

ABS Bulletin

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

Announcing the 2014 ABS Conference Program

We are excited to share with you the latest ABS conference news. If you haven't yet made plans to attend this year's ABS conference, don't delay!

The 38th annual conference of the Association will take place from August 7-10, 2014 at the Fairmont Royal York hotel in Toronto on the theme, "Scholarship and the Life of Society." All those who are interested in promoting and pursuing Bahá'í scholarship in all its forms are invited to come together, share their learning, and reflect on the challenges and transformative possibilities ahead. As the Universal House of Justice has explained,

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation is vast. It calls for profound change not only at the level of the individual but also in the structure of society. . . . There are no shortcuts, no formulas. Only as effort is made to draw on insights from His Revelation, to tap into the accumulating knowledge of the human race, to apply His teachings intelligently to the life of humanity, and to consult on the questions that arise will the necessary learning occur and capacity be developed. (The Universal House of Justice, *Ridván Message 2010*, para. 25)

The conference will bring together individuals from diverse fields to explore how to contribute to the life of society in the ways described by the House of Justice. This year there will be more plenary panels in order to explore current thought in the broad areas of social science, natural and life sciences, and the humanities. Panelists will briefly review the origins and



shifts in worldview and methodology in their areas of expertise, and present examples of the current breadth of conceptions and assumptions. The goal is to introduce conference participants to the complexity, diversity, and dynamism of scholarly thought, professional practice, or both, and to stimulate their interest and participation in additional discussions on scholarship at the conference and beyond.

Plenary Program

Mr. Paul Lample, member of the Universal House of Justice will deliver the opening plenary address on Thursday evening, titled "Toward a Framework for Action," shedding light on elements of the framework for action most relevant to the work of the Association.

Friday morning starts with a panel on "Exploring the Social Sciences." Geoffrey Cameron, PhD candidate in the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto, a Trudeau Scholar, and principal researcher with the Office of External Affairs of the Bahá'í Community of Canada, will consider "The

Prospect of Collective Action in Political Science." Dr. Deborah van den Hoonaard, sociologist and Canada Research Chair in Qualitative Research at St. Thomas University, and author of

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Paul Lample

books on qualitative research and on widowhood will address the topic, "Discourse Matters," as she considers "The Potential of Qualitative Sociology to Shed Light on Bahá'í Studies." Dr. June Thomas, Centennial Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, University of Michigan, and President of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, considers the benefits and limitations of using social science theory in applied social action in "Challenges for Social Science from the Perspective of Urban Practice."

There are 45 breakout sessions scheduled in the afternoons on Friday and Saturday in nine simultaneous sessions. For a list of titles and pre-

senters see page x.. There are also several workshop-style sessions scheduled on the first day of the conference, Thursday, August 7th from 9 am – 5 pm, including a sessions for faculty and students.

Friday evening is devoted to the arts starting with story telling by Louise Profeit-Leblanc, artist and Aboriginal story teller from the Nacho N'yak Dun First Nation. Louise recently retired from her role as Aboriginal Arts Coordinator at the Canada Council for the Arts. This presentation will be followed by an evening of joyful and uplifting artistic performances. The arts program is integrated throughout the plenary sessions and will infuse the conference with music and a devotional spirit. For those who wish to spend even more time socializing and having some relaxed fun, the "After Hours Arts" program will run at the end of the evenings.

On Saturday morning the plenary panel will explore the Natural and Life Sciences. Dr. Elizabeth Bowen, public health physician, educator, and development consultant will speak on "Health and Bioethics." Dr. Kamran Sedig, Associate Professor and researcher in the areas of artificial intelligence and applied cognitive science will share his work on "The Human Mind and Its Interaction with the World," and discuss the emergence of changing per-

spectives on "the mind." Dr. Arthur Dahl, President of the International Environment Forum, and biologist specializing in complex ecosystems and sustainability science will throw light on the changing demands on established natural science practices posed by the inherently social and moral nature of environmental problems in his talk, "Natural Sciences and Society."

Following the panel, Dr. Haleh Arbab, Director of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity and Doctor of Education and Development will share her extensive experience on "Learning to Read Social Reality in the Light of the Revelation," highlighting some of the thinking behind the programs of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity whose mandate is to learn systematically about enhancing the capacity of individuals and groups to participate in some of the prevalent discourses of society.

Saturday morning concludes with Dr. Faraneh Vargha-Khadem, developmental cognitive neuroscientist and researcher at the Institute of Child Health in London, England, exploring "Can Neuroscience Inform the Relationship between the Rational Soul, the Mind, and the Brain?"

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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Workshop Participants



Haleh Arbab

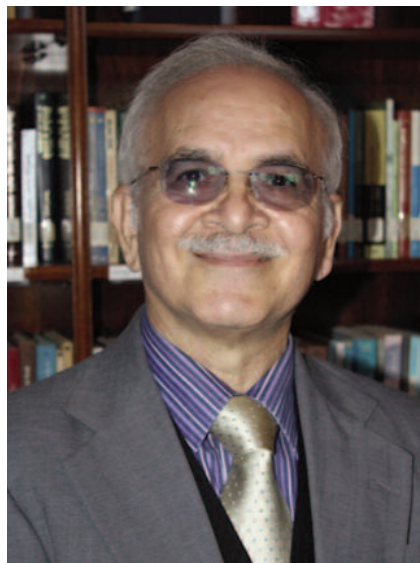
The 32nd Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture will be delivered by Dr. Vahid Ra'fati on "The Evolving Role of Bahá'í Scholarship" on Saturday evening. Dr. Ra'fati has been serving at the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre since 1980 and has authored numerous publications in Persian and English.

On Sunday morning the humanities are addressed from three diverse perspectives. Elham Afnan will explore literature in her presentation, "Reading Utopias: From Dichotomy to Complementarity." Dr. Afnan completed her doctoral studies in English Literature at McMaster University and currently serves as translation facilitator in the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre. Dr. Susan Maneck, Associate Professor of History and Philosophy at Jackson State University in Mississippi, will present on new approaches in history, with "Global History and the Oneness of Humanity." Finally, Dr. Gerald Filson, who is Director of the Office of External Affairs for the Bahá'í Community of Canada, and has a doctorate in Philosophy of Education, will share his observations about recent shifts in the discipline, and potential synergies with changes in the Bahá'í community.

Following the panel, Dr. Roshan Danesh, who completed his doctoral studies in Law at Harvard, and works,

teaches, and researches on law and religion, constitutional law, Indigenous rights, and conflict resolution, examines what the story of reconciliation might be from a perspective informed by the Bahá'í Writings and experience. "Retelling Reconciliation" asks what the roles and responsibilities of individuals and communities are in rising to meet this ongoing challenge.

Before the formal close of the conference, Mr. Dan Scott, member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Americas, will share his observations and thoughts on the conference and new efforts to "enhance the abilities



Vahid Rafati

of the friends to explore such opportunities in relation to their scholarly interests" (House of Justice, letter dated 24 July 2013)

Subject Area Consultation Sessions

The Friday morning session continues with fourteen simultaneous "Subject Area Consultation" sessions. Their main purpose is to stimulate the process of *enhancing the abilities of the friends to engage in public discourse in relation to their scholarly or professional interests*. Specific objectives include deepening awareness of the July 24, 2013 letter of the Universal House of Justice on these

matters and the notion of an evolving conceptual framework for framing activities, to enable students, youth and young adults to encounter more senior Bahá'ís in their field or interest area—for general support and individual mentoring opportunities, to initiate discussions on *learning from experience* by participants already engaged in discourses relevant to that field, and last, but not least, to seed more focused gatherings throughout the year, such as the small seminars and specialized settings envisioned in the Universal House of Justice letter. The sessions include:

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



Faraneh Vargha-Khadem



Roshan Danesh

Program for Children and Junior Youth

Be sure to register your children and junior youth for the educational Children and Junior Youth Program at the annual conference. This program will include speakers and artists from the main conference as well as other activities addressing the conference theme.

Important note to parents: children and junior youth must be pre-registered by 31 July 2014.

For the latest conference updates, visit <www.bahai-studies.ca/UpcomingConference>

Registration and Hotel Information

Conference registration and hotel information are available on the ABS website: <http://www.bahai-studies.ca/Registration>. For further inquiries, please contact the Association for Bahá'í Studies, 34 Copernicus St., Ottawa, ON, Canada K1N 7K4; tel.: 613-233-1903; fax: 613-233-3644; e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>.

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Breakout Sessions at the Conference

Peter Adriance, Arthur Lyon Dahl, & Christine Muller, "Contributing to Sustainability Discourse and Action"

Hussein Ahdieh, "Tahirih and the Women of the West"

Trip Barthel, "Consultation and the Scientific Method"

Sandra J. Bean, "False Dichotomies—Beginning a Discourse between Alternative Health Practices and Western Medicine"

Roger Blaine, "How is Science Improving the Effectiveness of Prayers for Healing"

Elizabeth Bowen, James Cribb, A.M. Ghadirian, and Brenda Maxwell, "Death as a Messenger of Joy"

Susan Brill de Ramirez, "Networking for Success via a Shared Culture of Learning"

Helen Cheng, "Electing the Trustees of the Merciful: Towards A New Paradigm of Power"

François Couillard, "Social Discourse: EBBF- a 25 Year Old Success Story"

Arthur Lyon Dahl, "Addressing Sustainability Challenges: A Framework for Material and Spiritual Transformation"

Roshan Danesh and Lex Musta, "Exploring Bahá'í Approaches to Social Change"

Mehrdad Ehsani, "A Scientific View of the Reality of Man-Part 3: The Ego"

Stephen Friberg, "Towards Universal Scientific Literacy: Lessons from the 2013 Wilmette Institute Course 'Science, Religion, and the Future'"

Abdu'l-Missagh Ghadirian, "Exploring Spirituality with Medical Students in an Academic Environment - An Analysis of 12 years of Experience"

Holly Hanson & Vasu Mohan, "Welcoming Our New Neighbours: The Contributions of Recent Immigrants to Core Activities"

Jay Howden, "The Unconscious Civilization, the Great Awakening, and John Ralston Saul"

Michael Karlberg, "Panels on Contributing to Discourses: Economics, Education, Primary Health Care, and The Role of Religion in Society"

Alan Kellogg, "The Human Spirit as Recognition Engine and Easy



Breakout Sessions

Continued from page 4

- Topic of Conversation: First Result of a Rapid Application Development Project”
- Ian Kluge, “Procrustes’ Bed: The Insufficiencies of Secular Humanism”
- Marlene Macke, “The Untold Story of Albert Durrant Watson and the Bahá’í Faith”
- Isar Mahanian, “Beyond Traditional Conflict Resolution Methods: Dynamical Systems Theory in the Context of Bahá’í Peacemaking”
- Hoda Mahmoudi, “Bahá’í Scholarship: Process of Learning at The Bahá’í Chair for World Peace”
- Farshad Fani Marvasti & Bahar Brocken, “Food as Medicine: The Bahá’í Writings and the State of the Science”
- Elaine McCreary, “Rational Soul, Its Scientific Method and Spiritual Search”
- Douglas McGrath, “Use of Art (Drama) in Respect of ‘Salt of My Tablets’”
- Robert Michell, “‘The Horizon’s Little Joke’ The Circle as Spatial Perfection in the Poetry of B.K. Filson”
- Marcia Moody & Schahrzade Rezvani, “Inclusive Education and Baha’i Scholarship”
- Shahin Movafagh Mowzoon, “Collective Diversity: Consultation, the Seven Valleys, and the Formation of a Collective”
- Nura Mowzoon, “Bahá’í Dating: Fact, Fiction and Social Physics”
- Kevin Naimi, “Thinking Sociologically About Independent Investigation”
- Kim Naqvi, “Contrasting Visions of Modernity: The Landscape Paintings of Albert Anker and Paul Klee”
- Layla Parker-Katirae, “The Independent Investigation of Truth as a Prerequisite for Navigating Today’s Social Media and Targeted Marketing”
- Hamid Peseschkian, “Positive Psychotherapy - A Bahá’í Inspired Method of Psychotherapy and Counseling in Transcultural Settings”
- Shay Rozen, “‘From the Valley of Achor to Doors of Hope’ - Bahá’í Studies at Israeli Academia in the Last Two Decades”
- Benjamin Schewel & Geoffrey Cameron, “The Bahá’í Faith and the Public Sphere”
- Adib Sedig, “Physics and Spirit: Self-Similarity and the Holographic Soul”
- Kamran Sedig, Paul Parson, and Ashley Naimi, “Investigating Harmony of Science and Religion: On the Mind, the Method, and the Object of Our Quest”
- Mikhail Sergeev, “The Bahá’í Faith and Modernity: A Comparative Analysis”
- David R Smith, “Shaping Habits of Thought for the Love of God - Further Considerations”
- Furugh Switzer, “Your Story Project: Breaking the Cycle of Poverty”
- Raymond Switzer & Furugh Switzer, “A New Race of Couples”
- Victoria Talwar, “Common Themes in Diverse Voices: The Role of Spirituality in Children’s Lives”

Hotel Information

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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 “Bahá’í Studies Conference.” You can also book online at <https://resweb.passkey.com/go/8BAH>

Room rates are CDN \$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 the room-block is filled or until July 22 (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 after the conference dates based on availability.



The Fairmont Royal York Hotel

The Journal of Bahá'í Studies - Volume 23, Issue No. 1/4

The latest issue of JBS is in the mail!

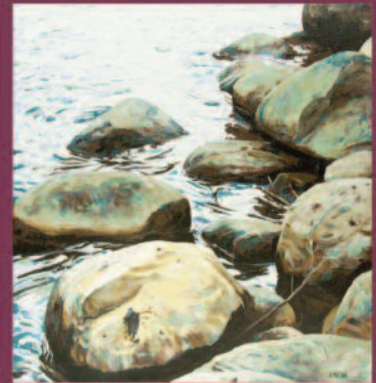
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ABS Webinar Recordings Available Online

The recordings of past ABS webinars are available on the ABS website for viewing and free download. Here is a list of the latest recordings:

Reading, Analyzing, and Transforming Reality through Participatory Research
with Dr. Shabnam Koirala-Azad

Technology, Values, and the Shaping of Social Reality
with Mr. Matthew Weinberg

Watch, Like, Share: How YouTube Is Advancing Mankind
with Ms. Shabnam Mogharabi

Emotional Intelligence, Relationships, and the Long Obligatory Prayer
with Mrs. Keyvan Geula

Can We Be Good without God?
with Mr. Ian Kluge

Applying the Framework of the Growth Process to Social Action: A Case Example from Northern Pakistan
with Drs. Judie and Michael Bopp

How Food Choices Affect Our Health, the Welfare of Humanity, and Our Environment
with Dr. Lisa Molin