Studies in Bábí and Baha'i History, Vol. 1

ed. Moojan Momen, pp. 85-223.

Los Angeles: Kalimat Press.

'ABDU'L-BAHA WITH FRIENDS and children. Lincoln Park, Chicago, 1912.

THE AMERICAN BAHA'I COMMUNITY, 1894-1917: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

by Peter Smith

The development of the American Bahá'í community in the years leading up to 1917 is not easy to characterize. The processes which animated it are complex and at times elusive. Its central concerns cannot always be readily identified. The sources which may provide a basis for some adequate future account remain as yet largely untapped. In the absence of any detailed general account of the early American Bahá'í community, this present survey seeks to provide a rough map of the period as a whole, to present some general framework by which more detailed studies of particular aspects of this history may be placed in a wider context. It can not claim to be more than a tentative outline of what seem to be the most salient features in the development of the American Bahá'í community in the first twenty-three years of its existence.

On 29 May 1892, when Mirza Husayn-'Ali, Bahá'u'lláh (b. 1817), died in the vicinity of the city of 'Akka in Ottoman Syria, the religion he founded had already passed through an extensive transformation. Almost fifty years earlier, Siyyid 'Ali-Muhammad, the Báb (1819-1850), had announced the fulfillment of the millenarian expectations of Shi'ih Islam and had thereby given birth to a religious movement at once dramatic and poignant in its short and bloody duration. From the ashes of the Bábí religion had emerged the religion of Bahá'u'lláh. Attracting to himself the majority of the remaining Bábís and greatly broadening the scope of Bábí belief, Bahá'u'lláh gave less

---

Based on a paper delivered at the second Seminar on Bahá'í Studies, University of Lancaster, April 15-16, 1978

attention to those elements of the messianic and esoteric traditions of Shi'i Iran, which had figured so prominently in the teachings of the Báb, placing greater emphasis on ethics and the practical manifestations of spirituality. Advancing, as a prescription for the world's ills, a program of social and religious reform, he laid claim to be the expected Deliverer prophesied not only by Islam and the Bábí religion, but also by other world religions. However, despite the recruitment of some Jews, Zoroastrians, and Levantine Christians to its ranks, and despite the migration of a number of Persian Bahá'ís from their homeland to neighboring countries, the Bahá'í Faith remained essentially a phenomenon within Persian Shiism. It was only after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, when the reins of leadership were taken up by his eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921), that the religion began to spread to North America, Europe, and the Far East, and the first substantial numbers of believers from a Christian background were attracted.

The years of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership were a crucial stage in the development of the Bahá'í Faith. Although it was later, under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's grandson, Shoghi Effendi Rabbani (1897-1957), that it became a worldwide religion with followers from a multitude of religious and racial backgrounds scattered throughout most of the countries of the world, it was this initial period of growth outside the Faith's original Islamic milieu which established the breadth of its appeal and its ability to adapt to an alien religious tradition. Similarly, while the final routinization of charisma (whereby the personal charismatic leadership of the ministries of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was transmuted into the legal-rational forms of the modern Bahá'í Administrative Order) only occurred in the years following 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death in 1921, this later transformation was presaged by developments within the Faith which took place during his lifetime and had his approval, his own Will and Testament providing the generating impulse for much of this administrative development.

If the changes that occurred in the period of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ministry are seen as being particularly important in the historical process by which a nineteenth-century movement within

Persian Shi'ih Islam evolved into a twentieth-century world religion, then the particular locus of those changes was surely the early American Bahá'í community. It was in America that the first Western converts were made. It was from America that the teachers of the new religion came when the European, and later the Australian and Far Eastern, communities were established. In terms of numbers, activity, and influence, the American Bahá'ís were the predominant group within the body of early Western believers. It was in their midst that many of the institutional forms which later developed into the Administrative Order of the Faith were founded. A study of the history of the early American Bahá'í community must, therefore, constitute an important part in any analysis of the overall development of the Bahá'í Faith.

In the period under review, the American Bahá'í community underwent considerable transformation both in terms of the preoccupations of belief and of organization and leadership. Originating in the 1890s with the missionary endeavor of Ibrahim George Kheiralla (Khayru'llah), a converted Syrian (Chaldean) Christian newly arrived in America, the nascent Bahá'í community first took on the appearance of a secret cult, making its appeal on the basis of a blend of millenarian expectation and metaphysical thought.

Following the establishment of firm links with the center of the new Faith, this aura of secrecy was cast aside. The basis of appeal, however, remained much the same, and despite its millenarian overtones, the Bahá'í Cause remained linked to the cultic milieu of the metaphysical movement. This changed in the years that followed, as there gradually emerged a national Bahá'í leadership, a process which accelerated in the period after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to America in 1912. Moreover, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit greatly broadened the religion's base of appeal. His own preference for social reformism rather than metaphysical speculation made a profound impact on the American community and attracted the attention of liberal Christians and other thinkers to the new movement. At the same time, his visit sensitized many American Bahá'ís to the importance of the Covenant, an idea which became a major factor in the ensuing

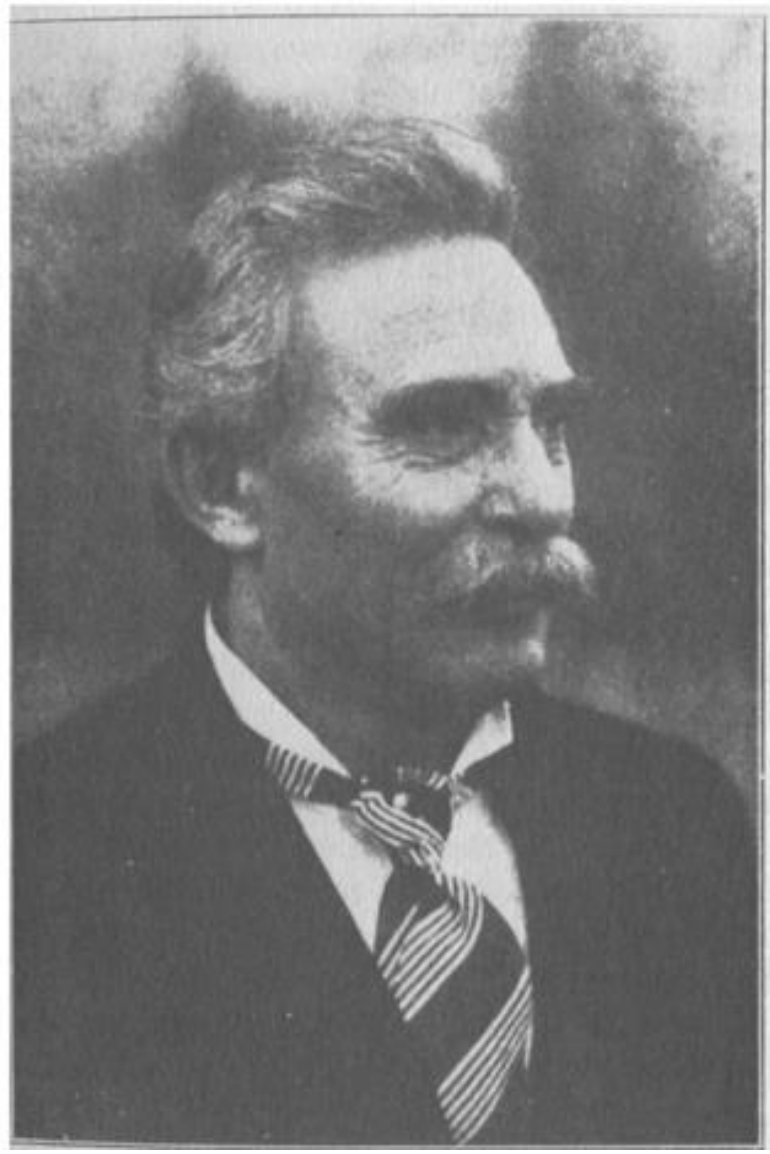
years in the move toward a greater homogeneity of belief and which allowed certain beliefs to be labeled as unorthodox in the name of firmness in the Covenant. Associated with this trend was a greater stress on national organization and a tendency for Bahá'ís to regard their religion as a distinct and separate entity, tendencies which were accelerated during the period of Shoghi Effendi's leadership.

It was not until 1894 that the first Americans became converted to the Bahá'í Faith, and we may conveniently date American Bahá'í history from that year. Prior to that date the American reading public may have come across accounts of the new religion in the books of scholars or literateurs, but the dramatic history of the religion of the Báb had excited much less interest in America than it had in Europe.

Greater interest was shown by American missionaries working in the Middle East who initially regarded the Bahá'í Faith as a reform movement within Islam which might create a more hospitable environment for Christian evangelism. From such a source came the first known reference to Bahá'u'lláh at a public meeting. This reference, made in September 1893 during a session of the World's Parliament of Religions at Chicago's Columbian Exposition, is regarded by Bahá'ís as marking the symbolic beginning of the history of their Faith in the West.[1]

THE KHEIRALLA PERIOD: 1894-1900

Early Teachings. The dominant figure during the first six years of American Bahá'í history was Ibrahim Kheiralla (1849-1929), who had been converted in 1890 in Egypt by a Persian business associate, Haji Abdu'1-Karim-i Tihrani.[2] In 1892 Kheiralla determined to proceed to America to spread the Bahá'í Faith, arriving in New York in December 1892.[3] By 1894 he had established himself in Chicago and in that same year had gained his first converts.[4] These earliest conversions seem to have been accomplished on the basis of personal contact, but before long, Kheiralla had fixed on what remained his standard system of attracting people to the Bahá'í Faith. This was a series of graduated lectures, the earliest dealing with such general issues



Ibrahim Kheiralla

as the immortality of the soul, the nature of the mind, and the need to believe in God. Later lectures dealt increasingly with Biblical prophecy concerning the second advent and the existence of a "Greatest Name" of God by which the believer might enter into a special relationship with the divine. Finally, for those who had taken all the lectures and shown themselves worthy, Kheiralla delivered the "pith" of his message: that God had returned to earth in the person of Bahá'u'lláh, and that now his Son, Jesus Christ, was living in 'Akka. Those who believed were given the Greatest Name and told to write to 'Abdu'l-Bahá confessing their belief.[5] The introductory lectures were expanded and published in 1896, and more fully in 1897, as *Báb-ed-Din: the Door of True Religion.* In this book, the author explained that the full instruction was private, and that even the name of the new religion was only known to those Truth-seekers who had "taken the full course and received acceptance from the Great Head of the headquarters of the Order."[6] This book stimulated interest in the new religion, and by 1900 there were perhaps as many as three thousand Bahá'ís situated in a dozen or so American cities, in particular Chicago, New York, and Kenosha, Wisconsin.[7]

The basis of appeal of the new religion of "Truth-seekers" or "Truth-knowers" is difficult to identify clearly. The aura of secrecy that surrounded the advanced lessons makes it difficult to determine precisely what was taught to the newly converted Bahá'ís. An appeal of sorts was certainly made to the American adventist tradition: after all, when it was eventually given, the "pith" or "kernel" of Kheiralla's message was that God and Christ had returned, and this was supported by complex use of Biblical prophecy and accompanied by a belief that the millennium was to commence in 1917. Yet it was a very esoteric version of the Advent which was proclaimed.

An appeal was also made to the metaphysical tradition and many of the Truth-seekers came from such a background. Yet Kheiralla took pains to criticize many metaphysical groups and ideas, distinguishing his own ideas from those of the Christian Scientists, Theosophists, and Vedantists, and denouncing pantheism and claims of inner guidance, psychic vision, or astral travel. Perhaps the central principle which combined the

various elements in Kheiralla's synthesis was that of esoteric knowledge. The appeal was made to the worthy few: the true seekers who attended private classes, not the many who could not apprehend the truth. Pupils were asked not to discuss what they had heard with outsiders. The true name of the Faith and the names of its founders were not given in the elementary classes or books. The classes could only be taken in a prescribed order. To know God was only possible if one knew the right password—the Greatest Name—and this was only given to those who were worthy to become believers. Salvation was conditional on belief. Becoming a believer gave the individual access to special powers beside which occult powers were "as chaff."[8] At a certain stage in the classes, the Truth-seekers were asked to meditate on certain Biblical verses which hinted at the Second Advent so as to make themselves deserving of the truth. The importance of visions was stressed. The neophyte was required to write a form of allegiance before he was fully initiated into the details of the new doctrine, and, although this is not stated, the Truth-seeker presumably became a Truth-knower. In this context adventist fulfillment became an element of occult knowledge, and Kheiralla's teachings of reincarnation, numerology, the need for rational argument, and the rejection of "irrational" Biblical verses were subsumed under an overriding belief in gaining that Truth which would make men free. It was little wonder that E. G. Browne should have been reminded of Isma'ili Islam when confronted by this congeries of teachings,[9] or that modern Bahá’ís should recoil in horror at what they see as a parody of their beliefs.[10]

The appeal of the Truth-seeker classes was not only based on the ideas taught. The personality of Kheiralla was also important. By all accounts an intelligent and engaging man, he impressed those who came into contact with him as enthusiastic and sincere. In distinction to many other teachers of new spiritual messages, he made no charge for his teachings. He did, however, make a charge for the mental (or spiritual?) healing which he performed and which no doubt attracted some to his teachings.[11] The aura of mystery itself may well have been important in attracting people to the classes, for although Kheiralla denied that the new teachings were secret, this was not

necessarily obvious to all of those who became Truth-seekers, an it is possible that some of the converts suspected that they were entering a secret society. Certainly some of them seem to have had ulterior motives, as is evidenced by the account of Browne's correspondent that "some people have sent the letter [the declaration of faith] for the sake of the rest of the teachings and for a mysterious something which they hope to get."[12]

While a systematic appraisal of the religious background and social composition of the converts is not yet possible, an overall picture can be constructed. Many of the converts were "seekers" and had already belonged to other groups within the cultic milieu. Judging by information for later periods, most were probably disaffected Protestants from the more liberal denominations. Although the "kernel of truth" was a message of the Second Advent, few, if any, converts were made from Adventist groups. The majority of the Truth-seekers were women. Of the men, many seem to have been in business or the professions, although there were also some artisans. A number of both the men and the women were (medical?) "doctors." Most of the converts were almost certainly middle class and to some extent educated. Most of them lived in large cities, and of those who did not, most learned of the new faith as a result of contacts with neophytes in one of the cities. The majority were white, many of whom were of British ancestry, but there were also a large number from German and (in Kenosha) Swedish descent.

Expansion and Growing Tension. At first the classes were conducted only by Kheiralla, who exercised a strong central control over the fledgling movement. How he attracted students to his classes is unknown, quite possibly many came as a result of personal contact with other class members or converted Truth-seekers; in some cases news of the new teaching seems to have circulated among the members of a particular group in the cultic milieu (for example, the followers of New Thought in New York City, a number of whom were converted).[13] Then again, the publication of the introductory lectures doubtless attracted others, and it is possible that Kheiralla advertised his classes.

From 1897 onwards, larger numbers were converted, and considerable diffusion occurred as individuals introduced to the teachings in Chicago returned to their home cities and invited Dr. Kheiralla to come and teach those with whom they had come into contact. It was increasingly difficult for there to be only one teacher of the new message, and accordingly Kheiralla appointed teachers to impart the message and to some extent lead the Bahá'ís in the various Bahá'í communities which were developing.[14] In at least two communities, Kenosha and New York, Boards of Counsel were elected from among the assembly of believers as a whole.[15] The relationship between these Boards and individual teachers is not known, nor are their powers and authority, but it is probable that at least until his departure for Akka in July 1898, Kheiralla continued to exercise an overall control, probably retaining the responsibility for giving the Greatest Name to converts.[16]

Some of the appointed teachers undertook missionary work in more distant parts of the United States resulting in the further spread of the Faith. In California, as a result of the teaching work of Dr. Edward C. Getsinger and his wife Lua (nee Moore), Mrs. Phoebe Hearst (wife of the newspaper magnate, Senator George F. Hearst) was attracted to the teachings and invited the Kheirallas and the Getsingers to be her guests on a pilgrimage to 'Akka. Leaving America in July 1898, the group proceeded East by way of Paris where Mrs. Hearst had a house, and Kheiralla (at least) went on to Egypt to visit his daughters by a previous marriage.[17] The party, enlarged by additions from Paris and Egypt, reached 'Akka in three separate groups, the first, which included the Getsingers, arriving on 10 December 1898. For most of the party the stay was comparatively short and their accounts of it emphasize the staggering impact that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's personality had upon them, increasing their devotion and enthusiasm for the Faith.[18] Two of the returning pilgrims, Miss May Bolles and Mrs. Miriam Thornburgh-Cropper, established new Bahá'í groups in Paris and London respectively. The Kheirallas, and possibly also the Getsingers, stayed for a longer time, however, during which the first rift between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Kheiralla occurred. This was to lead to Kheiralla and part

of the American Bahá’í community becoming partisans of "‘Abdu’l-Bahá's half brother Mirza Muhammad-'Ali.

The circumstances of the rift are hardly mentioned in orthodox Bahá’í sources: the accounts that do exist are by partisans of Muhammad-'Ali.[19] The Bahá’í explanation of Kheiralla's defection is that he was "actuated by pride and ambition," and that having been "blinded by his extraordinary success" in North America, he was "aspiring after an uncontrolled domination over the beliefs and activities of his fellow disciples."[20] H. M. Balyuzi posits that Kheiralla had conjured with the idea that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would accept a division of the Bahá’í community, with Kheiralla shepherding the Bahá’ís of the West and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá those of the East, but that meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for the first time he realized that his plan would not be accepted and so turned to Muhammad-'Ali.[21] Kheiralla's own account is that he gradually became disillusioned with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whom he later accused of prevarication and deceit, and found himself given the cold shoulder by the other Bahá’ís after a disagreement with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá over matters of doctrine. Accusations are also said to have been made against Kheiralla by the Getsingers.[22] Whether Kheiralla established any contact with the partisans of Muhammad-'Ali before he returned to America is not known, but he himself denies it.[23]

Kheiralla had been welcomed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in glowing terms: "Welcome to Thee, O Baha's Peter, O second Columbus, Conqueror of America!" and had been accorded "the unique privilege of helping ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lay the foundation-stone of the Báb's mausoleum on Mt. Carmel."[24] He returned to America in November (?) 1899 under something of a cloud, his wife leaving him and the Getsingers renouncing him. S. G. Wilson, probably quoting one of Kheiralla's American partisans, states that Dr. Getsinger, on his return to America, "announced that he was to be the representative of Abbas Effendi [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], because Dr. Kheiralla's teachings were erroneous and his conduct immoral."[25] Kheiralla's English wife Marian wrote from 'Akka to one American Bahá’í: "Forget everything you have been taught except that Bahá’u’lláh came and has passed away.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, Center of the Covenant is here, but He is not the re-incarnation of Jesus Christ."[26]

The Kenosha Episode. On Kheiralla's return to America his disaffection from 'Abdu'l-Bahá was initially overshadowed by events in Kenosha. Unlike Chicago or New York where a multitude of exotic religious groups could flourish unobserved, the Wisconsin town of Kenosha was too small (1890 pop.: 6,532; 1900 pop.: 11,606) for unusual religious movements to remain concealed for long. It was not surprising therefore that local church leaders should become worried when in less than three years a community of over two hundred "Truth-knowers," including most members of the business community according to one account, developed in their midst.[27] In 1899, with the backing of the local Baptist, Methodist, Episcopal, and Congregationalist churches, Stoyan Krstoff Vatralsky, a Protestant Bulgarian immigrant who had attended the first eleven classes, embarked on a campaign to unmask the mysterious Truth-knowers. In a series of public lectures and letters in the local press (October-December 1899), Vatralsky denounced the local Bahá'ís as dupes who had, perhaps unbeknown to themselves, joined a "pernicious Moslem monstrosity," a mixture of the "evil" religion of Islam and gnosticism, falsely presented in a Christian guise. The local newspapers took up the cry and pondered whether Kenosha would become "the Mecca of American Mohammedanism."[28]

The local Bahá'ís sought to rebut these charges, insisting upon their Christian credentials: one of their leaders going so far as to declare that since they were teaching God's Truth from the Bible, it was impossible that they were teaching "Mohammedanism." Assuming that this statement was sincere and not just an attempt at placating irate Christian sentiment, it reveals the ignorance of the Kenosha Truth-knowers concerning the doctrines of their own religion, and also the selectivity with which they had been taught Bahá'í beliefs.[29] One of the effects of Vatralsky's attack seems to have been to induce the Truth-knowers to drop the veil of secrecy that surrounded their beliefs

and activities. Possibly this would have happened anyway, but it seems likely that the defense of Bahá'í beliefs necessitated by Vatralsky's strictures hastened the event.

Crisis and Division. Although both Kheiralla and the Getsingers seem to have returned to America by November 1899, the storm over Kheiralla's questioned allegiance to 'Abdu'l-Bahá did not break until March 1900, when Kheiralla, at a meeting of the Kenosha Bahá'ís, renounced his allegiance to him, saying that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not the return of Christ and that his leadership of the Bahá'í community was invalid.[30] Presumably similar meetings were held in Chicago. In April Kheiralla's original teacher, 'Abdu'l-Karim-i Tihrani, arrived in New York, and in a series of meetings in that city, Chicago, and Kenosha, proclaimed to the Bahá'ís that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was Bahá'u'lláh's appointed successor, the Center of his Covenant, warning them of the spiritual dangers of following Muhammad-'Ali into violation of the Covenant.[31] 'Abdu'l-Karim also tried to win back Kheiralla's allegiance to 'Abdu'l-Bahá but was unable to induce him to renounce Muhammad-'Ali. Thereafter 'Abdu'l-Karim denounced Kheiralla and his teachings and prohibited the believers from reading his book, *Beha 'U'llah.*[32] Kheiralla meanwhile had formed "Houses of Justice" in Kenosha and Chicago, and on 27 May a conference was held in Chicago at which a group of American Bahá'ís repudiated 'Abdu'l-Bahá and became followers of Muhammad-'Ali.[33]

The resultant division of the North American Bahá'í community into two factions, one calling themselves Bahais (or Behais) supporting 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the other calling themselves Behaists supporting Muhammad-'Ali, was soon consolidated. The principals of each group sent teachers from the East to help strengthen the position of their American following. Books were published by both sides advancing their own claims and deprecating those of their opponents. Separate organizations were formed and separate meetings held. Many, however, joined neither faction and, dismayed by the mass of claims,

counterclaims, and bitter denunciations, left the Bahá'í Faith completely.

As in the East, the position of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's followers became stronger with the passing of time, while that of the Behaists weakened. From the early 1900s the number of Muhammad-'Ali's American partisans decreased, while the number of Bahá'ís increased. In 1900 there had been two to three thousand American believers. In 1902, Dr. Frederick O. Pease, the President of the House of Justice of the Society of Behaists, reported that about seventeen hundred had left the Faith entirely, leaving six or seven hundred, of whom three hundred were Behaists and the rest "Abbasites," (that is, followers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) "of one sect or another."[34] By 1906, according to the United States Census of Religions, the numbers of Bahá'ís had risen to 1,280 while the number of Behaists had sunk to 40.[35] The subsequent history of the Bahá'í Faith in America was therefore primarily concerned with the followers of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, although the spasmodic endeavors of Kheiralla and his associates continue to be a matter of concern at least until the 1920s.

After the early 1900s the Behaists appear to have become quiescent for some years, and in 1903 many seem to have returned to the "Abbasite" group.[36] There was some renewal of activity in the years following ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit to America in 1912, with a National Association of the Universal Religion being established in 1914, and with publishing activity continuing until 1918. Another lull ensued until the years following ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's death in 1921, when Muhammad-'Ali's claims were again circulated in America.[37] Little of this activity had any result. The Behaists sent no information to the 1916 or succeeding censuses and the death of Kheiralla (in 1929) and of Muhammad-'Ali (in 1930) removed most of the focus of the Behaists' (or Unitarian Behais') efforts. Isolated publications continued to appear until the forties, but these seem to have been the result of individual endeavor rather than any serious coordinated effort. Individual effort also produced a series of leaflets calling upon the American Behaists to reject Bahá’u’lláh

in favor of his half brother Mirza Yahya, Subh-i Azal, but this lone pamphleteer seems to have met with no success.[38]

Behaist Doctrine. Before leaving the topic of Kheiralla and the Behaists, the question of doctrinal divergence should be mentioned. On a number of theological issues Kheiralla's original teaching differed from Bahá'í orthodoxy—for example, his teachings of the personality of God, the preexistence of the soul, and reincarnation. More significantly, however, Kheiralla gave to his presentation of the Bahá'í Faith a particularly Christian context, with the promise of the 1917 millennium, and with 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the returned Christ. Again, while Persian Bahá'ís had often been cautious in their endeavors to propagate their Faith out of an awareness of the ever-present danger of persecution, the exaggerated aura of secrecy which enveloped Kheiralla's teaching was something of a different order, and of his own creation. The origin of these divergences seems to have been Kheiralla, who explained that 'Abdu'l-Karim had taught him little, and that most of his own ideas had come from his rational study of the Bible and his other researches.[39] After his disavowal of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Kheiralla's teachings underwent some modification, and apart from his partisanship for Muhammad-'Ali, he emphasized the "Christianness" of his own understanding as a converted Christian, as opposed to the Islamic and sufi flavor of that of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his followers, and made a greater appeal to rationality as being the basis of his ideas.

What Kheiralla had evolved was a unique synthesis of Bahá'í ideas (divorced from their Shi'i origins) and his own conceptions. It was a synthesis which had proved immensely appealing to certain members of the cultic milieu who, disillusioned with traditional American religion, were seeking some new religious ideology. The spiritual healing, the metaphysical speculation, the stated appeal to rationality, Kheiralla's own personality, the promise of some secret knowledge and mysterious power, may all have contributed to the conversion of the American Truth-knowers, but what eventually became central to the belief of many of them was the conviction that in the walled city of 'Akka their Lord, the Master, the Christ-like figure of

'Abdu'l-Bahá was living, and it was to him that they gave their love and their devotion. Kheiralla had been their guide, their "beloved teacher," but it was not to him that the majority of the Bahá'ís had given their allegiance. His defection troubled and perplexed them, but most did not follow him. The messianic motif had been the fundamental element in their religion, and the fullest expression of that motif lay with the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and not with Muhammad-'Ali and Kheiralla.[40]

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1900

Division of the history of any religious or social movement into periods, though often necessary for descriptive coherence, is almost inevitably an arbitrary procedure. In the present study, the year 1900, which saw the trauma of Kheiralla's defection, marks an obvious divide (and the 1894-1900 period has therefore been dealt with separately), but we would be mistaken if we supposed that the American Bahá'í community after that date was totally different from the pre-1900 community. In the face of great changes, there were continuities of personnel, practices, and beliefs. To an even greater extent is this true of any date which might be chosen to mark the end of the period of early American Bahá'í history. The date which has been chosen to mark the end of this present study does not mark any cataclysmic change in the beliefs and activities of the American Bahá'ís. After 1917, however, the tempo of American Bahá'í activity seems to have increased, and the processes of change which were further accelerated under Shoghi Effendi's leadership became marked, the period from 1917 to the early 1930s constituting an important and wide-ranging period of transition which extends across the crucial change in the overall leadership of the Bahá'í religion and in which organization and structure came to play an increasingly important part in American Bahá'í life.

CONTACT WITH ABDU'L-BAHA

The figure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá dominated the American Bahá'í community in the years following 1900. Bahá'u'lláh might be

the center of theological considerations, but it was the living "messianic" figure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who was the emotional center of the community, its source of guidance and authority. With increasing contact he became an awesome, yet loving, friend and counselor to whom all could turn for guidance, and to whom all could give unquestioning devotion.

The Station of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The post-1900 American community was united by its common allegiance to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; it was not united in its understanding of his spiritual station. Abbas Effendi, eldest son of Bahá’u’lláh and his appointed successor, had taken the title ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (the Servant of Baha) after the death of his father. During the lifetime of his father he had also been referred to as *Aqá* (a term of respect applied to the eldest brother or the chief of a family, and translated into English in Bahá’í sources as "the Master"), and as *Ghusn-i a'zam* (the Most Great Branch) among the *Aghsan* (Branches, a term used by Bahá’u’lláh to refer to his sons). After Bahá’u’lláh's death he also came to be termed *Markaz-i mithdq-i ildhi* (the Center of the Covenant of God), and *Mawldna* (Our Lord), a title given to the heads of Islamic religious orders.[41]

For the early American Bahá’ís, brought up in a Christian environment, the titles "Master" and "Our Lord" were ones which were commonly applied to Christ. Given the messianic motif in the Bahá’í teachings, it was easy to identify ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as being in some way Christ returned. If Bahá’u’lláh was the Manifestation of God, the "Lord of the vineyard," then might not his physical son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, be the returned Son of God, into whose hands the management of the Kingdom had been entrusted? No native American Bahá’í had seen Bahá’u’lláh, and for many he must have seemed a remote figure whose grandeur could only be envisaged by references to his son. By contrast, a good many American Bahá’ís had met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and in awed terms had described to their fellow believers the simplicity of his life, his care for the poor and sick, his simple teaching and parables which inspired the listener to lead a better life, his commanding yet loving per-

sonality, and his appearance as a patriarchal figure in oriental robes, surrounded by a circle of disciples, and living in the land of the Bible. It was easy to see ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Christ-like terms.

In the pith of his lectures Kheiralla had identified 'Abbas Effendi, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the reincarnation of Jesus Christ. It was an attractive teaching which was not set aside by Kheiralla's fall from grace. All agreed that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was "Lord" and "Master"; might he not also be more? By some he was explicitly identified as Christ. Isabella Brittingham, after her return from the Holy Land in 1902, wrote that having seen "‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "I have seen the King in his beauty, the Master is here and we need not look for another, this is the return of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, of the Lamb that once was slain;—the Glory of God and the Glory of the Lamb."[42] He was the "Lord of the Kingdom"; "The Messiah of this day and generation," and the "Son of God."[43] Others only hinted at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's "true" station, leaving the reader to make his own conclusions.[44]

Whether the mass of American Bahá’ís continued to regard ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as Christ is unknown. Bixby, writing in 1912, commented that "many" Bahá’ís referred to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as "the return or reincarnation of Christ"—but in the face of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's repeated insistence that he was not Christ returned but only the Servant of God, Bahá’í writers generally moderated their descriptions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.[45] Thus, Thornton Chase, who had written a delightfully covert account in 1902:

> He, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has never claimed or acknowledged that He is the Christ, and has not permitted others to claim it for Him, but He lives the life of Christ, He fills the office of Christ, He teaches the doctrines of Christ, and is saying to us many things of which Jesus said: "I have many things to say unto you, but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth shall come, He will guide you unto all Truth, will reveal all things unto you,"

was to write after his return from a pilgrimage to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1907 that "He asks most earnestly that no-one shall ascribe to him any mission or station other than that of the

Servant of God. Those who really desire to obey his will and comply with his wish, rather than to uphold their own imaginations, will do literally as he has requested." "It is enough," he added, "that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is the Example and Leader of all mankind in service, sacrifice, love and peace, fulfilling before all the Law of the Kingdom as declared by the Great Manifestation Bahá’u’lláh."[46]

If ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not to be regarded as Christ, then at least he could be accorded a superhuman status. He was *the* servant of God who demonstrated to mankind a Christ-like life. His followers were not deifying his human personality but rather were "worshipping the Divine Light which is manifesting through his life of service to God and man." "By his life of example he is teaching the heart of mankind and infusing spiritual consciousness into humanity," he was manifesting "the life of the Kingdom."[47] He was the embodiment of divine perfections, "the true expression ... of the Universal Spirit of all Religion"; he was at one with the Divine Will, "the God attributes."[48] He was the perfect Bahá’í.[49] He was "a Manifestation of God," who in the "Cosmic Trinity" of Will, Love, and Knowledge expressed Knowledge (as the Báb expressed Will, and Bahá’u’lláh Love); he was "the Point of knowledge" who like the atmosphere translated the "Light of Truth" into the "Water of Life." He was "the wisest being who ever walked among men."[50] Between him and Bahá’u’lláh there existed a "mystic Unity."[51]

It seems reasonable to suppose that this doctrinal confusion, which was only ended by the publication of Shoghi Effendi's letter, "The Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh" in 1934, reflected the awe which many American Bahá’ís felt toward ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but which they found difficult to express in theological terms, given his denial of being Christ returned. Many of the Bahá’ís who met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá described the staggering impact which that meeting had upon them. At her first sight of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Lua Getsinger felt herself unable to move, "then my heart gave a great throb and, scarcely knowing what I was doing, I held out my arms crying, 'My Lord, my Lord!!' and rushing to Him, kneeling at His blessed feet, sobbing like a child."[52] Similarly, Horace Holley describes his first sight of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: "Without having ever visualized the Master, I knew that this

was He. My whole body underwent a shock, my heart leaped, my knees weakened, a thrill of acute receptive feeling flowed from head to foot. ... In every part of me I stood aware of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's presence. ... In ‘Abdu’l-Bahá I felt the aweful presence of Baha'o'llah, and, as my thoughts returned to activity, I realized that I had drawn as near as man now may to pure spirit and pure being."[53]

Bahá’ís wrote not of meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but of being in "His Presence," in an experience which by its vividness eclipsed their ordinary everyday realities. "We met not a man in Acca but the Holy Spirit radiant, vibrant," wrote one pilgrim. "One cannot come into this Presence," wrote Mary Lucas, "without being changed in every atom of the entity." Describing the five days he spent as the guest of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the "prison-city" of Akka, Thornton Chase stated that "the real prison" of material desire lay outside the prison walls, while inside "all troubles, tumults, worries or anxieties for worldly things" were barred. Ultimately, for many American Bahá’ís it was not the doctrinal details of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's station which held them in thrall, but the fact that they had given him their allegiance as their Lord. In the words of an obituary for one early believer: "She firmly believed that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was her Lord; his name was the healing of her soul."[54]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Leadership of the American Community. To his American followers ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was a charismatic leader of messianic importance. He was the ultimate source of authority and guidance. To many Bahá’ís ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's authority was absolute, his least word of divine importance. Under such circumstances, we might expect the American community to be subject to strong central control, to be a tight-knit, cohesive unit—yet this was manifestly not the case. In part, the reason for this seeming anomaly lay in the nature of the Bahá’í community itself (an issue which will be discussed below), but of equal importance was the nature of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's leadership. It was a characteristic feature of the early American Bahá’í community that its main source of guidance and authority lived in a remote part of the Ottoman Empire. Apart from the almost

eight months which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent in North America, and the comparatively small number of American Bahá’ís who were able to visit him in Palestine, Egypt, or Europe, contact with him was by correspondence or vicariously, through meeting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's emissaries and the returning pilgrims.

The reliance on correspondence necessarily modified the exercise of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's authority. The individualistic nature of the American Bahá’í community meant that correspondence was largely with individuals, whose actions and beliefs would be modified by their own interpretations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's replies to their questions. This, and the fact that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's own response to his Western followers was generally one of loving encouragement and only rarely one of reproof, meant that individuals with very divergent beliefs felt themselves justified in advocating a variety of doctrines to their coreligionists. In disagreements about what Bahá’í belief or practice should be, it was possible that all sides might cite statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in support of their various arguments. This was complicated by a lack of any clear criteria for establishing what a bona fide statement by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was: verbal comments attributed to him might be given the same credence as signed letters. The vagaries of translation conducted by a variety of individuals, not all of them competent at the task, and none of them native English-speakers, brought in a further element of confusion, casting doubt on the fine nuances of meaning which individuals might wish to draw from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's statements.[55]

Underlying this almost technical problem of communication seems to have been a fundamental tolerance on the part of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá toward a diversity of belief on the part of his followers. On some issues—for example, the racial question— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was firm and unyielding, while on other topics (which he may have regarded as comparatively unimportant) he refrained from interfering with the individual's established beliefs. The metaphysical speculation which fascinated so many American Bahá’ís would seem to have been a prime example of this approach. According to Howard MacNutt, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wished to show his followers how to apply the Divine principle of love, not just to answer their metaphysical questions; and

Thornton Chase commented that "all of his words are directed towards *helping men to live.* Unless questions of metaphysics, dogmas and doctrines are introduced, he seldom mentions them."[56]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's leadership of the American Bahá'ís was often subtle in nature; he gently led the community in certain directions, or supported certain initiatives above others. Only on certain issues and to those individuals in whom he had the greatest confidence did he regularly give detailed and exact instructions. Apart from the charismatic authority ascribed to him by his followers, his most prominent role was that of a teacher lovingly instructing his American disciples by correspondence, by his talks with visiting pilgrims, and by his public addresses and private conversations during his American tour.

Correspondence with ''Abdu'l-Bahá. Of particular importance in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance of the American community was the vast interchange of correspondence.[57] Prior to 1912, for most American Bahá'ís this was the only means of contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. We have already noted that new Bahá'ís in the pre-1900 period were required to write a "supplication" to 'Abdu'l-Bahá confessing their belief, a practice which seems to have continued in some cases until at least 1915.[58] The correspondence thus initiated might continue unabated for a considerable period of time, with the supplicant not only asking for prayers and "spiritual bounties" but also asking questions on matters of Bahá'í doctrine and practice, or seeking advice with regard to both their own Bahá'í activities and their personal affairs. One of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's secretaries wrote:

> The many difficult problems of the Bahá'í world are solved by him. Now he writes to Persia on how to hold an election, then he writes to far-off America on how to rent a hall. One Bahai desires to know whether she should cook food for her child; another person asks how to proceed to buy a piece of land. There are some misunderstandings in this assembly to be removed; the feelings of some person are ruffled and must be smoothed down. One man's mother

> or father is dead, he requests a Tablet of Visitation. Another desires to have a wife. To one a child is born, she begs for a Bahá'í name; another has taught several souls, he asks for Bahá'í rings for them. This man has had business reverses, he must be encouraged, another has fallen from a ladder, he implores a speedy recovery. One has quarrelled with his wife, and he wants advice on how to be reconciled; another supplicates for blessings on his marriage. The Master goes over these one by one with infinite patience, and with his words of advice, creates order out of chaos. The sorrows of the world troop along in review before him, and as they pass, so the transformation happens! The sorrowful becomes joyful. The ill-tempered becomes good-natured, the lazy active, the sleepy one awakened.[59]

For those who accepted 'Abdu'l-Bahá as their Master, the receipt of his letters or Tablets *(Alwah)* was a priceless privilege, conferring great honor and bounty on the recipient. Those who had received a large number of Tablets might be highly regarded on that account, a certain authority and status accruing thereby.

The correspondence between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his American followers has a particular importance in any consideration of the development of the community over the period as a whole. From 1900, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had sent a succession of Persian Bahá'í teachers who endeavored to counter the problems caused by Kheiralla's defection, and gave to the American Bahá'ís expositions of the Bahá'í teachings. By the end of 1904, the last of these emissaries had returned to the East, and apart from a small but steady flow of pilgrims, correspondence became the only means of communication between the American Bahá'ís and their leader. Although the Persians had established a coherent basis of belief, a fluidity of doctrine and practice remained. Coordinating committees of Bahá'ís had been formed in the chief centers of the community, but their authority was weak and no firm national structure of organization and communications had been established, nor was one to emerge until after 1909. The onetime system of "spiritual guides" had become defunct, and while certain individuals had already come to prominence as energetic teachers of the Cause, or as informal

leaders of certain groups of Bahá'ís, there was no national leadership and no universally recognized local leaders. In this context, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Tablets constituted an important means by which he could exert direction on the community.

At a very general level, this context may account for the repetitive nature of many of the Tablets, as certain fundamental themes were reiterated time and again—in particular, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's injunctions that the Bahá'ís should be united, should be firm in the Covenant, should teach the Cause and serve humanity.

More specific direction was channeled via letters to such institutions as the New York Board of Counsel, the Chicago House of Spirituality, or the Chicago Women's Assembly of Teaching, or to individuals who by their enthusiasm and initiative were able to lead the development of certain innovations within the community. The seemingly deliberate use of certain individuals as innovators was reinforced by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's instructions to returning pilgrims, by which he might charge a certain individual to accomplish a particular task. As a result, certain individuals became associated with particular sections of "the work"—Isabella Brittingham and the observance of the Nineteen-Day Feast, Corinne True and the Temple project, Charles Mason Remey and the maintenance of firmness in the Covenant.

The importance attached to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Tablets soon led to measures being taken to disseminate them among a larger number of Bahá'ís. Often, typewritten copies of Tablets were made and circulated. At the same time, from 1900 onward, individual Tablets or small collections of them were produced in printed form. By the time of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit in 1912, at least fifteen such works had been produced by the American Bahá'ís, in addition to two major works published in London in 1908 and 1910, and the first part of a three-volume compilation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Tablets in 1909. The development of Bahá'í periodicals also aided this diffusion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's instruction and guidance.

WESTERN PILGRIMS IN 'AKKA, 1900

Standing (1. to r.): Charles Mason Remey, Sigurd Russell, Edward Getsinger, Laura Barney.

Seated (1. to r.): Ethel Rosenburg, Madam Jackson, Miriam Thornburgh-Cropper, Lua Getsinger, Claudia Coles.

Pilgrimage. A significant minority of Bahá'ís were able to undertake the arduous and lengthy journey to visit 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Syria. Already by 1900, several other Americans had followed the path established by the pilgrimage group of 1898, and by 1911 some 108 American Bahá'ís had made the journey. The importance of these pilgrims was considerable. They acted as valuable messengers for 'Abdu'l-Bahá, bringing his letters, message, and teachings to the American Bahá'ís. The experiences of pilgrimage—the climactic meetings with 'Abdu'l-Bahá; the timeless quality of their sojourn as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guest, surrounded by his family and followers; the devout attention given to his mealtime talks and stories and to the slightest remark or action on his part; the impressions created by being in the land of the Bible, in the presence of "the Master" and within the patriarchal circle of his leading followers in their eastern robes, in a city seemingly unchanged with the passage of time; the expressions of unity and brotherhood with the Oriental Bahá'ís in Egypt and Syria with whom they came into contact, and the feelings of respect engendered by the stories told by the widows and relatives of Persian Bahá'í martyrs; the instruction received from leading Bahá'í teachers in the East; and the pleasure at visiting places associated with the life of Bahá'u'lláh, combined to draw the pilgrim closer to the roots of his Faith, to enhance his devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and to increase his dedication and fervor in the service of his religion.[60] With 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement, the pilgrims returned to America by way of Egypt and the small Bahá'í communities of Europe, acting thereby as living embodiments of the "universal appeal" of their religion and encouraging their coreligionists in their efforts. On their return, the pilgrims endeavored to share their experiences with the community—speaking at meetings and publishing their impressions or circulating them in typewritten form as "pilgrim's notes," which became one of the major categories of early Bahá'í literature.

As with the receipt of Tablets, pilgrimage not only increased the pilgrim's knowledge of and enthusiasm for his religion, but seems to have been a factor contributing to prominence within the community—status, and perhaps even authority, accruing to the returned pilgrim.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Visit To America. 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived in New York on 11 April 1912 and remained in America until 5 December.[61] During those eight months, he traveled from coast to coast visiting in all some thirty-two cities including New York, Washington, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Montreal, Denver, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. He delivered numerous addresses, at least 185 of which were recorded. His tour was particularly important in terms of attracting the attention of the public to the Bahá'í teachings. It was also profoundly significant for the Bahá'ís themselves. For the first time most Bahá'ís had an opportunity to meet 'Abdu'l-Bahá; the publicity and prestige he attracted enhanced the public image of the American Bahá'í community; his efforts led to an influx of new converts; his portrayal of the Bahá'í teachings highlighted a new and immensely popular synthesis of its basic tenets; the efforts exerted in connection with the tour gave many adherents valuable experience in publicizing the Faith; the movement of Bahá'ís from place to place in order to be in "His Presence" strengthened feelings of community among them; and his open reference to the Covenant sensitized many Bahá'ís to the importance of what was to become a key doctrine.

To the Bahá'ís 'Abdu'l-Bahá frequently spoke of spiritual qualities: they must manifest love, kindness, and unity; bring happiness to the despondent, bestow food on the hungry, clothe the needy, and glorify the humble; free themselves from prejudice; avoid backbiting or giving offence; exert themselves in the service of universal peace so that all mankind could become as one family, and strive to illumine mankind; be steadfast and prepared to sacrifice; and not fear opposition. For the Bahá'ís, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own life offered both a model to emulate and a sense of contact with the numinous. Their accounts of his activities in North America place great stress on his love and com-

passion, his simple acts of kindness and charity, his self-sacrifice and severance from material considerations, his sympathetic understanding and wise counsels, his joyfulness and sense of humor, his forbearance and courtesy, his authority and nobility, his radiance, and at times even his transfiguration. To his American disciples ‘Abdu’l-Bahá seemed to live in a spiritual world illumining the material world by his contact with it. "All His concepts, all His motives, all His actions, derive their springs from that 'world of light.'" By contact with him they felt that they had been brought into touch with a new and vital reality. While many people who met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá might only feel that they had seen "personified dignity, beauty, wisdom and selflessness," for the believer that meeting "was the door to undreamed of worlds, to a new, a boundless, and eternal life."[62]

STABILIZATION AND EXPANSION OF THE COMMUNITY

The events of 1899 and 1900 placed the American Bahá’í community under the most severe stress it was to experience. Its membership was greatly reduced; the foundations of its faith were questioned; the teachings of its former leader and mentor were discredited and at least one of his books declared contraband. Besides believing that 'Abbas Effendi was their Lord what else were the Bahá’ís to believe? Who was going to teach them? What sources were any teachers going to use? Communication with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was limited by the difficulties of language and distance, and apart from a few typewritten copies of prayers and scripture they had no Bahá’í literature on which they could rely.

Persian Bahá’í Teachers. One of the most important elements of the Bahá’í community's recovery from this crisis was the presence, from 1900 to 1904, of a succession of Persian Bahá’í teachers who, acting as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's emissaries, were able to provide a degree of authority and leadership, as well as the basis for a coherent system of belief. In April 1900 the first of these men, Kheiralla's original teacher, 'Abdu'1-Karim-i Tihrani, arrived in New York. His main concerns seem to have been to

uphold ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's position as the Center of the Covenant and, if possible, to win back Kheiralla's allegiance to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.[63] Later in the year, 'Abdu'l-Karim and his interpreter returned to Egypt and were replaced by two more Persian Bahá’í teachers and their interpreter who arrived in November 1900: Haji Mirza Hasan-i Khurasani and Mirza Asadu'llah-i Isfahani—the former a leading Bahá’í of Egypt, the latter a brother-in-law of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and a leading Bahá’í of Syria.[64] These two were concerned with combatting Kheiralla's influence and, in Asadu'llah's case at least, with providing the American Bahá’ís with a synopsis of orthodox Bahá’í teachings. One of their first actions was to visit Kheiralla in Chicago, where Haji Mirza Hasan is said to have threatened him.[65] This was followed by a visit to Kenosha where an attempt was made to win back the Behaist group there.[66]

In Chicago, regular classes for the Bahá’ís were held in a newly rented building which also served as accommodation for the Persians and as a Bahá’í headquarters; regular Sunday public lectures were also given. Asadu'llah remained in America until May 1902, helping to form an administrative body (the future House of Spirituality), coordinating Chicago Bahá’í activities, and giving extensive teachings which later assumed printed form.[62] In 1901 the Bahá’í scholar Mirza Abu'1-Fadl-i Gulpaygani arrived. He remained some three and a half years, during which time he visited the Bahá’ís of Chicago, New York, and Washington, D.C., in addition to giving a series of lectures at Sarah Farmer's Greenacre Conferences, and composing his *al-Hujjaju'l-Bahaiyya (The Behai Proofs),* the first English translation of which was published in 1902. Both Asadu'llah and Abu'1-Fadl remained influential transmitters of the Bahá’í message to the American community both in person—to Western Bahá’ís visiting Syria and Egypt respectively—and in print—by way of articles in the Bahá’í periodical *Star of the West* and translations of their books and other works.

Other Orientals were also important in the American Bahá’í community at this time, notably Anton Haddad (like Kheiralla, a converted Syrian Christian) who was one of the Bahá’í leaders in New York and who contributed a number of translations of

scripture and other materials, as well as writing several pamphlets on various Bahá'í topics. In the wake of Asadu'llah, his son Mirza Ameen Ullah Fareed took up residence in Chicago, later qualifying as a physician. While in Chicago, Fareed produced some translations and attained some degree of prominence despite his youth. In 1912 he acted as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's interpreter. Abu'l-Fadl's interpreter, Ali-Kuli Khan, also produced several translations of scripture and of Abu'l-Fadl's writings, and was later appointed Charge d'Affaires of the Persian Legation at Washington, D.C. His marriage to an American was hailed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a union of East and West; he took a leading part in American Bahá'í affairs, serving for some years both on the Executive Board of the Bahai Temple Unity and the National Spiritual Assembly.[68] Another young man who undertook some translation work and initially came to America as Abu'l-Fadl's attendant was Mirza Ahmad-i Isfahaní, better known as Ahmad Sohrab. He remained in America till 1912, when he joined 'Abdu'l-Bahá's retinue as a second interpreter, returning with him to the East as a secretary.[69] Finally, Dr. Zia Bagdadi should be mentioned: coming to America to complete his medical training, he became involved in the work of *Star of the West* in 1911, and from then on played a leading role in the American community, serving on both the Chicago House of Spirituality and the Executive Board of Bahai Temple Unity.[70]

The effect of these teachers is difficult to evaluate. Except for Kenosha, they seem to have been successful in countering Kheiralla's influence among the Bahá'ís. For those Bahá'ís who remained loyal to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they provided a coherent statement of Bahá'í orthodoxy and a link with "the Master" who had sent them. The writings of Abu'1-Fadl and Asadu'llah provided the basis for Bahá'ís to study their religion and for potential converts to learn of the teachings. Their public lectures, particularly Abu'l-Fadl's lectures at Greenacre, became a means of publicizing the Faith, thus aiding its emergence from the pall of secrecy which surrounded it prior to 1900. Not that their teachings necessarily served to increase the overall numbers of Bahá'ís. Thornton Chase suggests that there was in fact a decline in

numbers as many "occultists" departed from the Faith when they realized the incompatibility of their own ideas with those taught by the Persian teachers.[71] More intangibly, the presence of these bearded and oriental-garbed patriarchal figures, and their attendant interpreters, no doubt contributed to the image the Bahá'ís had of themselves as a community, adding a touch of Eastern mystique, and reinforcing the sense which many Bahá'ís seem to have felt of being members of a community analogous to the early disciples of Christ. Some Bahá'ís rejected their authority,[72] but overall, at a time when the Bahá'í community of America faced a vacuum of ideology and leadership, they provided both, contributing thereby to the continued existence of that community.

Bahá'í Publications. Of particular importance, both in the establishment of a central core of Bahá'í belief and in efforts at proselytization, was the development of a substantial body of Bahá'í literature in the years following 1900. This was supplemented by the circulation of typewritten copies of prayers, Tablets, and news items between the various communities. By 1912 at least seventy books and pamphlets had been produced, and by 1917 this number had risen to more than a hundred. At first, both the New York Board of Counsel and the Chicago Behais Supply and Publishing Board (renamed the Bahai Publishing Society in 1902) took the lead in publishing Bahá'í literature.[73] But after a while this work became concentrated in Chicago where a small group of Bahá'ís were particularly interested in the task. Other Bahá'í assemblies (Washington, D.C.; Boston; Seattle; and London, England) also published Bahá'í books, and more were printed privately or produced by commercial publishers. The essentially national nature of Bahá'í publishing was recognized in 1911 when the Bahai Temple Unity placed the Chicago Publishing Society under national supervision. Chicago remained the center for Bahá'í publishing until 1924, when the National Spiritual Assembly appointed a New York-based committee to take over the work.

By 1917 a large range of English language Bahá'í literature had been produced. This included a book of Bahá'í hymns, a

folio of designs for the American Bahá'í Temple, an album of views of places of Bahá'í pilgrimage in the Holy Land, several defenses of the Covenant, some accounts of visits to the Bahá'ís of Europe and the East, various homilies on what the Bahá'í community should be like, and an account of persecution of Bahá'ís in Iran. The largest single category of literature produced was Bahá'í scripture, that is, the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The predominance of translations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings (twenty-four items), as compared with Bahá'u'lláh's (ten items), is perhaps indicative of the former's central position in the minds of the Bahá'ís despite the latter's higher theological status. The two other major categories of publications were expositions of the Bahá'í teachings—mostly by American Bahá'ís (twenty-seven items), and accounts of pilgrimages (fifteen items). Additionally, individual American Bahá'ís were involved in the translation and publication of Bahá'í literature into Danish, Esperanto, German, and Japanese. Besides books and pamphlets, a number of periodicals were produced. The earliest American Bahá'í periodical may well have been the New York Board of Counsel's *Bahai Bulletin.* Seemingly erratic in its publication and mainly concerned with New York affairs, it became defunct in the summer of 1909.[74] In addition to this official venture, Nathan Ward FitzGerald apparently produced a freelance Bahá'í magazine around 1905; and in 1900 Arthur P. Dodge, one of the New York Bahá'í leaders and founder of the *New England Magazine* produced *The American,* with the platform of the "Universal Brotherhood Party," a nonpartisan movement of unity working for God's Peace on Earth—not a Bahá'í publication as such, but clearly reflecting a Bahá'í viewpoint.[75] The idea of a magazine reflecting a Bahá'í viewpoint without directly presenting the Bahá'í Faith is also to be found in the proposal, made by Howard MacNutt's wife in 1902, of an "Argus" devoted to the interests of women and utilizing Bahá'í women writers,[76] and later in the production of the *Bulletin of the Persian-American Educational Society/Orient-Occident Unity Bulletin* (1911-?) and *World Unity* (1927-1934), "a monthly magazine interpreting the spirit of the New Age."

The most important early Bahá'í periodical was the Chicago-based *Star of the West.* The Chicago House of Spirituality seems to have intermittently discussed the possibility of a Bahá'í magazine from about 1900, but always came to the conclusion that such an effort would be premature.[77] When finally a magazine was produced, the initiative came from individuals rather than the elected body. The germ of the idea came from Ahmad Sohrab who proposed a magazine called "The East and the West" which would proclaim the Bahá'í message.[78] A group of Chicago Bahá'ís were excited by this idea and, following the termination of the New York Bulletin, two of their number (Albert Windust and Gertrude Buikema) began editing the *Bahai News.* The first issue appeared on the Bahá'í New Year's Day, 21 March 1910, and further issues appeared thereafter nineteen times a year, on the first of every Bahá'í month. The magazine was renamed *Star of the West* in 1911, and *The Bahai Magazine* in 1922, continuing under the latter name until 1935 when it was combined with *World Unity* in a new magazine, *World Order.* Until 1922 *Star of the West* was primarily concerned with the activities of the Bahá'ís rather than presentations of the Bahá'í teachings (with "what people are doing—not thinking") and included reports of local, national, and international Bahá'í activities as well as many of the Tablets received from 'Abdu'l-Bahá.[79] At times a Persian language section was included (Zia Bagdadi and Ahmad Sohrab were primarily responsible for this), and the magazine was distributed among the Bahá'ís of the East, where it undoubtedly did much to encourage the Oriental Bahá'ís by its presentation of the Western expansion of their Faith. Although a Star of the West Foundation was appointed in 1919 as a back-up team, Windust and Buikema continued to do most of the work until 1922, when management was transferred to the Publications Committee of the Bahai Temple Unity, later the National Spiritual Assembly. The change in management, besides bringing the venture firmly under national Bahá'í control, produced a different type of magazine. Exposition of the Bahá'í message replaced the ac-

counts of news, and publication became calendar—rather than Bahá'í—monthly.

Expansion of Membership. By 1900 there had been at least two thousand, and possibly as many as three thousand American Bahá'ís. This number had been sharply cut in the period of disputation following Kheiralla's defection. Frederick Pease, one of Kheiralla's chief lieutenants, estimated that by 1902 there were only between three and four hundred followers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in America and three hundred of Muham-mad-'Ali.[80] Thornton Chase, a leading Chicago Bahá'í, stated that in the wake of the teachings given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's emissaries, many Bahá'ís "fell away from the Cause," finding that the Bahá'í teachings did not accord with their "imaginations and superstitions."[81] Whether these defections were additional to the ones referred to by Pease is unknown. A good number of those who abandoned the Bahá'í community in the first few years of the century, or who chose to follow Muhammad-'Ali rather than 'Abdu'l-Bahá, seem to have drifted back a year or two later. In particular, Chase reported an influx of Behaists following the transfer of allegiance by Muhammad-'Ali's brother, Badi'u'llah, to 'Abdu'l-Bahá early in 1903.[82] These returned Bahá'ís and the active teaching work undertaken by many individual Bahá'ís led to such growth in the community that by 1906 the Bahá'ís were able to report a membership of 1,280 to the United States Census.[83] The rate of growth was lower than that prior to 1900, and it was only after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in 1912 and an increased tempo of teaching activities that the total number of Bahá'ís reached a size comparable to the 1900 peak. By 1916 the Bahá'ís were able to report to the census a membership of 2,884, adding that the figures indicated "simply those distinctly enrolled and not identified with any other religious body," there being "large numbers all over the country who attend the Bahá'í meetings and are closely identified with the movement, but have not discontinued their connection with the churches."[84]

The Bahá'í community of 1900 had been concentrated in Chicago (perhaps one-third of the total membership) and in the New York and Kenosha areas. While Chicago and New York remained dominant, the post-1900 community was far more widely and evenly spread, with a good many localities having between twenty and thirty Bahá'ís, and Boston, Oakland, California, and Washington, D.C., developing substantial communities of seventy or so. Growth seems to have occurred mainly in the newer communities, especially those on the West Coast. By 1906, there were Bahá'ís in some twenty-four local communities in thirteen states, and by 1916 this had risen to fifty-seven communities in twenty-one states.[85] Geographically, the Bahá'ís were spread through much of urban America, particularly the Atlantic and Pacific States and the eastern part of the Midwest. Of the twenty-seven states in which there were no Bahá'ís in 1916, most were largely rural in character: the Plains, Mountain, and Southern states being the areas with the fewest Bahá'í communities.

The overall picture of the composition of the Bahá'í community given for the Kheiralla period would seem to apply in the post-1900 period. Two-thirds of the membership were female, the majority married and seemingly well-to-do; the majority of the most prominent Bahá'ís were in business or the professions; most of the Bahá'ís were white, of either British or German ancestry, although in some communities (notably Washington, D.C.) there were quite a number of black Bahá'ís, and the remnant of the old Kenosha community included many Swedes; the religious background of most of the Bahá'ís seems to have been liberal Protestantism or the cultic milieu.

The 1936 Survey. This picture is given general support by a survey of the just over eighteen hundred "Bahá'í Historical Record Cards" collected by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States and Canada in or about 1936. Of a one-third sample of 601 cases (every third case in an alphabetical listing), 197 individuals were found to have become Bahá'ís by 1919. Data for this group is given in Figures 1 and 2. The ethnic composition (Figure 1) of the sample shows a

Figure 1
Ethnic Composition of a Group of Early American Bahá'ís*

American (black)	12	
American (white)	29	
British (including British-mixtures, but excluding Irish)	75	Total Northwest European = 149
German (including Anglo-German)	46	
Scandinavian	15	
Other Northwest European	13	
Other European	3	
Other	4	
	197	

'Calculated from a sample of 1936 "Bahá'í Historical Record Cards."

preponderance of Northwest Europeans (76%), especially of British (38%) and Germans (23%); and if those identified as America whites (15%) are also included, then 90% of the total may be assumed to have belonged to the white "old-stock" groups of American society which, though represented in all classes, dominated the higher-status groups. Of note is the almost complete absence of the generally working-class Southern or Eastern Europeans, and of the Irish (as opposed to the Scots-Irish who have been included with the British), all of whom had a fairly low status in American society at this time, and all of whom were largely Catholic or Eastern Orthodox. Also of note is the presence of a fair-sized (6%) group of black Americans, the ethnic group which occupied the lowest rank in the American status hierarchy.

The ethnic composition is reflected in Figure 2 which shows the religious background of the 197: thus the preponderance of "assumed Protestants" (70%), especially from the main Anglo-saxon denominations (33%) and from the Lutheran Churches (11%). The presence of almost as many members of the various

Figure 2
Religious Background of a Group of Early American Bahá'ís*

"Christian"	28		
Episcopalian	16	Total "main denominations" = 64	Total asssumed Protestant = 137
Methodist	16		
Congregationalist	10		
Presbyterian	16		
Baptist	6		
Lutheran	21		
Unitarian/Universalist	10		
"Protestant"	11		
Other Protestant	3		
Catholic	7		
Swedenborgian	1	Total "metaphysical" = 6	
Christian Science	3		
New Thought	1		
Theosophy	1		
Mormon	1		
Jewish	2		
Muslim	2		
Bahá'í	27		
None	10		
Insufficient data	5		
	197		

'Calculated from a sample of 1936 "Bahá'í Historical Record Cards."

metaphysical groups (Swedenborgians and others) (3%), as of Catholics (4%), and the greater number than either of Unitarian-Universalists (5%), should also be noted. Among the Protestants the generally more "liberal" denominations predominate, and ultrafundamentalist groups are completely absent. The large group of "Bahá'ís" in the sample (14%) indicates the main weakness of the survey for our present purposes, in

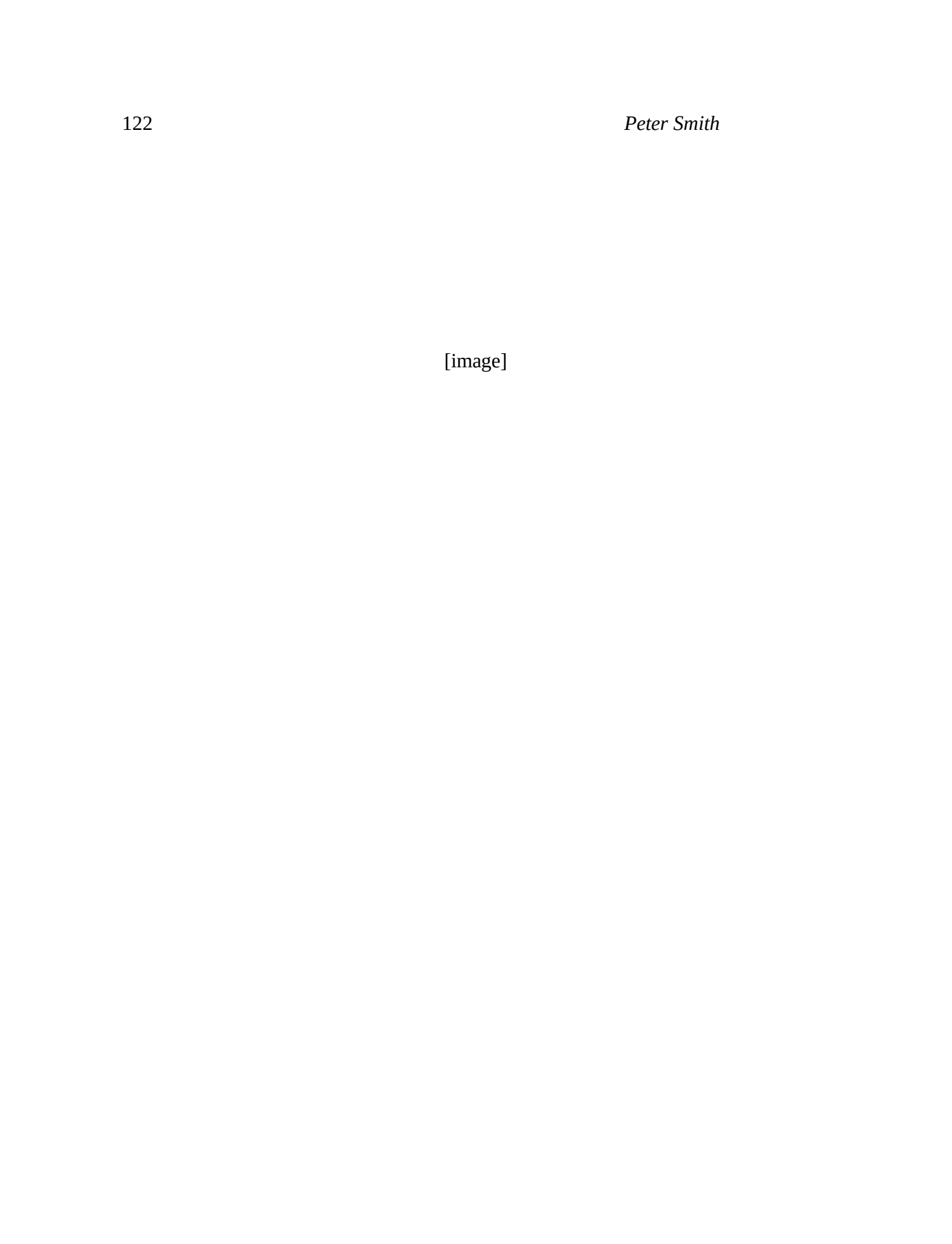
that it naturally represents those members of the pre-1920 community who were both still alive and still Bahá'ís in 1936—the group of "Bahá'ís" being the children of Bahá'ís of the earlier generation.

The sex ratio of this group of 197 conforms to the norm of virtually all statistics for this period, there being 130 women (66%) and 67 men (34%).

Most of this data is supported by such information as can be gleaned from the biographical and other materials which have provided the overall picture of the early Bahá'í community, but there is one major discrepancy, namely the extent of membership drawn from the various metaphysical groups.

The most categorical informant on this matter was Thornton Chase, who, in a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1904, stated that the majority of American Bahá'ís, having abandoned the churches and followed after "devises of modern minds and old and new forms of 'occultism,'" had "at last found a resting place in Bahaism"; or again, in a 1902 letter to Asadu'llah, remarked that nearly all the Bahá'ís were from a Spiritualist, Theosophist, Buddhist, Mental Science (New Thought), Christian Science, or Metaphysical background.[86] It is not yet possible to judge whether these comments accurately reflect the proportion of Bahá'ís who came from a metaphysical background, but it is clear from conversion and biographical accounts that, if not the "majority," then at least a very large number of early American Bahá'ís had previously belonged to, or had associated with such groups.

That these groups were only marginally represented in the 1936 survey is to be attributed to the possibility that membership in some metaphysical groups (especially the amorphous New Thought) may have been combined with membership in the mainstream churches—which latter membership alone has been recorded on the Historical Record Cards; and, more significantly, to the indications that there might have been a substantial exodus of "metaphysical Bahá'ís" in the years prior to 1936, and that anyway in the later period fewer converts were made among these groups. The dearth of information on what kind of people left the Bahá'í Movement, as compared


[image]

with the various sources on those who joined, is particularly frustrating in this context.

Teaching. One of the instructions most often given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to his American followers was to teach "the Cause" and to "diffuse the Divine fragrances." Many individual Bahá’ís responded to this appeal and, in addition to contacting their immediate circle of friends and family, sought opportunities to give their message to sympathetic groups, sometimes undertaking extensive travel in order to do so. The growing range of Bahá’í literature, much of it specifically designed as material for introducing seekers to the teachings, was a major aid in this.

During Kheiralla's time, Bahá’í teaching endeavor had been cautious, secretive, and tightly controlled. In 1898 Thornton Chase had written to a friend about the private nature of the teachings: "Do not reveal them to anyone who is not fitted to receive them and please be very careful in anything you may say at anytime, to be very cautious and *never* to tell any thing at all except *in the order* of the lessons as they were given to you. . . . Keep your good things to yourself selfishly until the time shall be ripe for others also; with rare exceptions, it is not yet."[87] In 1899 and 1900 this extreme secrecy was abandoned and many individuals (including Chase) taught openly. Teaching was much a matter of personal preference and initiative, and approaches varied widely. According to Anise Rideout, it was not until ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's release from prison (i.e., restriction) in 1908 that the American Bahá’ís were allowed to talk openly about their Faith, limiting themselves instead to answering questions about it when asked.[88] If this was a general ruling, it does not seem to have been generally observed: prior to 1907, Nathan Ward FitzGerald, one of the more audacious Bahá’ís, was already proclaiming the second coming of Christ to "large audiences" in Seattle, and many other individuals sought to publicly announce the Bahá’í message—albeit with more restraint than FitzGerald.[89]

In part, the geographic expansion of the Bahá’í community during this period is to be attributed to the great mobility of the

Bahá'ís themselves, a phenomenon which reflected the mobility of the American population as a whole. The movement of Bahá'ís led both to the formation of new groups and to changes in the composition of the larger communities. Also important, however, were the journeys undertaken by some Bahá'ís for the sake of teaching in new localities. In view of the costs involved, this often formed part of business or vacation trips, but in a few cases wealth or sacrificial saving enabled teaching trips to be privately funded. In a very few cases the traveling teacher was subsidized by his fellow believers.

This last measure was controversial.[90] Kheiralla had laid down the dictum that the teacher of spiritual truth could not be remunerated for his teaching: truth was free and payment could lead to corruption of the message.[91] This notion remained a vital principle in the minds of many Bahá'ís, often being associated with anticlericalism. To subsidize even the expenses of the teacher might flout this dictum and foster the growth of a clerical group within the community, yet not to subsidize would limit the teaching work to those with means and result in less being accomplished. It was a dilemma that was to remain unsolved until after 1915.

Most teaching work probably continued to be on an individual level, however. The seeker's readiness for the teachings, his "ripeness," was considered important. Stanwood Cobb's first introduction to the "Persian Revelation" was made when he was judged ready for it. ("I know by your eyes that you are ready for it."[92]) The semiformal meetings held by individuals in their own homes—what later generations of Bahá'ís have come to call firesides—were ideally fitted to this intensely personal method of teaching. At such meetings the seeker would meet a group of Bahá'ís, discuss the teachings, or perhaps read the latest Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and have his (or more often her) personal questions about the new religion answered in an atmosphere of drawing room geniality. In the larger communities several such meetings might be held, enabling a number of districts to be more easily served. In Chicago, for example, there were about a dozen.[93]

These meetings were also important for the Bahá'ís. Often held on a weekly basis, they provided a focal point for activities as well as an opportunity for studying the Bahá'í teachings together. Presumably these meetings also gave expression to the informal leadership which predominated in the community as a whole—in the case of Chicago, the various "firesides" may well have been related to the different cliques described by Chase.[94]

Lack of detailed sources precludes any overall description of the types of organizations contacted by the Bahá'ís in the 1900-1910 period. Chase's letters give the impression of particular concentration on the metaphysical groups (New Thought, Theosophy, Divine Science, and even Kabbalists), but this may not reflect the Bahá'í community as a whole, although if there was a particular concentration on the metaphysical groups, this would have continued the emphasis of the Kheiralla period and would certainly be compatible with the prevalence of converts from such groups among the early Bahá'ís.[95] Several Bahá'ís felt that metaphysical groups were particularly amenable to the Bahá'í teachings, especially when internal tensions made such groups unstable.[96] These groups were also likely to take an independent interest in the Bahá'í teachings, presenting them in a way not always welcome to the Bahá'ís. Thus Chase referred to New Thought lecturer Helen van Anderson as "teaching Bahaism in Seattle," asking, "where did she learn it and what kind is it?"; and again to the vague Bahá'í hints in (Nona?) Brooks' Divine Science lectures in Denver. The Rice-Wrays reported that the "teacher of [the] Order of 15" had been explaining that the only reason why the Báb had not taught karma and reincarnation was that he had thought that the Persians were not' yet ready for such teachings.[97]

One particular organization with which the Bahá'ís came into contact and which deserves special mention was the summer colony of Greenacre at Eliot, Maine. Established by Sarah J. Farmer in 1894, in the aftermath of the World's Parliament of Religions, the yearly Greenacre Conferences were devoted to the tolerant study of religions and modern ideas. They attracted

a wide variety of people: Vedantaists and New Thought people in particular. Lecturers included Ralph Waldo Trine, John Greenleaf Whittier, Paul Carus and Booker T. Washington. Lectures ranged in theme from Eastern religion to sociology, food reform, and art. In 1900, Sarah Farmer became a convert to the "Persian Revelation" of Bahá'u'lláh, and thereafter Bahá'í teachers were included in the conferences, most outstandingly Mirza Abu'1-Fadl and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The increase in Bahá'í influence, especially after 1912, and the inability of Sarah Farmer to control the situation because of deteriorating health, led to a dispute about the purposes of the conferences, which eventually led to a court case and ultimately to the Greenacre properties coming under Bahá'í control. In 1929 "Green Acre," as the Bahá'ís had renamed it (Acre being another name for 'Akka), became a full-fledged Bahá'í Summer School which it has ever since remained. Before the dispute and the conversion of the colony into a Bahá'í institution, Greenacre had supplied yet a further link with the metaphysical milieu.

With the broadening of the basis of appeal, and the increasing contact with liberal Christian groups and various organizations concerned with social issues, Bahá'ís were able to present their teachings to a much wider spectrum of people. On a particularly successful teaching tour of California in 1911, Dr. Fareed and Lua Getsinger were able to "give the Message" to some five thousand people, delivering lectures directly on the "Bahá'í Reformation" or referring to it in the course of lectures on other subjects. The groups thus contacted included the Masons, the Knights Templar, the Oakland Chamber of Commerce, two literary clubs, a Unitarian congregation, a large group of Japanese, the "World's Spiritual Congress," the Church of the Golden Rule, the Auxiliary of the Juvenile Court, the Jewish Women's Council, the Federation of Women's Clubs, faculty members of the University of California and of Stanford University, the crew of the battleship *California,* a Red Cross corps in Mexico, and prisoners in San Quentin. The Theosophist colony at Fort Loma was also possibly contacted."

A very different example of this broadening of contacts was afforded by the Bahá'ís of Montreal who, early in 1912, after

coming into contact with the local socialists, were able to present a talk by Honore Jaxon of Chicago in which he gave the Bahá'í message "from the standpoint of the working class movement," explaining the vital connection between the socialist and organized labor movements and the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.[100] This already established trend of wider circles of contact was greatly extended by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in 1912. A large part of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's time in North America was spent speaking to non-Bahá'í organizations, and the majority of his recorded addresses were delivered to non-Bahá'í audiences. In his interviews with journalists, he reiterated that the purposes of his journey were to "unify the religions of the world," and to promote "the brotherhood of man," the "oneness of . . . humanity," and "the ideal of Universal Peace,"[101] and his talks ranged widely over religious, humanitarian, social, educational, and economic issues. The groups with which he came into contact included:

Peace societies, Christian and Jewish congregations, colleges and universities, welfare and charitable organisations, members of ethical cults, New Thought centers, metaphysical groups, Women's clubs, scientific associations, gatherings of Esperantists, Theosophists, Mormons, and agnostics, institutions for the advancement of the coloured people, representatives of the Syrian, the Armenian, the Greek, the Chinese, and Japanese communities.

And at the center of his message were the "Universal Principles" of Bahá'u'lláh which were to become such a characteristic feature of presentations of Bahá'í belief:

The independent search after truth, unfettered by superstition or tradition; the oneness of the entire human race . . . ; the basic unity of all religions; the condemnation of all forms of prejudice, whether religious, racial, class or national; the harmony which must exist between religion and science; the equality of men and women . . . ; the introduction of compulsory education; the adoption of a universal auxiliary language; the abolition of the extremes of wealth and poverty; the institution of a world tribunal for the adjudication of disputes between nations; the exaltation of work, performed in

the spirit of service, to the rank of worship; the glorification of justice as the ruling principle in human society, and of religion as a bulwark for the protection of all peoples and nations; and the establishment of a permanent and universal peace as the supreme goal of all mankind.[102]

By the principles he advocated, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá established a new and immensely appealing synthesis of Bahá’í belief, indicating the universality of Bahá’í concerns, and giving the Bahá’ís a basic set of ideals which could assume creedal formulation as a simple summary of what the Bahá’í Faith represented. The teachings he gave and the groups he contacted represented a new, wider basis of appeal: social reconstruction was firmly joined to purely religious appeals. By his meetings with the eminent—churchmen, rabbis, diplomats, congressmen, government officers, politicians, educationalists, scientists, and industrialists—he not only brought the Bahá’í community into greater prominence, but also laid the basis for valuable contacts between the Bahá’ís and various groups and individuals. By the great amount of newspaper publicity he attracted—most of it sympathetic—the name of the Faith was widely disseminated, and as a result of meeting him many individuals were converted. By having to make the necessary arrangements for his speaking tour, several Bahá’ís gained valuable experience for their own endeavors; by his example many Bahá’ís learned greater proficiency at teaching; and as a result of his constant encouragement many were inspired to make greater efforts at teaching. In all probability, the marked increase in Bahá’í numbers between 1906 and 1916 can be mostly attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's tour in 1912. Less tangibly, we may suppose that his tour also profoundly effected the ethos of the American Bahá’í community.

The encouragement to teach had long been a major theme in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's letters to his American followers. He emphasized it during his North American tour, and after his departure from America he reiterated it forcibly in his letters and talks. This was the day in which they should proclaim the Cause; they

should consecrate their time to this task; they should not unloose their tongues "save for conveying the Message"; like soldiers they should rush forward and "scatter the forces of ignorance"; they should not let these "golden days slip by without result" ; the responsibility for the "steady progress of the Cause" depended on the teachers of the Faith; they were "the physicians of the sick body of the world of humanity."[103]

The urgency of this message was increased by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's warnings of war. In California, he had described Europe as "a storehouse of explosives ready for ignition," which particularly with the troubles in the Balkans, one spark could set aflame.[104] In Montreal he had stated that a European war was a certainty.[105] If the Bahá’ís were to lay the foundations for world peace they should act quickly. An apocalyptic note was struck by an editorial in the 21 March 1914 issue of *Star of the West:* Since 1914 was "the seventieth year of the Millennium" (i.e., since the Báb's declaration in 1844), and if the seventieth year of the Christian era—during which Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed and the Jews scattered—was a prototype for 1914, then "the culmination of the old order of things" was at hand.[106] By August 1914 Europe was at War. The dire predictions had been fulfilled, the task of working the universal peace which (it was hoped) would follow the war was more urgent than ever. For some Bahá’ís at least the millennium itself seemed near.[107]

Another factor which may well have increased the sense of urgency among the American Bahá’ís was the realization that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá might die in the near future. He had arrived in America at the age of sixty-seven after a lifetime of hardship, and despite ill health had completed a grueling lecture tour, returning to the East in poor health.

It was probably difficult for the American Bahá’ís to think, let alone talk, about the death of their beloved master. Yet at the 1913 National Convention the prospect was raised by Ali-Kuli Khan, who appealed to the Bahá’ís to spare no efforts in the building of the Temple so that it might be completed in the lifetime of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and be dedicated by him. His words inspired other delegates with a similar sense of urgency.[108] In 1914

‘Abdu’l-Bahá exhorted the Bahá’ís: "Friends, the time is coming when I shall be no longer with you. . . . O how I long to see the believers shouldering the responsibilities of the Cause! . . . Will they not answer my call? I am waiting. I am patiently waiting!" And in one of the last letters to reach America before communications with Syria were severed toward the end of 1916, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote that none should be shaken or disturbed if he were to "hasten from this world to another world and soar from this mortal prison to the immortal rose-garden," ending, "Should we enjoy life after this war, we shall correspond with all the believers."[109]

The fretful neutrality of the early months of 1917 was ended with America's entry into the "Armageddon" of World War I on 6 April—Good Friday. In the 5 June issue of *Star of the West* a report of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's words to some returning pilgrims in 1914 was printed: "I have done my part. . . . Now it is your turn. . . . God willing, you will fulfil my eager expectations. . . . The confirmations of the kingdom shall descend upon you, and the Supreme reinforcement shall surround you. Rest ye assured; let your hearts abide in peace. . . . This is the day wherein whomsoever arises to spread the Cause of God, the cohorts of the Supreme Concourse will assist him. Today the magnet of spiritual confirmation is teaching the Cause. . . . Again I say, teach the Cause! Do not tarry!"[110]

As well as exhorting his followers to teach, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advised them how to set about it: "first one must teach by deeds; then speak the word"; they should live in such a spiritual condition that their "very presence in the meetings" might transform their audiences; they must be humble, detached, impervious to criticism and hostility; they must be on fire with the love of God; they must constantly travel, spreading the teachings far and wide; they should teach as if offering a gift to a king, submissively without insistence, and solely for the sake of God; they should teach with moderation and wisdom, adapting the offered gift to the condition of the listener.[111]

Whether or not any Bahá’í teachers actually attained this ideal, there is ample evidence that a good many tried hard to

achieve it. Several conversion accounts refer to the intensity with which the teacher spoke, or to the teacher's radiant appearance and shining eyes: Cobb wrote that "it was the strange cosmic dynamism" with which his teacher's words were charged "that moved my soul."[112] Some teachers obeyed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's instructions to the letter. One lady, for example, refused to stay in any one place for more than nineteen days at a time, because ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said that teachers should travel constantly![113] Two particularly characteristic aspects of Bahá’í teaching method were the attempts to avoid argument and to adapt the message to the seeker's "condition," which resulted in a persuasive gradualism in the way the Bahá’í message was often conveyed and which easily fitted into the conceptualization of the Bahá’í Movement as "the essence of all the highest ideals of this century."[114] These aspects, evident in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's own teaching methods, were also articulated by his American followers. Thus May Maxwell wrote in 1915: "Uproot narrow superstitions by suggesting broader, deeper ideas. Never oppose people's ideas and statements, but give them a little nobler way of seeing life."[115] Mason Remey stated that "people are not urged or enticed, but rather, through love, are attracted to the cause," and that "in presenting this cause to a soul, the teacher's first step is to confirm the seeker in the truth of his own religion, and upon that, as a foundation, place this latter-day teaching."[116]

It is possible that the ethos of Bahá’í teaching underwent some change in the years following 1912. In the early years of the century the emphasis had been upon the Bahá’í Revelation as the fulfilment of prophetic hope, this was later outweighed by the emphasis on the Bahá’í Movement as the renewal of religion, the embodiment of the universal principles of the age. A detailed study of conversion accounts is needed before any firm conclusions can be reached, but an impressionistic comparison of the pre- and post-1912 periods seems to suggest that there was some change in the approach to potential converts. Cobb's introduction to the Bahá’í Faith in 1906: "Our Lord has come!" seems not untypical of the earlier accounts.[117] Later descriptions

generally give greater importance to the Bahá’í teachings as a perceived solution to the world's problems and as a liberal embodiment of religion.

If, as Vail suggested, the Bahá’í Movement was "not so much an organization as a spiritual attitude," and if converts were not required to abandon their previous religion, then this had obvious advantages for proselytizing. Stanwood Cobb wrote: "The great success of Bahá’í missionary work has been due to the fact that no one is asked to abandon his own religion in order to become a Bahá’í," adding, "The Bahá’í missionary can do what no other missionary can. He goes among various races and religions and wins adherents to his cause without attack, without invidious comparison, without offense to the sensibilities and loyalties of other religionists."[118]

This is only part of the picture, however. The Bahá’í Movement was regarded by its most committed followers as more than just a spiritual attitude. It might be the spirit of the age, but it ultimately revolved around an individual who claimed to be the Manifestation of God for the present era. Possibly it was not obvious to those at the fringes of movement, but at its core was the belief that the Word of God had been made manifest in the flesh. Initial attraction to the Bahá’í principles might ultimately lead to commitment to the central core of Bahá’í belief.

Apart from continuing the approach to liberal and humanitarian groups which had been so strongly established by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the American Bahá’ís became increasingly outgoing in their teaching endeavors following ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit. Individual initiative remained basic but was supplemented by organized teaching activity sponsored by the Bahá’ís as a group. What had earlier been a highly controversial measure became respectable. Such a radical departure from previously accepted norms was not instantly accomplished. By 1915 the scheme to fund part-time itinerant teachers centrally had been approved by the Convention of the Bahai Temple Unity, but lack of funds prevented its Executive Board from doing more than making a token start to the plan. Only with the arrival of the first five of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's general letters on teaching (later published as the

Tablets of the Divine Plan) was a real start made. Written in March and April 1916, and printed in the 8 September 1916 issue of *Star of the West,* these five letters were separately addressed to the Bahá'ís of the Northeastern, Southern, Central, and Western States, and of Canada. In them 'Abdu'l-Bahá called upon the Bahá'ís to teach and, particularly, to travel in those areas and states where there were few or no Bahá'ís so as to systematically establish new centers of the Faith. He also delineated some of the qualities which the teachers should have, and assured them all of divine assistance. In his letter to the Western states he reminded the Bahá'ís that when in America he had plainly predicted the coming war, as well as the fulfillment of all the prophecies of the Book of Revelation and of the Book of Daniel. Therefore, they should realize that this was the time for teaching. In his letter to the small group of Canadian Bahá'ís he directed their attention not only to Canada but also to Greenland, and requested that they teach the Eskimos.

The scope of these letters clearly inspired many American Bahá'ís. In the 4 November 1916 issue of *Star of the West,* the editors called for the establishment of five regional teaching funds to supply the expenses of such traveling teachers as might be appointed. Succeeding issues of *Star of the West* gave details of the teaching endeavors of the American Bahá'ís in response to these letters: "news from 'soldiers' at the front." By the end of 1916, more than seven Bahá'ís had already undertaken teaching in the Prairie and Mountain states; and another seven in the Central West; two Bahá'ís were on their way to the Canadian Northeast; new centers had been established in New England; and in six months the Boston community had trebled in numbers. In the South, where the Faith had spread least, Louis Gregory, the most prominent black Bahá'í, and Samuel Tait, a converted clergyman, between them spoke to about thirty thousand people, including several church congregations.[119]

The issue of teaching formed an important part of the deliberations of the 1917 convention: reports of teaching activities, the effort to place Bahá'í books in lending libraries, the use of *Star of the West* as a teaching medium, and the production of a

cheap introductory booklet for mass distribution were all discussed. The convention itself resolved that its Executive Board should undertake some degree of coordination of teaching work, cooperating with individuals in the five regions who were expected to initiate most of the work.[120] In the face of opposition to any kind of organization, and with other pressing issues to consider, such as the war and matters of administration, this was an important initial step in the Temple Unity's involvement in the teaching work. The further suggestion to appoint committees in each of the five regions was not accepted.

The concern with teaching was given yet more prominence at the November 1917 centennial celebration of Bahá'u'lláh's birth. Hosted by the Chicago House of Spirituality, the celebration included a whole afternoon designated as the first "Convention of Teaching," which leading Chicago Bahá'ís clearly hoped would lead to a teaching organization in the same way that the initial concern with building the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar at Chicago had resulted in the establishment of the Bahai Temple Unity.[121] A plan for teaching throughout the Central States was presented, the qualities of the teacher were discussed, and the necessity of the teacher being firm in the Covenant and of only teaching pure doctrine were asserted in no uncertain terms.

Teaching work continued through the war, receiving a tremendous boost after the "terrible experience" of separation had been ended, toward the end of 1918, with the reestablishment of communications with 'Abdu'l-Bahá.[122] 'Abdu'l-Bahá's first general letter to the American Bahá'ís instructed them to teach "so that all the inhabitants [of America] may become ready for the establishment of universal peace."[123] This injunction was reinforced at the 1919 Convention, at which all fourteen of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's general letters on teaching, the "Tablets of the Divine Plan," were ceremonially unveiled and plans for a systematic campaign of teaching made.[124] Further reinforcement was provided by the arrival, later in the year, of the Persian Bahá'í teacher and scholar, Mirza Asadu'llah Fadil-i Mazan-darani who undertook an extensive teaching tour of North America in the following year. In 1920 a National Teaching Committee with five regional committees was established, thus

placing on a firm foundation the organized and coordinated teaching endeavor which has ever since formed a major part of American Bahá'í activity. By 1917 teaching had already ceased to be a purely individual concern, but after 1919, with the surge in enthusiasm and the development of a firm organizational base with central funding, it had clearly become a community concern as well. This transformation is indicative of a general change in the ethos of the Bahá'í community itself.

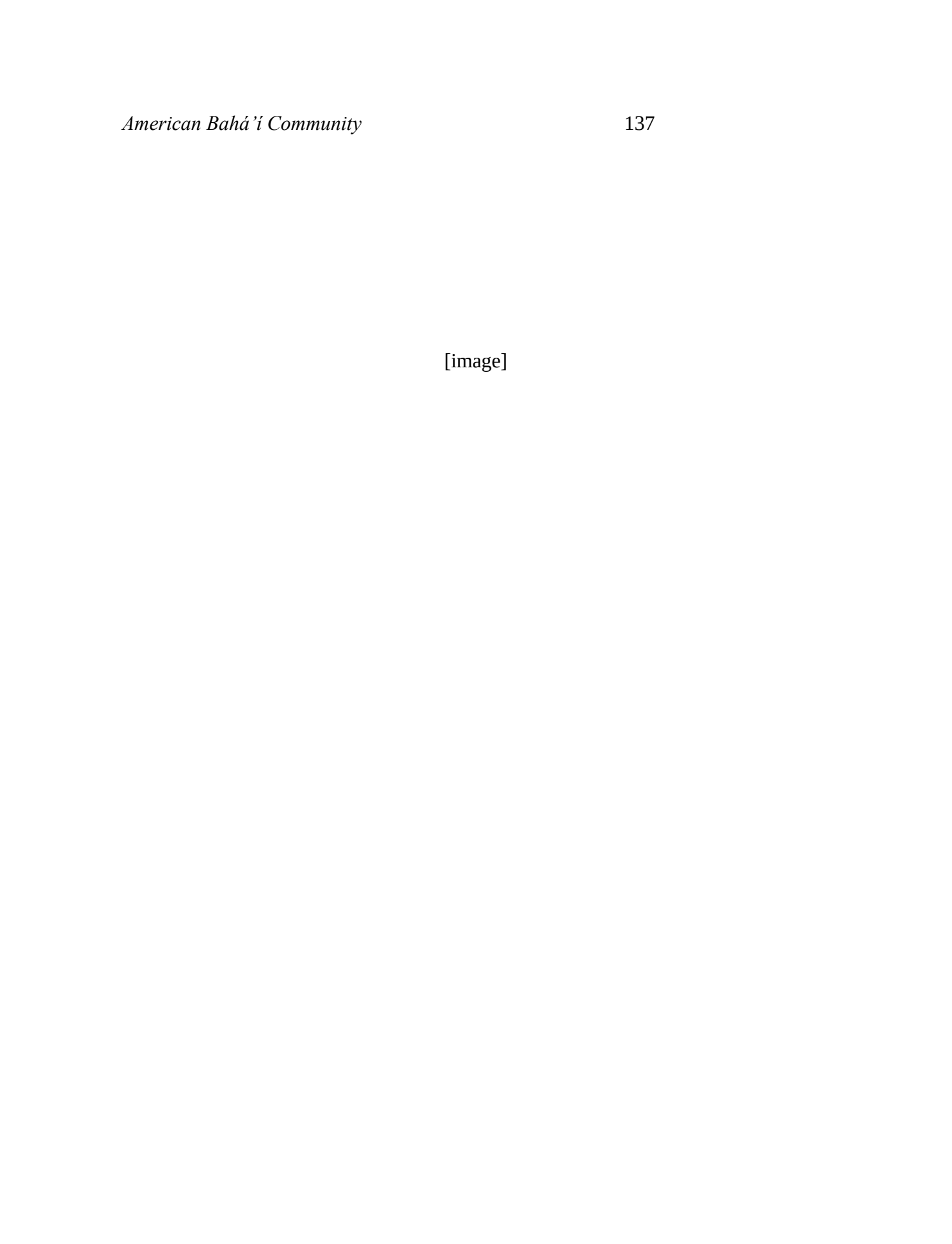
The teaching activities of the American Bahá'ís were not confined to the United States. In the wake of the first pilgrimage of 1898-1899, expatriate American converts established Bahá'í communities in London and Paris. The Paris group in particular formed a new base from which Bahá'í groups were established in Canada and the Hawaiian Islands (both in 1902). Later a flourishing Bahá'í community was established in Germany by two returning German-Americans (1905), and other American Bahá'ís sought to establish their religion in Italy (c. 1900), Mexico (1912) and Japan (1914). Additionally, American Bahá'í travelers were able to visit their oriental coreligionists, providing support for the Bahá'ís of Iran in particular with limited educational and medical programs.

Non-Bahá'í Comment and Criticism. The growth of the Bahá'í community in North America could not help but stimulate a response by non-Bahá'í observers. The initial newspaper response seems to have concentrated on the exotic appearance of the new religion and the startling claims made for its founders. The *New York Herald* for 12 August 1900 headlined its account of the newly discovered Bahá'í community: THESE BELIEVE THAT CHRIST HAS RETURNED TO EARTH: STRANGE FAITH HAS ATTRACTED MANY FOLLOWERS, A LARGE NUMBER OF WHOM ARE IN NEW YORK CITY. The *New York Times* for 18 December 1904 printed an account of "A Sunday morning gathering of New York believers in this new oriental cult."[125] The majority of the newspaper accounts of Bahá'ís occurred at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit and concentrated on his mission. In general their reaction was favorable: the patriarchal figure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá impressed the reporters who interviewed him;

they sympathized with his message of peace and universal brotherhood and complimented the principles he advocated to achieve it. Critical press comment on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the *Churchman* seems to have been untypical of the general response and centered on the decision by some ministers to allow ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to preach in their churches.[126]

Apart from the furor in the Kenosha newspapers at the time of Vatralsky's attack, most hostile coverage of the Bahá’í Faith and the American Bahá’í community appeared in periodicals, particularly the *Missionary Review of the World.* These articles were generally authored by former or serving Christian missionaries in the Middle East. In addition to attacking the morality and spirituality of the Bahá’í Faith and its leaders, these accounts contain a critique of Bahá’í beliefs from a Christian standpoint. Other periodical accounts included articles by scholars, sympathetic non-Bahá’ís, and clergymen.[127] In all cases, a chronological pattern can be discerned, with the major concentration of articles in the 1900-1904 and 1911-1915 periods, corresponding to the first discovery of the American Bahá’í community by outside observers and to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit and its aftermath, respectively.

Organization and Leadership. An element in both the stabilization and expansion of the Bahá’í community in America was the growth of local and national leadership and organization. This was by no means smooth or uncontroversial. In the aftermath of Kheiralla's defection there seems to have been something of a vacuum in leadership. There existed no generally acceptable locus of authority within the American community. In part, this was a feature of the general atmosphere of confusion and suspicion which followed the dispute, but more generally, it would seem that many American Bahá’ís had a distrust for any sort of organization or leadership beyond the recognition of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's overall authority. Kheiralla, as their original teacher, had occupied a special position, but after he had been discredited, they were wary of accepting any individual or group among their American coreligionists as a secondary



authority. The Persian Bahá'í teachers, as outsiders to the community and as representatives of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, also occupied a special position. Thornton Chase noted that among the "free and equal" individuals of the Chicago community, only the Persians were generally acceptable as teachers.[128] Even their authority could be questioned, however, and both of the long-term Persian teachers were rebuffed by some Bahá'ís.[129]

Under Kheiralla, two types of formal authority had developed: individual teachers or spiritual "guides," and "Boards of Counsel." Whether this implied a separation of powers between teaching and administration is unknown. Additionally, the larger communities each seem to have had some sort of overall leader. While the Behaists retained both types of formal leadership, the Bahá'ís seem to have dispensed with any formal recognition of individual teachers as authorities and to have relied solely on the institutional Boards.[130] The situation varied somewhat between the communities. In Chicago, where support for Kheiralla was persistent, the recently formed Board was replaced by a "House of Justice," formed under Asadu'llah's guidance in 1901 and soon renamed "the House of Spirituality."[131] At New York, where there was little support for Kheiralla (the leading teacher, Howard MacNutt, who had assisted Kheiralla with his book *Beha 'U'llah*, having supported 'Abdu'l-Bahá), the Board of Counsel continued as the administrative body until it was replaced at a much later date by the Spiritual Assembly. The situation at the now much depleted community of Kenosha is unclear, but possibly they also had some administrative body.[132]

Both the Chicago and New York bodies initially consisted of ten men (soon reduced to nine) elected (?) from among the members of their communities. The major part of the American Bahá'í community, however, was female, and it was the women who provided much of its dynamic. This found formal recognition at Chicago where a "Women's Assembly of Teaching" was formed at about the same time as the House of Justice. At some later date New York followed suit, and by 1910 a "Women's Board" had been established to serve in conjunction with the

"Men's Board."[133] According to Thornton Chase, relations between the Chicago House of Spirituality and "the ladies" were not always amicable. The more conservative members of the House of Spirituality insisted on the primacy of their authority, and looked askance at what they regarded as attempts to take over leadership in what was then proclaimed as "the day of women," while the women seem to have objected to the caution and lack of activity of the House of Spirituality. Although cooperation also occurred, this underlying tension remained, and contributed to the general weakness of the House of Spirituality's authority among the "free and equal" Bahá'ís of Chicago.[134]

The weakness of these institutional authorities was chiefly the result of the fierce individualism of many American Bahá'ís at this time. Marian Haney, a Bahá'í since 1900, was later to write that "aside from those committees [such as the Chicago House of Spirituality and the New York Board of Counsel], the affairs of the Cause were administered by individuals who seemed naturally to have the necessary ability to function," adding that "even the committees did not preclude the friends from serving and teaching in accordance with their own guidance," for "those were the days when the 'rugged individualism' of the Americans was greatly in evidence in the promulgation of the Cause."[135] This individualism found expression in nearly every aspect of the community's activities and contributed largely to its general ethos—an issue which will be discussed below. Not that all Bahá'ís were opposed to formal authority and organization, but for most of the first decade of the nineteenth century at least, formal leadership was conspicuous by its general absence or weakness.

In addition to the formal leadership of the members of the Chicago and New York institutions, there were various informal leaders who derived their authority from their reputation and activity as teachers—or their contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá by means of pilgrimage or the receipt of Tablets—or, most controversially, their claimed possession of special gifts, such as spiritual or psychic powers, special knowledge based on "visions

and voices," inspired interpretation, or telepathic or spiritual communication with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Often this reputed or claimed informal authority was fairly innocuous, leading perhaps to occasional personal jealousy, but otherwise creating no inharmony or division. Only in the cases where exclusivist claims (such as being "the only true and correct teacher in the city") were seriously maintained was there more lasting friction and dispute.[136] One effect of this prevalence of informal leadership was a certain amount of cliquishness in the larger centers such as Chicago. According to Thornton Chase, as many as five distinct cliques existed in that city at one time, some centering on personalities, but others seeming to reflect differences in attitude to the Faith, such as the "spiritual perfectionists" and "intellectuals" who constituted two of the groups.[137] Personality clashes and conflicting claims to possess correctness in teaching (which might reflect quite profound differences in interpretation of the nature of the Faith) would seem to have accounted for many of the disputes that occurred.

From 1909 onward, a limited national organization and other organizational forms gradually emerged, seemingly with the support of a majority, or at least a substantial number, of the American Bahá’ís. The antipathy many Bahá’ís felt toward formal authority hardened into a determined opposition to "organization." The existence, or more commonly the extent, of organization became a basic underlying tension in subsequent American Bahá’í history until at least the 1930s. This tension, which only intermittently flared into an open debate or dispute, incorporated divergent attitudes not only toward unfettered individual authority, but also regarding the nature of the Bahá’í Faith itself. Was it to be an "entirely spiritual" movement, or one of "practical spirituality"? Was it an inclusive spiritual brotherhood, eschewing dogma? Or was it a separate religion with its own definite laws and beliefs, albeit dominated by a liberal ethos?

While some individuals can be clearly identified as "organizers" or "anti-organizers" in the debate, many Bahá’ís tried to maintain an intermediate position. One way to reconcile the two divergent positions was to separate the philosophical ele-

ment of "pure spirituality" from mundane practicalities. Thus there were the Bahá'ís who explained to E. A. Dime "that the impossibility of organizing the Bahai Cause does not mean that the people cannot organize and co-operate for the accomplishment of the work of the Cause"—and the delegate at the 1917 Temple Unity Convention who, in defense of the introduction of new administrative machinery to support the teaching work, argued that: "We are not organizing the teachings. We are organizing a little group to assist the teaching. . . . You cannot organize this teaching; the force of the love of God will spread through this country in spite of, and quite beyond our organization"; or his fellow delegate who spoke of what was probably the fundamental fear that lay behind much of the opposition to organization when he referred to the importance of "both organization and freedom," the greatest need being for freedom and spontaneity "lest anyone check the Holy Spirit when it is going into action."[138] The movement toward organization enjoyed a momentum of its own, however, and from 1917 onward, centrally coordinated activity increasingly became part of the American Bahá'í community, enjoying further acceleration after the transition to Shoghi Effendi's leadership in 1921-22.

The actual growth of administrative bodies which began in 1909 was both local and national. Whether these developments were coordinated is at present unknown. In 1909 the Bahá'ís of greater Los Angeles took steps to effect an informal organization, the "Bahá'í Assembly" which then elected a five-member Executive Board and a secretary. In 1910 the Boston Bahá'ís formed their first Board of Counsel. In the same year, the Honolulu Bahá'ís found that the pressure of work forced them to commence a regular "business meeting," and the Chicago Women's Assembly of Teaching adopted a nine-member elected Executive Board with its own printed by-laws, which were in turn adopted by the Honolulu Bahá'ís in 1911. These were the exceptions, however. Most local communities seem to have remained fairly unorganized until the early 1920s, although some communities did have voluntary working committees. Cleveland had already elected a "board of Nine" in 1915 and a local Teaching Committee in 1918, but only formed its "House of

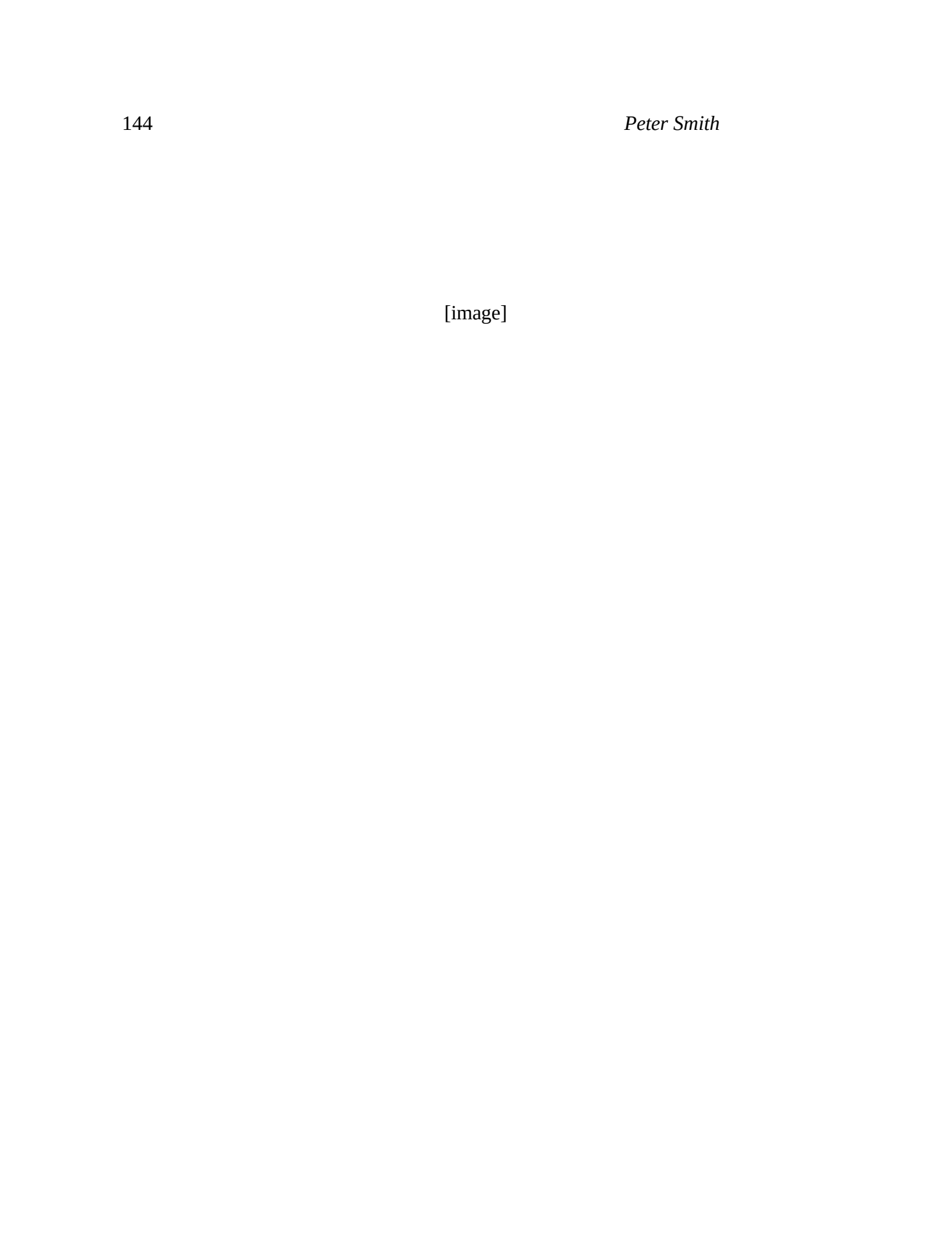
Spirituality" in 1920; the Washington, D.C. "Spiritual Assembly" was likewise formed in 1920; the Seattle "Counsel Board" and the Detroit "House of Consultation" were formed in 1921; and the Philadelphia "Spiritual Assembly" in 1924.[139]

These formal institutions, varying in name, size, composition, and means of formation, were actually organizing committees charged with coordinating local Bahá'í activities. Quite possibly they found more ready acceptance among the majority of their local constituents than the Chicago and the New York bodies had found among theirs. Much of the new growth in membership occurred in the smaller communities: the resulting groups were more likely to share a common understanding as to the nature of their religion, and to escape the sort of long-established antagonisms that crippled the Chicago community. Among these smaller groups, action which was unpopular to any large section of their membership was less likely to be taken; consensus rather than division was more likely to dominate, and the various working committees that were formed made far more limited claims to authority than the venerable institutions of Chicago and New York. Not that disagreements about principles did not occur, the newly appointed secretary of the "Bahai Assembly of Los Angeles" reported that when they initiated their very limited organization, thirty believers had signed their belief in writing, but: "There are many more who are in fact believers in the Revelation of BAHA'O'LLAH but who do not wish yet to connect themselves with any organization, no matter how informal it may be."[140]

Gradually, presumably under 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance, these institutions became more standardized with the adoption of a nine-member body elected annually, and open in membership to Bahá'ís of either sex, as the norm. The older Assemblies also adopted this form, Chicago by at least 1917, and New York by at least 1922.[141] Further standardization, and the extension of the institution of the "Local Spiritual Assembly" to all Bahá'í communities in which there were more than nine adult believers, only occurred under the leadership of Shoghi Effendi, who outlined the details of their duties and prerogatives.

It was the growth of the Bahai Temple Unity from 1909 onward which came to provide a national system of organization for the American Bahá'ís. But this was not the only national development of the time. The establishment of *Bahai News (Star of the West)* in 1910 provided the American Bahá'ís with their first regular national periodical, which proved invaluable not only as a teaching medium and as a means of educating the Bahá'ís in their religion, but also as a means for increasing their consciousness of identity in one national Bahá'í community rather than merely being members of their local groups. The year 1910 also saw the foundation of the Persian-American Educational Society/Orient-Occident Unity, which, in addition to its activities in Persian Bahá'í education, provided the necessary coordination for activities such as the preparatory arrangements for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit. The Orient-Occident Unity seems to have been well organized, with both a Central Executive Board based in Washington, D.C., as well as a National Executive Board, each with a membership of nine. An International Executive Board was also envisaged. Also by 1910 a women's "Unity Band" had been established to promote correspondence between American Bahá'í women and the "Women's Assemblies of the Orient." Finally, in this group of developments, a national Publishing Commission and Society were appointed in 1911 under the aegis of the Bahai Temple Unity.[142]

The Bahai Temple Unity. Important as these various local and national developments were, the development which was eventually to have the most impact was the growth of the Bahai Temple Unity. Originally centering around the plan to construct a *Mashriqu'l-Adhkar* (lit., "dawning-place of the remembrance of God"), a Bahá'í House of Worship or Temple, at Wilmette, Illinois, this venture gave rise to a national organization and leadership which increasingly concerned itself with all the various activities and plans of the American Bahá'ís, laying a foundation for the transition to the modern-day National Spiritual Assembly between 1922 and 1925. Ironically, the project to build the House of Worship itself proceeded far more slowly


[image]

than did the growth in importance of the Bahai Temple Unity, the agency entrusted with its construction. The final Temple design was not chosen until 1920, the superstructure was only completed in 1931, and dedication to public worship had to wait until 1953.

Construction work on the first Bahá'í House of Worship in Ashkhabad (Ishqabad), Russian Transcaspia, began in November 1902. News of this event prompted the Chicago House of Spirituality to petition ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in March 1903 for permission to build a similar edifice in America. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied in June, warmly approving the idea and also writing to Mrs. Corinne True, then President of the Chicago Women's Assembly of Teaching, encouraging their participation in the project. Several years of inactivity followed, eventually broken by the decision of the Women's Assembly of Teaching in 1906 to distribute a petition throughout the country, calling for construction work to begin. This petition, with almost a thousand signatures on it, was taken to 'Akka by Corinne True on her 1907 pilgrimage.[143]

Later in 1907, after preliminary searching for sites by the Chicago Bahá’ís, nine delegates representing various assemblies gathered in Chicago on Thanksgiving Day (26 November) and chose the present location of the House of Worship in the village of Wilmette, a north shore suburb of Chicago.

Although the House of Spirituality expressed its readiness to initiate the project in a general letter to the American Bahá’ís on 19 December 1907, and purchased two of the fourteen lots of the site on 9 April 1908, the main enthusiasm seems to have come from Mrs. True. She was appointed corresponding secretary for Temple activities by the House of Spirituality and acted as recipient for the contributions which began to come in from various parts of the country.[144] Apparently given only halfhearted support by the House of Spirituality, Mrs. True wrote to A.bdu'1-Baha expressing her concern about the Chicago community's capacity to administer the project. Her suggested solution, endorsed by A.bdu'1-Baha, was the establishment of a delegate meeting, representing the various assemblies and responsible for the construction. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's endorsement of

the plan, written on 19 June 1908, after advising her to consult with the House of Spirituality, significantly added that "in this new meeting, especially for the establishment of the Temple, ladies are also to be members."[145]

In response to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's instructions, the House of Spirituality called for a meeting of delegates in Chicago on 22-23 March 1909. This was attended by thirty-nine delegates representing thirty-five cities.[146] In a special Tablet to the delegates, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in addition to assuring them of divine support and stating that the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar should be open to all religious groups without discrimination and should eventually have numerous accessories—a hospital, a school for orphans, and the like, commented: "Now is the commencement of organization, hence every affair concerning the Kingdom of God is of paramount importance" and that those who failed to grasp its importance did not know "that the founding of this Mashrek-el-Azkar is to be in the inception of the organization of the Kingdom."[147]

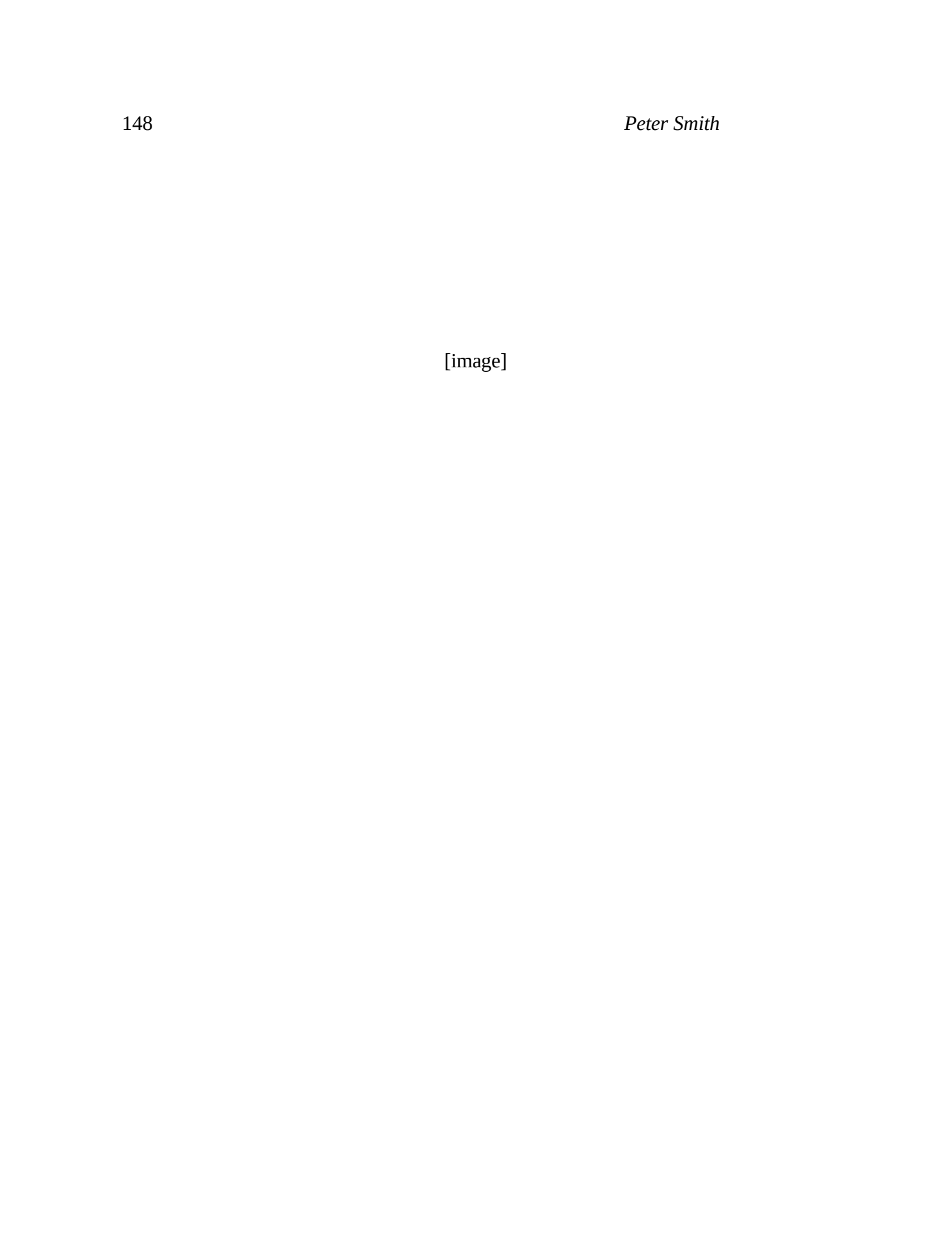
The convention then proceeded to business: elected officers, ratified the choice of the Temple site and resolved to purchase it, established a permanent national organization—the "Bahai Temple Unity"—and adopted a constitution. The constitution of the Temple Unity, which remained largely unaltered for the whole period of its existence, vested the Unity's powers in the constituent Bahá’í assemblies, exercised through their annually elected representatives, and delegated the management of its affairs to an Executive Board of nine members, annually selected by the delegates by open ballot or written assent. This arrangement whereby the Executive Board, in effect a small running committee, implemented the decisions of the annual convention to which it remained responsible, contrasts very markedly with the strongly centralized division of powers under the later National Spiritual Assembly.

The years between this first Temple Unity Convention and the transition to the present National Spiritual Assembly in 1922-25 were a period of administrative development of community activities. The yearly conventions, held during the period of the Bahá’í festival of Ridvan (21 April to 2 May), met mostly in Chicago, but also in New York (1913, 1919, 1920), San Fran-

cisco (1915) and Boston (1917), combining a two- or three-day convention with an opening celebration and general congress. What had begun as an essentially administrative meeting rapidly developed into the yearly occasion par excellence for many American Bahá'ís in addition to those who formally attended as delegates. Short impressionistic talks and reports of activities alternated with musical recitals and hymn singing. In later years especially, lengthy expositions on various aspects of the Bahá'í teachings were included in the congress program—as much for the benefit of the interested inquirers who came to the public sessions as for the Bahá'ís. Above all, an effusive spirit of camaraderie seems to have developed, aiding the growth of the consciousness of being part of one national community rather than merely members of local groups. Not that local identities ceased to be important: one delegate at the 1913 convention complained that there were still those who had failed to grasp the fact that the Chicago Temple was a national project and were thinking that it would be better to build Mashriqu'l-Adhkars in their own cities.[148] While it is doubtful that all would have agreed with Joseph Hannen's characterization of the 1910 convention as an experience second in intensity only to being "in the presence" of A.bdu'1-Baha,[149] it does seem that for those involved in the convention, especially for those who attended regularly, the experience was one of great importance and had a profound effect on their understanding of the development of the American Bahá'í community.

The actual project to build the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar progressed slowly as the legal and financial problems connected with land acquisition were met. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit in 1912, during which he attended the convention and laid the foundation stone for the building, encouraged a greater effort. In 1913 a plan for organized fund raising throughout the country was adopted; and in 1914 land payments were finally completed. The greater task of accumulating funds for the building itself took much longer to complete, and the final choice of design was not made until 1920, construction work beginning shortly thereafter.

The existence of a regular national meeting and of a permanent organization led, perhaps inevitably, to a concern with wider issues than simply the building of the Temple. Thus,

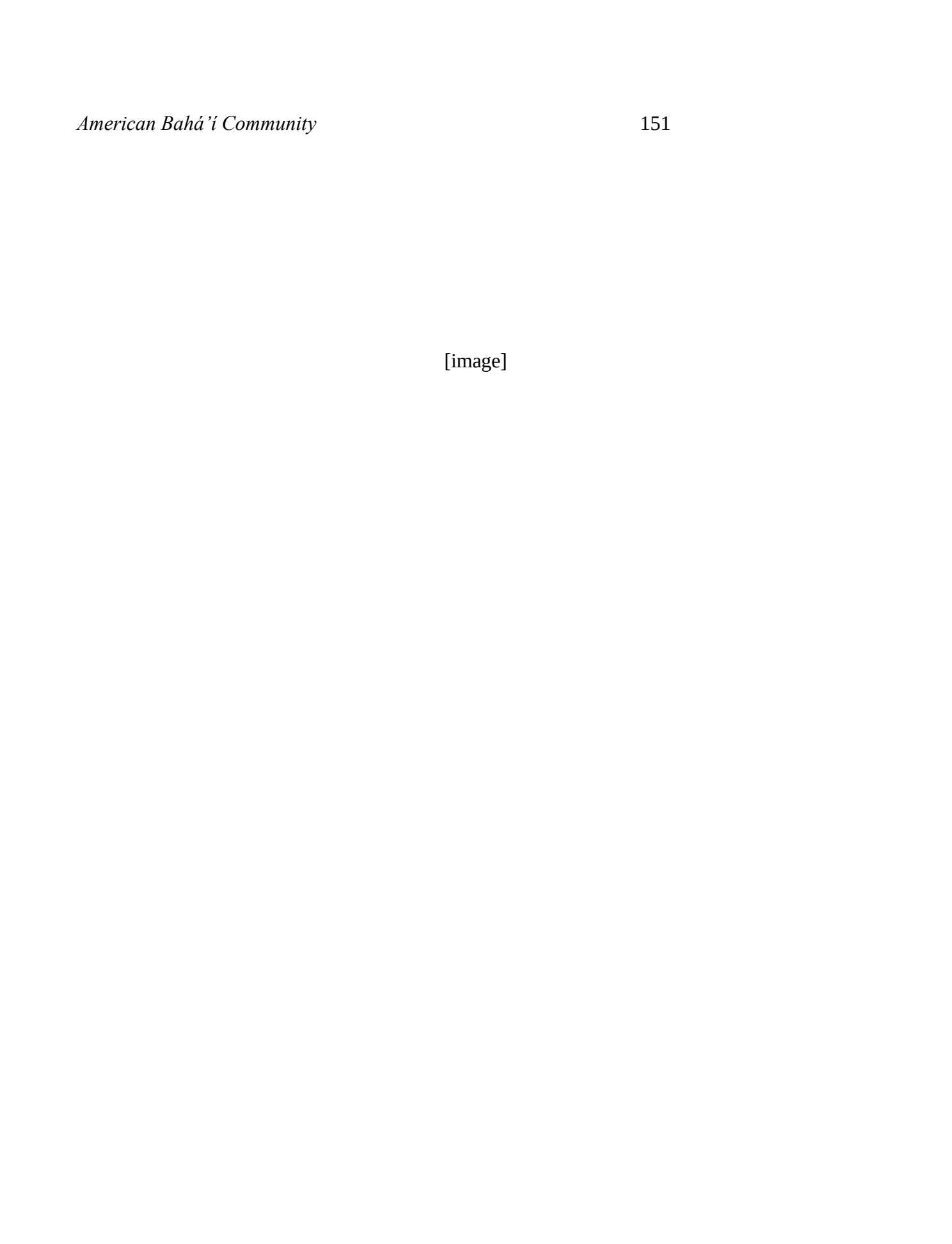

[image]

besides reports of land acquisition and fund raising for the Temple, the convention proceedings came to include reports of other Bahá'í activities, such as the Orient-Occident Unity and local teaching endeavors. The Temple Unity itself soon extended its activities to include publishing and teaching. The old Chicago Bahá'í Publishing Society (est. 1902) came under review at the 1911 convention and was revamped as a national concern, nationally funded and administered by an autonomous Publishing Society of nine members established by the Temple Unity.[150] Further to this, the Executive Board in 1915 decided on the formation of a Publicity Committee to answer various newspaper and magazine attacks which had appeared, and proposed that selected peripatetic Bahá'í teachers should be nationally funded.[151] This was followed in 1917 by the discussion of detailed teaching plans, the decision that the Executive Board should undertake a certain amount of national coordination for the teaching work, and the appointment of committees both to coordinate the activities of the Temple Unity with those of the Publishing Society and to prepare a compilation of Bahá'í writings on child education so as to facilitate the expansion of Bahá'í Sunday schools.[152] The existence of a regular and permanent organization also gave the delegates a sense of corporate identity which they expressed in greetings sent to what they saw as fraternal organizations, such as: the First Universal Races Congress in London in 1911 (addressed in the name of the "United Bahai Assemblies of America"), the Theosophical Society in 1912 ("as one of the joint bodies with them in the great work"), and the Esperantists in 1916 and 1917. In 1914, a cable was sent to President Woodrow Wilson, and in 1916 a delegate appointed to the conference of the League to Enforce Peace.

During the years 1909-1917 the Bahai Temple Unity changed from an administrative auxiliary concerned solely with the construction of the Temple to a body whose members felt a general responsibility for the overall progress of the Faith in North America. The increasing importance of the Temple Unity was marked by some shifting of powers in 1917. The adoption of bylaws at the 1917 convention[153] (possibly motivated by the Chicago Reading Room affair) effectively strengthened the Unity's

powers over the constituent assemblies.[144] The latter were all required to reapply for membership in the Unity within ninety days, failure to do so resulting in the lapse of their membership. The obligations which the assemblies held to the Unity were delineated; the powers to accept or reject applications for membership were vested in the Unity itself—the Executive Board having provisional, and the delegate meeting the ultimate, authority; and unlike the earlier arrangement for constitutional amendments, the power to make amendments to the by-laws was vested solely in the convention and not in the assemblies.

The Leadership Group. In the immediate aftermath of the dispute with Kheiralla there seem to have been distinct leaders of the various local groups: Dr. Chester Ira Thatcher and Dr. Rufus H. Bartlett in Chicago, Howard MacNutt in New York, and Byron S. Lane in Kenosha. But the years that followed were characterized by the weak collective leadership of the Chicago and New York institutions, aided or tacitly opposed by various prominent individuals. A provisional listing of prominent Bahá'ís in the 1900-1910 period can be offerred.[154] In Chicago: leading members of the House of Spirituality such as Thornton Chase, R. H. Bartlett, Charles Greenleaf, Arthur Agnew, George Lesch, Charles Ioas, and B. S. Lane; leading members of the Women's Assembly of Teaching such as Mesdames Nash, Francis Roe, Corinne True, Cecilia Harrison, Ida Brush, Fannie Lesch, and toward the end of the period Louise Waite. Other prominent Bahá'ís in Chicago included Mrs. Sara Herron and Dr. (William F.?) Nutt, both Behaist sympathizers and presumably eventually excluded from the community; (Harry?) Thompson, a well-known Bahá'í teacher who eventually became an advocate of man's sinlessness and divinity (and thereafter faded from the scene); Paul K. Dealy; and Ameen Fareed. In New York, Howard MacNutt, Arthur P. Dodge, Charles E. Sprague, Anton Haddad, Hooper Harris, and William E. Hoar seem to have been the original "leading lights"; Mountfort Mills and Percy Woodcock later joined them. Outside these two centers, few of the local communities seem to have had identifiable leaders. Helen S. Goodall of Oakland,



California, perhaps provided an exception, as to a limited extent did Joseph H. Hannen and (intermittently) Charles Mason Remey in Washington, D.C. Nationally prominent individuals, able to devote time to extensive traveling, visiting, and teaching, included Chase, True, MacNutt, Mills, Woodcock, Remey, Lua and Edward Getsinger, Isabella Brittingham, and Nathan Ward FitzGerald.

If this list is assumed to be fairly complete, a few general comments could be made. Prior to 1910 most of the prominent Bahá'ís lived in the large communities of Chicago and New York; approximately two-thirds of their number were men (in contrast to the one-third of the total membership); all of the prominent women were married; and generally, the greatest prominence would seem to have been gained by teaching activity. Although I only have detailed information on less than half of these individuals, the majority of the men seem to have worked in business or medicine. A good many seem to have been in their fifties, although there were several younger men. Remey, thirty-six years old in 1910, was probably the youngest.

The establishment of the Bahai Temple Unity created the basis for a national leadership. At the same time, other administrative developments produced others bases for prominence besides the teaching work. At a local level, administrative developments increased the number of communities with some kind of formal leadership, and the need to send delegates to the annual National Convention led to certain individuals coming to act as regular representatives of their localities. Detailed lists of these delegates for the period under review are only readily available for 1909 to 1913, and 1917. Out of 132 individuals who were appointed delegates during the five-year period 1909-1913, 5 never attended any of these conventions. Of the remaining 127, 90 only attended one; 22 attended two; 7 attended three; 3 attended four; and 5 attended five (in all cases as delegates). The small group of 15 who attended for three or more years, not surprisingly, tended to dominate the convention proceedings, as well as the membership of the Executive Board, supplying half (9 out of 17) of its members, including all of those who served on it for three years or more. While the total of delegates was

only 43 percent male, the 15 regular attendees comprised 9 men a 6 women, that is 60 percent male. This predominance of men in positions of leadership was also found in the membership of the Executive Board: of the 25 individuals who served on it during the 1909-1917 period, 6 were women and 19 men.

The Executive Board, while remaining subordinate to the annual convention, undoubtedly developed something of the ethos of a leadership group. By its regular meetings throughout the year the members doubtless gained a sense of cohesion and common purpose as well as a broader conception of the national activities of the community. At the conventions they were most likely to know what was going on, and therefore more able to influence consultations. The composition of this group suggests a considerable break with the previous list of prominent Bahá'ís.[156] Of those Bahá'ís who had previously been well known nationally, or had been local leaders, only Corinne True, Mountfort Mills, Arthur Agnew, Joseph Hannen, Mason Remey, William Hoar, Helen Goodall, and Hooper Harris were elected to the Executive Board (and only True, Mills, Agnew, and Hannen for three years or more). In part this may have been a matter of age. Leaders like Chase or Dodge who had been especially prominent were older than the members of the Board. The average age of the original members of the Board was forty-two.[157] More significantly the transition seems to have represented a change in style. The authority and function of the Chicago House of Spirituality and New York Board of Counsel had rested on various Tablets from 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That of the Executive Board and Temple Unity rested on a legal document, a formal constitution with articles and by-laws. This change of style was also reflected in the occupational background of the twenty-five: of the nineteen men, five were lawyers.

To a considerable extent the twenty-five typified the generalizations which have been made above about the early American Bahá'ís. Occupationally, most of the men were in business or the professions (they included the five lawyers, a court reporter, an architect, a printing worker, two doctors, a diplomat, possibly as many as five businessmen, and a Unitarian clergyman—

the latter an indication of the Bahá'í universality at this time). All of the women would appear to have been in fairly comfortable circumstances, and they were either married or widowed. Ethnically, all but three of the twenty-five were "old stock" white Americans, the exceptions being a black lawyer and two Persians. The membership of the latter is an indication of the esteem in which the few oriental Bahá'ís then resident in America were held. Religiously, most of the group appear to have come from Protestant backgrounds, albeit in a few cases by way of the metaphysical milieu. In only one case (Percy Woodcock, who was only a member of the Board for a matter of months) do any of these members appear to have retained metaphysical interests after they had become convinced Bahá'ís.

Geographically, the membership did not reflect the distribution of Bahá'ís in America, beyond being urban rather than rural in location. The largest concentration of members, fourteen in all, came from the East Coast centers of Boston (three), New York (six), and Washington, D.C. (five). Although remaining by far the largest community numerically, Chicago only supplied three members to the Executive Board, an indication of its declining importance in Bahá'í affairs, and perhaps, of a general malaise in its community life. The other eight members came from other parts of the Midwest (five), and from California (three). Almost as a symbolic indication of the transfer of responsibility for the Temple project from the Chicago House of Spirituality, only one member (Agnew) of the pre-1900 membership of that body was ever elected to the Executive Board.

Of the new leadership of the Executive Board, several were to be important in the difficult period of transition to the National Spiritual Assembly: most outstandingly Roy Wilhelm, who was to serve for thirty-three years on the Executive Board and the National Assembly; Alfred Lunt for twenty-two; Corinne True and Louis Gregory for fifteen; Mountfort Mills for thirteen; Harry Randall for ten; and Harlan Ober for nine.

Besides the Temple Unity, the other major basis for national prominence remained the teaching work. The close correlation between individuals prominent in this work—such as Bagdadi,

Gregory, Hannen, Khan, Lunt, Mills, Randall, Remey, True, Vail, Wilhelm, and Woodcock—and the membership of the Executive Board suggests that there may well have been a reciprocal relationship between the two. Prominence in teaching work was almost certainly a major factor in the consideration delegates gave to who should be elected to the Executive Board, while membership on that body, in turn, made it more likely that a particular individual might be used as a teacher and lecturer by the Bahá'í community. Only a few very well-known teachers—such as Lua Getsinger and Ameen Fareed—were never elected to the Executive Board. Apart from teaching, activities such as the *Star of the West* and the Orient-Occident Unity provided a measure of national prominence, although Albert Windust and Gertrude Buikema (the editors of the former) and Ahmad Sohrab (the main figure in the latter) were not elected to the Executive Board.

DOMINANT RELIGIOUS CONCERNS

At this early stage of research into American Bahá'í history any portrayal of the dominant religious concerns which animated the community must be tentative. Nevertheless, the main motifs (the dominant religious themes) that underlay the Bahá'ís' expression and presentation of their religion can be readily discerned. Five such motifs can be identified: (1) millenarianism, (2) metaphysical esotericism and concern with the religious quest, (3) religious liberalism, (4) social reconstructionism, and (5) personal devotion and obedience to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. These motifs were not equally represented in formal statements of Bahá'í belief. As the period progressed, the importance of these various themes changed.

Bahá'í Millenarianism. The millenarian motif, which figured so prominently in the history of the Bahá'í Faith in the Middle East, was also an essential element in the American Bahá'í community, despite the change from an Islamic to a Christian milieu. The American Bahá'ís might give different theological values to the various elements of their belief, but like their

Oriental coreligionists they gave particular emphasis to the fulfillment of messianic expectation. Bahá'u'lláh himself, the "Lord of the Vineyard," fulfilled Christian prophecy concerning "the latter days"; the Báb had made his declaration in 1844, the Millerites' second choice (after 1843) for the year of the Advent; 'Abdu'l-Bahá was seen as a Christ-like figure; and, for some Bahá'ís at least, there was expectation that the millennium would commence in 1917.

Adventism. Given such strong millenarian ideas, it might be expected that Bahá'ís would make particular appeal to the already established Christian tradition of millenarian expectation which formed an important element in the religious history of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century America. Certainly Bahá'ís consciously appealed to this tradition. Bahá'í writers such as Isabella Brittingham, Paul K. Dealy, and Thornton Chase announced Bahá'í fulfillment of Adventist expectation. Leaflets were produced with titles such as *Prophecies and Warnings. Can ye not discern the signs of the times?* and *Prophecies— Signs of the Coming of the "Son of Man."* The redoubtable Col. FitzGerald even proclaimed the second coming to well attended meetings in the Northwest.

Despite these efforts there is almost no evidence of any response from the mainstream of the Adventist tradition. FitzGerald, a former Christadelphian minister, is the only example at present known to me. Presumably the Bahá'í Movement's doctrinal liberalism, the esoteric and metaphorical nature of its Biblical exegesis, and the fact that it centered its belief on an individual who had been subject to the normal restraints of a human birth and death, combined to make the Bahá'í claims unacceptable to American Adventists.

Nevertheless, ideas of messianic fulfilment and millenarian expectation were of vital importance to many American Bahá'ís. No matter how esoteric a rendering of the Adventist tradition the Bahá'ís gave, it was still an essential part of their religious concern. What seems likely is that Bahá'í teachings made their appeal to those Americans who accepted the promise of Christian fulfilment, and perhaps hankered after a new era of

human perfection, but had rejected Biblical literalism and fundamentalist concerns. Christian millerarian ideas were not confined to fundamentalists and conservatives. At an extreme, the metaphysical movement, through which so many early American Bahá'ís had passed, provided examples (such as Swedenborgians and Christian Science) of an esoteric version of the Adventist tradition combined with metaphysical concerns. It seems likely that in a somewhat analogous manner the Bahá'í Movement managed to appeal to those who sought a combination of traditional Christian concerns and new doctrinal dimensions beyond the scope of the churches. The account given by Stanwood Cobb (then in training for a ministry in Unitarianism) of his first encounter with the Bahá'í Revelation—the announcement in the midst of the metaphysical bastion of Greenacre that "Our Lord has come!"—is perhaps indicative of the peculiar combination of factors which accounted for the appeal of the Bahá'í Movement in America. Millenarianism was a vital part of that appeal, but it was only part of a complex of factors which may be regarded as "accounting for" acceptance of the Bahá'í message by the early generation of American Bahá'ís.

The Nature of Bahá'í Millenarianism. The precise nature of early American Bahá'í millenarianism is not easy to determine. Certainly, like their present-day successors, the early Western Bahá'ís believed that Bahá'u'lláh had fulfilled Biblical prophecy: he was the "Glory of the Lord," the "Everlasting Father," the "Prince of Peace," the "Comforter," the "Spirit of Truth," and the "Lord of the Vineyard," who came to establish the Kingdom of God on Earth. However, to a much greater extent than modern Bahá'ís, they seem to have envisaged the near advent of God's earthly kingdom. With 'Abdu'l-Bahá still alive, they felt that they lived in a special time in which God's promises could be easily and speedily fulfilled. This belief in the near advent of the Kingdom seems to have been given a date by some Bahá'ís—the years 1914 and 1917 receiving special attention— and to have been linked with some kind of apocalyptic expectation. The absence of these latter beliefs from any formal statement of the teachings, and their seemingly somewhat secret

nature, makes it difficult as yet to describe them with much precision.

In public statements, at least, leading Bahá'ís presented a decidedly nonapocalyptic picture of the means by which the divine kingdom would be established on earth. Thus although Dodge wrote that the Báb had "come to prepare the way for the coming of the 'Great and dreadful day of the Lord' on earth" (Mai. 4:5), he also explained that the "New Heaven and new earth" (Rev. 21:1) had in fact commenced in 1844: the invention of the telegraph and the other wonders of modern technology having created a new earth, and the new heaven "rapidly becoming a reality, for the truth of religion is already supplanting the colossal error of past superstition and imagination." For Christ's words, "Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you!" (Luke 17:21) showed that "Heaven" indicated "the religion or truth of God."[158] Remey offered a similarly allegorical interpretation of Christ's parable of the coming of the Lord of the Vineyard (identified as Bahá'u'lláh) who would "miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen" (Matt. 21:41). This indicated, explained Remey, "the great out-pouring of divine grace through this new revelation, which will be so great as to overcome and dispel the great power of evil (spiritual ignorance) which is dominating humanity. This day is the time of the world's turning from humanity to divinity."[159] Again, a vision far removed from apocalyptic terrors.

Yet, underlying these bland assurances (or perhaps awakened by the worsening international situation pinpointed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during his American visit) was a more apocalyptic vision of world events. Thus the *Star of the West* editorial of 21 March 1914 pondered whether "the culmination of the old order of things" was at hand. It linked the year 1914, the Bahá'í Year 70—"the seventieth year of the Millennium"—with the Christian year 70, which marked the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, and the dispersion of the Jewish people.[160]

On the whole, however, it was a mild apocalypticism. The anticipated war was a reflection of man's inability to order the world without divine assistance. After the war, the Peace would

come as mankind came to its senses. This optimistic view was reflected in the report by a non-Bahá'í who seems to have attended the 1917 Bahá'í Convention held shortly after America's entry into World War I. In contrast to the official convention report which concentrated on administrative matters and the informal "Potpourri of Convention Fragrancies" which dealt mostly with teaching, the observer, Eric Dime, noted that "the war proved the leading topic of discussion." He added that the Bahá'ís were confident that the war would end within the year and "the foundations of peace laid," although there would be an inevitable period of readjustment and social upheaval before "perfect peace" could be finally established. One support for this belief was that 1917 was held to be the last year mentioned in prophecy, since Daniel had written: "Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days" (the year 1335 in the Muslim calendar being equivalent to 1916-1917).[161]

A starker characterization of the continuing war was given in 1918 by Remey in a confidential essay:

We are living in the day of the great Armageddon. The ideals and institutions of the past ages are dying, and the divine ideals and institutions of God's Kingdom have been born into the world of humanity; therefore, this great struggle now in progress, is essentially and fundamentally one of the spiritual forces—a struggle between the powers of Light and Darkness . . . , and this great war ... is but one of the manifestations of this great conflict.[162]

According to Remey, this was the time of terror attendant upon the "latter-Day Revelation of God" during which evil forces were rampant "in the awful agony of their death struggle." In this struggle between heavenly and satanic powers, it was necessary for the Bahá'ís to enter the lists to ensure the speedy establishment of the Most Great Peace.

'Abdu'l-Bahá reminded the Bahá'ís of the Western States in 1916 that he had warned the world of the nearness of war and had spoken of the fulfilment of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation: this then was the time to teach! For some American

Bahá'ís the American government was also an important factor in the establishment of the foundations of peace. Woodrow Wilson in particular was regarded as an agent in the practical implementation of the Bahá'í principles.[163]

After the war, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged the Bahá'ís in numerous letters to teach: "The whole world is prepared for the call of the Kingdom. The past war has given rise to a wonderful capacity among men." He warned that real peace would not be established at Versailles where self-interest prevailed, but only through the word of God; and, to some of his followers he intimated that further conflict would ensue. Hope that the Millennium would soon be established was voiced—Martha Root, for example, told the 1922 Convention that: "People are now advancing so far in the path that we are soon to realize the millennium"—but it would seem that in general Bahá'ís settled down to patiently work for the Most Great Peace which they believed would be established in God's own time.[164]

It is not possible to fit the early American Bahá'í community neatly into the traditional dichotomy between pre- and post-millenarianism. However, they had far more in common with the latter, who believed that the millennium would arrive by a process of social and religious evolution which human effort could perhaps accelerate, than with the pre-millenarians, who expected a sudden and revolutionary intervention by God. This does not mean that there were not some tendencies towards a pre-millenarian position. But generally speaking, for most of the period, the Bahá'ís concentrated their attention on the millennial peace of the future which they by their teaching efforts could help to establish more quickly, and not on supernaturally induced apocalypses. To a considerable extent too, many felt that they might already be living in that divine Kingdom by their association with the messianic figure of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The central concern remained the new era which the Bahá'ís were helping to accomplish. Like the Seventh Day Adventists, who also retained a strong millenarian expectation, Bahá'ís were fundamentally interested in the reform and reconstruction of the world according to divine principles and not with rejection of the world in expectation of an apocalypse. This was shown in

greater endeavor toward teaching activity, which was regarded as the means of more speedily accomplishing the spiritualization of the world.

This Bahá'í post-millenarianism differed both from pre-millenarianism and from the allegorization of Augustine (i.e., the Kingdom of God as the Church). It may have accepted that in part the "Kingdom is within," but it also worked actively for its establishment on earth. Unlike the kind of post-millenarianism in which the millennium is postponed to a distant indefinite future, as a result becoming "colourless and dim,"[165] the early Bahá'ís had a vivid image of the Kingdom. Although reinforced by a sense of its imminence, that image was not reliant on that sense. We may speculate that the vividness of the image was retained as a result of the historical nearness of the prophetic fulfilment claimed by the religion's founders, the personal immediacy of contact with 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the sense of a collective responsibility and mission to spread the Bahá'í Cause. We may suppose that for Bahá'ís their own millenarianism was at once an expression of their identity with the Christian tradition, a factor in the definition of their specific identity as followers of one regarded as the fulfilment of that tradition, and a source of their sense of purpose.

The Religious Search and the Metaphysical Movement. For many Bahá'ís, acceptance of the Bahá'í teachings had been preceded by a religious search. Conversion accounts by early American Bahá'ís frequently described a pattern of initial disillusionment or dissatisfaction with their religion, followed by some sort of search which, in quite a number of cases, took the form of a safari through the wide range of new religious movements which had sprung up in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. This was followed in turn by encounter with, and acceptance of, the Bahá'í teachings. Naturally, such conversion accounts reflect the views of those who remained Bahá'ís.

At its extreme, the religious search could be extremely lengthy. For example, James Oakshette was in turn a Congregationalist minister, a psychic researcher, a Rosicrucian master, a Theosophist, and then a Bahá'í. He retained his metaphysical

interest, however, and at the time of his death in 1937, after more than thirty years as an active Bahá'í, was still a priest in the (Theosophical) Liberal Catholic Church. Or again, the woman described by Jessup who had been an agnostic, a Theosophist, and a Christian Science healer, only to find each unsatisfactory. She was thus "on her way to see what Abbas Effendi had to offer." The prolonged search could also take a more literary form, as with the man described by Chase who had studied the writings of Vivekananda, Mme. Blavatsky, Buddha, Lao Tse, Emerson, Confucius, and Marcus Aurelius before finally becoming a Bahá'í after reading Bahá'u'lláh's *Hidden Words.*

The Bahá'í Movement and the Cultic Milieu. The prevalence of search as an experience among the American Bahá'ís suggests an intellectual independence and an intense religious motivation. For those who found traditional religion unacceptable, the search for religious alternatives very frequently led them to that vague collection of groups which have been described as the Metaphysical Movement or the metaphysical tradition. These are convenient general terms for a congeries of late nineteenth-century American religious groups that sought new frontiers in religious knowledge, enlightenment in occult wisdom or the religious traditions of the East (as in Theosophy and Vedanta), spiritual composure and physical health in the "harmonial religion" of Christian Science and New Thought, or evidence for the continuance of life beyond the grave in Spiritualism or the philosophy of reincarnation. Ahlstrom's characterization of harmonial religion as "a vast and highly diffuse religious impulse that cuts across all the normal lines of religious division"[167] could well be applied to the metaphysical movement as a whole. For while there were many who played an active part in various specific groups, there were also others who sympathized or became influenced by the movement's ideas but remained members of their churches. From such groups a large number (perhaps initially, even the majority) of the Bahá'ís came.

The major contacts between Bahá'ís and the metaphysical groups were with Christian Science, New Thought and Theosophy. Of these, formal contacts were most often made with New

Thought and Theosophical groups, whose liberalism and eclecticism allowed them to look with favor on the Bahá'í message and to invite Bahá'í speakers to their meetings. The Bahá'ís seem to have made special efforts to contact these groups. Even during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tour, when much wider contacts had been made, these groups supplied a disproportionate number (eleven out of forty-eight) of the religious audiences which 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed. Other contacts were afforded by the Bahá'í presence at the New Thought and Vedanta stronghold of Greenacre, and in Chicago by the inclusion of five Bahá'ís on that city's Executive Committee of New Thought Groups. Christian Science differed from the other two groups in that its authoritarian exclusivism precluded formal contact. However, the Bahá'í Movement, along with the New Thought groups, seems to have received a steady stream of former Christian Scientists who were attracted by the ideas of Christian Science, but repelled by its tight control.

In addition to formal contacts, we may assume that there were also informal contacts between Bahá'ís and those in the groups from which they had come. Acceptance of the Bahá'í Message did not necessarily entail any break of relationships with these former groups. In many cases some degree of membership may have been maintained. Through most of this period the Bahá'ís, like Theosophy and New Thought, maintained an individualist policy: all were welcome under its banner, membership was on a society rather than a church basis, and members were not required to disassociate themselves from their previous religion.

The various metaphysical movements of the late nineteenth century possessed a certain doctrinal kinship. They shared a common concern for "the deeper realities of the universe," advocated a scientific-religious approach to life, regarded religion as an "experience of reality . . . which gives meaning to life," and rejected the traditional Christian conceptions of God and man. They interpreted the Bible intuitively for its esoteric and allegorical meanings, rejected evil as unreal, repudiated the creedal authority of organized Protestantism, and found solace instead in the freedom of individualism and self-reliance.[168] Associated with these movements was a ragbag of ideas and

theories, ranging from vegetarianism and food reform to attempts to make contact with the psychic world.

When the Bahá’í teachings were first expounded in America, it was not surprising that the greatest response was shown by members of this "cultic milieu," who had already rejected much of traditional Protestant orthodoxy, were usually engaged in a search for new religious realities, and some of whom had already developed an interest in Eastern religious thought. Bahá’í teachings, such as the brotherhood of humanity; the non-existence of evil as a positive force; the need for a spiritual solution to the problems of the world and the individual; the universality of true religion; the progressive revelation of truth; the need for religion to be positive and reasonable in its approach, and to be reconciled with science; the rejection of "man-made creeds," including the doctrine of the Trinity and Biblical literalism; and the stress on the individual's own search after truth unconstrained by any clerical controls, had a natural affinity with the ideas of the cultic milieu. Drawing much of its membership from the metaphysical movements and encountering the most serious responses to its message from those movements, the Bahá’í Cause in America, like Vedanta, its fellow Eastern export and liberal missionary movement, became in fact part of the cultic milieu. Unlike Vedanta, however, it did not remain part of that milieu.

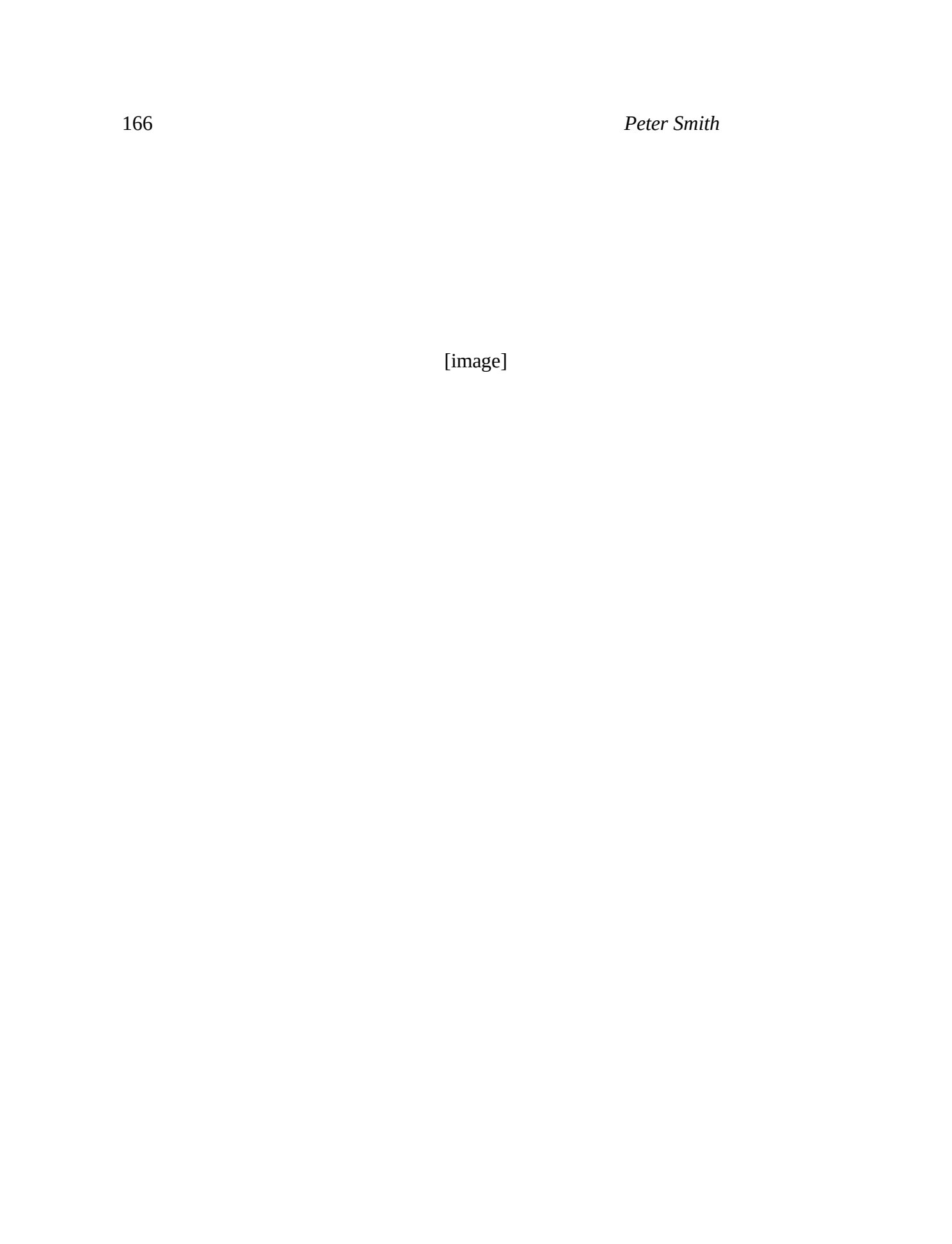
From a theological standpoint we could say that the presence of the Bahá’ís in the cultic milieu was always problematic. Fundamentally, the Bahá’í Faith is a revealed religion, with its own orthodoxy and with laws and principles which are regarded as divinely ordained. Ultimately, absolute obedience to Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God, and to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant was demanded. Human foibles and fancies were as nothing in the face of the might and splendor of an all-powerful deity. These were not beliefs which might find a ready response in the cultic milieu. What provided the main link between the Bahá’ís and the metaphysical movements was not the Bahá’í revelation, but the Bahá’í teachings. For accompanying this essentially dogmatic theology was a set of beliefs which in many respects bore an affinity to the ideas of the cultic milieu, and which were couched in the most liberal terms. While

both "dogmatic" and "liberal" elements of Bahá'í belief formed essential parts of the religious corpus as a whole, the more dogmatic elements were not so readily evident to the casual investigator or to those at the periphery of the movement. The relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and the cultic milieu was essentially ambivalent. Ultimately, the coexistence of these elements was to engender tensions within the American Bahá'í community. In the course of resolving those tensions, the Bahá'í Movement in America was to move away from the cultic milieu which had initially provided it with such a fertile soil for its operations.

The Impact of the Metaphysical Element on the Bahá'í Community. Before the separation between the Bahá'ís and the cultic milieu was effected, the latter exercised considerable influence upon the American Bahá'í community. In part, this consisted of metaphysical beliefs and practices which certain Bahá'ís brought with them into the Bahá'í community. More significantly it included special claims to authority and a pervasive rejection of external religious authority.

In itself, the fact that many Bahá'ís would seem to have held religiously unconventional ideas would not necessarily have had much impact on the community. If some Bahá'ís indulged in astrology, or psychometry, or read tea leaves and palms as well as Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá at their meetings, then doubtless the Bahá'í community could have tolerated such practices and beliefs, scripturally unsanctioned as they were. To an even greater extent was this true of those fringe beliefs which, if not actually metaphysical in themselves, were in some way vaguely connected with the cultic milieu, such as vegetarianism and food reform (even a "Bahá'í Dietest" at one point). Similarly, the practice of spiritual healing—for which a certain scriptural warrant could be found—was acceptable.[1"9]

What was questionable were ideas such as reincarnation, cosmic consciousness, and the ability of man to become "cosmic man," or beliefs in (and claims to be in receipt of) psychic communication and revelation by means of automatic writing, visions and the like. Such ideas were decidedly against Bahá'í


[image]

orthodoxy, and in the case of attempts to "tamper with the psychic forces" were specifically opposed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.[170] They continued to enjoy some currency amongst the Bahá’ís, however. Rev. James T. Bixby stated in 1912 that, although denied by Bahá’í scholars and teachers, the Bahá’í doctrine of return was popularly understood as a doctrine of reincarnation, and Anna Mason Hall wrote to *Star of the West* in 1920 to say that she had met "so many people" who were interested in the psychic and who had been erroneously taught "along with the Revelation" that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sanctioned it.[171] On many of these issues we may assume that the large number of Bahá’ís with metaphysical sympathies combined with the absence of clear rules of entry or a formal creed to enable such beliefs to continue in the face of opposition from those who adhered to more orthodox beliefs. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's method of leadership must also have contributed to the lack of any imposition of categorical restraints on the more extreme heterodox beliefs.

Far more serious problems than mere heterodoxy resulted from the attitudes of many "metaphysical" Bahá’ís toward authority. These problems were of two kinds: (1) the prevalence of that attitude, termed by Roy Wallis as epistemological individualism, which regards religious authority as essentially centering on the individual, and (2) claims to authority made in specific instances by individuals on the basis of psychic or other special powers.

According to Wallis, in the religious grouping where epistemological individualism predominates—what he calls the cult— authority rests with the individual member, the seeker, who "determines what components of the belief system offered to him he will accept."[172] The individual regards himself, and not any external orthodoxy, as the final arbiter of truth. This description readily accords with Thornton Chase's account of the early American community. According to Chase the majority of American Bahá’ís had abandoned the churches and followed after "devises of modern minds and old and new forms of 'occultism'" before they "at last found a resting place in Bahaism." Consistently opposed to occultism in a Bahá’í guise, Chase argued that most of the occultist Bahá’ís did not abandon

their previous ideas when they became Bahá'ís, rather they had just added "the fact of the Manifestation [of God]," creating an unnatural mixture. They were "faddists," who had become Bahá'ís merely in search of endorsement of their own views, rather than with any acceptance of the need for personal transformation; their "occultist attitude" exalted the individual in intellectual or psychic terms so that even the authority of the Supreme Being could not be accepted. If Chase's account is generally correct, then this would certainly help account for the looseness of Bahá'í belief in the early period as well as the opposition toward organization and formal external authority. The preference which many Chicago Bahá'ís showed for Asadu'llah's interpretations of their dreams, rather than the presumably orthodox classes on the Bahá'í teachings given by Abu'1-Fadl (whom they disdained as cold and intellectual) provides a good example of the operation of these attitudes, personal selection of congenial beliefs predominating over any acceptance of the belief system as a whole.[173]

In a community in which an interest in the occult was combined with a general weakness of formal authority, and the absence of a formal creed, it is small wonder that claims of special authority on the basis of "wonderful powers" or "visions and voices" were occasionally made. As far as can be discerned, no blatant attempt to gain authority by such means ever succeeded for long. Instead, what may have occurred was acceptance of certain individuals as possessing a special correctness in teaching by some sections of the Bahá'í community. Only in the rarest instances did such individuals achieve either lasting or widespread recognition, but the presence of such claimants was a factor producing disunity, cliques, jealousies, and considerable confusion over what the Bahá'í Cause represented. The most spectacular instances involved claims of astral communication with 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Thus, the woman reported by Remey who regarded herself as the transmitter of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's messages by means of astral connection, and who sent cables and other messages in his name to such dignitaries as the Pres-

idents of the United States and Mexico. And the man described by Chase, whose public teaching among the Bahá'ís ranged (presumably depending on the audience) from the hint that "all the word is not written in the Books," to the forthright statement that he himself was a giver of the non-written Word, being in constant communication with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and receiving instruction from him—all without the inconvenience of having to exchange letters! Although the woman seems to have been dismissed as an embarrassing eccentric, the individual described by Chase had wide-spread support, even serving briefly as President of the Executive Board of the Bahai Temple Unity.'[74]

The belief, clearly illustrated in this last example, that there was an esoteric meaning which lay behind the Bahá'í scripture, also led to the formation of "concentration circles" in various cities in order to secure "spirit revelations" to develop a better understanding of the teachings. Generally kept secret within a limited circle of individuals, such activities had a potentially divisive effect within the community. Not only were there clear overtones of establishing a gnostic elite, but a radically different conceptualization of the Bahá'í Cause was exposed.

The *cause celebre* which finally crystalized the opposition of those Bahá'ís who were more "orthodox," concerned the teachings of the Boston metaphysician W. W. Harmon. Harmon himself is as yet a fairly shadowy figure. He seems to have been one of a number of individuals who, while not really Bahá'ís, revered 'Abdu'l-Bahá, supported the Bahá'í teachings, and associated with the Bahá'í community. Occupying a marginal position in relationship to that community at a time when clear distinctions between believers and non-believers were not often made, he retained an ambivalent identification with the followers of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The philosophy which he developed, combining elements of metaphysical and Eastern religious thought with Bahá'í teachings, proved to be very popular with a certain section of the Bahá'í community, who believed that by study of Harmon's interpretations of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation, they would receive divine illumination. To that end, they estab-

lished circles for the study of Harmon's ideas in various cities, a development which sparked off the events relating to the Committee of Inquiry of 1917-1918, and discussed below.[176]

Religious Liberalism. In the half-century between the end of the Civil War and America's entry into the First World War, American churches underwent a profound transformation. Among the Protestant churches, the development of theological liberalism and social Christianity represented a major and innovatory response to new social and theological challenges. The rise of fundamentalism in turn represented a reaction to these radical tendencies.

The general feeling that society must change, that "the new wine" was "beginning to ferment in old bottles," and that creeds, beliefs, social and political organizations must either respond to the new social forces or shatter under their strain had come, by the turn of the century, to represent a vital part of the American mood. Theological liberalism and social Christianity represented this mood within the Protestant churches. Outside of the traditional churches, the mood was strongly expressed in new religious movements, such as Theosophy and New Thought, which combined on occasion the demand for "scientific religion" with a concern for social reconstruction. In such a milieu, the Bahá’í teachings, especially after the formulation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's "universal principles," appeared as an attractive program of religious liberalism and social reconstruction. There seems every indication that the Bahá’í expression of such religious concerns was a major factor in its appeal, not only to those who formally professed themselves as believers, but also to that much wider circle of sympathizers who came to surround the Bahá’í community after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit in 1912. It may well be that there was also some resonance between the Bahá’í vision of the millennium and the secularized millenarian-ism which developed in social Christianity.

The Bahá’í Faith as promulgated in North America, with its emphasis on human brotherhood, transcending race, creed and class; on the primacy of moral behavior over creedal affirmation; on its own purpose as a non-sectarian, inclusive move-

ment of unity, untrammelled by dogma and organization, and free from a priestly class; on the necessity for freedom from prejudices; and on the individual search after truth; on the evolutionary nature of religion; on the rejection of Biblical literalism; and on the essential harmony between science and religion, was preeminently liberal in theological terms. The existence of unliberal elements, in particular the insistence on obedience to the Center of the Covenant, did not detract from the predominant image of liberalism which the Faith enjoyed at this time.

An Inclusive Spirit of the Age? The primary vision of the Bahá'í Cause which 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to his followers was that of a broad inclusive movement:

> The Bahai Movement is not an organisation. You can never organise the Bahai Cause. *The Bahai Movement is the spirit of this age.* It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahai Cause is an *inclusive Movement:* The teachings of all the religions and societies are found here; the Christians, Jews, Buddhists, Mohammedans, Zoroastrians, Theosophists, Freemasons, Spiritualists, et. al., find their highest aims in this Cause. Even the Socialists and philosophers find their theories fully developed in this Movement.[177]

To be a Bahá'í was simply "to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for universal peace and universal brotherhood," it made no difference "whether you have ever heard of Bahá'u'lláh or not, . . . the man who lives the life according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is already a Bahai. On the other hand a man may call himself a Bahai for fifty years and if he does not live the life he is not a Bahai." To a questioner who asked if it was possible to become a Bahá'í while retaining a faith in Christianity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have replied: "Of course you may keep it. If you become a Bahá'í you will apply it." As an indication of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's generous and tolerant liberalism, Myron Phelps related two anecdotes which he had been told when he visited Akka: To a man who wanted to give him his qualified allegiance 'Abdu'l-Bahá replied, "that he asked him to

give up nothing; that he approved of his continuing to adhere to any religious faith with which he might be associated, and that the one thing necessary was to love God above all things and seek him"; and to a lady who feared that her orthodox friends would be repelled if they knew that she had joined a new religion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá advised that she remain in the Church, sharing what she had learned as Christ's true teaching.[178]

This broad, liberal vision of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was taken up by his followers. Albert Vail wrote that the "great spiritual awakening" which was the Bahá’í gospel was "not so much an organization as a spiritual attitude, not so much a new religion as religion renewed." Montfort Mills spoke of it as a quickening of the spiritual consciousness of the world." Specifically, to become a Bahá’í was not to abandon one's previous religion, but to add to it: the Bahá’í might remain "a Buddhist, or Hindu Braman *[sic]*, a Parsee, a Mohammedan, or a Christian. He becomes one of the Bahai Movement when he catches the Bahai Spirit." "For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asks none to leave their own religion but to love it—to look back through the mists of ages and discern the true spirit of its founder—to cast off dogma and seek reality." One could remain an active member of one's church, but only live up to its ideals, "setting aside man-made creeds and interpretations, forms, and ceremonies," for "it is found that to the degree that men see God aright, they will see Him alike."[179]

The liberalism and inclusivity portrayed by these quotations have remained the dominant image of the early American Bahá’í community. A recent analyst's description of a "loosely knit, inclusive spiritual philosophy infiltrating the existing religions" merely echoes earlier accounts. Atkins, a writer on cults, described the Bahá’í Faith in 1923 as "a leaven rather than a cult," an attempt to reduce religion to "very simple and inclusive forms," challenging the followers of widely separated religions "to be more true to what is deepest in their [own] faith." And Speer's critical dismissal (1904) of its "loose eclecticism" and "indefinite mobility." Indeed, it seems likely that to many Bahá’ís their Faith appeared the epitome of liberalism.[180]

Not that this was the whole picture, however. For at the center of the Faith were claims to absolute authority, made not only by Bahá'u'lláh as founder of the Faith, but also by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. To 'Abdu'l-Bahá's closest followers at least, he was not only a charismatic, almost messianic, leader but also the Center of his father's Covenant to whom obedience was due. He might not rigorously exercise his authority, he might encourage his followers to adopt a liberal attitude toward many aspects of religion, but ultimately, as he himself explained: "Any opinion expressed by the Center of the Covenant is correct and there is no reason for disobedience by anyone."[181] In the midst of a general religious liberalism there was a firm strand of authoritarianism.

Bahá'ís claimed that their Faith was a broad and inclusive movement, membership in which did not require the adherent to break his ties with his former religion, but such inclusivity was clearly on Bahá'í terms and continued church membership could be double-edged. The Bahá'ís might only desire "to diffuse in existing churches and societies the spirit of universal love," but "when this love bears its fruits the denominations will want to unite in one universal church"—that is, the Bahá'í Cause itself. Behind the universal teachings which were "the spirit of this century and the light of this age," the belief in Bahá'u'lláh's claims and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's station remained. The Bahá'ís might recognize other religions as being divine in origin and assert the essential unity of all religions; they might feel themselves bound to "consort ye with [the people of] all religions with joy and fragrance"; and their teaching methods might incline them to "moderation," presenting the most acceptable aspects of their religion to the potential convert, gently winning him to their point of view, but this did not mean that they regarded their Faith only as a "spiritual attitude." As Remey pointed out, those Bahá'ís who retained their church connections used them as a means for giving the message, giving "the glad tiding of the coming of the Lord in His Kingdom" to such "prepared souls" as they might find. The attitude toward the world's major religions was one of tolerance and acceptance of their validity *as*

precursors of the Bahá'í religion in which they were all fulfilled. Contemporary religions and humanitarian movements—from Christian Science to women's suffrage—were not only part of the same spirit of the age which was most perfectly manifested in the Bahá'í Faith, they were also "rays of the glorious Sun of Truth which is shining upon the world today through the Revelation of BAHA'O'LLAH."[182]

The broad appeal of Bahá'í liberalism contrasted with what many early Bahá'ís seem to have perceived as the narrow, sectarian outlook of the churches. This perception prompted the religious quest which they had undertaken for some more congenial system of belief. In some cases, disenchantment with the churches and with clerical authority had led individuals to become free-thinkers or agnostics. For some of these, Bahá'í liberalism with its ethos of inclusivity, its stated opposition to dogmatism, and the principle of the agreement of science and religion, offered an attractive route by which they might return to some kind of religious belief and still maintain much of the autonomy of free thought.[183] The implicit authoritarianism of the Bahá'í religion was not immediately apparent to all of those who became adherents, or to those who became sympathizers. In the long run the essential ambiguity of Bahá'í liberalism was to engender severe strains in the American Bahá'í community, producing a division between those who perceived the Bahá'í Movement as only a benign and inclusive spirit of the age or a set of advanced principles geared to the needs of a scientific and rational world and those who perceived it as a religion firmly rooted in revelation and centered upon a Covenant toward which obedience was due.

What Peter Berger has described as doctrinal liberalism, as opposed to religious liberalism in general, seems to have been a vital element in the faith of the majority of Bahá'ís, including those who insisted most strongly on the prerogatives of religious authority. Richardson's critical dismissal of the Bahá'í teachings of freedom from dogmatism and the brotherhood of man as simply a superficial veneer over what was essentially dogmatic sectarianism would seem unnecessarily harsh. There is little to suggest that Bahá'ís were insincere in their beliefs or that they

did not genuinely perceive their faith to be undogmatic. Rather, it seems that the coexistence of doctrinal liberalism with religious authoritarianism was an essential feature of Bahá'í belief: an example of the union of opposites which devout religionists are able to accomplish.

Social Reconstructionism. Stemming largely from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's annunciation of universal principles, the Bahá'í concern with the reconstruction of society on the basis of religious imperatives came to form one of the most distinctive features of the Bahá'í Message, leading perhaps to the criticism quoted by Alter that "Bahaism is not a religion but a society for social welfare."[185]

For a number of Bahá'ís, good works of one kind or another were regarded as an integral part of their religiosity. As early as 1903 or 1904, Dodge had written that the Bahá'ís held "to the Positive Reality of actual Christianity," "striving to LIVE THE LIFE," in the knowledge that love and service toward God were not possible without love and service to one's fellow men. Generally such charitable works as were performed seem to have been initiated by individuals, for example Francis Roe's work for neglected children in Chicago. But occasionally a whole community became involved in some project: the Honolulu assembly initiated monthly prison visits during which they held a Sunday Bahá'í service with prayers and Christian and Bahá'í hymns, and the Seattle Bahá'ís expended almost a fifth of their income for 1910 on charitable works, notably for the local poor and needy but also for two scholarships for children at the Tihran Bahá'í School.[186]

Overall, however, such works of charity did not form a major part of Bahá'í activity. The *Survey* comment that the Bahá'ís were "back of or within every progressive movement" and that thousands of them were "pushing the various peace organizations of different countries," was a gross exaggeration, although not impossibly believed by many Bahá'ís.[187] Apart from the very real example given by the Bahá'ís with regard to racial prejudice, there seems little evidence that the Bahá'ís contributed

much in practical terms to the solution of the social and economic problems which confronted America.

What the Bahá'ís did offer was advocacy of an overall solution. The economic and social problems of industrial society would be solved if mankind would but spiritualize its collective life and recognize that religion and justice represented the only viable basis for society. Extremes of wealth and poverty needed to be abolished; the public fund, financed by a graduated income tax, intestate estates, treasure-troves and the like, should be used to support those in need; a system of industrial profit-sharing should be instituted; the rights of both capital and labor should be protected; and work itself was exalted to the rank of worship when performed in a spirit of service. Narrow nationalisms and divisive prejudices must be abandoned, to be replaced by a conceptualization of the earth as one country. Thoughts of war and hatred should be replaced by thoughts of peace and love. World peace could be achieved, given sufficient desire on the part of mankind. On the road to world peace an international court of arbitration should be established, armament reductions should be accomplished by international treaty, and international security maintained by the threat of collective action on the part of all nations against any aggressor nation. International understanding should be fostered by the adoption of an international language. Women should be given the same rights as men—if anything it was more important for girls (as future mothers) to receive education than for boys. Women should advance in all departments of life, not only for their own sakes, but also because in the new civilization female qualities (intuition, love, service) needed to counterbalance the traditional male qualities of force and aggression. Racial equality had to be achieved; fellowship between the races had to be fostered; if men would but concentrate on spiritual qualities rather than physical qualities then racial prejudice would be discarded. Mankind was one and should unite.

Such advocacy gained the Bahá'ís an audience of sympathizers beyond the circle of committed believers. Many of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's audiences in North America reflected this broad appeal: educational establishments, peace groups, women's

societies, a session of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, meetings held in the Bowery Mission and at Jane Addams' Hull House settlement. Contacts with many such groups were maintained by the American Bahá'ís after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's return to the East and on occasion jointly sponsored meetings were held. Contacts with peace groups and Esperantists were particularly common.

Bahá'ís advocated peace, but they were not pacifists. Although in 1916 the Bahai Temple Unity had sent delegates to the League to Enforce Peace, by 1918 several Bahá'ís were in the forces as volunteer combatants. The Executive Board of the Temple Unity addressed an extremely controversial letter to the Department of State, with a copy to the Provost Marshal General, emphasizing the Bahá'í obligation to be obedient to government, denying anyone the right to claim to be a conscientious objector on Bahá'í grounds, and stating that they were ready to enlist if need be in "our country's marching hosts through the wise behests of our government." Not all Bahá'ís shared such feelings. One at least, found herself under investigation by Federal agents on account of her ardent advocacy for peace.[188]

Contacts with Esperantists, by contrast, were far more straightforward. 'Abdu'l-Bahá had suggested that Bahá'ís should learn Esperanto, and from 1912 onwards the American Bahá'ís began to pay the would-be international language much attention. They found that Esperantist groups offered congenial locales for Bahá'í teaching work.[189]

In terms of American society at this time, the most distinctive element in the Bahá'í social message was its advocacy of racial equality. By 1900, the myth of black Americans' "separate but equal" status in American society had been proclaimed by the Supreme Court and mocked by Jim Crow laws which, from 1890 onwards, effectively disenfranchised Southern blacks. Segregation between the races extended to almost all aspects of life, including religion. The constant threat of lynching gave physical support to black subjugation.

With most early Bahá'í teaching work based on personal contracts, the predominantly Northern, urban, middle-class, white

composition of the American Bahá'í community effectively limited the early spread of the Faith to blacks who were city-dwelling Northerners, and quite probably to those who were either independent professionals or whose work (e.g., as domestics) brought them into contact with white Bahá'ís. Whether black Bahá'ís were completely integrated into the Bahá'í community straightaway is unknown. Despite 'Abdu'l-Bahá's insistence that there should be no compromise on the racial issue, some Bahá'ís doubtless found it difficult to escape the traditional suspicion and social pressure of the time. In Washington, D.C., for example, where the Bahá'í community was markedly multiracial, one Bahá'í seems to have had some success for a time in her attempts to divide the black and white Bahá'ís.[190] In general, however, the Bahá'í community was distinguished by the interracial nature of its meetings—both devotional and social.

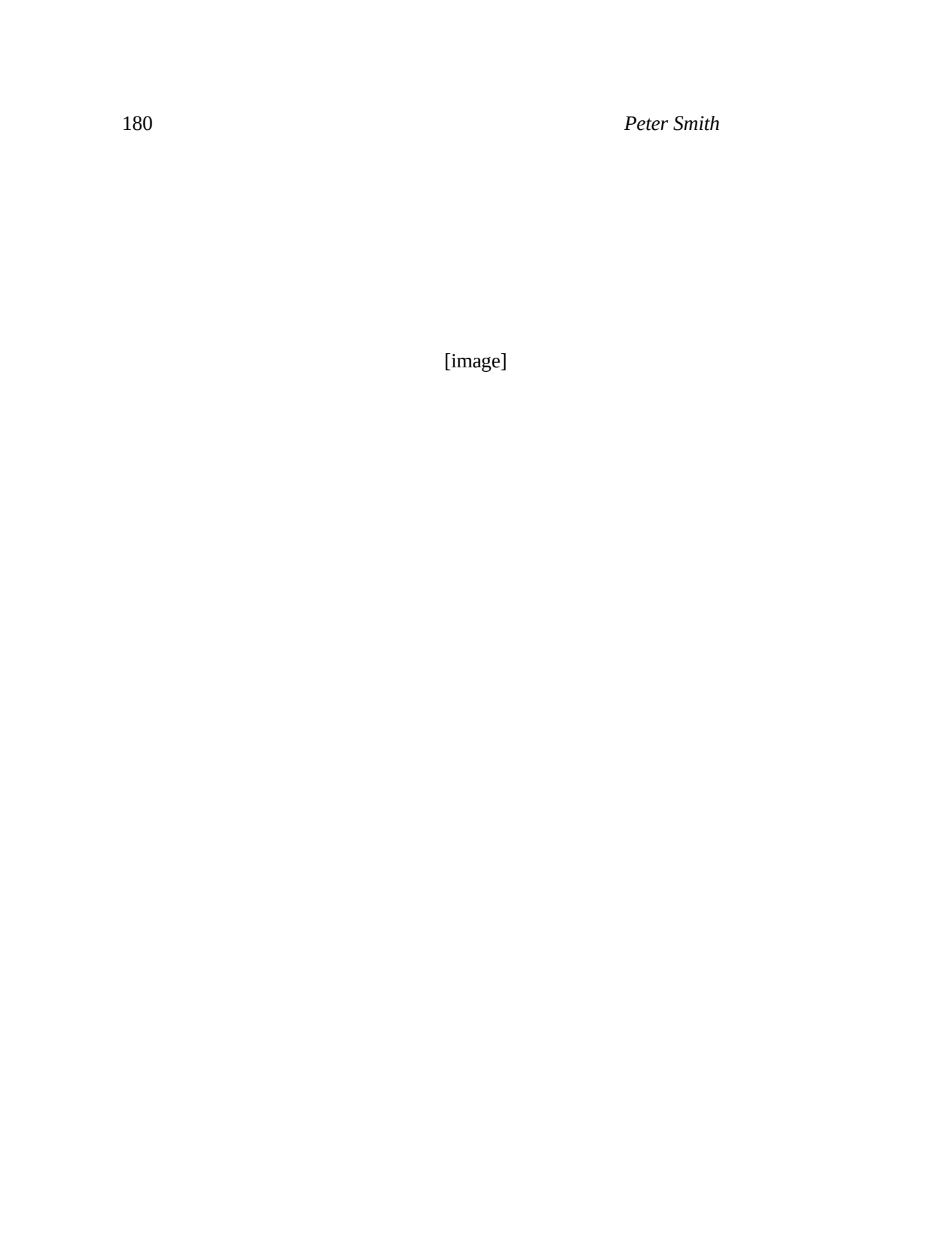
Only after the First World War, however, and after the race riots in Northern cities in 1919, did the Bahá'ís go beyond the example of interracial meetings and the general advocacy of interracialism as one Bahá'í principle among others. From 1921 onward, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's encouragement, and in cooperation of sympathetic non-Bahá'ís, the Bahá'ís began to organize Race Amity Conferences at which panels of speakers, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, white and black, conducted a more specific advocacy of the need to solve the "racial question." The predominantly Northern base for these meetings indicates the continued failure of the Bahá'ís to secure any firm foothold south of Washington, D.C.[191]

This development of more specific action after the First World War also seems to have occurred with regard to other social questions: thus the various post-war activities in New York ranging from a vegetarian restaurant for the poor to the interracial activities of the Rainbow Circle, Victoria Bedkian's work with orphans, and Shahnaz Waite's Bahá'í Fellowship Group at San Quentin prison.[192]

DEVOTION AND OBEDIENCE

Personal Devotion. Many members of the early American Bahá'í community laid great stress on liberty and liberalism. The attitude of epistemological individualism, the conviction that ultimately the locus of religious authority lay with the individual, was characteristic, not only of many members of metaphysical movements, but also of many of those who might be identified as religious liberals, as well as those who had broken with traditional religion completely to become freethinkers of one kind or another. The prevalence within the Bahá'í community of individuals coming from such backgrounds has been noted. The whole process of religious search, which many had undertaken, was in itself often an embodiment of the desire for a religious belief that would not only answer the urgent questions of the day, but would also fulfill the need felt for greater freedom in religious belief than the main churches would traditionally allow. Despite the liberalism characteristic of many aspects of the Bahá'í Movement, the essential claims of its central figures were definitely authoritarian. Bahá'u'lláh's writings were regarded as the unerring Word of God, and as 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself stated: "Any opinion expressed by the Center of the Covenant is correct and there is no reason for disobedience by anyone."[193] A proper examination of the implicit tension between Bahá'í liberalism and Bahá'í authoritarianism—a tension which remains a fundamental part of modern Bahá'í life—is beyond the scope of the present paper. For the present it will suffice to investigate what I would suggest was one of the main factors binding together these contrary impulses, namely personal devotion to the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith.

Although in the Bahá'í context the personal devotion many American Bahá'ís initially gave to 'Abdu'l-Bahá was theologically questionable (in that it drew its strength from a belief that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was, if not the return of Christ, then at least the return of the same Christ-spirit), and although A.bdu'1-Baha's


[image]

own denials of "Christ-hood," and his theological emphasis on Bahá'u'lláh may have brought in an element of control, personal attachment and devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá remained of immense importance within the community as a whole. For some Bahá'ís, at least, it constituted one of the most basic elements of their faith. The devotion to A.bdu'1-Baha as "Lord" and "Master" went beyond purely theological considerations: In "His Presence" reality seemed transformed; the material world faded before the world of the spirit; and the devotee prepared to enter "undreamed of worlds," "a new, a boundless, and eternal life."[194] Whatever his theological status, devotion to him brought his followers into contact with what they regarded as the numinous.

From such a figure, claims to authority were acceptable and its exercise might not seem an imposition. His commands were as those of a loving, almost divine father; they were not those of some religious functionary. The simultaneous devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá and opposition to any form of "organization," which many Bahá'ís combined, is an indication of this attitude in which acceptance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's charismatic authority was combined with vehement opposition toward any purely human authority as might be developed in some form of organization or direction within the community. This attitude toward 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority also reflected the way in which it was exercised: his sympathetic encouragement, combined with only occasional reproof, was doubtless a fairly easy form of authority to bear among the often fiercely independent Bahá'ís. For individual, religiously highly liberal, Bahá'ís, devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá provided the link between their continued theological liberalism and their obedience to the commands of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the divine laws of Bahá'u'lláh. This link was reinforced by the characteristically liberal nature of many of those commands and laws.

Devotion to 'Abdu'l-Bahá was not invariant among Western Bahá'ís, however. S. N. Alter, after visiting both American and English Bahá'í groups, wrote that it seemed that the London Bahá'ís "were quite content to accept 'Abdu'l-Bahá merely as a

medium of interpretation," but that the American Bahá'ís "were not satisfied with less than ascribing divinity to him," this attitude offended the Londoners, "in fact it seemed that ‘Abdu'l-Bahá held an even more prominent place in the minds of some of the American Bahais than Baha Ullah himself."[195] Although something of this range of belief also existed among the American Bahá'ís themselves, it is clear that the prevailing ethos was of devotion to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá. Whether or not this general difference between America and London was also a factor in the comparative lack of success which the British Bahá'ís experienced in their attempts to enlarge their minute community, it is clear that devotion to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá provided an important aspect in the unity, the appeal, and the dynamism of the Bahá'í Movement in America. The most active American Bahá'ís felt that they were not only working to promulgate a set of universal teachings, but were also complying with the requests of their Lord. The complex appeal of universal principles, Christian fulfillment, and the rest, when combined with the existence of a living messianic figure, made far more religious impact than, say, the existence of a set of universal teachings by themselves.

Common devotion to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá was also important in maintaining cohesion within the American Bahá'í community. This allegiance united a community in which profound differences of opinion existed, not only as to matters of organization and belief, but also concerning the nature of the religion itself. Similarly, differences of theological "understanding regarding ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's "station" (was he Christ returned, the Perfect Master of the age, or the Center of the Covenant, or perhaps all of these?) became less significant in the face of a common devotion. Given that a variety and complex of factors attracted people to the Bahá'í Movement, the ethos of devotion acted as a cement between what might otherwise have been disparate groups or factions.

Obedience and the Doctrine of the Covenant. The relationship of the American Bahá'ís to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá was not only based on devotion. Of particular importance in 1900, and increasingly after 1912, the distinctive Bahá'í doctrine of the Covenant pro-

vided the basis for a relationship of obedience. The growing importance of this doctrine, at the same time as certain elements within the American Bahá'í community were pressing for a greater degree of organization and for some control over what might be taught as Bahá'í belief, had profound implications for the evolving nature of the American Bahá'í community.

The Bahá'í doctrine of the Covenant is a multilayered concept effectively consisting of two aspects: (1) a theological description of a series of spiritual agreements which are believed to exist between God, the Manifestations of God, and mankind; and (2) the specific appointment by Bahá'u'lláh of a successor.[196] It is to this latter aspect that Bahá'ís generally refer when they speak of the Covenant, and it was this aspect which received most attention in the early American Bahá'í community. In several of this writings Bahá'u'lláh had referred to his eldest son, 'Abbas Effendi, the Most Great Branch, as the one to succeed him and act as the shepherd of his Faith. 'Abbas Effendi's half brother Mirza Muhammad-'Ali and various other members of his family accepted this appointment but charged 'Abbas with exceeding his authority and laying claim to the rank and prerogatives of a Manifestation of God. The resulting dissension divided the Bahá'ís into two groups: one group who regarded 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 'Abbas Effendi, as the Center of his father's Covenant and themselves as "steadfast and firm" *(thabitin)* Bahá'ís, in distinction to the followers of Muhammad-'Ali whom they termed *naqidin* (violators of the Covenant, Covenant-breakers); and the other group who supported Muhammad-'Ali and termed themselves *Ahlu't-Tawhid* or *Muwahhidin* (Unitarians).

The partisans of Muhammad-'Ali constituted a significant group among the Bahá'ís in Syria, but in Iran, and later in America, they made little headway, and followers of 'Abdul-Baha predominated.

This doctrine of the Covenant was a central issue in the American community in the period immediately following Kheiralla's defection. The first of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's emissaries, 'Abdu'1-Karim-i Tihrani, spoke in uncompromising terms concerning 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority; outlined the main arguments

in support of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's position; stated that he who turned away from the Center of the Covenant turned away from God; denounced the *naqidin* as "idols," "devils," and "spotted snakes" who would receive torture and punishment from God; called upon the Covenant-breakers to repent; and instructed the firm believers to shun the false teachings of Satan which were being promulgated in their midst.[197] The account Kheiralla gives of his confrontation with Hasan-i Khurasani suggests that the second of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's emissaries was no less vehement in his call to firmness in the Covenant and his denunciation of the *naqidin.*[198]

As the threat posed by the Behaists lessened, so the doctrine of the Covenant seems to have received less emphasis. Doubtless Asadu'llah and Abu'1-Fadl taught the believers the importance of the Covenant, but in their books the doctrine was not given excessive attention and was presented in terms of its positive aspect (that is, that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was Bahá’u’lláh's successor) rather than its negative aspect (that is, the dangers of Covenant-breaking). This approach to the Covenant is reflected in a talk Howard MacNutt delivered to the New York Bahá’ís after his return from a visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in 1905, in which he referred to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the "Center" and "Expression" of Bahá’u’lláh's Covenant of "Love and Life" through unity.[199]

Of course, this presentation of the Covenant might simply have been made to present the Faith in as favorable a light as possible to the general public, who might be expected to react unfavorably to vehement attacks on Covenant-breaking of the type mounted by 'Abdu'l-Karim, but the general impression given by Bahá’í literature and letters from about 1901 to 1912 is one of little overt concern with the Covenant. It is possible that those who wished to become Bahá’ís were taught about the Covenant and Covenant-breaking, but we have no evidence for this.[200] Even in Chicago, where an active group of Behaists survived until at least 1906, there seems to have been little emphasis on the Covenant after the initial rejection of Kheiralla.[201] In part, this seeming deemphasis on the Covenant doctrine might be attributable to the background of liberal Christianity and metaphysical thought from which the majority of the Bahá’ís

came. The exclusivism of this doctrine was simply not to their taste.

One of the effects of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit to North America in 1912 was to resensitize many Bahá’ís to the importance of this doctrine. On several occasions he spoke publicly to the Bahá’ís of his station as Center of the Covenant and referred to his father's written appointment of him as successor, of the dangers posed by Covenant-breakers, and of the need to shun them.[202] Privately he seems to have been even more explicit, warning several leading Bahá’ís of the need to be vigilant against attacks on the Covenant.[203] This concern was no doubt partly the result of some renewal of activity on the part of Dr. Kheiralla which seems to have taken place at this time.[204]

One of the responses to this concern expressed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the introduction of a yearly "Center of the Covenant" issue of *Star of the West,* the first appearing in the 23 November 1912 issue, in which it was declared in unequivocal language that this was the "Day of God," and that Bahá’u’lláh was the Manifestation of God, "The Father." That these were radical departures in the way the Bahá’í teachings were presented in America is evidenced by the editorial, which stated that while the contents might startle those who were only slightly familiar with the movement, they were not "the ravings of diseased minds, nor the fanatical outbursts of the unbalanced." Rather, they were the considered statements of those who were recognized authorities on the Bahá’í Revelation. The statements might be ridiculed by many, "but the burden is upon the sceptic to disprove these statements."[205] The rest of the issue included Bahá’u’lláh's *Kitdb-i 'Ahd* (Book of the Covenant), in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was named as his successor, and extracts from the addresses and writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 'Abdu'l-Karim, and Abu'1-Fadl dealing with the Covenant.

Over the years, there developed what might be termed a philosophy of the Covenant, as its implications were discussed and the topic looked at from new points of view. The 1912 issue of *Star of the West* had presented the need for "firmness in the Covenant" primarily in terms of the preservation of Bahá’í unity. In the 1913 "Center of the Covenant" issue (no. 14, 23

November), a new aspect was introduced in an article by Charles Mason Remey dated January 1906, and approved by Abdul-Baha, in which Remey compared ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the heart in a body—if a Bahá’í severed his connection with the center, he was cut off from the supply of spiritual sustenance. Remey also introduced an apocalyptic note into his discussion, emphasizing the need for obedience to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's instructions at the present time, as tests and calamities might of a sudden afflict the world so that there would no longer be any time "to consider ways and means for carrying out his commands."[206]

Remey must be regarded as the major exponent of the Covenant in the early Western community: the articles and letters that appeared on the subject were predominantly his; his assembly (Washington, D.C.) took a lead in publishing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Tablets on the Covenant; and he was the driving spirit in the Committee of Investigation of 1917-18.[207] In a letter dated 19 July 1913 Remey underlined the gravity of Covenant-breaking, comparing the Covenant-breaker to the gangrenous limb that the surgeon removed for the safety of the rest of the body and quoting ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as instructing the Bahá’ís to "hold aloof from violators."[208] In a supporting statement the editors explained that, in addition to Remey's letter, they had reprinted Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá "which were spread throughout America many years ago, wherein is plainly stated that which is now becoming clearly understood," in case "some of the friends [the Bahá’ís] may think, when reading Mr. Remey's excellent presentation of this vital subject . . . that Abdul-Baha is now teaching something new regarding 'The Covenant of God.'" They added: "Abdul-Baha has always maintained this position as *The Center* although for some years this Centership has been veiled from the people because of their spiritual blindness."[209]

The interesting features of the treatment given to the Covenant doctrine in the 1912 and 1913 issues of the *Star of the West* and continued in later years are as follows: first, the obviously apologetic nature of the presentation. It was assumed that a large proportion of the readership would be taken aback by what would appear to them as a strange innovation in the

Bahá'í teachings, and pains were taken to convince them of both the authenticity and the time-honored nature of the doctrine. Second, the need to present a rationale for the Covenant, particularly what might be perceived as the more "negative" elements of the doctrine, such as the instruction to shun Covenant-breakers—a marked contrast to the vehement denunciations of 'Abdu'l-Karim who said in effect: This is the law. Obey it!. Finally, the prominence of an individual ideologue in articulating the response which was then taken up by other members of the community—an indication of the role played by leading individuals in the development of the early American community (and paralleled by the role taken by Corinne True in the Temple project).[210]

The excommunication of unrepentant dissidents was only one aspect of the "protection of the Covenant." Another was the system of credentials which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá required of his Eastern followers if they journeyed to the West. The majority of Bahá'í Covenant-breakers, Azali Bábís, and Muslim opponents of the Faith came from the Middle East, and it was feared that members of such groups might journey westward to disrupt the Occidental Bahá'í communities. In order to prevent this, Bahá'í travelers from the East were required to carry a letter in the handwriting of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá with his signature and seal, as evidence of their good standing. After leaving America, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed a series cables and Tablets on this subject to various American Bahá'ís, including several to Remey and Roy Wilhelm, which he directed should be circulated among the Bahá'ís, and in which he emphasized the importance of checking the credentials of any Bahá'í coming from the East, including members of '‘Abdu’l-Bahá's own family. Furthermore, he directed that any individual without a letter of permission from him should be shunned, and warned that wolves would come from the East to attack "the sheep of God." A compilation of these messages was printed in the 16 October 1915 issue of *Star of the West.* The messages, mostly written in 1913, presaged some of the events of the following year.

Emphasis on the Covenant was underlined by the course of events. On an international level, increasing tension culminated in the outbreak of the "European War" in the summer of 1914.

Although not at first directly involved, the United States was not unaffected by the calamitous events taking place. For the Bahá'í community, the War assumed particular significance as a vindication of the need for their teachings and of the prophetic truth of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's warnings of a coming world conflict uttered during his Western tour. A large proportion of the pages of *Star of the West* at this time were devoted to the issue of war, and an equation made between the needs of the Bahá'ís to propagate their Faith, serve humanity, and be firm in the Covenant; and the abolition of war and the establishment of "the Most Great Peace."

Coincidental with these events on the world stage, the Bahá'í community experienced a renewal of activity on the part of various dissident individuals in both the East and the West. In the West the central figure was Dr. Ameenu'llah Fareed, son of Mirza Asadu'llah and nephew of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wife. He had spent several years in America and had accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá on his Western tour as one of his interpreters, during which time relations became strained. The climax to a deteriorating relationship occurred in 1914, when in disregard of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions, Fareed traveled to Europe, apparently expecting meetings to be organized for him. This act was regarded by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as openly defiant and led to Fareed's excommunication. Sydney Sprague, a prominent American Bahá'í who was married to Fareed's sister and who was traveling with him in Europe, together with the wives of both men, and later Mirza Asadu'llah himself, were also declared Covenant-breakers.[211] The direct effect of this episode on the American community does not seem to have been very great. Fareed had at least one propagandist in America—a Mrs. Chevalier—but overall gained little support. Nevertheless, the event was significant in reinforcing the realization that the doctrine of the Covenant was of central importance in the Bahá'í Revelation. The events had taken place in Europe, but Fareed and Sprague and Asadu'llah were well known to the American Bahá'ís. Also noteworthy was the involvement of Mason Remey and George Latimer, who were also traveling in Europe at that time. They helped combat Fareed's influence in England and then traveled to Syria at 'Abdu'l-Bahá's request, presumably for briefing con-

cerning the situation. One of Remey's essays on the Covenant, which was later widely circulated, was first composed at this time. The year 1914 also saw the publication of a couple of pamphlets by Ibrahim Kheiralla but their impact on the Bahá'í community is unknown.

The Chicago Reading Room Affair. Of far more significance for the American Bahá'ís than the Fareed episode was the Chicago Reading Room affair of 1917-18. Centering on the Bahá'í Reading Room established in Chicago by Luella Kirchner, the events of 1917-18 served not only to make the American Bahá'í community acutely aware of the Covenant doctrine and its consequences, but also to unloose pent-up frustrations which many Bahá'ís felt concerning what they regarded as the unwarranted intrusions of metaphysical ideas into the presentation of Bahá'í beliefs.

The teachings of W. W. Harmon, the Boston metaphysician, were controversial, not only because they mixed metaphysical and occult elements with Bahá'í belief, but because the groups of Bahá'ís in various cities who espoused Harmon's ideas claimed that by studying his interpretations of Bahá'u'lláh's writings, divine illumination could be received. In Chicago, where the Reading Room seems to have become a center for "Harmonite Bahá'ís," the antipathy many "older and firmer" Bahá'ís felt toward such ideas was compounded with Chicago's unhappy history of dissension. Mrs. Kirchner had not only been a former associate of Dr. Nutt, but she came into conflict with the Chicago House of Spirituality. In Boston and elsewhere, Harmon's teachings might have only led to tensions; in Chicago they were to precipitate a national dispute. It seems likely that the inability of the American Bahá'ís to communicate with 'Abdu'l-Bahá because of the war, and the apocalyptic ideas attendant upon that war, made the dispute, when it came, all the more harsh and bitter.

The local conflict came to a head in April 1917 at the Boston convention, to which both the House of Spirituality and the Reading Room sent delegates. In the summer the newly elected House of Spirituality determined to expunge the by now rebel Reading Room; and in November, during the Chicago-held

Centenary celebrations of Bahá'u'lláh's birth, representatives of the national community took up the affair and appointed an investigative committee. This committee, consisting of Mason Remey as chairman, Emogene Hoagg, George Latimer, and Louis Gregory, reported in favor of the House of Spirituality to a special meeting held at Corinne True's home on 9 December, charging that the Reading Room Bahá'ís—now calling themselves the Chicago Bahá'í Assembly—were violators, creating disunity and spreading false teachings, "mingling human ideas with the Word of God." The committee also rejected the Reading Room Bahá'ís' counter-allegations that the House of Spirituality had lost its authority and had acted unfairly toward them; that the Temple Unity was too powerful; and that two of the leading members of the House of Spirituality, Zia Bagdadi and Corinne True, were attempting to dominate the Chicago community. The committee praised the good qualities of those thus attacked, credited Dr. Bagdadi with having been placed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a "conservator" against violation in Chicago, and supported the authority of the House of Spirituality. Support for these findings was given by the forty-eight (from nineteen communities) in attendance at the December meeting, who ratified the report and authorized the Committee members to tour the country to explain the situation.

This victory against the "dissenters" was not unopposed, however. In addition to those attracted by Harmon's teachings, there were others, including leading Bahá'ís such as Agnes Parsons and Joseph Hannen, who objected to the manner in which the inquiry had been conducted, in particular arguing that the violators should have had the chance to defend themselves at the special meeting, which should in any case have been held on some "neutral ground" rather than at the home of one of the leading participants.[212] In response to the various criticisms that had been made, Remey, the committee chairman, circulated several essays explaining and defending the committee's position.[213] From these documents it is clear that there had never been any question of allowing the violators to state their case. Having determined their guilt, the committee was concerned that the "firm" Bahá'ís should be protected, and

that "the necessary division between the firm and the wavering souls" should be accomplished.[214] Those who sympathized with the violators were in danger of themselves becoming violators.

Remey's defenses of the committee's actions reveal a further development of his philosophy of the Covenant. They also reflect his understanding of the Bahá'í Faith as a whole. For Remey the Covenant-breakers were carriers of spiritual poison, of a loathsome and contagious disease against which the community had to be protected by shunning them. There was a "psychology of violation" which was represented not only by "the actual spoken denial of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant," but also by "the spread of superstition and false teachings, the circulation of falsehoods and calumnies, causing division and enmity between the friends, and disregard for the laws of the Holy Book." Within this wide definition all sorts of unacceptable behavior and belief could be seen as violation: from the contamination of religious truth by "psycho-occult flights of imagination" to illegitimate occult-based claims to authority; from backbiting to soliciting money or financial advantage in the name of the Cause.[215]

Firmness in the Covenant had to be placed in a wider context. In the midst of the World War, "the great Armageddon," evil forces were rampant "in the awful agony of their death struggle." At this time of cosmic struggle between the powers of light and darkness, of which the war and tribulations were only manifestations, the Bahá'ís were being tested. In their struggle, the Bahá'ís had to ensure contact with the Center of the Covenant. Even unintentional violation cut them off from this source of their spiritual health. The spiritual poison which the American Bahá'í community had tolerated in the past now had to be cast out "or else the work thus far accomplished will go for nothing, and the vital spark of the Movement on our continent will die."[21b] Firm vigorous action, rather than the naive hope that the "spirit of love and unity" would lead to a change of heart in the violators, was required. The Bahá'í Cause itself was not a "democratic institution" in which human will could determine membership or practice, rather it had divine laws which had to be obeyed by its adherents or they would suffer the con-

sequences of disobedience. It was not human reasoning but study and obedience to the Holy Words which were the means of attaining firmness in the Covenant.[217]

Whether or not this articulation of the wider significance of Covenant-breaking was widely accepted, a substantial number of leading Bahá'ís seem to have accepted the findings of the report, even though they may have had reservations about the means by which the committee had conducted the affair. At the April 1918 convention held in Chicago, the committee's report was unanimously approved by the assembled delegates. Those delegates present, however, represented less than half of the normal convention attendance (thirty-five, as compared with eighty in 1917 and eighty-four in 1919). Forty accredited delegates did not attend; and many of them presumably boycotted the meeting.[218]

The convention itself seems to have been dominated by the effects of the year's struggle. Extreme care was taken to ensure that only correctly accredited delegates were admitted to the convention. The afternoon session of the first day, which was held at Mrs. True's home with an aura of secrecy surrounding its deliberations, was devoted entirely to this question. As well as rejecting the credentials of several delegates whose assemblies had failed to follow the detailed regulations laid down at the previous convention, the assembled delegates refused to admit Major Honore J. Jaxon and Frank H. Hoffman, representatives of the self-named "Chicago Bahai Assembly," and also rejected another group named "the Assembled Bahais of Chicago." Great attention was also paid to the matter of authenticity of publications, and a decision was made to interdict W. W. Harmon's books as having been the cause of the trouble. The shadow of possible violation also fell across the selection of committee members. It was even felt necessary to telephone one leading Bahá'í to check on her attitude to the investigators' report before appointing her to a committee. Another reflection of the convention's approval of the committee's stand was their election to the Executive Board of five of the main participants: True and Bagdadi of the Chicago House of Spirituality,

and Remey, Gregory, and Hoagg of the Committee of Investigation. The Executive Board itself elected Remey as its president.[219] In the case of Bagdadi, Remey, and Gregory, this was reelection after several years in which they had not been elected to that body. Agnes Parsons, a known opponent of the means by which the committee had achieved its results, was not reelected although she had been the Board's vice-president for the previous year.

The effects of this remarkable and traumatic incident in American Bahá'í history are difficult to evaluate. The concern with the Covenant expressed in such covertly circulated literature as the committee's report and Remey's essays generally found little expression in readily available literature, such as *Star of the West.* In the absence of similar confidential material after 1918, it is not possible to be certain about the aftermath. We may assume that many of those who had been called violators left the Bahá'í community completely. It is not yet possible to estimate the number of individuals involved, but it presumably included such leading Chicago Bahá'ís as Jaxon and Hoffman. Some others who disagreed with the methods the committee had employed, regarding them as harsh and preemptory, may also have left, as may have "metaphysical Bahá'ís" who found sections of the Bahá'í community more inclined to oppose their beliefs following Remey s outspoken attacks. The Reading Room affair may well have been the first main factor—to be followed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death in 1921, opposition to Shoghi Effendi's leadership, the increasing importance of administration after 1922, and the actual form of that administration[220] — which contributed to the overall decline in membership from 2,884 in 1916, to 1,247 in 1926.[221]

'Abdu'l-Bahá's own reaction, after communications were restored in October 1918 (on the evidence of the readily accessible letters printed in *Star of the West* only), seems to have been to emphasize unity and the need to teach, and to praise the Bahá'ís for passing through the years of tests unscathed. He made no overt reference to the events of 1917-18, in these letters.

If we may speculate on the effect of the events of 1917-18 on the general ethos of the Bahá'í community, it would seem probable that the successful expulsion of the Reading Room group from the Bahá'í community changed the balance between the elements of liberalism and authoritarianism in favor of the latter. Again, the close involvement of the convention with the events may have contributed to the development of the feelings of general responsibility which the Temple Unity was increasingly displaying. As Harlan Ober commented at the 1918 convention, the yearly meeting had become the time "to consult on every matter that affects the welfare and the growth of the Cause."[222] More clearly, there were evidently moves in the direction of bringing some measure of control over what was taught as Bahá'í doctrine. As early as 1913 Albert Hall had told the convention that while some years previously no one had dared to raise the question of a test of doctrine, they now had such a test in the idea of firmness in the Covenant.[223] In 1918 this idea found formal expression in the proposals to establish reviewing procedures for Bahá'í books, both old and new; for the words "approved by the Publications Committee" to be printed in the front of all new American Bahá'í books; in the need expressed for a "correct list" of Bahá'í teachings; and in Remey's appeals to ensure doctrinal control at Green Acre. Much of the old liberalism still remained, but it is clear that the post-1918 American community was already displaying signs of the greater control which was to characterize it in the period of Shoghi Effendi's leadership. The actual events of 1917-18 might fade into historical obscurity, but the change in ethos which they presaged remained as part of the wider transformation of the Bahá'í community which continued until the 1930s.

THE BAHAI COMMUNITY AND ITS EVOLUTION

From the foregoing discussions it might appear that the early American Bahá'í community was beset with divisions and internal tensions: there were profound differences of opinion regarding whether to organize or not, and if there had to be organization, then to what extent it could be developed and what its status within the community was. There was the question of

whether Bahá'í doctrinal tolerance should extend to allowing Bahá'ís to maintain occult and metaphysical beliefs which were at best unsupported by Bahá'í scripture and teachings and at worst in conflict with them, or more significantly whether there should be some kind of control to prevent such heterodox beliefs from being taught as if they were supported by the Bahá'í teachings, or even as if they were an integral part of them. Again, how was the Bahá'í Movement to be understood: was it just the liberal and inclusive spirit of the age, or were the more authoritarian truth claims implicit within it the true heart of the movement? Then again, how could the belief in Bahá'í liberalism be reconciled with the doctrine of the Covenant, in particular with the practical application of that doctrine in labeling certain individuals as violators of the Covenant?

To a considerable extent the maintenance of a unified Bahá'í community in the face of such internal tensions might be explained by the common allegiance, which nearly all Bahá'ís seem to have borne, to '‘Abdu'l-Bahá, who as the center of the believers' emotional attachments to the Faith, was able to transcend the differences of belief and the variant conceptualizations of religion which existed within the Bahá'í community as a whole. Moreover, at a doctrinal level, it was ‘Abdu'l-Bahá himself who both preached liberalism and demanded obedience, who taught tolerance and was himself tolerant of milder heterodoxies. Again, while ‘Abdu'l-Bahá ultimately demanded obedience, he did not generally exercise an authoritarian control over his followers. Instead, he stressed that he only wished to be known as ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, the "servant of Baha," and to serve as the servant of the Bahá'í community. That this complex role was generally accepted by the American Bahá'ís is suggested by the nature of such disputes as arose within the community. After the Kheiralla episode, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's authority was not questioned by most American Bahá'ís—Fareed's supporter, Mrs. Chevalier, and those who later subscribed to both Harrison Dyar's defense of Fareed and to Dyar's general thesis that it was entirely the Bahá'í principles and not any attachment to its central figures which constituted the heart of the movement, seem to have been very much in a minority position.[225] Rather, disputation seems to have consisted of rival claims to

the possession of a correct understanding of the Bahá'í teachings, often supported by references to various writings, sayings, or reported sayings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

In addition to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's role, two underlying factors in the apparent unity of the American community in the face of fundamental and implicit tensions may well have been the vagueness of membership within that community and a vagueness in the way fundamental Bahá'í concerns were understood. Together these allowed the coexistence of varying approaches to belief within the community.

Under Kheiralla there seems to have been a formal procedure whereby a potential Bahá'í was admitted into the community: a letter of supplication was sent to '"Abdu'l-Bahá and the neophyte was given the Greatest Name. Detailed lists of adherents also appear to have been kept. To what extent any of these procedures continued after 1900 is at present unclear: the practice of writing a letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at least, appears to have been continued, albeit with less formality surrounding it. In general however, after 1900, membership in the Bahá'í community seems to have involved little in terms of formal commitment. There was no credo to affirm, no particular ritual associated with joining, no demand to dissociate from former church membership, no religious obligations which were enforced, or any very distinctive religious practices which were generally observed. Membership was, as the 1906 census affirmed, on "a society basis."[226] At a minimal level, an individual could become a Bahá'í on the basis of some degree of attraction to either the Bahá'í teachings, or to the central figures of the Bahá'í Faith, in much the same way any voluntary interest group could be joined. While for a good many Bahá'ís, the Bahá'í Revelation became the dominating fact of their lives, the whole basis of their existence, this did not mean that all of their coreligionists were under the compulsion to emulate them.

The varying range of commitment to the Faith found expression in the distinction between enrolled and unenrolled Bahá'ís. As the anonymous, presumably Bahá'í informant who supplied the information for the 1906 and 1916 censuses pointed out, the fact that the Bahá'í Movement did not demand exclusive membership meant that although figures could be given for "those

distinctly enrolled and not identified with any other religious body," there were in addition "large numbers all over the country who attend the Bahai meetings and are closely identified with the movement, but have not discontinued their connection with churches." This statement suggests a two-tiered structure of membership: a central core of enrolled believers, and a wider circle of close sympathizers and unenrolled Bahá'ís.

A much more informal division in membership resulted from the varying amount of instruction a new Bahá'í might receive. To R. P. Richardson, there seemed to be a real distinction between the neophytes and sympathizers who were only aware of the broad humanitarian teachings of the movement, and of an "inner circle" who had accepted the "esoteric doctrine" of "Bahá'u'lláh as the Messiah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Center of the Covenant."[227] It would be untrue to regard these latter beliefs as esoteric ideas confined to an inner circle—they were after all presented in a basic Bahá'í text such as Remey's *The Bahai Movement* (1913)—but it seems that there were substantial differences in the extent of adherents' knowledge of Bahá'í beliefs, and also that some beliefs were more openly taught than others. There was thus a continuum in knowledge and commitment from the periphery of sympathizers and less committed Bahá'ís, who were more likely to regard Bahá'í as a very open religious movement advocating a number of liberal principles and led by a saintly teacher, to a central core of "confirmed believers," who accepted both the Bahá'í teachings and the more controversial claims advanced by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Within the Bahá'í community, the lack of any creedal formulation beyond the statement of universal principles; the stress on tolerance; the opposition toward the idea of dogma; the belief that the Bahá'í message came not "as a new religion, challenging competition, but as a new light and a quickening of the spiritual consciousness of the world";[228] and the emphasis on the voluntary nature of belief, the Bahá'í teacher having "no authority over the conscience of any member of the Cause,"[229] combined to make the task of securing any more than a very superficial consensus of belief very difficult. Indeed, this lack of consensus may well have been regarded by many as an expression of the much vaunted principle of Bahá'í liberalism, and therefore a

perfectly acceptable state of affairs anyway. The vagueness of what actually was Bahá'í doctrine could be interpreted as embodying the spirit of universality and tolerance.

Such an approach, of course, did not actually resolve the implicit tensions which have been described. Nor was it very satisfying to some of the most active and committed Bahá'ís, who clearly believed that to be a Bahá'í involved far more than the mere acceptance of a set of liberal religious and social principles, but rather demanded a personal dedication and commitment to the Bahá'í Faith as a complete religious system. Over the period as a whole, the demands for a more structured religious entity grew more insistent, finding expression in demands for more organization, the introduction of some doctrinal standards, and the safeguarding of the Covenant. Not that these demands were uniform—those Bahá'ís who advocated greater structure and recognition of authority were not necessarily agreed on the nature and extent of the changes they wished to see—but the demands were persistent, and were eventually taken up by a wider circle of Bahá'ís and increasingly found formal expression from 1917 onward.

At the beginning of the period, demands for more structure were largely unheeded. Such authority as the Chicago House of Spirituality and the New York Board of Counsel enjoyed was being eroded; the system of formal teachers utilized by Kheiralla had been abandoned; and the unimpeded rights of the individual believer were asserted. For an individual like Thornton Chase—a staunch defender of the prerogatives of the House of Spirituality who supported the idea of organization in general, believed that "sane and practical" teachings of righteousness and right living were the essentials of religion, looked askance at occult "imaginations," despaired of the personal jealousies that held back the teaching work, and was involved with other members of the House of Spirituality in the production of a Bahá'í catechism as early as 1902, and in general advocated the need for more structure—the actual state of the American Bahá'í community was an unhappy parody of what it should be.[230]

Despite the introduction of a greater amount of organization from 1909 onward, the years immediately surrounding ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's visit seem to have been the period during which the stress on liberalism and lack of structure was greatest. In large part this seems to have been the direct result of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's influence. It was during his Western journey that the universal teachings first assumed the form of a statement of principles. In his general dealings with Bahá’ís and non-Bahá’ís alike, he emphasized the universality and non-sectarian nature of the new religion and stressed the need for a broad and loving humanitarianism. Many Bahá’ís clearly found themselves gaining a broader and more inclusive vision of their religion. Shortly before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's arrival in America, the editors of *Star of the West* were appealing to the Bahá’ís to "avoid all appearance of being a new religious sect by separating themselves from others in work or worship, for the cause has seemingly, yet unintentionally, developed in the West a condition akin to a sect—that which the Bahai Reformation does not represent." Answering criticisms that *Star of the West* was itself too sectarian, the editors pledged themselves to change the magazine so as to "more fully represent the Bahai Movement, and attract and hold the attention of all those interested in the brotherhood of man and the Fatherhood of God—whatever or wherever their religious, ethical, educational or humanitarian affiliations may be." In the same issue a leading London Bahá’í reported that: "The Spirit poured out through ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during his recent visit" (in 1911) had affected many groups and caused the Bahá’ís to feel an "increased freedom" in mixing with other groups "and co-operating with them in whatever efforts one finds them making, for any good purpose—not to trouble them about a new name nor disturb them in the position where they are, but rather to encourage and inspire them to greater humanitarian efforts; not to make a new sect and add to sectarian strife, but to leven and raise the spirituality of all religious bodies and assisting all whom we find to be doing this. Is not this most truly the Bahai Mission of Unity?" Again, the Boston Assembly reported that they had changed the time of their main

meeting from Sunday morning as they did not want to exclude churchgoing people or to appear to be "a new religious sect, separating ourselves from others in worship. Constantly the message comes to us from Abdul-Baha to universalize our efforts . . . and we feel that this is a step in that direction."[231]

After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's return to the East, two factors combined to facilitate the development of more structure: the increasing concern with teaching which necessitated a greater degree of organization, and the increasing concern with the Covenant. The trauma of war, involving for the Bahá’ís not only a separation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but also the intensification of such apocalyptic feelings as some appear to have had, underlined the importance of teaching. At a time when the wider American society was increasingly turning in on itself, and suspected dissidents were being persecuted in the infamous Red Scare, the Bahá’í community, in an act of parallel harshness, expunged what for the first time had been clearly identified as its own dissident element, and, also for the first time, began to establish mechanisms by which certain standards of doctrinal orthodoxy might be ensured.

From 1917 onward, the early American Bahá’í community began to lose those features which led Vernon Johnson to characterize it as "a loosely knit, inclusive, spiritual philosophy infiltrating the existing religions."[232] The importance of organization continued to increase until, from 1922 onward, the modern system of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, component parts of an Administrative Order, developed. The National Assembly quickly assumed a legislative role and was no longer answerable to the convention; the Temple project, Green Acre, and *Star of the West* came under its direct authority; and between 1926 and 1929 the legal establishment of declaration of trust, by-laws, and incorporation was completed. The organization of teaching also continued apace, at first under the National Teaching Committee by itself, and then under the overall control of the National Spiritual Assembly, which in 1925 launched "A plan of unified action to spread the Bahá’í Cause, throughout the United States and Canada." The emphasis on the Covenant, which had been expressed with such inten-

sity in 1917, continued to occupy a central role in American Bahá'í concerns. In the aftermath of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's death, Emogene Hoagg wrote from Haifa that although 'Abdu'l-Bahá had been kind to the violators no one else could do as he had done: "Our duty is to obey his commands . . . and no longer play with fire."[233] This attitude was reinforced by the printing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Last Tablet" to the American Bahá'ís, in which they were called upon to be vigilant in their guard against Covenant-breakers, and later by the circulation of a translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament in 1925, and the expulsion of Ruth White after she had attempted to prove that the Will, with its appointment of Shoghi Effendi as Guardian, its delineation of an administrative system, and its vehement denunciations of Covenant-breakers, was a forgery. Though Bahá'ís were allowed to continue their church memberships until 1936, it would seem likely that well before that date Mason Remey's circulated statement (in 1919) about Green Acre ("We all realise that the Bahai Religion stands unique in its purity amongst religions. My own observations have shown me that all other religious teachings as they are now interpreted in one way or another are more or less opposed to the Bahai Religion,") had become just as representative of Bahá'í attitudes as the traditional ideas of a vague inclusivity.[234] Certainly the argument that Green Acre should be a medium only for the presentation of the Bahá'í Message, unconstrained by any teachings contrary to the Faith, had long since been implemented.

By the 1930s the transformation described by Johnson "from a loosely knit, inclusive, spiritual philosophy infiltrating the existing religions to an exclusive, tightly run organization existing outside of and alongside the religious bodies of the day" had been completed, at least for America.[235] That process of transformation originated not, as Johnson has suggested, with the accession of Shoghi Effendi, but with the tensions which existed within the American community from the early 1900s. The imposition of a structure of organization and belief can be dated from around 1917. Thereafter, the process of change gained increasing momentum: Shoghi Effendi's accession to the Guardianship greatly accelerated rather than initiated this process.

The early years of the Guardianship and the last years of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's leadership together constituted a period of transition of vital importance, not only in American Bahá’í history, but also in the general history of the Bahá’í Faith as a religion.

NOTES

[missing endnote numbers]

The research on which this paper is based could not have been carried out without a travel grant from the Social Science Research Council and the facilities provided by the American, British, and Canadian Bahá’í National Spiritual Assemblies in enabling me to consult the library and archival materials in their possession. To all of these bodies I must express my gratitude. I should also like to record my thanks to Mr. Roger Dahl, the archivist at the National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111.

The reference was by Rev. Henry H. Jessup, Director of Presbyterian missionary operations in North Syria, in his paper "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," read in his absence by a fellow missionary, Rev. George A. Ford. See Barrows, *World's Parliament of Religions,* vol. 2, pp. 1125-26. Balyuzi *(‘Abdu’l-Bahá,* p. 64) quotes the relevant passage.

Unless more correspondence comes to light, the main sources of information for this period will remain the accounts of Ibrahim Kheiralla himself (O *Christians,* pp. 165-92; and as relayed by Mirza Jawad in Browne, *Materials,* pp. 93-112). The most complete account of Kheiralla's classes is given by a "Miss A. A. H." of Brooklyn, N.Y., in a series of letters and notes sent to E. G. Browne in 1898 (See Browne, *Materials,* pp. 116-42). Kheiralla's books give the substance of his teachings.

Following Kheiralla's defection in 1900, the American Bahá’ís became reticent about describing these earliest years so that there are few orthodox Bahá’í accounts of it. *The Bahá’í Centenary* compilation manages not even to mention Kheiralla, apart from a list of early pilgrims.

3. . The extent of the involvement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and 'Abdu'l-Karim in this venture is unclear. 'Abdu'l-Karim, "who stood in place of a spiritual guide" to Kheiralla, was consulted (Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha,* p. 65) and possibly agreed to defray his expenses (Dr. Mirza Muhammad Mihdi Khan, quoted in Browne, *Materials,* p. 144). Berger suggests ("From Sect to Church," p. 86) that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

also contributed to the finance of the trip, but I have found no support for this. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's permission was certainly obtained for the venture, and Shoghi Effendi states that it was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who "conceived the idea of inaugurating His mission by enlisting the inhabitants of [America] under the banner of Bahá’u’lláh *{World Order of Bahá’u’lláh,* p. 76).

Ross ("Bábism") reports that Kheiralla lectured on Islam, giving particular emphasis to the teachings of the Báb, while he was in Chicago at the time of the World Fair in 1893, but I have found no supporting evidence for this, although Kheiralla was certainly at the World Fair on business (Jessup, "The Bábites," p. 453).

The account given by Miss A. A. H. (who did not herself become a believer) of the classes is supported by the reminiscences of Elizabeth Greenleaf, one of the early converts (Sala, "The Greenleafs") and some undated notes of "Lessons given in [the] Bahai Movement or Truthseekers or Truthknowers as we were called at that time about 33 years ago" (Kenosha Papers, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111.). See also Collins ("Kenosha I") and Vatralsky, ("Mohammedan Gnosticism"). Reference to "the Christ" at "the Headquarters" and to the private nature of the teachings is given in a letter from Thornton Chase to John J. Abramson, 13 April 1898 (Chase Papers, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111.).

The Islamic tradition that there is a "Greatest Name" of God was taken up by the Bahá’ís, who believe that name is *Bahá* (glory, splendor), as in the title Bahá’u’lláh (the Glory of God). The form of one of these "confessions of belief" written to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is given in Browne *(Materials,* p. 121).

Kheiralla, *Báb-ed-Din,* pp. 8-9.

A set of "Books of Supplications from students," mostly compiled in 1899, lists some 1,488 names, the majority of whom had received the "G.N.," that is, the Greatest Name (National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111.). Vatralsky ("Mohammedan Gnosticism," pp. 58, 69) reports Kheiralla claimed to have converted two thousand Americans in his first two years of effort; an estimate by the Behaist leader, F. O. Pease, would place the peak number at about twenty-four hundred (Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 271); and A. P. Dodge, a New York Bahá’í leader, estimated that there were three thousand Bahá’ís by 1900 (Browne, *Materials,* p 148), a figure later supported by Kheiralla *(Reality,* vol. 10, no. 4 [1925] p. 32.), and cited by Ross ("Bábism," p. 622). It is probable that there was a wider circle of people associated with the Truth-knowers who had not yet received

the Greatest Name or been admitted into the central core of believers. The existence of such a group might account for the varied estimates of numbers. We need not give any credence to several contemporary newspaper accounts which gave estimates of ten thousand or more (Browne, *Materials,* pp. 150-52).

The largest community was Chicago with perhaps as many as one thousand Bahá'ís (Browne, *Materials,* p. 148; Ross, "Bábism," p. 622); the New York and Kenosha areas each had several hundred; Cincinnati, had more than fifty; while smaller communities existed in Baltimore, Boston, Brooklyn, Detroit, Milwaukee, Newark, Philadelphia, San Francisco, Washington, D.C., and in Enterprise, Kans., Hoboken, N.J., Ithaca, N.Y., and Racine, Wise. (Browne, *Materials,* pp. 148-49; Ross, "Bábism," p. 622; "Books of Supplications").

Chase to Abramson, 13 April 1898, Chase Papers.

Browne, *Materials,* p. x.

Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p. 116.

One account claims that Kheiralla took money for classes, but as this was composed in 1940, reporting at third- or fourth-hand, it is quite possible that this has been confused with payment for healing (Boston History, p. 1, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111.). Kheiralla himself declared that the true teacher of spiritual truth could not be rewarded for his labor *(Báb-ed-Din,* p. 12).

Whether Kheiralla actually had any qualifications beyond the B.A. which he gained at the Syrian-American College in Beirut is doubtful, but he was commonly referred to as "Doctor," while he himself added the letters "D.D." after his name. S. G. Wilson, who knew Kheiralla personally, recorded that the doctorate was awarded by a Chicago night school *(Bahaism,* p. 266).

Browne, *Materials,* p. 122. At this period a large number of secret societies existed in America, many of them catering to the business community. In addition to Freemasonry, these included such pseudo-oriental groups as "The Ancient Arabic Order of Nobles of the Mystic Shrine." The possibility that some individuals regarded the Truth-seekers as a secret society is also suggested in an article by Collins ("Kenosha I," p. 3) in which he states that according to one account "nearly all the prominent business men and women . . . became believers." Whether the mysterious Oriental Order of the Magi to which many of the leading Chicago Bahá'ís are said to have belonged was a secret society or a religious group is unknown.

Star of the West, vol. 6, p. 193. In Chicago, several members of the Oriental Order of the Magi became converted, learning of the new religion from fellow members of the order. This group, mainly

doctors and businessmen, included Dr. Chester Ira Thatcher and Dr. Rufus H. Bartlett, successively the leaders of the Chicago Bahá'ís in the 1899 to 1900 period, and at least one woman, Lua Moore (Getsinger), one of the most prominent of the early Bahá'ís (Bahá'í Historical Record Cards: John Osenbaugh, M.D.). See note 12, above.

Browne, *Materials,* pp. 96-98; Kheiralla, *O Christians,* pp. 169-70.

Collins, "Kenosha I", pp. 2-3. In the early period the term "assembly" (sometimes with a capital A) was loosely used to refer to the group of Bahá'ís who lived in a particular community. Only with the development of the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith under Shoghi Effendi did the term "Assembly" (always capitalized) come to refer to the elected administering body of a community, the Local (or National) Spiritual Assembly.

The system seems to have varied among communities. In the largest community, Chicago, no Board of Counsel was formed until 1900; instead there was an overall "leader" from about 1899 until 1901, and twenty or more "teachers" (Chase to Blake, 21 March 1900, Chase Papers; Bahá'í Historical Record Cards: John Osenbaugh, M.D.). The appointed teachers are possibly the same as the "guides" referred to in Haddad *{Messages from Acca,* pp. 4, 10, 15, 16) and the rank later claimed by F. A. Slack of "Spiritual Guide of the Behaist Assembly of Kenosha" (Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 272).

Kheiralla had a succession of five wives: three when he lived in Egypt (one died after bearing him three children and the other two he divorced); and two in America, the first an Englishwoman, Marian Miller, who was one of his first converts and who left him after the pilgrimage, the other an American lady who died in 1912. His matrimonial history was apparently used to discredit him in America (Berger, "From Sect To Church," p. 100).

See the accounts by May Maxwell *(Early Pilgrimage);* Miriam Thornburgh-Cropper (Blomfield, *Chosen Highway,* pp. 234-36); Lua Getsinger, Marian Kheiralla, and Phoebe Hearst (Adams, *Persia,* pp. 478-89). See also the account of Mirza Jawad-i Qazvini, one of the partisans of Muhammad-'Ali (Browne, *Materials,* pp. 97-110).

Kheiralla, O *Christians;* Browne, *Materials,* pp. 101-12. Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters, while accepting that Bahá'u'lláh had appointed 'Abdu'l-Bahá as his successor, charged the latter with exceeding his authority. Non-partisan accounts of the lengthy and bitter dispute are rare. In English there are accounts written by followers of both Muhammad-'Ali (Kheiralla, *Facts;* and Mirza Jawad, quoted

in Browne, *Materials,* pp. 74-93) and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By,* pp. 246-49; Balyuzi, pp. 50-61; 91-95; 111-12). See also the testimony of Muhammad-'Ali's brother, Badi'u'llah *(Epistle),* who vacillated between the two, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's *Will and Testament.* Some of the wider issues are discussed by Richards *(Religion of the Bahá’ís,* pp. 90-99); Berger ("From Sect to Church," p. 163; "Motif Messianique," p. 102); and Johnson, ("Critical Transformations," pp. 235-36; 241-54).

Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah,* p. 82.

Balyuzi, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá,* pp. 85-86. Support for this statement comes in an anecdote related by Elizabeth Greenleaf, according to whom Kheiralla asked his class to write to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suggesting that in view of the difficulties of communication, infallibility should be conferred on Kheiralla for the Western Bahá’ís while ‘Abdu’l-Bahá retained his infallibility for the Bahá’ís of the East (Sala, "The Green-leafs," p. 8).

Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 268.

Kheiralla, *Facts,* p. 10; idem, *Three Questions,* p. 23.

Browne, *Materials,* p. 99; Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah,* p. 82; *God Passes By,* p. 275.

Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 269.

De Mille, "Lua Getsinger," p. 7.

Voelz, "History 1897-1933," Kenosha Papers. This detail is omitted from the 1947 (revised) "History." On the Kenosha community see also Collins ("Kenosha") and the "Notebook with press clippings," Kenosha Papers.

Kenosha Kicker, 19 October 1899. More colorfully, the *Chicago Journal* pondered whether this "epidemic of Mohammedanism" might lead to the Kenosha people "running amuck to show their hatred of the infidel dogs about them," asking "who would care to face a large and determined Kenosha juramentado dressed in his white robe de nuit, armed with a case knife, and sworn before a Wisconsin muezzin or cadi or a notary public or something to die killing Christians . . . ?" Might not the churches send in missionaries, or perhaps the President could dispatch a commissioner "to make a treaty of peace with the reigning Sultan"? (cited in the *Kenosha Telegraph Courier,* 9 November 1899).

Kenosha Kicker, 26 October 1899. Bahá’í doctrine upholds a divine status for Islam and the Quran. As if to counter the charges made against the Kenosha Bahá’ís, they seem to have emphasized the Christian nature of their teachings more than other American Bahá’í communities. Thus the reported statement in the *Kenosha Daily*

Gazette, 17 November 1900, that the Kheiralla section (?) of the Bahá'í group was now a Bible-based religion, and the apparent existence of a "Behaist Christian Society" referred to in the *Sunday American,* 19 January 1902.

This meeting was held on 8 March 1900. Voelz, "History 1897-1933," "History 1897-1947," p. 2, Kenosha Papers. Rumors of Kheiralla's dispute with ‘Abdu'l-Bahá were probably already circulating. Thornton Chase wrote to a friend on 1 April that he had seen a Tablet (a letter) from ‘Abdu'l-Bahá to Lua Getsinger indicating that Kheiralla's teachings must not be endorsed, but that he should be treated with harmony. Chase added that this news had not tested his faith (Chase to Blake, 1 April 1900, Chase Papers).

Abdel-Karim, *Addresses.*

See Kheiralla, *Three Questions,* p. 23; and MacNutt, *Report of First Meeting.*

Chase to Blake, 26 April [1900], Chase Papers; Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 270. Kheiralla's connection with this Chicago conference is as yet unclear. On 27 May (that is, the same day which Wilson gives for the conference), another meeting was held at which 'Abdu'l-Karim and Kheiralla finally fell out in their attempts to come to some agreement (MacNutt, *Report of First Meeting,* pp. 9-12). Kheiralla had earlier (8 May) expressed his willingness to recognize ‘Abdu'l-Bahá's overall authority but had refused to deny Muhammad-'Ali (Ibid., pp. 3-6).

34. Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 272. Chase was later to write of various "cliques" among the Bahá'ís of Chicago but I have found no evidence for the followers of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá being divided into sects (Chase to Bryant, 24 May 1906, Chase Papers).

U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1906,* vol. 2, pp. 41-42.

Chase to Brittingham, 18 January 1903; Chase to Bryant, 18 January 1903, Chase Papers.

Many of the Kenosha Behaists transferred their allegiance to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá following the renunciation of Muhammad-'Ali by his brother Badi'u'llah (Chase to Brittingham, 18 January 1903; Chase to Bryant, 18 January 1903, Chase Papers). On Badi'u'llah's recantation, see Badi'u'llah, *Epistle to the Bahá'í World,* pp. 2-5 and Balyuzi, *‘Abdu'l-Bahá,* p. 102.

The Behaist leader in Kenosha, the Reverend Frederick A. Slack, their "pastor" and "Spiritual Guide," remained active until at least 1914 (Unspecified newspaper article, 16 December 1904, Notebook with press clippings, Kenosha Papers; Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 272).

37. Browne, *Materials,* p. 112; *Reality,* vol. 6, no. 8 (1923) pp. 36-40.

Behaist publications in later years included a number of pamphlets by Kheiralla, such as *Immortality Scientifically Demonstrated* (n.p., 1914), *Universal Peace and Its Sole Solution* (n.p., 1914), *An Epistle of Peace* (Chicago: n.p., 1918), and *Immortality: Hereafter of Man's Soul and Mind: Man Never Dies* (New York: Syrian-American Press, 1928). Kheiralla's book *Beha 'U'llah* was reprinted in 1915. Joseph G. Hamilton and Frederick O. Pease produced a work, *The New Religion* (Chicago: National Association of the Universal Religion, 1926). Muhammad-'Ali's son, Mirza Shu'au'llah, inaugurated a short-lived *Behai Quarterly* in Kenosha in 1934, and William E. Dreyer produced a number of edited versions of Kheiralla's "scientific writings" during 1943 and 1944.

This was August J. Stenstrand who during the period of Behaist decline became a follower of Subh-i Azal, and having been unanimously voted out of the "First Central Church of the Manifestation" of the "Society of the Behaists of America" in May 1906, proceeded to circulate a series of five "Calls of Attention to the Behaists or Bábísts of America." Stenstrand like Kheiralla later found the occasional place for his ideas in the columns of the Bahá’í periodical *Reality,* during its period of heterodoxy (1922-29).

Kheiralla, *Three Questions,* pp. 22-23.

Berger, "From Sect to Church," p. 89. On the concept of the "motif" as a fundamental and characteristic theme in the history of a religious movement see Smith ("Motif Research"). The concept is borrowed from Berger.

A current authoritative doctrinal statement on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's station is given in Shoghi Effendi's 1934 letter, "Dispensation of Bahá’u’lláh *(World Order of Baha'u'llah,* pp. 131-39). See particularly the list of titles and the arguments against some of the more extreme characterizations described here (pp. 134, 136-39).

Brittingham, *Revelation of Baha-Ullah,* p. 24. Both believers and detractors generally agreed on what appeared to be ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's way of life, but disagreed as to his motives. In the case of his detractors, they alleged a dark, covert side to his character. A polemical intent can be ascribed to most of the accounts written about him, either by personal enemies such as the partisans of Muhammad-'Ali, or by hostile Christian missionaries, or by committed believers, and many accounts by sympathetic non-Bahá’ís might be dismissed as superficial and impressionistic.

Anton Haddad, quoted in Adams, *Persia,* p. 470; Hearst to Bradford, 19 November 1899; and Hearst to Babcock, 5 December 1899, quoted in Adams (ibid., p. 489). A similar statement by Mrs. Hearst was apparently printed in the *New York Sun* and the 21 February 1901 issue of *Public Opinion* (Speer, *Missions,* vol. 1, pp. 164-65).

Thus A. P. Dodge inserted into his account of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, "The Master," the instruction to read various Biblical quotations (of apocalyptic import) "in connection with this article," so that "some idea may be had of the importance of these things" *(The Truth of It,* p. 60).

Bixby, "What is Bahaism," pp. 840-41. See also Chase, *In Galilee,* pp. 9, 70-71; Grundy, *Ten Days in the Light,* pp. 36-37, 48; Maud, "‘Abdu’l-Bahá," p. 175; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets,* 1909-16, vol. 2, p. 429.

Chase, in *Bahá'í World,* vol. 3, pp. 327-28; idem, *In Galilee, p. 71.*

Remey, *The Bahai Movement,* pp. 29-30.

MacNutt, *Unity,* pp. 11-12.

49. Holley, *Modern Social Religion,* p. 171.

Holley, *Bahaism,* pp. 26, 31-46.

Esslemont, *New Era* (1923), pp. 67-68; Holley, *Bahai Scriptures,* p. 255.

In Adams, *Persia,* p. 482.

Holley, *Modern Social Religion,* pp. 211-12.

Arthur Agnew, quoted in Chase, *In Galilee,* p. 84; Lucas, *Visit to Acca,* p. 37; Chase, *In Galilee,* p. 24; *Star of the West,* vol. 10 (1919-20) p. 343.

In the posthumously revised editions of Esslemont's *Bahaulldh and the New Era* (1974, p. 66) emphasis is placed on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's general Tablets as establishing "a foundation for unity of belief," so that "the differences of understanding caused by reference to His Tablets to individuals, in which the Master answered personal questions, rapidly disappeared [after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's death?]."

MacNutt, *Unity,* pp. 14-15; Chase, *In Galilee,* p. 34.

Ultimately, a detailed study of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's correspondence will need to be undertaken. By 1978, over nineteen thousand original or authenticated copies of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's Tablets had been collected at the International Bahá'í Archives in Haifa (Universal House of Justice, *Five Year Plan,* p. 7).

Alexander, *Bahai Faith in Japan,* pp. 11-15.

Sohrab, *Abdul-Baha in Egypt,* pp. 136-37.

These statements are based on a reading of various accounts of pilgrimages which were later printed. As not all pilgrims left records of their visit, it is not possible to judge how representative these statements are for the whole body of pilgrims. See the published notes of Chase, Cobb, Finch, Knobloch and Knobloch, Gregory, Goodall and Cooper, Grundy, Haney and Haney, Honnold, Lucas, Maxwell, Peeke, True, and [Wilhelm]. See also, Gail, *Sheltering Branch.*

During this period ‘Abdu’l-Bahá lived under varying degrees of restriction in his house in 'Akka, in general the attitude of the administering governor determining the extent of his freedom. In some instances the visits of the Western Bahá’ís, which were naturally a source of suspicion in the decaying and spy-ridden Ottoman Empire, had to be of the briefest duration. In 1908 the Young Turk Revolution led to freedom for political and religious prisoners of the old regime, and in the summer of 1910 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá moved to Egypt, embarking on the first of his Western journeys a year later.

It has not been possible to come to any firm conclusions concerning the composition of the Western pilgrims. Several of the more prominent and wealthy Bahá’ís are included, and most of the men were of professional or business backgrounds. However, Bahá’ís of more modest calling and those less prominent in the work of the Faith were also among those who went. The sex ratio (two women to every one man) reflects that of the American community as a whole (National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá’í Centenary,* pp. 141-42).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá's tour of America is given detailed treatment in Balyuzi, *{‘Abdu’l-Bahá;* Ward, *Historical Study;* idem, *239 Days;* and Zarqani, *Badáyi'u'l-Athdr* (a diary account by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's secretary). The unpublished translation of the last work exists in the National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111. Transcripts of many of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's talks in America are given in the recently republished *Promulgation of Universal Peace.*

Ives, *Portals,* pp. 253, 14-15.

Abdel-Karim, *Addresses;* MacNutt, *Report of First Meeting.*

The dates given for the arrivals and departures of the Persian emissaries are based on information in various sources and often contradict the dates in Balyuzi *{‘Abdu’l-Bahá,* pp. 86-87). Asadu'llah did not arrive after Mirza Hasan's return, but rather about the same time as him, probably November 1900 (Browne, *Materials,* p. 154); both remained for some time. Mirza Hasan returned to Egypt in about August 1901 ("Some Notes on the History of the Bahai Faith in Johns-

town, New York," p. 1, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111.) and Asadu'llah left America in May 1902 (National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá'í Centenary,* pp. 143-44; Chase to Brittingham, 25 May 1902, Chase Papers). Abu'1-Fadl was in America from 1901 until November or December 1904, not as stated by Balyuzi and Wilson *(Bahaism,* p. 271) until 1902 (Abu'1-Fazl, *Knowing God; Bahá'í World,* vol. 9, pp. 856, *858).* Haji Niyaz-i Kirmani also visited America (Browne, *Materials,* p. 170).

See *Kenosha News,* 16, 17, 21 January 1901; Voelz, "History 1897-1933," Kenosha Papers.

Assad'u'llah, *Explanations.* The *National Union Catalog* also lists *Nine Instructions concerning Genesis and the Mystery of Baptism* (n.d.).

Bahá'í World, vol. 12, pp. 703-704; vol. 14, 351-53.

Sohrab returned to America after the First World War and became very prominent in Bahá'í activities. In the 1930s he came into conflict with Shoghi Effendi and was declared a Covenant-breaker. The resulting dissensions were probably the most severe to affect the American community since Kheiralla's defection. See Johnson, "Critical Transformations," pp. 311-18, for a summary.

Bahá'í World, vol. 7, pp. 535-39.

National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá'í Centenary,* p. 157.

Thornton Chase records that there was sustained opposition to Asadu'llah on the part of certain Chicago ladies, notably Sarah Herron, the Behaist sympathizer and Kheiralla's former missionary to Philadelphia (Chase to Brittingham, 17 April 1902, and 25 May 1902, Chase Papers). Ali-Kuli Khan states that some of the Chicago Bahá'ís found Abu'l-Fadl "cold and intellectual," ignoring his teaching classes in preference to Asadu'llah's interpretations of their dreams *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 9, p. 856).

The Chicago group included Arthur and Mary Agnew, Thornton Chase, Mary Lesch and Albert Windust. That there seems to have been some rivalry between the two early publishing centers is implied by Thornton Chase, who states that the New York Board of Counsel's wish that all future publishing be carried out in Chicago had led to greater companionship between the two (Chase to Bryant, 17 January 1905, Chase Papers).

Whitmore, "Albert Windust I," p. 12.

Chase to Bryant, 3 October 1905, Chase Papers. Speer, *Missions and Modern History,* p. 165. Thompson to Chase, 27 April 1900, Chase Papers.

Chase to Brittingham, 19 November 1900, Chase Papers.

Chase to Bryant, 3 October 1905, Chase Papers.

Whitmore, "Albert Windust I," p. 12.

Windust to Mills, 7 February 1910, Windust Papers, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111. Cited in Whitmore, "Albert Windust I," p. 12.

Wilson, *Bahaism,* p. 271.

National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá'í Centenary,* p. 157.

Chase to Brittingham, 1 February 1903; and Chase to Abu'1-Fadl, 13 March 1903, Chase Papers.

U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1906,* vol. 2, pp. 41-42. The figure was certainly higher, as no number was recorded for New York City, a major center.

Idem, *Census of 1916,* vol. 2, pp. 43-44.

Idem, *Census of 1906,* vol. 2, pp. 41-42; idem, *Census of 1916,* vol. 2, p. 45.

Chase to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 27(?) February 1904; Chase to Asadu'llah, 17 June 1902, Chase Papers.

Chase to Abramson, 13 April 1898, Chase papers.

Anise Rideout, "Early History of [the] Bahá'í Community, Boston, Mass.," p. 5, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111.

"History of the Bahá'í Cause in Seattle, Washington," National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111. Chase regarded FitzGerald as something of a maverick in these matters (Chase to Bryant, 3 October 1905, Chase Papers).

Chase to Bryant, 3 October 1905, and 24 May 1906, Chase Papers.

Kheiralla, *Báb-ed-Din,* pp. 12-13.

Cobb, *Memories,* p. 2.

Chase to Bryant, 30 November 1902, Chase Papers.

Chase to Bryant, 24 May 1906, Chase Papers.

Chase to Blake, 21 March 1900; Chase to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 27(?) February 1904: Chase to Bryant, 2 October 1908, 24 April 1909, and 3 June 1911; Chase to unidentified man, 9 May 1911, Chase Papers.

Chase to Bryant, 30 November 1908; and E. and E. A. Rice-Wray to Chase, 22 August 1909, Chase Papers.

Chase to Bryant, 30 November 1908, and 24 August 1909; E. and E. A. Rice-Wray to Chase, 19 July 1909, 23 July 1909, 8 August 1909, and 22 August 1909, Chase Papers.

See Martin, "Sarah Jane Farmer."

99. Chase to Bryant, 3 June 1911, Chase Papers. *Star of the West,* vol. 2, no. 13, pp. 6-7; vol. 2, no. 14, pp. 13-14; vol. 2, no. 16 pp. 12-13.

Star of the West, vol. 3, no. 1 (1912-1913) p. 8.

Ward, "Historical Study," p. 184.

Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By,* pp. 289, 281-82.

Star of the West, vol. 5 (1914-15) pp. 5-7; vol. 7 (1916-17) pp. 104-105, 157.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation,* p. 371.

National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in Canada,* pp. 42, 48-51.

Star of the West, vol. 5 (1913-14) p. 8.

The expected year for the millennium had been fixed by Kheiralla as October 1916-October 1917 *{Beha 'U'llah,* pp. 180-81). The extent to which such a belief survived among the Bahá'ís is unknown, but for some of them it remained strong.

Star of the West, vol. 4 (1913-14), pp. 132, 141-46.

Ibid., vol. 5 (1914-15) p. 104; ibid., vol. 7 (1916-17) pp. 165-66.

Ibid., vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 49-50.

Ibid., vol. 3, no. 19 (1912-13) p. 8; vol. 4 (1913-14) p. 104; vol. 5 (1914-15) pp. 5-9; vol. 7 (1916-17) pp. 96-97.

Cobb, *Memories,* p. 3.

Chase to Bryant, 17 May 1906, Chase Papers.

Star of the West, vol. 5 (1914-15) p. 67.

Bahá'í World, vol. 8, p. 636.

Remey, *Bahai Movement,* p. 98.

Cobb, *Memories,* p. 3.

Vail, "Bahaism," p. 339; Cobb, *Security for a Failing World,* pp. 92-93.

Star of the West, vol. 7 (1916-17) pp. 157-59, 170.

Ibid., vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 106-11, 115-17, 128-33.

Ibid., pp. 150-151, 200-201.

Ibid., vol. 10 (1919-1920) p. 168.

Ibid., vol. 9 (1918-19) p. 154.

Ibid., vol. 10 (1919-20) pp. 54-66; Sohrab, *Divine Plan.*

Quoted in Browne, *Materials,* pp. 150-33.

Ward, "Historical Study," pp. 186-95.

Hostile accounts include: Jessup, "The Bábites"; Vatralsky, "Mohammedan Gnosticism"; a number of articles by Wilson which

were later to form part of a book, *Bahaism;* Shedd, "Bahaism"; Richardson, "Persian Rival to Jesus." Other accounts include: Ross, "Bábism"; Bixby, "Behaism"; Carus, "Bábism"; Dime, "Millenium." Additionally, Adams, *Persia,* pp. 453-89 and Speer, *Missions,* vol. 1, pp. 121-82, devote considerable attention to the new religion in works of a wider nature.

Chase to unnamed Bahá'í woman, 14 September 1902, Chase Papers.

See note 65. As both recorded incidents took place in Chicago, they may have been a reflection on the troubled state of that community.

Nevertheless, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to Asadu'llah encouraging both the organizing of "Houses of Justices of men and assemblies of teaching of maid-servants of God" as well as "electing men and women teachers, and their traveling and journeying in all parts" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets,* p. 5).

Chase reported that the change in name was because of foreign (oriental?) political implications, not because the body was doing things other Bahá'ís did not approve of (Chase to Bryant, 9 October 1902, Chase Papers). Equally likely, however, was that it was to avoid confusion with the Behaist House of Justice which had also been formed by 1901 (Muhammad-Ali and Badi'u'llah to the president of the House of Justice [F. O. Pease], 31 March 1901, in Johnson, "Critical Transformations," pp. 434-38).

See William Collins' essay in this volume.

Star of the West, vol. 1, no. 1 (1910-11) p. 17.

See in particular Chase to Bryant, 27 September 1902, 9 October 1902, and 24 May 1906; Chase to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 24 April 1906; and Chase to Agnew, 21 January 1910, Chase Papers. According to this last letter, a "feminine party" had succeeded in putting out the "Old Counsel Board" in New York. On cooperation, see Chase to Bryant, 11 December 1903, Chase Papers.

National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá'í Centenary,* p. 160.

Examples are cited in Remey ("Protection of the Cause," pp. 12, 15-16) and in Chase to Bryant, 9 January 1905, 17 May 1906, 24 May 1906, 2 October 1908, 30 November 1908, and 13 December 1908; Chase to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 24 April 1906; and Chase to Agnew, 14 November 1910, Chase Papers.

Chase to Bryant, 24 May 1906, Chase Papers.

Dime, "Millenium," p. 175; *Star of the West,* vol. 8 (1917-18) p. 107; ibid., p. 106.

Los Angeles, Boston, Honolulu, Cleveland, Detroit, Philadelphia, Seattle, and Washington histories, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111.; see also, *Star of the West,* vol. 1, no. 1 (1909-10) p. 15; vol. 1, no. 2 (1910-11) pp. 6-7; and Alexander, *Forty Years of the Bahá'í Cause in Hawaii,* p. 21.

Star of the West, vol. 1, no. 2 (1910-11) p. 7.

Ibid., vol. 8 (1917-18) p. 201; *Reality,* vol. 5, no. 10 (1923) p. 56.

Star of the West, vol. 2, no. 16 (1911-12) pp. 9-10; no. 1 (1911-12) p. 6; vol. 1, no. 1 (1910-11) p. 4; vol. 2, no. 4 (1911-12) p. 15; vol. 3, no. 5 (1912-13) p. 5.

Whitmore, "Corinne True I," pp. 6-8. Corinne True was later to act as Financial Secretary of the Temple Unity, a job which she continued to hold throughout the Temple Unity's existence. For those who resented what they saw as female domination, her prominence was not entirely welcomed (ibid., p. 10). 'Abdu'l-Bahá's support for Corinne True is evidenced by his directing three members of the Chicago House of Spirituality at the end of their 1907 pilgrimage to consult with Mrs. True about the Temple on their return, as he had "given her complete instructions" (cited in ibid., p. 8).

General letter of the Washington, D.C. assembly, February 1908, Chase Papers; Whitmore, "Corinne True I," p. 9. See also Chase to Bryant, 2 October 1908, where Chase refers to a forthcoming meeting about the Temple called by the House of Spirituality at Mrs. True's home, but to which few members were likely to go as they did not consider it important.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets,* vol. 1, p. 100. See also, True, *Table Talks,* p. 124; Whitmore, "Corinne True I," p. 10.

Shoghi Effendi *(God Passes By,* p. 262) has 39 delegates and 36 cities, while Whitmore ("Corinne True II," p. 14) has the two numbers reversed. The list in the Bahai Temple Unity's *Record of the Bahai Temple Convention* (1909) has 39 delegates and 35 cities, one city (Spokane) being listed twice.

Bahai Temple Unity, *Convention.*

Star of the West, vol. 4 (1913-14) p. 138.

Ibid., vol. 1, no. 4 (1910-11) p. 1.

Ibid., vol. 2, no. 4 (1911-12) p. 15; vol. 3, no. 5 (1912-13) p. 5.

On the Publicity Committee, see the Executive Board minutes for 28 November 1915, and on the fund for traveling teachers, see those for 25 April 1915, and 27 November 1915 (Bahai Temple Unity Records, National Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, 111.).

I have not been able to determine to what extent the children of Bahai parents were considered part of the community during this period. Initially, the only local community to establish a Bahá'í Sunday School appears to have been Racine, Wisconsin—a smaller, and atypically, a largely working-class community (Racine History, Canadian National Bahá'í Archives, Toronto, Ontario). Later, Sunday Schools were established in a few other towns, including one in Washington, D.C. which received the enthusiastic support of Joseph and Pauline Hannen, prominent advocates of Bahá'í children's classes. Overall, little organized activity seems to have taken place. Only one Sunday School with thirty-two students was reported to the 1906 census, and this number had only increased to four schools (two in states without a Bahá'í assembly) and eighty-six students by 1916 (U.S., *Census of 1906,* p. 42. and *Census of 1916,* p. 45).

Star of the West, vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 131-32.

This listing has been derived from various sources on the basis of recorded activities (for example, public speaking, visits to Bahá'í communities, hosting Bahá'í meetings, acting as a Bahá'í spokesman) and repute in Chase's correspondence. The various local histories and Chase's correspondence have been the main sources. Much more detailed work needs to be done before anything like a definitive list can be prepared.

Bahai Temple Unity, *Convention; Star of the West,* vol. 1, no. 4 (1910-11) pp. 10-11; vol. 2, no. 4 (1911-12) pp. 8-9; vol. 3, no. 5 (1912-13) pp. 2-3; vol. 4 (1913-14) pp. 130-31; vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 129-30.

The twenty-five were as follows: Arthur S. Agnew, Chicago; Willard H. Ashton, Rockford, 111.; Zia Bagdadi, Chicago *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 7, pp. 535-39); Ella G. Cooper, San Francisco *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 12, pp. 681-84); Helen S. Goodall, Oakland, Cal.; Louis G. Gregory, Washington, D.C. *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 12, pp. 666-70); Albert H. Hall, Minneapolis; Joseph H. Hannen, Washington D.C; Hooper Harris, New York; H. Emogene Hoagg, California *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 10, pp. 520-26); William H. Hoar, New Jersey; Bernard M. Jacobsen, Kenosha, Wis.; Edward Kinney, New York *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 12, pp. 677-79); Ali Kuli Khan, Washington, D.C. *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 14, pp. 351-53); Alfred E. Lunt, Boston *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 7, pp. 531-34); Mountford Mills, New York; Harlan F. Ober, Boston *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 12, pp. 866-71); Anna L. Parmer-ton, Cincinnati; Agnes Parson, Washington, D.C. *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 5, pp. 410-14); W. H. Randall, Boston; Charles Mason Remey,

Washington, D.C.; Corinne True, Chicago; Albert Vail, Urbana, 111.; Roy C. Wilhelm, New York *(Bahai World,* vol. 12 pp. 662-64); and Percy Woodcock, New York.

This is based on data for twelve individuals: Cooper, Gregory, Hall, Harris, Hoagg, Khan, Kinney, Lunt, Ober, Remey, True, and Wilhelm.

Dodge, "Bahai Revelation," pp. 57, 61.

Remey, *Bahai Movement,* p. 44.

Star of the West, vol. 5 (1914-15) p. 8.

Ibid., vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 128-33, 106-111, 115. Dime, "Millenium," p. 167, 179-80. Dan. 12:12.

Remey, "Protection of the Cause," p. 3.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of the Divine Plan,* p. 22; Sohrab, *Unveiling of the Divine Plan,* p. 30. Dime, "Millenium," pp. 176-77.

Woodrow Wilson was highly regarded by both 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who praised his earnestness and self-sacrifice in the cause of peace *(Star of the West,* vol. 10 [1919-20] p. 42), and Shoghi Effendi *(Citadel of Faith,* p. 36).

A popular belief (not supported by any official statement) is that Wilson's formulation of the Fourteen Points at Versailles was influenced by the Bahá'í teachings through his daughter, who is said to have been "an ardent student of the Bahá'í teachings" (Guy Murchie, "I Am A Bahá'í," *Chicago Sunday Tribune,* 3 (13?) July 1958, p. 4. Miller strongly disputes these claims on the authority of Wilson's grandson, Francis Sayre *(Bahá'í Faith,* p. 353).

Star of the West, vol. 10 (1919-20) pp. 30, 42. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Bahá'u'lldh,* pp. 29-30. *Star of the West,* vol. 13 (1922-23) p. 74.

Talmon, *Millenarian Movements,* p. 177.

Bahá'í Historical Records Card: James C. Oakshette. Jessup, "Bábítes," p. 456. Judah, "Indian Philosophy"; idem, *Metaphysical Movements.*

Ahlstrom, *Religious History,* p. 1020.

Judah, *Metaphysical Movements,* p. 7, 11-19.

The examples of unconventional ideas given here are drawn from Remey, "Protection of the Cause," the eventually heterodox Bahá'í magazine *Reality,* and various letters by Chase.

Star of the West, vol. 10 (1919-20) p. 344; Esslemont, *New Era* (1923), p. 166.

Star of the West, ibid. Bixby, "What is Bahaism," p. 842. The doctrine of "return" *(Rij'at)* refers to the return of the same

spiritual qualities and attributes manifested in different individuals in successive religious dispensations.

Wallis, "Cultic Movements," p. 304.

Chase to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 27(7) February 1904; Chase to Bryant, 19 January 1911; Chase to Agnew, 9 June 1910, Chase Papers. *Bahá’í World,* vol. 9, p. 856.

Remey, "Protection of the Cause," p. 15-16. Chase to Bryant, 30 November 1908.

The man was Percy Woodcock, a leading New York Bahá’í. Similar claims would also appear to have been made by some individual in the 1940s with reference to Shoghi Effendi. The latter dismissed the idea in no uncertain terms *(Bahá’í Institutions,* p. 112).

Remey, "Protection of the Cause," p. 15.

Harmon described how at a meeting with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Dublin, New Hampshire, he felt himself to be in the presence of an almost supernatural power, seeing '‘Abdu’l-Bahá as a radiant divine incarnation who instructed him to write a book on divine illumination. The book, having received '‘Abdu’l-Bahá's blessing was published by the Boston Bahá’ís in 1915 *(Divine Illumination*, pp. *7-8*, 10-12). The extremely hostile report of the Committee of Investigation also refers to a set of lessons titled "Study of Reality" (pp. 10-11). It was this later work which seems to have caused the trouble.

Star of the West, vol. 5 (1914-15) p. 67. This quotation was used by opponents of organization in their efforts to restrict or prevent its development. Shoghi Effendi was later (1929) to describe the passage as "an obscure and unauthenticated translation of an oral statement" which could hardly be used "as the sole criterion of truth ... in defiance and total disregard of the available text of all His ['‘Abdu’l-Bahá's] universally recognized writings" *(World Order of Bahá'u'lldh,* p. 4).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Esslemont, *New Era* (1923), p. 70. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Hammond, *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London,* p. 109. Gaver, *Bahá’í Faith,* p. 17. Phelps, *Abbas Effendi,* p. 96, 97.

Vail, "Bahaism," p. 339. *Star of the West,* vol. 13 (1922-23) p. 70. Vail, ibid. Holbach, "The Bahai Movement," p. 453. United States, *Census of 1916*, vol. 2, p. 44.

Johnson, "Critical Transformations," p. 392; see also pp. 289-301. Atkins, *Modern Religious Cults,* p. 328. Speer, *Missions*, vol. 1, pp. 141, 166.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablets* (1922-25), p. 380.

Star of the West, vol. 7 (1916-17) p. 51. Ibid., vol. 10 (1919-20) p. 226. Bahá'u'lláh, *Tarazat,* p. 84. Remey, *Bahai Movement,* pp. 99-100. *Star of the West,* vol. 5 (1914-15) p. 344; Esslemont, *New Era,* p. 166.

Alter, *Studies in Bahaism,* pp. 68-69. Alter suggests that some Western Bahá'ís treated their religion purely in sociological terms, using it as only a vehicle for their free-thinking ideas on socialism and society. Alter refers specifically to Horace Holley's *The Modern Social Religion* (1913), which contains Holley's appeal for a form of Christian socialism. Holley himself pointed out that his conceptualization of the Bahá'í Faith later underwent considerable development *{Bahai World,* vol. 13, p. 850).

Berger, "From Sect to Church," p. 173. Richardson, "Persian Rival to Jesus," pp. 482-83.

Alter, *Studies in Bahaism,* p. 69.

Dodge quoted in Speer, *Missions,* vol. 1, p. 165. Ward, "Historical Study," pp. 198-99. *Star of the West,* vol. 1, no. 3 (1910-11) p. 13. Seattle History.

Survey, 27 April 1912, p. 179.

Star of the West, vol. 7 (1916-17) p. 66; vol. 8 (1917-18) pp. 153-56. *Bahai World,* vol. 13, p. 864.

Star of the West, vol. 4 (1913-14) p. 322; vol. 7 (1916-17) p. 66.

Remey, "Protection of the Cause," p. 7.

In one celebrated instance 'Abdu'l-Bahá insisted on the attendance of one of the black Bahá'ís at a dinner for Washington notables that was held in his honor and gave the black Bahá'í the seat of honor beside him. During his tour and with his encouragement, two Bahá'ís—Louis Gregory, the most prominent black believer, and Louisa Mathew, a white Englishwoman—were married in New York *(Bahá'í World,* vol. 12, p. 668; vol. 13, p. 876).

National Spiritual Assembly, *Centenary,* pp. 202-205. *Star of the West,* vol. 12 (1921-22) pp. 50-55, 60-61.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets,* vol. 2, p. 380.

Ives, *Portals,* pp. 14-15.

Alter, *Studies in Bahaism,* pp. 15-16.

See Ferraby, *All Things Made New,* pp. 241-55; National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, *Power of the Covenant.*

Abdel-Karim, *Addresses;* MacNutt, *Report of First Meeting,* pp. 2, 13.

Browne, *Materials,* pp. 154-55.

MacNutt, *Unity,* p. 12.

At a much later date, the practice of requiring applicants for Bahá'í membership to study the *Will and Testament* of 'Abdu'l-Bahá —a document primarily concerned with the Covenant, the Administrative Order based on it, and Covenant-breaking—before their applications were accepted was common in Western Bahá'í communities.

Thus while Thornton Chase in his letters describing Bahá'í life in Chicago occasionally complains of the machinations of the Behaist sympathizer Sarah Herron and her attempts to lure Bahá'ís away from 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Covenant itself is rarely mentioned, and "occultism," rather than Covenant-breaking is seen as the main danger to the community.

'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets,* vol. *2,* pp. 316-18, 376; Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p. 220.

Remey et al., "Report of Committee of Investigation," pp. 3, 20.

Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá,* pp. 271-72. Kheiralla was then living in Chicago, and at least one of the Bahá'ís was in association with him, but their activities are unknown. The Bahá'í in question was Dr. Nutt, who appears to have been a thorn in the side of the Chicago community for some time (Remey, "Protection of the Cause," p. 8; Remey et al., "Report of Committee of Investigation," pp. 20, 25) and who was nearly elected to the Executive Board in 1912. I assume that he is the same individual who is referred to by Balyuzi *{'Abdu'l-Bahá,* p. 271) and Collins ("Kenosha II," p. 2) as Dr. Knott, presumably a mistaken transliteration from the Persian diary account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels, *Kitab-i Badáy'u l-Athar* ("Mahmud's Diary").

Star of the West, vol. 3, no. 14 (1912-13) p. 8.

Ibid., vol. 4 (1913-14) p. 242.

It is extremely ironic that at a much later date and after appointment as a Hand of the Cause and service as the President of the International Bahá'í Council, Remey himself was declared a Covenant-breaker in 1960, following his claim to succeed Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith (Johnson, "Critical Transformations," p. 342-58). An interesting point of continuity is the apocalyptic tone adopted by Remey in the 1906 article and his doctrine of the "great global catastrophe" proclaimed during and after his break with the majority of the Bahá'ís.

Star of the West, vol. 4 (1913-14) pp. 171-75.

Ibid., pp. 176-77.

This is not to say that Remey's articulation of the doctrine of the Covenant was necessarily original—indeed it seems more likely that it was developed as a result of contacts with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and various oriental Bahá’í teachers during Remey's travels—but that it was novel in terms of the understanding the majority of the American Bahá’ís had of their Faith.

As has often been the case with other instances of Covenant-breaking, Western Bahá’í sources make scant reference to the Fareed affair. Even Remey is fairly oblique in his reference to the episode ("Protection of the Cause," pp. 18-19). *Star of the West* printed only ‘Abdu’l-Bahá's references to the affair without giving any names (Vol. 5 [1914-15] pp. 168, 184, 201, 211-18, 233-34), and Balyuzi *(‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 230, 402, 407-409) only gives a short account. A version of the affair supplied by Fareed appeared in the September 1923 issue of *Reality* (Vol. 6, no. 9, pp. 40-46).

Interestingly enough, Fareed seems to have been the center of some controversy as early as 1906, while still in Chicago. Thornton Chase, who initially took a great liking to the young man, expressed his annoyance at what he saw as Fareed's increasing pride and desire for leadership, describing the coterie of women admirers who surrounded Fareed (the "Fareed devotees") and the cooling of relations between this group and the House of Spirituality (Chase to Bryant, 17 May 1906, and 24 May 1906, Chase Papers). Both Chase and Balyuzi *(‘Abdu’l-Bahá,* p. 230) charge Fareed with dishonesty.

Fareed and Asadu'llah both remained excommunicate until their deaths. Sprague eventually made his apologies and was accepted back into the American Bahá’í community in 1941, after ten years of effort *(Bahá’í World,* vol. 9, p. 635). Balyuzi gives 1937 as the date of his final repentance.

The main sources for these events are Remey et al., "Report of the Committee of Investigation," Remey, "An Open Letter," "Firmness in the Covenant," "Protection of the Cause." These documents, mimeographed and "for private circulation only," obviously reflect the "official" viewpoint on the affair. But they do at least reproduce both the original allegations of the "Reading Room people" (Remey et al., "Report of Committee of Investigation") and the later criticisms of the Committee's actions (Remey, "An Open Letter") in order to refute them.

Parsons to Boyle, 14 December 1917, Parsons Papers, National Bahá’í Archives, Wilmette, 111. For those present at the meeting see Remey et al., "Report of Committee of Investigation," pp. 32-33.

Remey, "An Open Letter."

Remey, "Protection of the Cause."

Ibid., pp. 3, 28.

Remey, "An Open Letter."

Star of the West, vol. 9 (1918-19) p. 50-54. Most of the absentees were individuals who were not regular convention at-tenders, predominantly Bahá'ís from the Midwest and Northeast, that is, from the same areas where Harmonite ideas seem to have been popular.

Star of the West, vol. 9 (1918-19) p. 76.

That is, the introduction of "a more definite basis for voting membership" and the limiting of the 1926 census figures to voting members of local communities which had a Local Spiritual Assembly (and which, therefore, had to have at least nine members) (U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1926,* vol. 2, p. 70).

U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1916,* vol. 2, p. 45; idem, *Census of 1926,* vol. 2, p. 72.

Star of the West, vol. 9 (1918-19) p. 41.

Ibid., vol. 4 (1913-14) pp. 135-36.

Ibid., vol. 9 (1918-19) pp. 55-58; Remey, "Protection of the Cause," pp. 8-9; Remey to "the Friends of the Green Acre Fellowship regarding the development and maintenance of the constructive universal policy of Bahai teachings in Green Acre," 21 November 1919, Chase Papers.

Reality, vol. 6, no. 9 (Sept. 1923) pp. 40-46. Harrison Gray Dyar (1866-1929), a rather curious figure in American Bahá'í history, edited the Bahá'í magazine *Reality* for a period (1922-1929), during which he presented his particular interpretation of the Bahá'í Movement. Although considering himself a Bahá'í, he was indifferent or disdainful toward a primarily religious interpretation of the Bahá'í teachings, and was not generally considered to be a Bahá'í by leading American Bahá'ís. His editorship of *Reality* was made possibly by the fact that from 1922 onwards the magazine was basically under non-Bahá'í ownership. From 1925 onwards, market pressures resulted in *Reality* becoming a *de facto* metaphysical magazine, although retaining a nominal identification as a Bahá'í magazine for a while.

U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1906,* vol. 2, p. 42. Lack of detailed information precludes any reliable discussion of Bahá'í religious practice at this time.

Richardson, "Persian Rival," p. 482.

Star of the West, vol. 13 (1922-23) p. 70.

U.S., Dept. of Commerce, *Census of 1926,* vol. 2, p. 76.

National Spiritual Assembly, *Bahá'í Centenary,* p. 157; Chase to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 27(7) February 1904; Chase to Brittingham, 25 May 1902, Chase Papers.

Star of the West, vol. 2, no. 16 (1911-12) pp. 11-12, 13, 14.

Johnson, "Critical Transformations," p. 392.

Star of the West, vol. 13 (1922-23) p. 25.

Remey to "the Friends of the Green Acre Fellowship . . . ,"21 November 1919, Chase Papers.

While Johnson's argument is applied to the development of the Bahá'í Faith as a whole, this particular transformation is supported almost entirely with evidence from the Western, especially American, communities.