



# ONE COUNTRY

## INSIDE

Newsletter of the Bahá'í  
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2

Perspective: The UN at 60: The Search for Values in an Age of Transition.



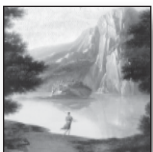
4

In Germany, Bahá'ís celebrate 100 years of crisis and achievement.



13

At Green Acre, the first "modern" peace treaty and a woman's contribution to it is commemorated.



16

Review: *Restless Souls* — Leigh Eric Schmidt explores the quest for enlightenment in the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

## In Guyana, young people take the lead in an effort to avoid risky behaviors

Innovative and popular, Youth Can Move the World offers leadership training for young people to help them avoid alcohol and drug abuse, HIV/AIDS, and other social problems.



*Youth Can Move the World* program coordinator Farah Beepat, center, discusses ways to avoid domestic violence with 11- to 15-year-olds at the Uitvlugt Secondary School in Uitvlugt, Guyana.

GEORGETOWN, Guyana — With an empty Coke bottle for a pint of rum and a white plastic chair the only other prop, the skit performed by five young men and women during a recent meeting of the Future Club here told a story that is unfortunately all too familiar in this vibrant South American country.

A husband drinks too much and beats his wife, shouting and swearing at her for failing to have dinner ready on time. Crying and inconsolably depressed after many such episodes, she decides to take her own life. Her planned method is to drink "Gramazone," the local name for the widely available herbicide Paraquat, which offers a certain if painfully slow death.

However, as performed before an audience of several dozen other young people from every section of this gritty coastal capital one recent day, the young woman's friends intervene, pleading with her not to take her life.

And so the heroine, played by 16-year-old Rayana Jaundoo, triumphantly throws the poison aside. "I have learned I don't care what other people do and what other people say," she says, breaking character and addressing the audience directly. "I can live a positive life."

Although a little overplayed, it is a happy ending, just the sort encouraged by the young facilitators of an innovative and highly successful youth leadership training program here, known as Youth Can Move the World (YCMTW).

*Guyana, continued on page 9*

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## The Search for Values in an Age of Transition

[Editor's note: The following Perspective editorial is adapted from "The Search for Values in an Age of Transition," issued recently by the Bahá'í International Community for the 60th anniversary of the United Nations. The full statement is at: [http://www.onecountry.org/e172/BIC\\_UN\\_60th.htm](http://www.onecountry.org/e172/BIC_UN_60th.htm)]

In 1945, the founding of the United Nations gave a war-weary world a vision of what was possible in the arena of international cooperation and set a new standard by which to guide diverse peoples and nations towards a peaceful coexistence. Sixty years later, the questions that fuelled the San Francisco Conference assert themselves anew: Why have the current systems of governance failed to provide for the security, prosperity, and well-being of the world's people?

The challenges facing the international community are numerous: Weak states have erupted in conflict, lawlessness, and massive refugee flows; the advancement of men and boys at the expense of women and girls has sorely limited the creative and material capacities of communities to develop; the neglect of cultural and religious minorities has intensified ancient prejudices setting peoples and nations against one another; an unbridled nationalism has trampled the rights and opportunities of citizens in other nations; and narrow economic agendas exalting material prosperity have often suffocated the social and moral development required for the equitable and beneficent use of wealth.

Such crises have laid bare the limits of traditional approaches to governance and put before the UN the inescapable question of values: which values are capable of guiding the nations and peoples of the world out of the chaos of competing interests and ideologies towards a world community capable of inculcating the principles of justice and equity at all levels of human society?

Significantly, the question of values and their inextricable link to systems of religion and belief has emerged on the world stage as a subject of consuming global importance. A growing number of leaders and deliberative bodies acknowledge that the full impact of religion-related variables on governance,

diplomacy, human rights, development, notions of justice, and collective security must be better understood.

Among humanity's diverse civilizations, religion has provided the framework for new moral codes and legal standards, which have transformed vast regions of the globe from brutish and often anarchical systems to more sophisticated forms of governance. The existing public debate about religion, however, has been driven by extremists on both sides — those who impose their religious ideology by force, whose most visible expression is terrorism — and those who deny any place for expressions of faith or belief in the public sphere. Neither is representative of the majority view, and neither promotes a sustainable peace.

At this juncture of our evolution as a global community, the search for shared values — beyond the clash of extremes — is paramount for effective action. A concern with exclusively material considerations will fail to appreciate the degree to which religious, ideological, and cultural variables shape diplomacy and decision-making. In an effort to move beyond a community of nations bound by primarily economic relationships to one with shared responsibilities for one another's well-being and security, the question of values must take a central place in deliberations, be articulated and made explicit.

We can no longer be content with a passive tolerance of each other's worldviews; what is required is an active search for those common values and moral principles which will lift up the condition of every woman, man, and child, regardless of race, class, religion, or political opinion.

The emerging global order, and the processes of globalization that define it, must be founded on the principle of the oneness of humankind. This principle, accepted and affirmed as a common understanding, provides the practical basis for the organization of relationships between all states and nations. The increasingly apparent interconnectedness of development, security, and human rights on a global scale confirms that peace and prosperity are indivisible — that no sustainable benefit can be conferred on a nation or community if the welfare of the nations as a whole is

ignored or neglected.

The principle of the oneness of humankind does not seek to undermine national autonomy or suppress the cultural and intellectual diversity of the peoples and nations of the world. Rather, it seeks to broaden the basis of the existing foundations of society by calling for a wider loyalty, a greater aspiration than any that has animated the human race. Indeed, it provides the moral impetus needed to remold the institutions of governance in a manner consistent with the needs of an ever-changing world.

We recommend the following towards a more just and effective United Nations:

**Human Rights and the Rule of Law** — The grave threats posed by religious extremism, intolerance, and discrimination require the United Nations to address this issue openly and earnestly. We call on the UN to affirm unequivocally an individual's right to change his or her religion.

The Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights, bolstered by the requisite moral, intellectual, and material resources, must now become the standard-bearer in the field of human rights. Further, as one of the most effective instruments for the protection of human rights, Special Procedures should receive adequate budgetary and administrative support.

**Development** — While the search for a scientific and technologically modern society is a central goal of human development, it must base its educational, economic, political, and cultural structures on the concept of the spiritual nature of the human being and not only on his or her material needs.

The capacity of people to participate in the generation and application of knowledge is an essential component of human development. Priority must be given to education, and the UN should consider that in terms of economic investment, the education of girls may well yield the highest return of all investments available in developing countries.

The rich countries of the world have a moral obligation to remove export and trade distorting measures that bar the entry of countries struggling to participate in the global market. The Monterrey Consensus, which recognizes the importance of a 'more open, rule-based, non-discriminatory and equitable' system of trade, is a step in the right direction.

**Democracy** — The exercise of democracy will succeed to the extent that it is governed by the moral principles that are in harmony with the evolving interests of a rap-

idly maturing human race. These include: trustworthiness and integrity needed to win the respect and support of the governed; transparency; consultation with those affected by decisions being arrived at; objective assessment of needs and aspirations of communities being served; and the appropriate use of scientific and moral resources.

**Collective Security** — Based on the understanding that in our interconnected world, a threat to one is a threat to all, the Bahá'í Faith envisions a system of collective security within a framework of a global federation, in which national borders have been conclusively defined and in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded all rights to maintain armaments except for purposes of maintaining internal order.

To address the democracy deficit and relentless politicization of the Security Council, the United Nations must move towards adopting a procedure for eventually eliminating permanent membership and veto power. Alongside procedural reforms, a critical change in attitude and conduct is needed. Member States must recognize that in holding seats on the Security Council, they have a solemn moral and legal obligation to act as trustees for the entire community of nations, not as advocates of their national interests.

We agree with the Secretary-General's characterization of terrorism as any action "intended to cause death or serious bodily harm to civilians or non-combatants with the purpose of intimidating a population or compelling a Government or an international organization to do or abstain from doing any act." Moreover, it is imperative that problems such as terrorism be consistently addressed within the context of other issues that disrupt and destabilize society.

Steps should be taken to increase the participation of women at all levels of decision-making in conflict resolution and peace processes, locally, nationally, and internationally.

The task of establishing a peaceful world is now in the hands of the leaders of the nations of the world. Their challenge is to restore the trust and confidence of their citizens in themselves, their government, and the institutions of the international order through a record of personal integrity, sincerity of purpose, and unwavering commitment to the highest principles of justice and the imperatives of a world hungering for unity. The great peace long envisioned by the peoples and nations of the world is well within our grasp.\*

***In an effort to move beyond a community of nations bound by primarily economic relationships to one with shared responsibilities for one another's well-being and security, the question of values must take a central place in deliberations, be articulated and made explicit.***

## In Germany, Bahá'ís celebrate 100 years of crisis and achievement

Among the performances enjoyed by some 1,800 participants gathered to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith in Germany were these young dancers from the Anna Koestlin Schule.



**Featuring prayers, speeches, music, and theatrical performances, the program took note of the “dark” times when the Bahá'í Faith was banned under Nazism — and of the joyous highlights that have followed during modern Germany's reconstruction and prosperity.**

STUTTGART, Germany — Capping a multifaceted observance of the 100th anniversary of the Bahá'í Faith in Germany, some 1,800 participants gathered in this southwestern German city to commemorate a history both “darkened” by crisis and “highlighted” by achievement.

People came from every region of Germany and at least 25 other nations for the day-long jubilee, held 10 September 2005 at the Stuttgart Congress Center.

Featuring prayers, speeches, music, and theatrical performances, the program took note of the “dark” times when the Bahá'í Faith was banned under Nazism — and of the joyous highlights that have followed during modern Germany's reconstruction and prosperity.

Performances, including old film clips and photographs, depicted events such as arrival of the first Bahá'í in Germany in 1905, an historic visit by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1913, the interrogation of a Bahá'í at a police station during the Nazi regime, and the joyous consecration of the Bahá'í House of Worship in Langenhain in 1964.

The September commemoration followed significant events in April and May that fo-

cused on the outward relationships the Bahá'í community has forged over the last 100 years.

On 10 May 2005, a centenary reception was held at the Berlin headquarters of the government of Hesse, the state in which the House of Worship and the Bahá'í national center are located.

That reception was marked by a congratulatory message from the German Minister for Home Affairs, Otto Schily, who praised the contributions of German Bahá'ís in the promotion of social stability.

“The protection and preservation of common values as well as the equality of all human beings are basic principles of the Bahá'í Faith, and its adherents support them actively in public discourse in Germany,” said Mr. Schily.

Mr. Schily said that Bahá'u'lláh's “extremely humane” principle guiding people to dedicate themselves to the service of the entire human race is valid for all the great religions of the world as well as for every country concerned with human beings and their rights.

“It is not enough to make a declaration of belief,” Mr. Schily said. “It is important to live according to the basic values of our



constitutional state, to defend them and make them secure in the face of all opposition. The members of the Bahá'í Faith do this because of their faith and the way they see themselves."

Further, he said, in view of the inflammatory slogans by some extremist groups, the 2002 message of the Universal House of Justice to the world's religious leaders — which called on them to act decisively to eradicate religious intolerance and fanaticism — was of great importance.

Together, Mr. Schily said, Germans must abolish racial and ethnic prejudices and fight the nationalism that incites hatred of others rather than enriches the love of one's country.

"I wish the Bahá'í community in Germany a peaceful and dignified future for their members but also, true to their own guiding principle, for all humankind," he said.

The May program included a panel discussion on the "Requirements of Social Cohesion" that focused on social integration and the role of religion in modern society.

In a keynote address introducing the discussion, a prominent member of the German federal parliament, Ernst Ulrich von Weizsaecker, commended the ideas of the German Bahá'í community on social integration, which were published in a statement in 1998.

Other participants in the panel discussion included: the state secretary in the Federal Ministry of Family Affairs, Senior Citizens, Women, and Youth, Marieluise Beck; the president of the Federal Agency of Civic Education, Thomas Krueger; the plenipotentiary of the Council of the Protestant Church of Germany to the Federal Republic and the European Union, Stephan Reimers; and the academic director of the Townshend International School in the Czech Republic, Friedo Zoelzer.

Among the invited guests were Buddhists, Christians, Hindus, Jews, and Muslims.

On 22 April, a reception was held at the national Bahá'í center in Hofheim-Langenhain, next to the Bahá'í House of Worship.

Guests included representatives of the Federal and European Parliaments, the government of Hesse, the cities of Hofheim and Wiesbaden, and political parties.

At that reception, the state secretary of the Ministry of Science and Art of Hesse, Joachim-Felix Leonhard, praised the principles of the Bahá'í Faith, describing the Bahá'í message as "cosmopolitan, global, and modern."

"The Bahá'ís," said Professor Leonhard, "are seeking to communicate and under-

stand at a time when others are talking about a clash of civilizations."

The mayor of Hofheim, Gisela Stang, referred to initial opposition to the establishment of the House of Worship 41 years ago but said the Bahá'ís are now fully integrated into the community.

"They provide an important impulse for the city and for society," said Ms. Stang, referring to the forums the Bahá'ís organize and to their cultural diversity.

Representing the city of Wiesbaden, Angelika Thiels thanked the Bahá'í community for its contribution towards nurturing understanding among religions. Ms. Thiels also referred to the contribution of the Bahá'í community in offering to the wider society regular children's classes in which pupils learn about spiritual and moral values.

The September event was held in Stuttgart because that was where the German Bahá'í community was first established, by Edwin Fischer, a German-born dentist who emigrated in 1878 from Germany to New York, became a Bahá'í there, and then returned to his native country in 1905.

Dr. Fisher used every opportunity, including talking with his patients, to mention the Bahá'í teachings, and in time a number of Germans embraced the new religion.

The community grew and in 1913 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of Bahá'u'lláh and the

***"The protection and preservation of common values as well as the equality of all human beings are basic principles of the Bahá'í Faith, and its adherents support them actively in public discourse in Germany."***

**— Otto Schily,  
German Minister for  
Home Affairs**

*The ups and downs of the German Bahá'í history, including an interrogation at a police station during the prohibition of the Bahá'í Faith under the Nazi-regime, were staged by a group of Bahá'í youth as part of centenary celebrations in September.*



***“The Bahá’ís are seeking to communicate and understand at a time when others are talking about a clash of civilizations.”***

**— Joachim-Felix Leonhard, state secretary of the Ministry of Science and Art of Hesse**

head of the Faith from 1892 to 1921, visited Stuttgart. By 1923, the community had formed the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Germany, a national-level governing council.

From 1937 to 1945 Bahá’í activities were banned in Nazi Germany, in part because of the Faith’s progressive teachings, including the oneness of humanity. Local Bahá’í communities were dissolved and their literature was confiscated. Some of the believers were interrogated, imprisoned, and deported by the authorities. Some Bahá’ís of Jewish background were killed by the regime.

After World War II the German Bahá’í community reestablished its activities. Help in this effort came, in part, from American Bahá’ís, who sent their German co-religionists money, food and literature, and aided them in rebuilding their administrative structures.

One of the featured guests at the September commemoration was John Eichenauer, a US soldier and a Bahá’í who had been stationed in post-war Germany. He told participants of his experiences in helping the Bahá’í community of Germany rebuild after the war.

By 1950, there were Bahá’ís living in 65 localities in Germany. In 1964, the Bahá’í House of Worship in Hofheim-Langenhain

near Frankfurt was dedicated. Open to people of all faiths, it is the first Bahá’í House of Worship on the European continent. In 1987, the State of Hesse declared it a cultural monument.

With the political reunification of Germany in 1989, the Bahá’í community was soon reestablished in eastern Germany.

Today, German Bahá’ís live in 900 towns and cities throughout the country. There are 106 local Spiritual Assemblies, as local-level Bahá’í governing councils are known. The Bahá’í community is active in the discourse on interfaith and gender equality issues, as well as in sustainable development and human rights education.

At the September event, for example, Stuttgart’s deputy mayor for social affairs, Gabriele Mueller-Trimbusch, thanked Bahá’ís for their initiative in starting World Religion Day.

“The respect you pay to other world religions, your openness for people who have different opinions, your message of peace for the world we live in, makes you a greatly appreciated partner for us,” she said.

“Stuttgart highly values the activities of the Bahá’í community, because it participates in the social life of our city in an exemplary manner,” Ms. Mueller-Trimbusch said.\*

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## David S. Ruhe, former member of the Universal House of Justice, passes away

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NEW YORK — Dr. David S. Ruhe, former member of the Universal House of Justice, the international governing council of the Bahá’í Faith, died on 6 September 2005 near his home in Newburgh, New York, following a stroke in mid-August. He was 91.

Dr. Ruhe became a Bahá’í in Philadelphia in 1941, subsequently serving on numerous local Spiritual Assemblies and national Bahá’í committees. Elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of the United States in 1959, he served as its secretary from 1963 until 1968, when he was elected to the Universal House of Justice, on which he served until 1993.

A medical doctor, Dr. Ruhe was also an accomplished film-maker, painter, and author. Graduating from the Temple University School of Medicine in 1941, Dr. Ruhe began his medical career during World War II as a malaria researcher with the United States Public Health Service.

In 1954, Dr. Ruhe was named the first

professor of Medical Communications at the University of Kansas Medical School. Among the innovations he introduced there were the use of optical fibers for endoscopic cinematography, the projection of high-definition images in surgical theaters, and videotaping of psychiatric sessions for peer review. He made scores of medical films, winning the Golden Reel award, the Venice Film Festival award, and the Royal Photographic Society of Great Britain award.

Dr. Ruhe was also prolific writer. In his medical career, he authored many papers and two books on aspects of medicine and medical audiovisual communication. During his years at the Bahá’í World Centre, Dr. Ruhe wrote *Door of Hope*, a detailed history of Bahá’í holy places in Israel, published in 1983. Later, he wrote *Robe of Light*, a historical account of Bahá’u’lláh’s early years, published in 1994. Dr. Ruhe is survived by his wife, Margaret, and two sons, Christopher and Douglas, and their families.\*



**Dr. David S. Ruhe**

## In Iran, more arrests and another year without college for Bahá'í youth

NEW YORK — Persecution against the Bahá'ís of Iran has continued to escalate in recent months, with fresh arrests in July, August, and September, and the arrival of another school year in which Bahá'í students are denied access to university.

Some 23 Bahá'ís have been arrested since the end of June, bringing to 53 the total number of Bahá'ís detained in Iran from January through September 2005. All were held on charges solely related to their religious beliefs.

As well, hundreds of Bahá'í youth were again denied access to higher education this year when the Iranian government issued university entrance examination results that falsely indicated they were Muslims, a move the government first tried last year in a ploy aimed at placating human rights monitors while still keeping Bahá'ís out of college.

“Between the rising tide of arbitrary arrests and imprisonments and the continued subterfuge that prevents Bahá'í youth from obtaining a college or university education, it is clear that Iran's treatment of its Bahá'í minority continues to worsen,” said Bani Dugal, the principal representative of the Bahá'í International Community to the United Nations.

“We believe the degree of religious freedom granted to Bahá'ís in Iran remains the litmus test by which the Islamic Republic of Iran should be judged as the world looks for signs of its willingness to behave as a responsible member of the international community of nations,” said Ms. Dugal.

Ms. Dugal said Bahá'ís were arrested in July, August and September in a number of cities across Iran, including Mashhad, Karaj, Sari, Ghaem Shahr, and Babol Sar. Earlier in the year, Bahá'ís were arrested in Tehran, Kata, Semnan, and Shiraz.

“The pattern of arrests is widespread, clearly indicating the systematic nature of the persecution and the involvement of the national government,” said Ms. Dugal.

Ms. Dugal said the pattern of arrests and detentions has also been carried out without concern for due process. She noted, for example, that on 5 September a court in Karaj

sentenced four Bahá'ís to ten months' imprisonment on the basis of a verbal indictment. “Those four, who had been released on bail on 15 August after business licenses had been posted as collateral, asked for a written document stating the charges against them, but the court refused to issue one,” said Ms. Dugal.

As well, Bahá'í homes continue to be searched, and documents and possessions seized, said Ms. Dugal.

The continuing effort to keep Bahá'ís out of colleges and universities is in keeping with a policy established in the late 1980s.

As last year, the government used a cruel ploy to continue to deny Bahá'ís access to higher education. Under pressure from the international community to allow Bahá'ís to return to university, the government in 2004 and again this year allowed Bahá'ís to take national entrance examinations.

However, as with last year, when examination results were returned in August, the government had printed the word Islam in the field indicating the test-taker's religion. Bahá'ís have long made it clear that as a matter of principle they will not falsely say that they are Muslims — or allow themselves to be falsely listed as Muslims.

This year, as well, Bahá'í students approached the government and sought to have the error corrected. And again, they were rebuffed — and so as a matter of principle have refused to enroll.

“Given the government's stated policy of seeking to block the ‘progress and development’ of the Bahá'í community, as outlined in a 1991 government memorandum, this latest episode is clearly aimed at keeping Bahá'ís out of college while placating human rights monitors,” said Ms. Dugal.

“We have information that at least 200 Bahá'í students this year — and probably more — passed the examination and thus qualified for entrance into college,” said Ms. Dugal. “But because the government continues to play games over the very fundamental right to religious belief, these young people are denied access to higher education.”\*

***“This latest episode is clearly aimed at keeping Bahá'ís out of college while placating human rights monitors.”***

**– Bani Dugal, Bahá'í International Community**

## At the UN, world leaders renew promises

UNITED NATIONS — World leaders renewed their five-year-old promise to halve global poverty rates, ensure education for all, and sharply reduce HIV/AIDS and other diseases — and also took new steps towards reforming the United Nations — at the 2005 World Summit in September.

Some 154 heads of state or government attended the Summit, held 14-16 September to assess progress towards meeting the so-called Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which were adopted at the Millennium Summit in 2000 and set global targets for reducing poverty and improving health and education.

“We reaffirm our commitment to eradicate poverty and promote sustained economic growth, sustainable development, and global prosperity for all,” stated the outcome document, the final resolution adopted by the General Assembly at the Summit’s end.

Also on the Summit’s agenda were proposals aimed at reforming the United Nations so as better to meet the needs of a globalizing world in which new and broadly interconnected problems — from terrorism to new diseases to poverty — increasingly threaten international peace and security.

“We believe that today, more than ever before, we live in a global and interdependent world,” stated the outcome document. “No State can stand wholly alone. We acknowledge that collective security depends on effective cooperation, in accordance with international law, against transnational threats.”

World leaders took steps to adopt some of the reform measures that had been proposed in the lead-up to the Summit. Earlier in the year, for example, UN Secretary General Kofi Annan released a report titled “In Larger Freedom” that called for the expansion of the Commission on Human Rights into a more broadly constituted Human Rights Council, urged the creation of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission, and outlined steps to enlarge the Security Council to make it more representative.

The outcome document called for the creation of a Human Rights Council, with the objective of “promoting universal respect for

the protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, without distinction of any kind and in a fair and equal manner.” Decisions about “the mandate, modalities, functions, size, composition, membership, working methods and procedures of the Council,” however, were handed to the 60th session of the General Assembly, which remains in session until next September.

World leaders also established a Peacebuilding Commission, with a mandate “to bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery.”

However, plans to reform the Security Council were even less concrete. While the outcome document states “we support early reform of the Security Council...in order to make it more broadly representative, efficient, and transparent,” no definite proposals were put forward.

Much of the outcome document restated and reaffirmed the broad principles and commitments articulated in United Nations global conferences of the last decade.

“We reaffirm the universality, indivisibility, interdependence, and interrelatedness of all human rights,” world leaders said, echoing one of the most important elements of the Vienna Declaration of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights.

The outcome document likewise emphasized the importance of full employment, sustainable development, and the idea that “progress for women is progress for all,” echoing key themes from the 1992 Earth Summit, the 1995 Social Summit, and the 1995 Fourth World Conference for Women.

Where the 2005 Summit broke new ground was, perhaps, in the broad articulation of the interconnections between the main global challenges facing humanity.

“We acknowledge that peace and security, development, and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being,” world leaders said. “We recognize that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.”\*

***“We acknowledge that peace and security, development, and human rights are the pillars of the United Nations system and the foundations for collective security and well-being. We recognize that development, peace and security, and human rights are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.”***

— 2005 World Summit outcome document



## In Guyana, young people take the lead in an effort to avoid risky behaviors



Young people from around Guyana at a Youth Can Move the World facilitators' training session.

### *Guyana, continued from page one*

The program focuses on the prevention of alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, HIV/AIDS, and domestic violence. Since its founding in 1997, YCMTW has offered more than 7,000 Guyanese young people strategies aimed at helping them cope with and avoid such problems.

Its success at reaching youth on the margins has been widely recognized, not only by other youth-oriented NGOs but also by the government-run national university, which has given support to YCMTW. As well, much of its funding has come from international development agencies and, most recently, researchers at the University of Ulster in Northern Ireland have launched a three-year study on the project's methods and accomplishments.

"The project in Guyana is quite innovative," said Roy McConkey, a professor in the health promotion group at the Institute of Nursing Research at the University of Ulster, who is heading up the study. "They manage to do a remarkable amount of work with very little resources."

Established by the Varqa Foundation, a Bahá'í-inspired non-governmental organiza-

tion based here, YCMTW also emphasizes in its training the importance of — and the possibilities for — personal and community transformation. To do that, the project uses a program of spiritual and moral education produced by the Ruhi Institute of Colombia, which draws quite directly on the Bahá'í writings for its motive power.

"From the very beginning of the project, we saw that the only way that genuine change could come about was through community and personal transformation," said Brian O'Toole, director of YCMTW and chairman of the Varqa Foundation. "We saw that these Bahá'í materials were successful around the world."

### **Integrating spiritual values**

Observers say the emphasis on spirituality is an important part of the program.

"The approach of integrating spiritual values, including positive community values, makes it a program with a difference," said Samuel A. Small, director of the Institute of Distance and Continuing Education at the University of Guyana, which provides end-of-training certification to YCMTW graduates.

"In the [other] youth programs that I know of and have participated in, spiritual

***"The project in Guyana is quite innovative. They manage to do a remarkable amount of work with very little resources."***

**– Professor Roy McConkey,  
University of Ulster**



*At the Future Club, Youth Can Move the World facilitators led two dozen participants through a discussion on suicide prevention, which ended with the performance of various skits to illustrate what had been learned. At center is Rayana Jaundoo, pretending to drink Paraquat herbicide only to have her friends snatch the bottle away.*



values are never part of the core of the curriculum, and personally I believe that because of the tremendous problems that are being brought upon young people today, every effort should be made to help them to see that spiritual values are not taught separately in churches, mosques, temples and so on, but that they are really part and parcel of our every day life skills,” said Mr. Small.

The social problems addressed by the project are by no means unique to Guyana — but they are nevertheless serious concerns in this beautiful tropical country situated on the southern edge of the Caribbean basin.

After Haiti, Guyana has the highest HIV/AIDS rate in the Caribbean, which is the world’s second-most afflicted region after Sub-Saharan Africa, according to the World Health Organization. AIDS has become the leading cause of death for people aged 25-44 in Guyana, according to the WHO.

Domestic violence is also a major problem. According to the International Women’s Rights Action Watch, studies of domestic violence in Guyana indicate that between one-third and one-half of all women face incidents of domestic violence.

And, with high levels of unemployment, alcohol and drug abuse are also major problems in Guyana, although few official statistics are available.

The program, which has received funding

from UNICEF, the European Union, and the InterAmerican Development Bank among other agencies, seeks to fight these problems mainly by educating young people about the risks associated with each behavior.

The facilitators’ manual, for example, discusses the short and long term effects of alcohol, ranging from poor judgment and lowered inhibitions to cirrhosis of the liver and dependency. It explains clearly how HIV/AIDS is transmitted and discusses a range of protective measures, from less risky types of sex to condom use to abstinence.

The curriculum also promotes the development of social action — such as the protection of the environment — and positive moral values. The section on domestic violence, for example, explains ways in which qualities like honesty, compromise, and forgiveness can improve a relationship.

Spiritual ideas, such as the Golden Rule, are also emphasized, underpinned by quotations from the major world religions.

“It comes out of a Bahá’í framework, but we have enriched it with spiritual insights from Islam, Christianity, and Hinduism,” said Dr. O’Toole, who came to Guyana with his wife, Pamela, 27 years ago from the United Kingdom.

### Addressing religious diversity

The incorporation of religious quotations has resonated particularly well in Guyana, said Dr. O’Toole, owing to the distinctive religious diversity of Guyanese society.

Colonized by the Dutch, who introduced African slaves, the country later became a British colony. After a slave revolt and the subsequent abolition of slavery, the British brought in indentured servants from India to work on sugar plantations. At various points, Portuguese and Chinese laborers were also brought in.

The result today is an extremely diverse society, composed of about 50 percent from an East Indian background, about 35 percent from an African background, about 7 percent from a Native American background, and the rest European, Chinese and mixed backgrounds. Religious beliefs are also diverse. About 50 percent of the population are Christian, 35 percent are Hindu, 10 percent are Muslim, and the remaining five percent belong to other religions, including the Bahá’í Faith.

“One of the beautiful things about Guyana is that religion is very much a part of people’s lives,” said Dr. O’Toole of Varqa.

“Even if they don’t practice it, they are interested in it.”

Young people who have participated in YCMTW training say the discussion of spirituality is an important part of the program.

Susan Coocharan, 17, said the program’s balance between practical education and the holy writings of various religions has given her new tools to avoid risky behaviors.

“I used to think that guys were the only thing in life that matters,” said Ms. Coocharan, a Christian from Essequibo in the western part of the country, who participated in an intensive two-month YCMTW training program in July and August 2005. “But when I came to this program it helped me to develop spiritual qualities and it made me see that guys are not the only thing in life.”

Dhanpaul Jairam, 31, has been involved in YCMTW since March 2005, when he received training to become a facilitator. A Hindu, he has since established a YCMTW subgroup in his home village of Bath Settlement in the Berbice region of Guyana, where he has reached out to young people from every religious background.

At first, he said, the Hindus didn’t want to mix with the others. “But I talked about all of the religions,” said Mr. Jairam, who works as a radio telephone operator for the Guyana Sugar Corporation. “I do have a Bible and a Qur’an. And Hindu writings.”

Because of the emphasis on all religions, Mr. Jairam said, young people of all backgrounds were willing to participate. “That is why I think YCMTW is doing a great job of encouraging youth of all walks of life to make of themselves somebody,” said Mr. Jairam.

### Health promotion model

Another key feature of the project is its use of youth, themselves, as agents of change. By encouraging young volunteers to establish YCMTW groups in their own villages and neighborhoods, it has grown organically as young people themselves involve their friends and acquaintances.

Troy Benjamin, 19, started a 17-member YCMTW group in his village in the remote North Rupunui Region after attending the intensive training program last summer.

“I was very much interested, because some of the topics mentioned were dealing with alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and such,” said Mr. Benjamin, who is himself of Native American — or “Amerindian” background — as are most of the other 500 resi-



Members of the Future Club in Georgetown, at a Youth Can Move the World session on suicide prevention.

dents of his village. “And I knew that those problems were kind of arising, and I was facing it in my community as a whole.”

He said the young people in his group like the program. “Some of them actually had these problems, and they were kind of trying to get out of these kinds of problems,” said Mr. Benjamin. “The materials from YCMTW [have] assisted me to carry out these meetings.”

Prof. McConkey of the University of Ulster said using young people themselves to deliver health promotion messages is one of the key innovations of the project.

“In affluent countries like the United States and Great Britain, we rely on professional educators, who may well have a special training or special expertise,” said Prof. McConkey. “But they may lack a relationship with young people. Hence we sometimes wonder why our health promotion messages don’t come through.

“The model that they are using, in which local groups are built up, in which [young] people in those groups have knowledge about each other and their own behaviors — I think in that setting people are more likely to be open about what they actually do,” said Prof. McConkey.

Over the next three years, Prof. McConkey hopes to study the degree to which this and other features of the project are effective in changing risky behaviors.

“I would think that there is a very good chance that this will impact on the thought processes of the young people,” said Prof. McConkey, adding that, based on preliminary interviews, “there is some evidence that their attitudes are already different.”

Mr. Small of the University of Guyana be-

***“I was very much interested, because some of the topics mentioned were dealing with alcohol abuse, domestic violence, and such. I knew that those problems were kind of arising, and I was facing it in my community as a whole.”***

**— Troy Benjamin, 19,  
Youth Can Move the  
World facilitator**

***“The approach of integrating spiritual values, including positive community values, makes it a program with a difference.”***

**— Samuel A. Small,  
University of  
Guyana**

believes that program has already proven itself to be highly effective. “I recall many positive statements made by young people who have been through the program,” said Mr. Small.

He credits the program’s inclusiveness as one element of its success. “Every year I’ve been surprised by the enthusiasm shown by these young people,” said Mr. Small. “It attracts people across all ethnic, political, and religious lines — the whole gamut.

“Another aspect of the program is the use of a variety of media to get across their message,” added Mr. Small. “There is drama, there is song and dance, there is poetry.”

At the YCMTW-led session at the Future Club, the use of drama — in the form of simple skits about suicide — appeared to be highly effective, as did the idea of using youth themselves to deliver the message.

The Future Club is one of various youth-oriented groups and organizations — including schools — that have invited YCMTW facilitators to make presentations.

The anti-suicide skit performed by Rayana Jaundoo and other members of the Club was one of five such skits performed that day after a presentation by YCMTW facilitators about suicide.

All of the facilitators, who were young people themselves, first talked about suicide in general terms, and then led the two-dozen participants through a series of true/false ques-

tions designed to explore some of the myths and facts surrounding suicide. They also talked about contributing factors, such as isolation, drug and alcohol abuse, and domestic abuse or other problems in the home.

Kevin McPherson, 19, one of the YCMTW facilitators who led the session, received training about a year ago. Already a member of the Future Club — which itself seeks to help teenagers develop greater self-esteem and self-confidence — Mr. McPherson said the YCMTW brings a different approach to social awareness because it is young people talking to young people.

“It’s good for someone in your peer group to stand up and say, “It’s wrong to beat your woman,” said Mr. McPherson, discussing the YCMTW message against domestic violence.

Lomeharshan Lall, 18, another of the YCMTW facilitators who led the session, said he believes the program has helped reach many young people. “In Guyana, youth are being brought down by social issues, and so you can rightly say that YCMTW is very beneficial, because it has the answer to how to deal with these things,” he said.

Mr. Lall, known to his friends simply as “Lall,” knows of what he speaks. “Abuse and domestic violence, drugs and alcohol, I’ve witnessed these things and that’s why I’m into this, because I know a lot of people who are affected by it.”\*

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## **Bahá’í scholars explore links between science and religion**

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**T**he relationship between science and religion is gathering increasing attention around the world, from research about the power of prayer to heal to the impact of new technologies on traditional societies.

Bahá’í scholars on two continents recently gathered to explore the connection between science and religion, among others issues, at regional conferences of the Association for Bahá’í Studies.

In mid-August, the Association of Bahá’í Studies – North America met in Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA, on the theme of “Science, Religion, and Social Transformation.”

Attended by some 1,300 people, the 11-14 August 2005 event explored everything from the role of inspiration in scientific discovery to the value of prayer in healing. Presentations ranged from neuroscience and quantum mechanics to philosophy and psychology.

In early July, the Association of Bahá’í Studies – English-Speaking Europe met in Dublin to hear a wide range of papers ad-

ressing issues such as “Religious Belief and Reproductive Technologies” and “Reflections on Unity in Diversity.”

The 2-3 July event also featured a talk by Dr. Sheikh Shaheed Satardien, a Muslim cleric from the Dublin Inter-Faith Roundtable, who addressed the topic of religious conflict.

At the North American conference, more than 100 speakers presented during the four-day event. Participants came mainly from the United States and Canada but also traveled from Australia, Austria, Chile, China, France, Gabon, Germany, Haiti, Israel, Italy, Japan, New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Sudan, and the United Kingdom.

Most presentations focused on the main conference theme. The Bahá’í sacred writings explicitly uphold the underlying harmony of science and religion, and many scholars sought to show how these two systems are increasingly seen as complementary aspects of the same reality.\*



## At Green Acre, the first “modern” peace treaty is commemorated



*Commemorating the 100th anniversary of the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty and the role of Green Acre founder Sarah Farmer in supporting it, celebrants carried a peace flag in September — along with flags of Japan, Russia, and the United States.*

**E**LIOT, Maine, USA — According to some historians, the 1905 Russo-Japanese War was the first truly modern war, involving as it did both the telegraph and the telephone, along with machine guns, barbed wire, illuminating star shells, mine fields, advanced torpedoes, and armored battleships.

The war's resolution might also be called the world's first modern “peace,” inasmuch as its end came about through perhaps the first use of so-called multi-track diplomacy, involving not only the belligerents but also the United States and, significantly, input from civil society.

Were it not for US diplomacy and the military restraint displayed by the other European nations, the Russo-Japanese war might have become the first world war. For his role in the so-called Portsmouth Peace Treaty, US President Theodore Roosevelt won the Nobel Peace Prize.

But it was the contribution of civil society, and in particular the activities of a farsighted and influential woman — Sarah Jane

Farmer — that were honored in a commemoration here at the Green Acre Bahá'í School in September 2005.

That commemoration drew the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, who spoke at Green Acre on the topic of “Peace in the 21st Century” on 4 September 2005. In particular, the Honorable Ryozo Kato spoke about Japan's growing role in peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts around the world.

“Japan is working around the world for the conservation of the environment, for disarmament, and for the eradication of poverty and disease,” said Ambassador Kato.

His speech, before some 175 people, capped a week of activities that celebrated the role played 100 years ago by Ms. Farmer, who was an early member of the Bahá'í Faith in the United States and the founder of Green Acre, which had established itself as a key meeting point for leaders of nascent interfaith and peace movements at the start of the 20th century.

The Portsmouth Peace Treaty was signed

***The event drew the Japanese Ambassador to the United States, who spoke at Green Acre on the topic of “Peace in the 21st Century.”***



Among the speakers at the commemoration were, left to right, Erica Toussaint of the Bahá'í community of the United States; the Honorable Ryozo Kato, Japan's ambassador to the United States; and Foad Katirai of the Bahá'í community of Japan.

at the nearby Portsmouth Naval Shipyard, just down the Piscataqua River from Green Acre. And at one point during the negotiations, diplomats could reportedly see a huge "peace" flag that was flown by Ms. Farmer on the grounds of Green Acre.

More importantly, Ms. Farmer had, in the years preceding the Treaty negotiations, sponsored a well-known series of summer conferences about peace and inter-religious harmony. [See book review on page 16.]

In 1904, for example, the annual Green Acre conference closed with a program dedicated to the resolution of the Russo-Japanese war. The following year, when delegations from Russia and Japan were meeting in Portsmouth to negotiate an end to the war, Ms. Farmer obtained a pass to the ceremonial signing of the Treaty — the only woman to attend the event.

Charles Doleac, co-chair of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty Anniversary Committee, said at the 4 September commemoration that Ms. Farmer and other early Bahá'ís in the greater Portsmouth area played a critical role in pushing government delegations towards a settlement.

"The Bahá'ís in 1905 were really trying, through the work of Sarah Farmer, to resolve this dispute," said Mr. Doleac, who has done extensive research on the Portsmouth Treaty process and history.

Mr. Doleac added that other local civil society groups, including many churches in the area, likewise pushed for peace, all helping to "create the atmosphere" that kept the

delegations at the negotiating table "until peace was achieved."

Foad Katirai, who represented the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan at the event, said that the Portsmouth Peace Treaty process can be understood as among the first "multi-track" efforts at diplomacy, one that included not only various governments but also a civil society component.

"Many associations, many people, seek peace," said Dr. Katirai, who is also author of a book, *Global Governance and the Lesser Peace*. "The Bahá'í vision is perhaps unique in that we regard world peace as already having been born in the 20th century. What remains for us in the 21st century is to take the newborn peace and to see that it grows and develops into a mature and lasting system of global governance."

Erica Toussaint, a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, noted in her remarks that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, had given a talk in London about the prerequisites for universal peace at about the same time as the Portsmouth Treaty was being signed.

"In that talk, he said: 'In the days of old an instinct for warfare was developed in the struggle with wild animals; this is no longer necessary; nay, rather, co-operation and mutual understanding are seen to produce the greatest welfare of mankind,'" said Ms. Toussaint.

In his remarks, Ambassador Kato spoke of the close alliance between Japan and the United States in efforts to promote peace and freedom around the world.

He said that today Japan is the world's second largest democracy, second largest donor of foreign aid, and second largest contributor to the United Nations.

Ambassador Kato also expressed "deep, deep admiration for the effort" that Bahá'ís have played in "attending to world peace and human harmony."

The week-long commemoration included a talk by Suheil Bushrui, who holds the Bahá'í Chair for World Peace at the University of Maryland. On 26 August 2005, Dr. Bushrui spoke on "A Step Towards a Culture of Peace: Reflections on the Treaty of Portsmouth."

Prof. Bushrui's talk was followed by five days of diverse educational activities exploring the cultural, economic, educational, political, and spiritual foundations of the creation of lasting peace.\*

**"The Bahá'ís in 1905 were really trying, through the work of Sarah Farmer, to resolve this dispute."**

— Charles Doleac, co-chair of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty Anniversary Committee

## Restless Souls

Review, continued from page 16

nent religious and philosophical thinkers and activists. They included Unitarian minister Edward Everett Hale, women's rights advocate Matilda Joslyn Gage, philosopher William James, Hindu guru Swami Vivekananda, Jain lecturer Virchand Gandhi, Buddhist monk Anagarika Dharmapala, and Black activist W.E.B. DuBois.

Dr. Schmidt focuses on Greenacre not only because of its influence but also because of the way in which its history illustrates the tension that existed between religious pluralists who accepted everything and nothing at the same time, using universalism as the justification for an endless individualistic quest, and those who, like Ms. Farmer, moved towards a more concrete expression of faith, based on a new sources of authority, in a quest for genuine unity.

For Ms. Farmer, this occurred with her embrace of the Bahá'í Faith. She founded Greenacre as a place in which all religious traditions might be explored and individual spirituality pursued. But then a fateful encounter aboard a ship bound for the Mediterranean in 1900 led her to Palestine, where she met 'Abdu'l-Bahá — and subsequently declared herself a Bahá'í.

Upon her return, however, some acquaintances criticized her conversion, saying Ms. Farmer had betrayed the principles of "self-reliant individuality and boundary-crossing cosmopolitanism" that had previously exemplified the New Thought and related movements ensconced at Greenacre, a converted inn on the pine-forested shores of the Piscataqua River.

"[P]eople were supposed to keep seeking, to remain open to new perspectives and insights, not to settle on one path alone among many," writes Dr. Schmidt.

But Ms. Farmer's embrace of the Bahá'í Faith was "the culmination of her grand vision of the unity of all religions." In Ms. Farmer's mind, Greenacre became "less about an open door than a final realization, less about a quest than a fulfillment."

Dr. Schmidt notes that her "evangelism" as a Bahá'í was never "heavy-handed," and that a number of Greenacre seekers were also happy to embrace the Bahá'í Faith. Others, however, turned away, leading to a boardroom battle for control of the place, which Ms. Farmer eventually won — although at

great cost to her peace of mind.

Eventually, Greenacre became the Green Acre Bahá'í School, which has remained committed to the exploration of new religious concepts and principles, under the unifying vision of the Bahá'í Faith.

As an object lesson for today, however, the story of Ms. Farmer and Greenacre — and indeed the entire book — offers many parallels to the kind of mixing and matching of religious traditions that we see at a global level, and the accompanying concerns over authority and authenticity.

Recent international interfaith conferences, such as the 2000 Millennium World Peace Summit of Religious and Spiritual Leaders at the United Nations, or the revived Parliament of the World's Religions in 1993, 1999, and 2004, reveal a landscape of increasing religious tolerance, pluralism, and universalist patterns of thought.

For Bahá'ís, then as now, the foment in humanity's collective consciousness can be explained as the spiritual influence that accompanies the coming of a new Revelation.

The themes Dr. Schmidt traces as so emergent in liberal 19<sup>th</sup> century America — the commonality of religious teachings, the need for the independent investigation of truth, the breaking away from clergy, the equality of women and men, the growing perception of unity in all things — are, in the Bahá'í view, obvious elements of the new spiritual reality that marks humanity's entry into its long promised age of maturity.

Those themes recur today as traditions and traditional religious teachings are challenged by the forces of globalization, modernity, and individual inspiration — forces which are themselves understood by Bahá'ís to be the result of the fulfillment of prophecies for an age of peace and enlightenment that are found in all of the world's great religions.

"A new life is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive," Bahá'u'lláh wrote in the mid-1800s. "It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favors which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you."

*Restless Souls* is a book whose sum is more than its parts. Interesting in its own right for the rich and complex picture it paints of a time when Americans began to free themselves from religious orthodoxy in a thousand different ways, it also holds up a mirror to our own time.\*

***"Between its founding in 1894 and Farmer's death in 1916, Greenacre was among the greatest sources of religious innovation anywhere in the country. It was the last great bastion of Transcendentalism, a school of philosophy and art for Emersonians and Whitmanites; it was a New Thought proving ground for such leaders as Ralph Waldo Trine, Henry Wood, and Horatio Dresser; it was a hub for representatives of the Society of Ethical Culture, Theosophy, Buddhism, Reform Judaism, Vedanta, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith."***

— Leigh Eric Schmidt, *Restless Souls*

## A mirror to our own time

Although it focuses on the American fascination with mysticism and churchless spirituality in 19<sup>th</sup> century, many readers of Leigh Eric Schmidt's new book will undoubtedly see parallels to trends and events in our own time, and on a global level.

*Restless Souls: The Making of American Spirituality* is certainly fascinating enough in its own right. Dr. Schmidt, a respected professor of religion at Princeton University, charts the rise of religious pluralism and the shift from "old religions of authority" to "new religions of the spirit" in the United States, following a line that runs from Emerson and Thoreau to the New Age spirituality of television host Oprah Winfrey.

For Bahá'ís, moreover, the book is especially significant because of the way it highlights the impact and influence of Sarah Farmer, the founder of what is today the Green Acre Bahá'í School in Eliot, Maine. [See story on page 13.]

Dr. Schmidt devotes a whole chapter to Ms. Farmer and Greenacre (as it was first known). As well, references to the influence of Greenacre are salted throughout the book — it seems that almost everyone who was anyone in the quest for enlightenment in the United States at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century spoke at or visited Greenacre.

The theme Dr. Schmidt develops over the course of the volume is straightforward. As he explains it: "This book probes the way in which the very development of 'spirituality' in American culture was inextricably tied to the rise and flourishing of liberal progressivism and a religious left."

The discerning reader, however, is likely to find another theme as well: how a great spiritual ferment in the 1900s, stirred by a wide range of new ideas, from transcendentalism to theosophy, and coupled especially with the dawning age of religious pluralism, opened the door to a new acceptance of other religious traditions by mainstream society.

As Dr. Schmidt writes, a "growing liberal fascination with a globalized mysticism of universal brotherhood" motivated and inspired many of the leading religious thinkers of the late 1900s, culminating in events such as the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions, as well as numerous books, lectures,

and pamphlets that explored the "perennial philosophy" and the commonality of all religions.

Certainly, this phenomenon is nowhere better exemplified than in the story of Ms. Farmer and Greenacre, which is undoubtedly why it occupies a central position in *Restless Souls*.

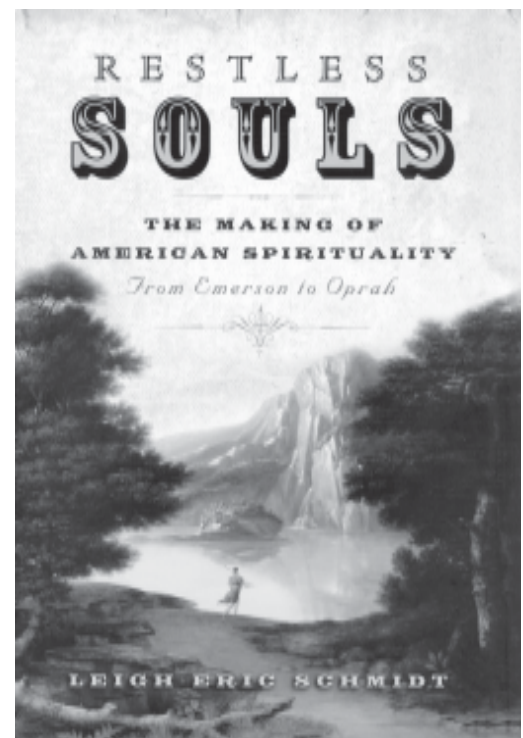
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the greatest sources of religious innovation anywhere in the country," writes Dr. Schmidt. "It was the last great bastion of Transcendentalism, a school of philosophy and art for Emersonians and Whitmanites; it was a New Thought proving ground for such leaders as Ralph Waldo Trine, Henry Wood, and Horatio Dresser; it was a hub for representatives of the Society of Ethical Culture, Theosophy, Buddhism, Reform Judaism, Vedanta, Zoroastrianism, Islam, and the Bahá'í Faith."

The list of those who populated Ms. Farmer's circle and/or participated in the famous Greenacre conferences of the late 1800s and early 1900s reads like a *Who's Who* of promi-

*Review, continued on page 15*