

ABS Bulletin

A PUBLICATION OF THE ASSOCIATION FOR BAHÁ'Í STUDIES—NORTH AMERICA

Vahid Rafati is 2014 Balyuzi Lecturer

The Executive Committee is pleased to announce that Dr. Vahid Rafati will deliver the 32nd Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture at the ABS conference this year.

Dr. Rafati was born in Shiraz, Iran, in 1945 and received his B.A. degree in Psychology from Tehran University. In 1972 he traveled to Lebanon to continue his education at the American University of Beirut before the Lebanese civil war forced him to move to the United States in 1974. He subsequently completed his PhD in Islamic Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Dr. Rafati has been serving at the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa, Israel since 1980. He is the author of numerous articles and books in both Persian and English.

Reimagining the Conference

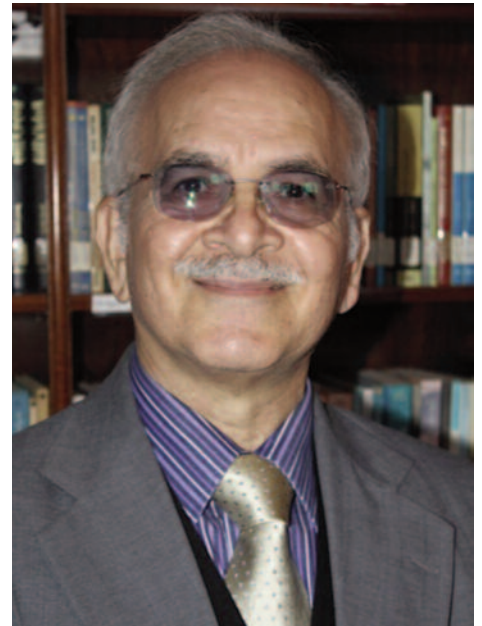
The 38th Annual ABS Conference taking place in Toronto, August 7 – 10, 2014, explores the theme of “Scholarship and the Life of Society.” This is the first annual conference to be planned in light of new guidance from the Universal House of Justice on the role of ABS.

The guidance came in the form of a letter dated 24 July 2013 addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, which supervises the Association. The House of Justice wrote:

“Every believer has the opportunity to examine the forces operating in society and introduce relevant aspects of the teachings within the discourses prevalent in whatever social space he or she is present. It is, perhaps, as a means to enhance the abilities of the friends to explore such opportunities in relation to their scholarly interests that the endeavors of the Association for Bahá'í Studies can be conceived.” (See full text of letter on the ABS website, www.bahai-studies.ca.)

ABS is encouraged to “consciously and progressively” clarify the most relevant elements of the “evolving conceptual framework” that gives coherence to all Bahá'í activities and to “explore fresh approaches with some simple steps that can grow in complexity.” Much of this will likely take place in “specialized venues” and “small seminars” in which “individuals from certain professions or academic disciplines” can “examine some aspect of the discourse in their field.” An initial effort of this kind was ABS’ co-sponsorship of the Bahá'í Lawyers’ Retreat at Green Acre in Dec. 2013. Other similar events are being planned. But what is the purpose of a large annual conference? How can it, as the House of Justice asks, be “reimagined”? Our approach is doing this step by step.

One virtue of the conference is bringing together a large number of people from highly diverse fields. It



Vahid Rafati, 2014 Balyuzi Lecturer

provides a rich opportunity to orient all participants to the potential for contributing to the life of society as explained in the House of Justice letter, and for participants to meet others from the same or a different field who might be potential collaborators. To aid this, the 2014 conference will replace some individual talks with three plenary panels which will explore current thought in the broadly defined areas of social science, natural and life sciences, and the humanities. These will be complemented by smaller group discussions on ten or so more finely defined areas, so that participants may

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meet others in their field, become familiar with the recent guidance on building capacity to engage in discourse, and discuss learning from their own experience. “Fishbowl” sessions on specific discourse topics will engage participants in yet another way. These small gatherings are designed to inspire an ongoing process, where successive consultation generates learning in a certain field or on a particular topic.

The conference also includes plenary talks by outstanding speakers who can address the theme from a number of valuable perspectives:

- Mr. Paul Lample, member of the Universal House of Justice
- Dr. Haleh Arbab, Research Director of the Institute for the Study of Global Prosperity
- Dr. Roshan Danesh, lawyer and specialist in consultation and conflict resolution
- Dr. Faraneh Vargha-Khadem, respected neuroscientist from the UK.

Simultaneous breakout sessions on diverse topics, selected from individual proposals, are held in the afternoons. Further details will be available on the website.



Haleh Arbab

All those who are interested in promoting and pursuing Bahá'í scholarship in its diverse forms are invited to come and share their learning and reflect on the challenges and transformative possibilities ahead, as we take together some simple first steps in re-visioning the conference.

Registration and Hotel Information

Conference registration and hotel information are available on the ABS website: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/UpcomingConference>.



Faraneh Vargha-Khadem

The early conference registration deadline is May 31st. For further inquiries, please contact the ABS office, tel.: 613- 233-1903; e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>. Hotel reservations must be made directly with the conference hotel, The Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front Street West, Toronto, ON M5J 1E3. To book your room, please call the Reservations Department at 1-800-663-7229 or the Global Reservation Centre at 1-800-441-1414, and refer to the group and meeting name “Baha’i Studies Conference.” Room rates are CDN



Paul Lample

\$139.00 single/double. Each extra person sharing a room will be charged an additional \$20.00 per night. There will be no charge for children up to and including 18 years old who share with their parents. These rates are guaranteed only until July 22, 2014. Reservations made after the cut-off dates will be based on availability at the Hotel’s prevailing rates. The conference rates are extended to three days before and after the conference dates based on availability.

The *ABS Bulletin* (ISSN 0840-6138) is published quarterly by the Association for Bahá'í Studies, a nonprofit scholarly organization with 1833 international individual memberships and 113 institutional memberships. The Association promotes scholarship on all aspects of the Bahá'í Faith; holds conferences and seminars on promising research fields; and publishes books, as well as the refereed *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*.

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Association for Bahá'í Studies
34 Copernicus Street
Ottawa, ON
Canada, K1N 7K4
Tel. 613-233-1903
Fax 613-233-3644
E-mail: abs-na@bahai-studies.ca
Web site: www.bahai-studies.ca

Message from Journal of Bahá'í Studies Editor

Dear ABS Members and Friends,

It is my honor to have been appointed editor of *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, and one of the first tasks for the Journal—now well into its third decade of providing scholarly articles related to Bahá'í history, development, scripture, teachings and their relevance to current social issues—is to increase immediately the number of issues per year. In this regard, it is my hope in planning ahead that this news will encourage you to use the Journal to attract new members to the work of the Association and to submit (or urge others to do so) articles for consideration—please refer to the new guidelines on our web site.

IMPORTANCE

As you know, because these articles are peer-reviewed, placing an article in the Journal carries with it the prestige of being published in a scholarly journal. More importantly, writing articles for *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* also challenges us to discover new and innovative methods for employing the teachings of the Faith to inform various fields of study. Conversely, this same process better enables us to understand how knowledge derived from discrete areas of study can help elucidate our understanding and application of the Bahá'í teachings and texts to the many challenges facing society today.

CHANGES

You will notice with the forthcoming issue a couple of substantive changes to the Journal. The foremost change is that many issues will be theme-based. It is our hope that this thematic integrity will encourage readers to approach each volume as more of a coherent discourse. Second, issues will contain an introductory piece “From the Editor’s Desk” that

will serve to discuss the themes underlying the coherence of the articles included and to provide more background about the articles and the authors.

THEMES

Besides the two themes that will be covered in the next two volumes—volume 23 about the Formative Age and volume 24 about religious perspectives and the poetic voice—we are considering the following subjects for future issues, just to name a few: ageing and dementia; racism and prejudice; anxiety and depressive disorders; the nature of the essential self; law, justice, and ethics; reflections on education; the Bahá'í concept of evolution; the harmony of science and religion; suffering and spiritual development; governance and globalism; care-giving and the family.

OBJECTIVES

Needless to say, there are countless areas for us to explore, whether as interested members of ABS or as students and scholars wishing to contribute our voices to the ongoing discourses of this Formative Age unfolding so rapidly before us: the universal issue of the rights of women, the urgent need to seek justice for all peoples, as well as important issues regarding Bahá'í theology, scripture, history, and philosophy. But the ultimate objective at the forefront of all our intellectual pursuits is to translate our insights into action. Toward this end, it is my hope that from each successive volume of the Journal will emerge conversations in the many professional and academic areas regarding methods for translating Bahá'í principles into practical solutions for advancing individual and collective transformation.

ENCOURAGEMENT FROM THE HOUSE OF JUSTICE

With the help of the editorial board, I am determined to succeed, and the opti-

mism with which I proceed is tremendously enhanced by the recent Universal House of Justice letter providing guidance for the Association. It is this mandate that inspires us now to increase our efforts in fulfilling the boundless potential latent in both the Journal and the Association for Bahá'í Studies in general:

“Bahá'ís who are involved in various disciplines—economics, education, history, social science, philosophy, and many others—are obviously conversant and fully engaged with the methods employed in their fields. It is they who have the responsibility to earnestly strive to reflect on the implications that the truths found in the Revelation may hold for their work. The principle of the harmony of science and religion, faithfully upheld, will ensure that religious belief does not succumb to superstition and that scientific findings are not appropriated by materialism.” (Universal House of Justice, letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of Canada, 24 July 2013).

As members of ABS, we stand on the shoulders of noble souls who founded the Association and the Journal some four decades ago, as well as all the other souls who have worked so tirelessly through the years to sustain and further develop what they began. I look forward to your assistance in advancing the Journal as an essential tool for marshalling resources for study of the Bahá'í Faith so that we can subsequently apply all we learn to the mounting demands of a world community in dire need of the tools for implementing what the Blessed Beauty has bequeathed us, His champions in the field of service.

—John S. Hatcher, PhD
Editor, Journal of Bahá'í Studies
editor@bahai-studies.ca

Schedule of Upcoming Webinars

The Association is continuing to schedule webinars to engage both ABS members and the community at large in the study and discussion of scholarly topics. For the list of upcoming webinar sessions go to the ABS website at: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/UpcomingWebinars>.

Friday, April 25, 2014 - 8:00 p.m. EST with Dr. Keyvan Geula

Topic: Emotional Intelligence, Relationship, and the Long Obligatory Prayer - Part 2

This popular and insightful presentation was longer than the usual 1-hour time-slot could accommodate. The Association for Bahá'í Studies and Mrs. Geula are pleased to invite the friends to a second meeting that will cover more ground and allow more time for questions and answers.

You can watch the recording of the first session at <http://www.instantpresenter.com/bahai/EB50DC84894A>.

Wednesday, May 21, 2014 - 8:00 p.m. EST with Matthew Weinberg

Technology, Values and the Shaping of Social Reality

Technological change is inherent to human progress. But technological development often proceeds in a manner decoupled from community values and broader questions of individual and collective purpose. How then can individuals and communities be empowered to make meaningful choices about technology? How do we move from being passive technological users or subjects to active agents in constructively shaping patterns of technological development? The webinar will explore some of the principles and practices that might underpin Bahá'í contributions to emerging discourses concerning the creation, use and diffusion of technology.

Matthew Weinberg served as Research Director of the Bahá'í International Community, in Haifa, Israel, from 1995-2002. He also was a senior analyst with the U.S. Congress Office of Technology Assessment in Washington, DC, where he directed several studies in the areas of environmental and technology policy.

To watch recordings of past webinars, go to: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/PastWebinars>

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www.bahai-studies.ca/PastWebinars**

Members' News

Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian has published, *Steadfastness in the Covenant: Responding to Tests and Tribulations* (George Ronald, March 2014).

Todd Lawson and Omid Ghaemmaghami have edited the volume, *A Most Noble Pattern, Collected Essays on the Writings of the Báb, 'Alí Muhammad Shírází (1819-1850)* (George Ronald, 2011).

ABS Bulletin has gone digital

This is the first issue of the *ABS Bulletin* that members are receiving electronically along with a copy of an invoice for those whose membership needs to be renewed.

In consideration to those members with no access to email, the Association will print copies of the Bulletin and continue to mail the issue upon request. Please contact the ABS office to let us know if you still wish to receive a hard copy.

37th ABS Annual Conference Plenary Sessions Recordings

The audio CDs of the plenary talks are available for purchase. The videos are also available on the ABS website for free viewing or download at <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/proceedings>. Order the CDs at our online store, on the ABS Website: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/catalog/12/cds_dvds>

SCHOLARSHIP AND THE LIFE OF SOCIETY

Association for Bahá'í Studies 38th Annual Conference, 7-10 August, 2014
Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

Full Name	Address, Phone, and E-mail address	Days Attending (Thu, Fri, Sat, Sun, or All)	Category (adult, couple, child, student, senior, unwaged). Include child age.	Registration fee	Friday Subject Area Consultation (see list on other side)

Please register EACH person attending the conference
by fax: 1-613-233-3644, by phone: 1-613-233-1903,
online at <http://www.bahai-studies.ca>,
or by mail: 34 Copernicus Street, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada, K1N 7K4.

Discount (if applicable)	
Scholarship contribution	
Total	

	Full Conference (4 days)		One-Day Fee	
	ABS Member	Non- Member	ABS Member	Non- Member
Individual Adults	By May 31	\$150*	\$35	\$55**
	By July 31	\$100	\$35	\$55**
	After July 31	\$110	\$45	\$65**
Couples	By May 31	\$150	\$220*	n/a
	By July 31	\$160	\$230*	n/a
	After July 31	\$170	\$240*	n/a
Seniors (65+/ Students/ Unwaged)	By May 31	\$70	\$100*	\$25
	By July 31	\$80	\$110*	\$25
	After July 31	\$90	\$120*	\$30
Children (ages 5-15) must be registered by July 31		\$70		\$35
Special Discounts	Senior/Student couple: 10% off total registration fee Family: 20% off total registration fee***			

Method of Payment
 Cheque Money Order
 VISA MasterCard American Express

Credit Card Number _____

Credit Card Expiration Date _____

Cardholder's Name (please print clearly) _____

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During the Friday morning session, a number of “Subject Area Consultations” will be held simultaneously for 90 minutes. Please select the one you will most likely attend.

- Arts (fine and performing)
- Counseling and Mental Health
- Law and Political Science
- Social Sciences (including Development Studies, Anthropology, Sociology)
- Applied Sciences (including IT, Engineering)
- Business and Management
- Education
- Environmental Studies
- Health Sciences
- Humanities (including Philosophy, History, Literature)
- International Affairs
- Natural Sciences (including Math, Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

ALL CONFERENCE FEES ARE IN CANADIAN DOLLARS

***This fee includes a 1-year membership in the Association, including a year's subscription to *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* and ABS Bulletin, and discounts on ABS publications and conferences. US and international memberships are charged at the US currency rate.**

****This fee does not include membership.**

*****Parents and dependent children living at the same address (minimum 3 registrants).**

CANCELLATION POLICY: Registration fees are refundable, less 10% administrative fees if the Association is notified by July 31, and less 20% administrative fees if notified after July 31.

Registrants from outside Canada, please note: fees paid by credit card are processed in Canada. Some credit card companies apply a service charge for transactions taking place in another Country.

Hotel Information

Fairmont Royal York 100 Front Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5J 1E3

Single/double occupancy — \$139 per night (plus tax)

Each extra person sharing a room will be charged an additional \$20 per night. No charge for children up to and including 18 years old who share with their parents. Maximum occupancy: 4 persons per room.

Toll-free reservations: 1-800-663-7229

Online booking: <http://resweb.passkey.com/go/bahaisstudies2014>

Conference attendees must make hotel reservations directly with the hotel. To receive the special rate ask for the Association for Bahá'í Studies special conference rate when making your reservation.

Please Note: these rates are guaranteed **only until the room-block is filled or until July 22, 2014, whichever comes first.** Reservations made after the cut-off dates will be based on availability at the Hotel's prevailing rates. **The conference rates are extended to three days before and three days after the conference dates.**