

ABS Bulletin

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

ABS 39th Annual Conference 2015 Theme Statement and Call for Presentations

The ABS Executive Committee is pleased to announce the theme and venue for the 2015 ABS conference. The conference is being held at the Hyatt Regency Orange County in California on August 6-9 on the theme “Advancing the Life of the Mind.”

The Theme Statement and Call for Presentations below invites you to explore this theme and to send proposals for presentation at the conference. The deadline for submission of proposals is 1 April, 2015.

Theme Statement:

Advancing the Life of the Mind

Since the establishment of the Association for Bahá'í Studies in 1975, it has served to foster the intellectual life of its members and of the Bahá'í

community. The annual conference has developed as one way in which the Association seeks to bring together a growing number of participants to explore the implications of the Bahá'í teachings for a variety of disciplines, professions and fields of inquiry. The conference and other specialized settings created by the Association promote learning among a range of attendees across a range of interests. Our common purpose is to develop our capacity to examine the ideas, concepts and theories operating within the scholarly and professional disciplines, and to contribute to the development of a growing body of knowledge associated with Bahá'í thought.

The theme of this year's conference is “Advancing the Life of the Mind.” The “power of intellectual investigation” is

praised by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as “an eternal gift producing fruits of unending delight.” He says, “It is the very foundation of all individual and national development.”¹ The Bahá'í teachings convey a vision of the future that calls for “profound change not only at the level of the individual but

also in the structure of society.”² This concerted effort to transform society is intimately related to advances in thought: “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.”³

With this vision in mind, the conference will serve as a venue in which fresh approaches can be taken to generate and apply knowledge related to various disciplines and fields of study. Participants are invited to consider how they can play a role in working with others “to earnestly strive to reflect on the implications that the truths found in the Revelation may hold for their work.”⁴ This calls for a greater appreciation of the harmony of science and religion, examining scientific methods of discovery and considering how the Revelation sheds light on the process of inquiry. How might the Bahá'í teachings illuminate study of the core theoretical concerns of economics and political science?



Laguna Beach View (Courtesy of Destination Irvine)

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How do they guide inquiry into history, philosophy, and the role of art in society? What insights from the teachings inform discourses about the application of the health and life sciences? How might they advance our understanding of the process of education and the development of human capabilities? These are only a few of the kinds of questions that might be considered over the course of the conference – whether in small working groups or the large plenary sessions – and which will continue to be investigated in other spaces and gatherings outside of the conference.

¹ *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), p. 50.

² The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010.

³ The Universal House of Justice, Ridván Message 2010.

⁴ The Universal House of Justice, Letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, 24 July 2013.

Call for Presentations

Proposals for individual presentations and panels are invited for topics on the above themes, as well as additional topics meeting the criteria below. Topics are not limited to the conference theme, and presentations can include works in the visual and performing arts. Proposals for presentations and panels must be submitted on-line and include a 200 word explanation of the goals and method of the work presented, accompanied by a 100 word abstract for publication in the conference programme.

Further information on proposing a topic can be found below, including,

- **What do people present on at an ABS conference?**
- **How is an ABS conference presentation different from a course at a Bahá'í school or a talk at a special event?**

- **Who presents at an ABS conference?**
- **What are the possible formats for presentation?**
- **How is an ABS proposal written?**
- **Additional Information**

What do people present on at an ABS conference?

- Presenters explore an original question or proposition through a clearly described method or approach.
- They may also review the existing discourse of a field or discipline from a position of expertise and a Bahá'í perspective, for the purpose of fostering new discussion.
- Presentations on the visual or performing arts may explore theory or introduce and present new artistic work.
- Presentations are always works-in-progress, presented to engage the conference participants in discussions about new work, or a new reflection on work.

In all cases, the presenter's goal is both to present their original work, and to test it with the conference participants. The conference participants, for their part, may be the peers of the presenter, engaged in the same discipline or work, or be interested members of the broader community, who want to engage in this discourse.

How is an ABS conference presentation different from a course at a Bahá'í school or a public talk at a special event?

In contrast to traditional Bahá'í school sessions and other conferences, which more often present on established ideas and thought, the main goal of the Association for Bahá'í Studies conference is to present new, and original work. Consequently, the requirements for a proposal are that

1. it represent new and original work,
2. it has not been presented elsewhere in a school, workshop, seminar or study-class format, or

3. it is being presented for continued development to a new, larger audience for review and feedback.

Who presents at an ABS conference?

While presentations must be connected to existing thought and practice, a broad range of qualifications is recognized.

- At most conferences, about half the presenters are from the academic world, either faculty or graduate students.
- About half of the presenters are from outside the academic world, representing a broad range of professional expertise and informed amateur scholarship.
- Proposals from new scholars and young scholars are sought and most welcome.

Potential presenters wishing further guidance on submitting proposals or unable to submit online can contact the Association at <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>

What are the possible formats for presentation?

While many presentations are talks or panel discussions, the use of the arts and other diverse approaches are also encouraged.

Those presenting visual, musical,

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theatrical or literary arts should be aware that the equipment in presentation rooms is usually, though not always, limited to digital projectors and screens, with simple audio systems set up for speaking, and that they lack stages and elevated theatre-style seating. Presentation needs beyond this norm can be addressed to the conference committee so that they can be accommodated where possible.

Presentations can be individual, or a panel of speakers can be proposed for a single topic. The Association can also assist individual presenters to find potential collaborators and present their work in new panels. Those submitting proposals can therefore choose from the following presentation formats.

- A stand alone presentation by a single presenter or multiple presenters, of either
 - a discussion style session with a 20 minute presentation and 40 minutes for discussion;
 - a lecture style session with a 40 minute presentation and 20 minutes for discussion.
- A 90 - 120 minute panel presentation of two or more people who have been working separately on a common theme, and would offer different perspectives on that theme. At least one third of the scheduled time is preserved for discussion;
- A 90 -120 minute panel presentation of two or more people who have been working collaboratively on a common theme, and would present their joint research and explorations. At least one third of the scheduled time is preserved for discussion;
- An individual submission with a special request to be placed (if possible) in a collaborative panel with presenters on related themes, for later discussion and interaction;
- A poster presentation, in which work is summarised in a mixed visual and verbal poster format, and presenters interact with conference

participants on a one to one basis or in small groups in a specified session. Guidelines on how to do a poster presentation can be found at <<http://bahai-studies.ca/upcoming-conference/>>

All panels are scheduled for between 90 to 120 minutes, depending on the number of participants and scheduling constraints. Panellists must be prepared for strict time-keeping. They must also be prepared to engage in discussion with their fellow panellists. Where possible, they should get to know each other and each other's work in advance.

How is an ABS proposal written?

The 200 word proposal is extremely important since it will be the basis for deciding whether to accept the submission, and where to best place it in the schedule. All proposals are reviewed by a common review team, plus at least one additional reviewer experienced in the topic area. Proposals must outline the presentation in detail and provide sufficient background on the topic and on the presenter's qualifications for the review panel to assess its value.

For more academically-styled presentations, it is helpful to begin by identifying which specific questions are being addressed. Explain why the questions are important with respect to current thinking and/or practice, and what means will be used to address the question (related theory, methods of research, presentation style, etc). The proposal can also briefly comment on known or anticipated results.

Presentations not following a standard academic style are welcome and encouraged. In an arts-based presentation, for example, the "results" may be a performance or visual work, evoking audience response. Other approaches to exploring ideas and knowledge are also welcome, and can be presented in the proposal with an explanation of their use.

The deadline for submission of proposals is 1 April 2015.

Proposals must be submitted online at <bahai-studies.ca/upcoming-conference-abs-conference-submission-form/>

Additional Information

Providing Handouts to participants: Please consider providing handouts for participants in a shared drive on the Cloud, on a commonly available on-line service such as "Dropbox" or "Google Drive", for downloading during the conference or later. Simple instructions can be found at: www.dropbox.com/en/help/19>
Guidelines for PowerPoint presentations: Some presenters find it useful to provide slides for visual presentation. If you feel it is absolutely necessary for your presentation to include such visual aid, please consider familiarizing yourself with some best practices in this area, easily found through search engines. One such useful site is:
<www.sc.edu/cte/guide/powerpoint/>

Registration and Hotel Information

Conference registration and hotel information are available on the ABS website: <www.bahai-studies.ca> For further inquiries, please contact the ABS office, tel.: 613-233-1903 or e-mail: <abs-na@bahai-studies.ca>.

Hotel reservations must be made directly with the conference hotel, Hyatt Regency Orange County, 11999 Harbor Blvd., Garden Grove, CA 92840. To book your room, please call the Reservations Department at 888-421-1442 and refer to the group name "Association for Baha'i Studies Conference."

Room rates are \$139.00 single/double, and \$159 triple/quad occupancy. These rates are guaranteed only until **Wednesday, July 15, 2015**. 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.

Open Letter to ABS Members from the Executive Committee

24 February 2015

Dear Friends,

The ABS Executive Committee appreciates your continued support of the work of the Association through your membership. Over the past few years, the operations of the Association have been affected by rising costs, as well as by the desire to provide members with improved services. Among the improved services being implemented is the increase in the number of issues of *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*. The Journal is now being published a few times per year which results in higher printing and shipping costs. The Association also conducts regular monthly webinars covering topics in diverse areas of interest by experts in the field, free of charge to all the members and to the public. On the new and improved ABS website we now have links to free viewing and downloading of conference plenary presentations, as well as articles from past issues of JBS. The quarterly issue of the ABS Bulletin will continue to be sent to members electronically. The ABS conferences continue to provide spaces for discourse in various disciplines where learning is promoted.

We are writing at this time to inform our members that after careful consideration, the Committee sees a need to change the ABS membership fee structure. The goal of the Association is to become self-supporting and decrease our reliance on the National Funds of the Faith. The last time that membership fees were increased was twenty four years ago back in 1991. Since then, the cost of printing, shipping and all other operations related to maintaining the ABS office and services has risen dramatically. All these factors have made it necessary to increase the membership fees.

The Committee was heartened to receive further guidance from the Universal House of Justice in its letter dated 24 July 2013 addressed to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, where it described the progress in the development of the Association since its establishment in North America in 1975, its contribution to the intellectual life of the Baha'i community and to greater involvement in the life of society. 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 endeavours of the Association for Bahá'í Studies can be conceived. Through the specialized settings it creates, the Association can promote learning among a wide range of believers across a wide range of disciplines."

With this vision and goal, the Association is endeavoring to create spaces in the form of seminars and specialized gatherings, in addition to the annual conference, to engage individuals from various professions and academic disciplines in learning together across a wide range of fields.

The new membership fee structure will be as follows:

	One year	Three Year discounted
Adult:	\$70	\$190
Full-time Student/Senior/Unwaged:	\$40	\$110
Couple:	\$85	\$230
Institution	\$85	\$230

International Members Postal Surcharge: \$30 additional fee is required for members outside North America due to high postage costs.

We trust that this modest increase after nearly a quarter of a century will lessen dependence on the Funds of the Faith and strengthen the material foundation necessary for ABS services to continue to develop and flourish. We are counting on your continued support. As always, we welcome your comments and suggestions.

With loving regards,
ABS Executive Committee

2014 ABS Conference Report

“Scholarship and the Life of Society”

How do we learn so deeply about the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh that we can talk about it in meaningful ways within the social spaces where we find ourselves?

How do we apply its spiritual concepts to our occupations or professions — both examining the social forces that affect them and contributing to discourses about the knowledge those fields generate?

How, in essence, does each of us find a place in the intellectual life of the Bahá'í community in a way that influences the world around us?

These are some of the challenges the Universal House of Justice posed in a July 24, 2013, letter to Canada's National Spiritual Assembly concerning the future of the Association for Bahá'í Studies.

So in planning its 38th North American conference Aug. 7–10 in Toronto, on the theme “Scholarship and the Life of Society,” the ABS took to heart the fresh view that letter set out for correlating Bahá'í teachings with contemporary thought, one of

the Association's long-standing aims.

The letter reinforced the concept that “any of us can be a Bahá'í scholar” if we strive to “live up to the high expectations set forth by Bahá'u'lláh and ‘Abdu'l-Bahá” as we work to generate and apply knowledge, noted Lisa Dufraimont, representing the ABS Executive Committee, in welcoming remarks on the conference's first evening.

As that letter infused the consciousness of the 1,200 participants from 21 countries, a number of its concepts came to the fore in formal presentations and informal conversations alike: investigating reality, raising capacity, the role of action in learning.

And the gathering added momentum to the idea of an evolving conceptual framework, “a matrix that organizes thought and gives shape to



Opening Address by Secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, Mrs. Karen McKye

activities.” Several presenters evoked that framework in talking about how Bahá'í principles influence the ways they think, talk and interact within their arenas of service.

The July 24 letter influenced the very structure of the conference. In addition to the regular slate of plenary speakers, workshops and smaller breakout sessions, new opportunities to reflect and share ideas for discourse were provided on three levels:

- Experts in plenary panel discussions addressing the general areas of social sciences, natural and life sciences, and the humanities.
- Groups of professionals and academics (often younger) on smaller-scale panels during breakout sessions addressing economics, education, health care, perceptions of death, religion in society, science and religion, and sustainability.
- Exchanges of ideas in the form of subject area consultations, with 14 simultaneous sessions each focused on a particular profession or area of interest.



Plenary Audience

No doubt the thinking about how Bahá'í scholarship influences the life of society will continue to evolve, as will the ABS's role in encouraging intellectual efforts inspired by Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation.

Counselor Daniel Scott, commenting at the close of the conference, pointed out that even within the Bahá'í community, these efforts to generate and apply learning go far beyond the realms of academia and professions.

After all, he said, a culture of learning is at the heart of the Bahá'í community-building process that has been edifying "the hearts of scores of others, and in some cases whole neighborhoods."

That's true especially of young people, Scott said.

"The [Universal] House of Justice looks to rising generations of Bahá'ís to wholeheartedly address a wide range of intellectual challenges ... to render service for the betterment of the world," Scott said, quoting from the Supreme Body's letter: "To this arena, pregnant with possibilities, the Association... can offer an important contribution."



Conference Workshop

Paul Lample addresses learning processes and framework for action

For more than a century Bahá'ís have been in a constant process of learning what the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh really means in this world, both in theory and in our communities, said Paul Lample, a member of the Universal House of Justice, on the first day of the conference.

Scholars inspired by the Bahá'í teachings have a "challenging range of tasks," he said. They can help shape a tolerant community that is neither "carried away by new ideas" nor shaken in its faith by them.

Lample noted that the July 24, 2013, letter from the House of Justice concerning development of the ABS was the result of "a couple of years consulting about the intellectual life of the Bahá'í community." The Supreme Body's hope, he said, is to "reinvigorate and refocus" Bahá'í scholarship while building on accomplishments of the past. He touched on a few points in support of that aspiration.

The framework of how we conceive the work of the Faith has always been developed to keep our community on a path of moderation and prevent polarization.

Whether seen in Shoghi Effendi's messages educating the community about Bahá'í administration, in efforts by Bahá'ís in social and economic development, or in the community-building process now emerging, Lample noted that a couple of principles have been consistent.



Opening Plenary Address, Mr. Paul Lample

Those involved in these learning processes have always been advised to avoid the extremes of rigidity on one hand and of rejection of structure on the other. And understanding has grown deeper "gradually as they translated those concepts into action."

Scholarship by Bahá'ís continues to play a key role in advancing the Faith's body of knowledge.

Lample urged broadening the definition of scholarship "to think about the intellectual work of the Faith in its widest sense."

For instance:

- Academics introducing Bahá'í principles into the discourse of their specific fields.
- Students of the Bahá'í Revelation itself striving to gain "a deep grasp of the teachings and their significance."
- Bahá'ís and their friends in many clusters or learning sites, focused on learning from the process of building capacity where they live.

A pre-eminent need in Bahá'í scholarship, he said, is to gradually build a framework built on "constructive habits of mind" that keeps our learning process balanced.

Such a framework would involve a consultative style of investigating reality that encourages free expression of well-considered ideas, “as long as we don’t insist that we’re right and as long as we don’t argue about the divine questions” — allowing a closer understanding of truth that emerges over time from study, reflection and action.

As one example of that process, Lample recounted how the Universal House of Justice in 2001 introduced the concept of intensive programs of growth, but didn’t describe everything about what such a program would look like. Instead, “it was the friends acting within that framework that mapped it out ... over 10 years.”

Such a framework would encourage tact and wisdom, so that we neither express our ideas in insistent ways that alienate those with different perspectives nor cling to extreme views and become “impervious to any attempt to understand reality in any different way” — both pitfalls in public discourse that we all witness nowadays.

It would foster a growing trust that “religion keeps science from veering into materialism and science keeps religion from veering into superstition.”

And it would recognize that guidance about the Revelation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice — far from a “fossilization” of our thinking about the fundamental teachings — helps “frame them in a way that opens up possibilities.”

Human thought has limits, he said. We all have to struggle for understanding, whether in scientific inquiry or in our study of the Bahá’í revelation. And humanity has always faced pitfalls when people get invested in their own ideas, try to “bend the truth to themselves,” and even employ power to coax others into going along with them.

In protecting freedom of thought while guarding against divisive habits, “the first line of defense ... is Bahá’í intellectuals themselves,” Lample said. It’s up to everyone involved in the

learning process to create a community that allows the latitude to make mistakes, “welcomes exploration of reality,” and provides for people of learning to take their true place as, in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words, “stars in the heaven of true knowledge.”

Vahid Rafati explores “The Evolving Role of Bahá’í Scholarship” in Balyuzi Lecture

Vahid Rafati, in delivering the 32nd Hasan M. Balyuzi Memorial Lecture, “The Evolving Role of Bahá’í Scholarship” on Aug. 9, offered two quotations to frame his talk on the need for Bahá’í scholars — particularly young believers — to step up and build on the legacy of such as Mirzá Abu’l-Fadl-i-Gulpáygání.

At Ridván 1998 the Universal House of Justice noted that a “hunger for meaning, a yearning of the soul, is on the rise. This spiritual hunger is characterized by a restlessness, by a swelling dissatisfaction with the moral state of society; it is also evident in the upsurge of fundamentalism among various religious sects, and in the multiplication of new movements posing as religions or aspiring to take the place of religion.”



Balyuzi Lecturer, Dr. Vahid Rafati

Fifty-five years earlier, a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi averred: “The Cause needs more Bahá’í scholars, people who not only are devoted to it and believe in it and are anxious to tell others about it, but also who have a deep grasp of the Teachings and their significance, and who can correlate its beliefs with the current thoughts and problems of the people of the world.”

Those who take up that challenge must “be humble and faithful to the Covenant, fight against ego and be generators of knowledge in the community,” said Rafati, who serves in the Research Department at the Bahá’í World Center in Haifa, Israel.

That’s in marked contrast, he said, to the ‘ulamá, Muslim scholars who



Breakout Session

through the centuries of guiding the religious, social and political affairs of that faith's community have been "primarily responsible for misinterpretation of the Qur'an and Hadith and have led to disunity and enmity within Islam and in its approach to other religions."

Rafati said many of the laws Bahá'u'lláh set down in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas specifically abrogated powers the 'ulamá have exploited to maintain their grip on the direction of Islam, including use of the pulpit; congregational prayer; personal interpretation of the Sacred Writings; individual use of the Right of God and of contributions/endowments; blind imitation of experts; and application of religious laws by other than elected institutions.

In the Bahá'í Faith, "The elected institutions ... are divinely confirmed to direct efforts of the Faith on local, national and finally international levels," he noted.

"The power to act, however, resides at the level of individual initiative and collective volition. In other words, the individual believer is tasked with converting into action the decisions that are made by the consultative bodies."

Further, "To effectively translate the Writings into action, no individual believer can afford ignorance. The responsibility to study the Writings, the responsibility to be inspired by them, the responsibility to translate them into action — these responsibilities fall upon the shoulders of every individual Bahá'í."

Part of a culture of learning in which the Universal House of Justice has urged Bahá'í individuals, communities and institutions to immerse themselves, this responsibility calls for not only a deep knowledge of the teachings but a sound understanding of the histories of the Bábí and Bahá'í Faith and the "challenges, developments and energies generated in those movements," said Rafati.



Dr. Haleh Arbab

Also helpful, he said, are special skills and expertise in the languages of the Revelation, as well as understanding of the history of religion, especially Islam, and of methodologies of research and scholarly work.

The International Teaching Center and the Continental Boards of Counselors can help, said Rafati, by encouraging budding scholars, promoting within the Bahá'í community tolerance of the views of others and establishing research centers.

This is a great challenge and opportunity, he said — one Bahá'u'lláh addressed in the Most Holy Book to the rebuilders of the world:



Subject Area Consultation Session

"Happy are ye, O ye the learned ones in Bahá. By the Lord! Ye are the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean, the stars of the firmament of Glory, the standards of triumph waving betwixt earth and heaven. Ye are the manifestations of steadfastness amidst men and the daysprings of Divine Utterance to all that dwell on earth. Well is it with him that turneth unto you, and woe betide the froward. This day, it behoveth whoso hath quaffed the Mystic Wine of everlasting life from the Hands of the loving-kindness of the Lord his God, the

Merciful, to pulsate even as the throbbing artery in the body of mankind, that through him may be quickened the world and every crumbling bone."

Haleh Arbab discusses "Learning to Read Social Reality in the Light of Revelation"

It would be easy to mistake the mandate of the Institute for Studies in Global Prosperity as enhancing the capacity of individuals and groups to participate in the prevalent discourses of society.

After all, as Haleh Arbab noted in her August 9 talk, "Learning to Read Social Reality in the Light of the Revelation," ISGP's courses and seminars have enabled hundreds of students to "take ownership of their education and to prepare themselves adequately to make contributions to their fields without sacrificing their beliefs or packing them in a corner of their lives reserved for religion."

But the charge at this early stage in the institute's life is to learn systematically about enhancing those capac-



Opening Address by Representative of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States, Mrs. Valerie Dana

ities, said Arbab, its director, based at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa, Israel. And ISGP's efforts to address that mandate have required it to answer key questions.

Among the first, regarding "the attitudes we were going to adopt towards the existing body of knowledge of humanity," she said.

At this stage of humanity's transition to maturity the affairs of the world are in disarray, Arbab noted. Beneath that disorder, however, lies a system of thought and knowledge. Should Bahá'ís throw the baby out with the bathwater?

No, said Arbab. We know that in childhood we "develop many of the tools we'll use throughout our lives," and we build on them.

"The implications are clear: We have to approach our participation in the discourses of society with full mastery of the relative fields of knowledge," she said. "We can test assumptions in light of [the Bahá'í] Revelation without throwing out any realities that underlie them."

The nature of science and religion gave rise to another of the questions ISGP had to address as it developed its methodologies.

"Some would say all truths of science can be found within the Revelation, while others would say that the imprecise language of religion can eventually give way to the precision of science," related Arbab.

"But statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá divided science and religion sharply from each other. Science, through empiricism, finds truths about the universe and society, and religion provides the values needed to exercise science properly and to put such gifts of science as technology and systems or processes into good use."

ISGP, she said, decided to anchor its discourse in the field of social and economic development of the peoples of the world, "hoping we would get insights into the way the two systems contributed to the advancement of civilization."

These efforts evoked encouraging responses in the spaces where the discourse was launched, particularly India, Uganda and Brazil. But they made clear, she said, the limitation of resources Bahá'ís can bring to bear at this point.

And the role of ISGP's courses and seminars in developing needed capacity? Arbab said many students have come to the Institute reeling from the strong materialistic views they encounter at university, "views that leave their holders virtually no room for dialogue on science and religion."

They feel, she said, "that to succeed at university they have to think and perform within the models dominant in their fields of study, adopting methods counter to their beliefs." So the Institute offers these students a "concentric framework they can make their own."

"Capacity building increases a number of interrelated abilities in the believers that enables them to focus considerable energy on the twin processes of expansion and consolidation and at the same time assist interested individuals to lend their talents

to social action and discourses of society," said Arbab.

ISGP, she said, is also considering development of capacity related to research, "the capacity to analyze in the light of revelation certain global social phenomena."

But Arbab cautioned her audience "not to fragment the teachings according to our own perceptions, zeroing on a few sentences or passages and coming up with formulaic statements that actually limit our explorations of reality rather than constantly opening for us new horizons."

In addressing an issue such as the movement of populations, she said, "We cannot focus only on suffering, but we must also describe joy. We must see light within the darkness. We must be aware of the intricate connections between the processes of integration and disintegration. We cannot forget that in real life joy and sorrow embrace each other.

"Only in this way the knowledge we generate in this first stage of inquiry can lead to processes of action and reflection in which the populations can participate and the knowledge we generate will continue to contribute to the civilization-building process in which we're all engaged."

- Report by Editors of *The American Bahá'í*

38th Annual Conference Report to be continued in the March issue of the *ABS Bulletin*.

Conference Recordings available for sale and free download on the ABS Website

<http://bahai-studies.ca/proceedings-and-recordings/>

ADVANCING THE LIFE OF THE MIND

Association for Bahá'í Studies 39th Annual Conference, 6–9 August, 2015 Hyatt Regency Orange County, California, USA

Please register for 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.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Province/State _____

Country _____ Postal/ZIP Code _____

Telephone _____ E-Mail _____

If this registrant is a child, please indicate age _____ Do you have any special needs? _____

		Full Conference Fee (4 days)		One-Day Fee
		ABS Member	Non-Member	All categories
Individual Adults	By May 31	\$100	\$170*	\$50**
	By July 31	\$110	\$180*	\$50**
	After July 31	\$120	\$190*	\$50**
Seniors (65+)	By May 31	\$80	\$120*	\$40**
Students (15+)	By July 31	\$90	\$130*	\$40**
Unwaged	After July 31	\$100	\$140*	\$40**
Children (ages 5–14) <u>must be registered by July 31</u>		\$70		\$35
Family discount		20% off total registration fee***		



Please circle one fee.

ALL CONFERENCE FEES ARE IN US \$

*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 memberships are charged at the Canadian currency rate.

**This fee does not include membership.

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

Total Fees: _____

Scholarship Contribution: _____

Postal surcharge † _____

GRAND TOTAL _____

Method of Payment

- Cheque Money Order
 VISA MasterCard American Express

† Non-members residing outside North America, please add \$30.

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.

Credit Card Number

Credit Card Expiration Date

Cardholder's Name (please print clearly)

Cardholder's Signature