



Vineyard of the Lord

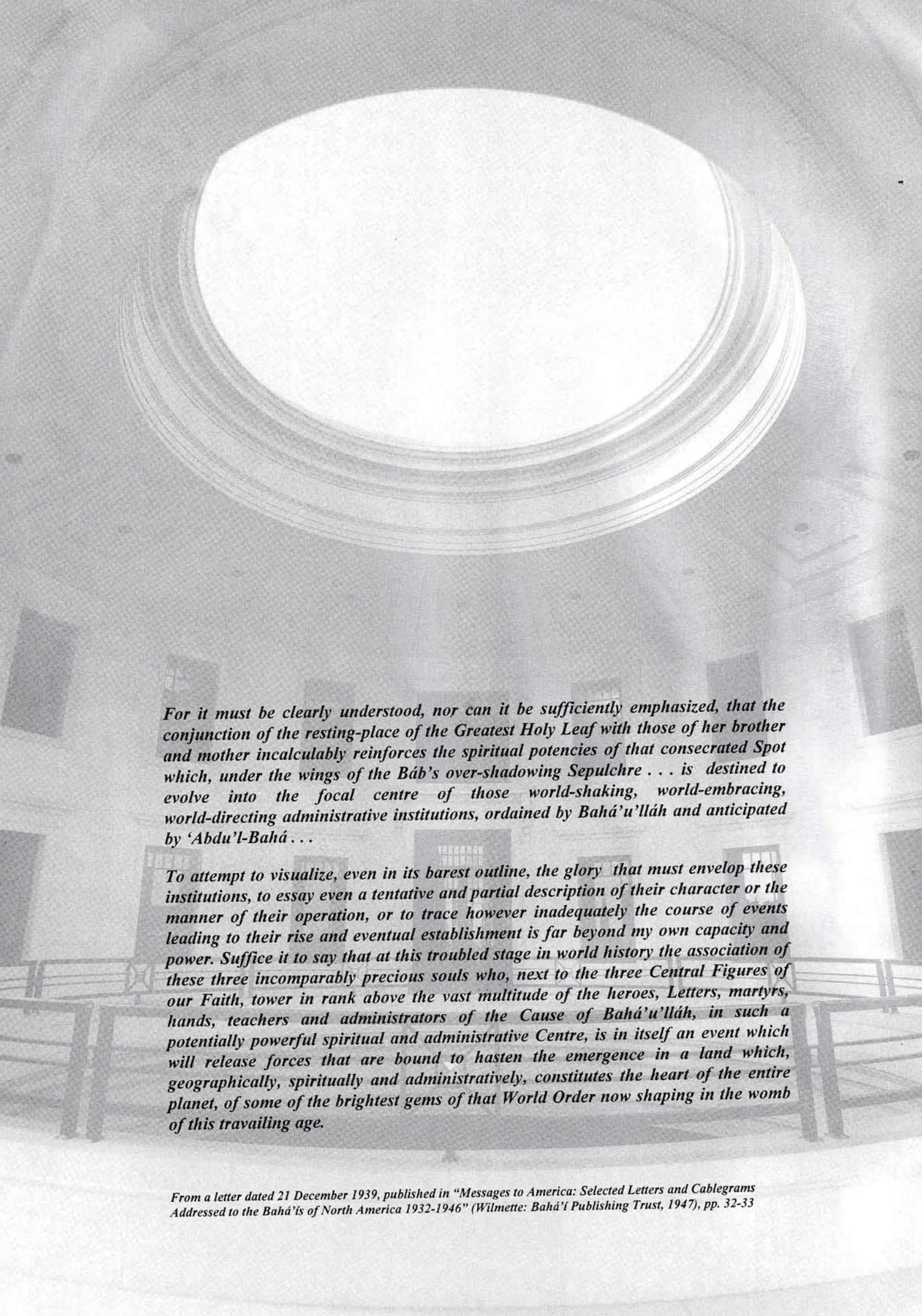
MOUNT CARMEL BAHÁ'Í PROJECTS UPDATE

*"O Carmel . . . Rejoice, for God hath in this Day
established upon thee His throne . . ."*

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For it must be clearly understood, nor can it be sufficiently emphasized, that the conjunction of the resting-place of the Greatest Holy Leaf with those of her brother and mother incalculably reinforces the spiritual potencies of that consecrated Spot which, under the wings of the Báb's over-shadowing Sepulchre . . . is destined to evolve into the focal centre of those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh and anticipated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá . . .

To attempt to visualize, even in its barest outline, the glory that must envelop these institutions, to essay even a tentative and partial description of their character or the manner of their operation, or to trace however inadequately the course of events leading to their rise and eventual establishment is far beyond my own capacity and power. Suffice it to say that at this troubled stage in world history the association of these three incomparably precious souls who, next to the three Central Figures of our Faith, tower in rank above the vast multitude of the heroes, Letters, martyrs, hands, teachers and administrators of the Cause of Bahá'u'lláh, in such a potentially powerful spiritual and administrative Centre, is in itself an event which will release forces that are bound to hasten the emergence in a land which, geographically, spiritually and administratively, constitutes the heart of the entire planet, of some of the brightest gems of that World Order now shaping in the womb of this travailing age.

PROGRESS REPORT

The Shrine of the Báb and its terraced gardens cynosure of the eyes of close to a billion viewers

"Lift up your hearts above the present and look with eyes of faith into the future! Today the seed is sown, the grain falls upon the earth, but behold, the day will come when it shall rise a glorious tree and the branches thereof shall be laden with fruit. Rejoice and be glad that this day has dawned, try to realize its power, for it is indeed wonderful!"¹ This inspiring advice from 'Abdu'l-Bahá has often been taken to heart by Bahá'ís, which has resulted in many victories for the Faith. The construction of the momentous Projects on the Mountain of God is an example of this vision being translated into reality. This reality was brought home to millions of people in a dramatic way through the medium of television when the spiritual focus of these Projects, the Shrine of the Báb, and its terraced gardens, became the cynosure of the eyes of close to a billion viewers across the globe at the dawn of the year 2000.

The Shrine of the Báb and the Terraces were filmed as part of a world wide television coverage by BBC and ABC for the millennium celebrations, and shown on many TV channels all over the world with different commentators. In Israel, the Israel Broadcasting Association aired the segment on Haifa with six singers from the Carmel Acapella choir performing "Halleluya" in Hebrew standing on the steps of one of the terraces below the Shrine of the Báb with the Shrine towering above them. This was followed by Arabic and Jewish dance performances by young students on Ben Gurion Avenue and the song "Small World", with the Shrine and the Terraces forming the backdrop.

In a moving account sent by one of the friends from the United States, he informs of a similar presentation, adding that "the PBS (Public Broadcasting

System) commentator in the United States, 'in fulfilment of their mission statement', educated the viewing public as to what the Bahá'í Faith is. He introduced the Báb, and the suffering that the early followers faced, and finally the execution of the Báb Himself. And then he proclaimed the Name of Bahá'u'lláh throughout our country . . . He introduced us to the high principles taught by the Faith and its ultimate goal of uniting all the peoples of this earth. My heart-beat increased and tears welled up in my eyes as I heard the name of our Lord and knew it was being shared throughout the United States, nay, the entire globe, at this same moment. On this day of significance the media, which perhaps was created for this moment, proclaimed the name of Glory to the suffering Earth." These sentiments perhaps reflect the feelings of many Bahá'ís who had the opportunity to view in their own countries this segment on Haifa.

Fine tuning in winter, in anticipation of springtime

With the onset of winter, the focus of work on the Terraces has shifted from planting new vegetation to maintaining and strengthening the established gardens. Winter also provides the opportunity to fine-tune the designs already put in place, and to prepare for springtime. Winter set in late this year, but we have received some torrential rains of unusual ferocity, testing our drainage system, as well as the stability of the planted slopes of the Terraces. The system stood the test well, and there has been little or no erosion in the planted areas.

Geometric curves delineate the shape of the Entrance Plaza

Extensive plumbing work and installation of pipes for the fountains has commenced in the mechanical room. The construction of geometric curves and aqua drains has delineated the shape of the Entrance Plaza.

Reference:

1. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 68

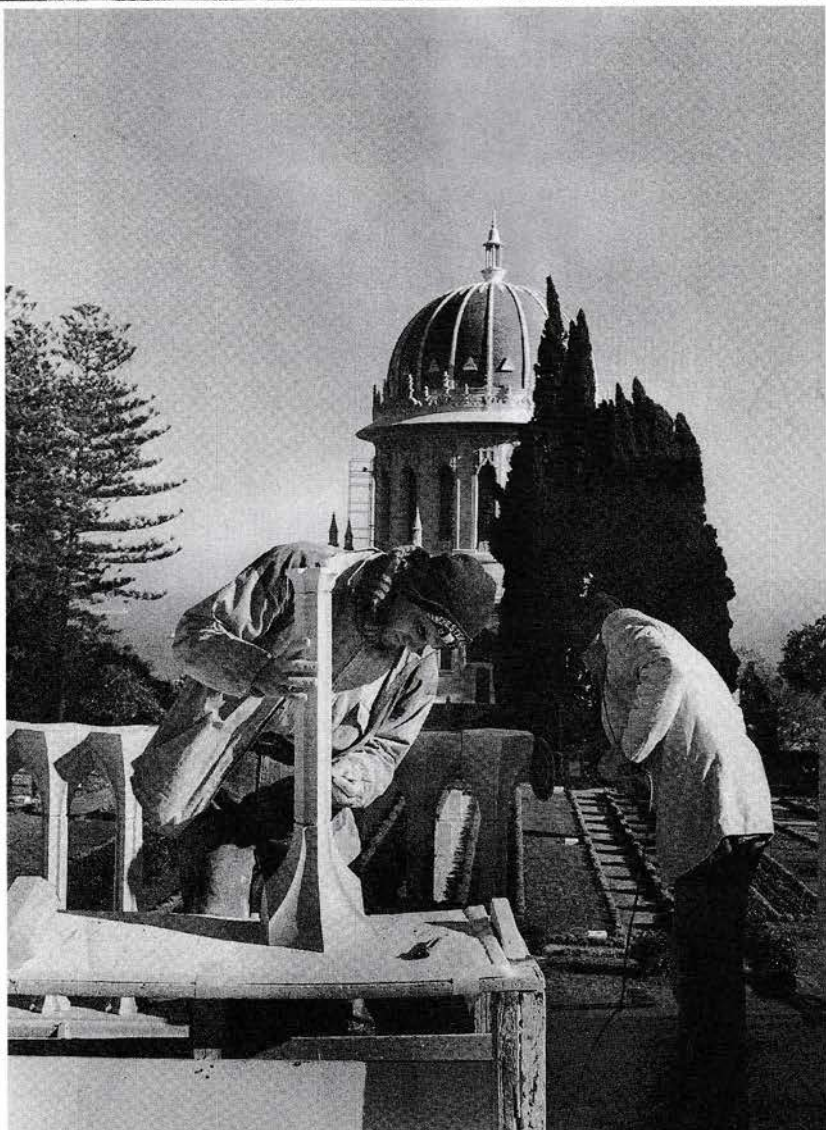


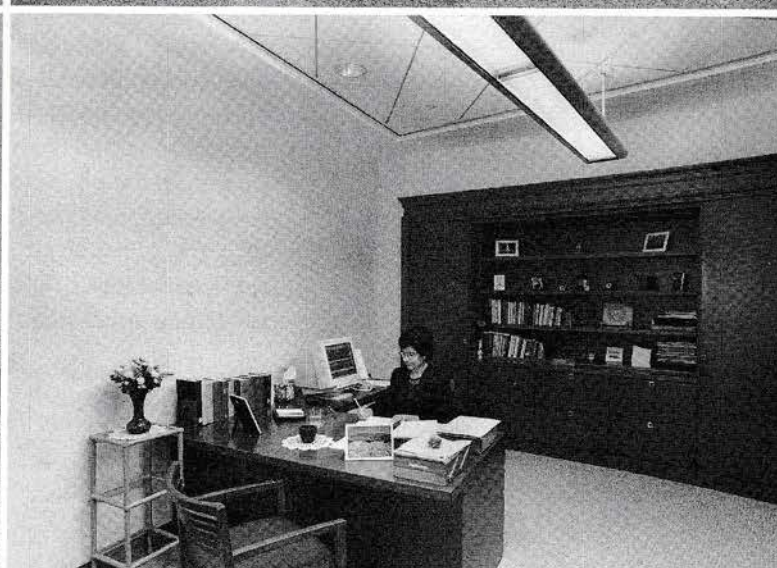
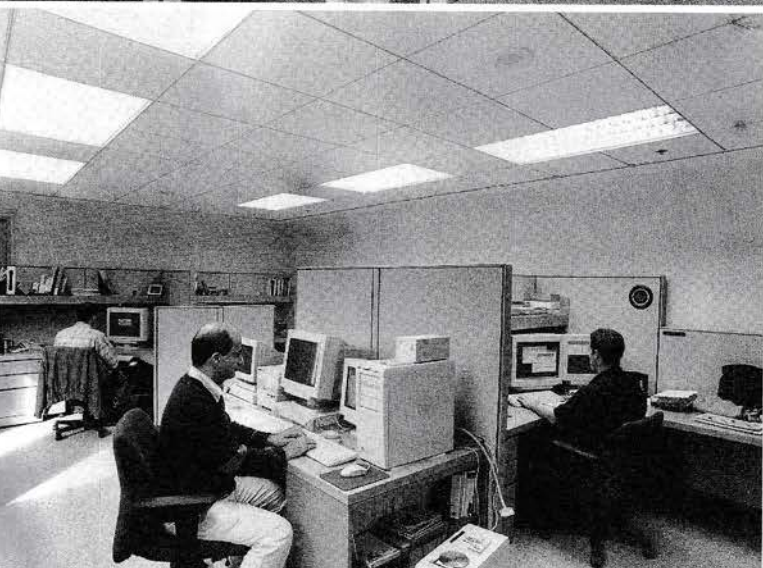
Photo above: The construction of the geometric curves and aqua drains have clearly delineated the shape of the Entrance Plaza to the Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb, at the foot of Mount Carmel.

Photo right: Masons intent upon installing balustrades on the parapet of a section of the bridge which links the Terrace of the Shrine of the Báb with Terrace 11.

Opposite page, photo above: The International Teaching Centre, an institution which "powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice."

Opposite page, photos below: The Centre for the Study of the Texts is occupied and fully functional. Seen here are different areas of the building—lounge, reception, and offices.





Projects in the most decisive phase of their progress

The Projects on the Mountain of God are now in the most decisive phase of their progress. As conveyed by the Universal House of Justice in its Ridván Message of 156 BE, "dedicatory events [are] scheduled to take place on 22 and 23 May 2001". Before this formal inauguration, in January a Counsellors' Conference in the Holy Land "will mark the occupation by the International Teaching Centre of its permanent seat, an occasion for which Auxiliary Board members throughout the world will be invited to join the Counsellors in the Holy Land." With just a few months to go, the Mount Carmel Projects team is racing against time to complete the remaining Terraces of the Shrine of the Báb, and the International Teaching Centre Building.

International Teaching Centre

Before we detail the progress towards the completion of the Teaching Centre Building, it may be appropriate to hearken back to the words of the Universal House of Justice in its letter of 8 June 1973 to the Bahá'ís of the world, regarding the establishment of this institution.

"The time is indeed propitious for the establishment of the International Teaching Centre, a development which, at one and the same time, brings to fruition the work of the Hands of the Cause residing in the Holy Land and provides for its extension into the future, links the institution of the Boards of Counsellors even more intimately with that of the Hands of the Cause of God, and powerfully reinforces the discharge of the rapidly growing responsibilities of the Universal House of Justice."

Externally, the Teaching Centre and Common Area are extensively clad in stone. Most of this work has now been completed. Inside the building, carpet tiles are in place on levels 1 to 4, including the large dining room for staff. This work is now being carried out at level 7. Office furniture for the entire complex has been ordered, and delivery is expected in March. Work inside the Auditorium, which shares levels 4 and 5, is coming on very well. Stone work inside and outside has been completed; 85% of the maple wood panels covering the interior walls are in place; auditorium seating is expected to arrive soon from England. The Auditorium is now ready for audio-visual equipment and stage lighting. The tender to install this equipment was awarded to a Canadian firm, whose staff have just arrived to commence work.

All the equipment for the kitchen at level 4 has been set up, including the dish washing area. Work is under way in the servery. The units for serving hot and cold foods are being manufactured, and expected to be installed in a few weeks time. Dining tables and chairs are being selected for the staff dining room.

As with the Centre for the Study of the Texts and the Archives Extension, most of the structure of the International Teaching Centre and the Common Area has been built into the mountain. Several patios and skylights have been designed in these buildings to serve as natural light wells. A star-shaped, semicircular skylight surrounded by a garden, is located at level 9 of the building. The aluminium frames of this skylight now hold a laminated and tempered tinted glass. Just below it is the domed ceiling of the entrance hall of the Teaching Centre with a nine-sided perforated pattern. The skylight and this domed ceiling allow for an interesting display of sunlight during the day, as it refracts through the perforated pattern. □

We bring you another historical perspective on the city of Haifa and the Bahá'í gardens on Mount Carmel, gleaned from the early volumes of the "Bahá'í World".

Shrines and Gardens

By Beatrice Irwin

In spite of modernization . . . the Holy Land still exhales an ineffable calm, and the deep gladness of unutterable things. Here the mysteries of spirit and matter mingle, and are poised in a balance that presages a new world order.

Historically, mystically and humanly, Haifa and 'Akká seem to be appropriate dawning points for a new spiritual drama whose outline is already dimly discerned in the world today.

Not so long after the invincible walls of 'Akká repulsed the cannon of Napoleon, a Persian of noble ancestry and His family were sent as Turkish prisoners to the fort . . . The name of this prisoner was Mirzá Husayn 'Alí of Tihrán, known to His followers as Bahá'u'lláh, or the "Glory of God" . . .

It is recorded that this Messenger greatly loved gardens and the radiance of natural retreats, and that resting one day in a circle of cypress trees more than half way up the slopes of Mount Carmel, He conceived the vision of that second shrine and garden, which now guards the mortal remains of the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, better known to Bahá'ís as the "Master", and to the world as Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbás of Haifa, knighted by the British Government for His rare services of help and conciliation during the difficult period prior to, and following the British occupation of Palestine.

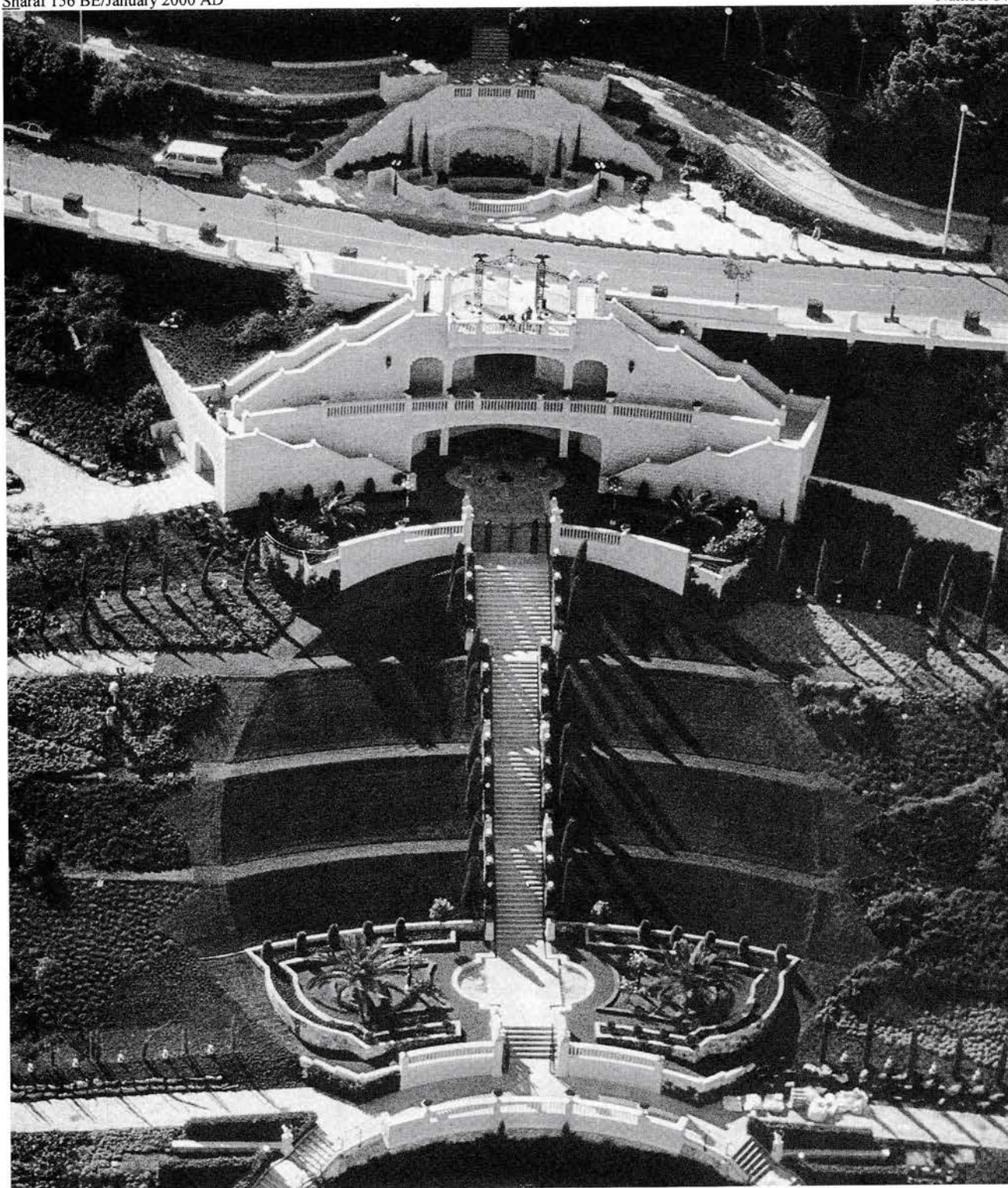
Of all the works founded by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, possibly the building of this Shrine on Mount Carmel is the most poetical, mystical and universal in appeal—a beacon of spiritual progress . . . and surrounded by the fragrant fertility for which Mount Carmel is famous, the Shrine and its nine terraced gardens are already recognized by travelers of all denominations as one of the inspiration points of Palestine, a haven of beauty that interprets death in terms of larger life and creative growth. The plan executed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá presents a square edifice of simple lines built in golden sandstone quarried from Mount Carmel, and divided into nine chambers of lofty proportions . . .

At the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ascension, the gardens were only in their initial stage of development, but in an incredibly short time, under the direction and devoted zeal of His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, they have attained to their present mature beauty. Shoghi Effendi, appointed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith in the world today, has brought the brilliance of a cultured mind, and the wisdom of a loving judgement to the creation of this verdant memorial, which holds infinite promise for the future, as well as a stable satisfaction in the present. . . .

The gardens at present cover an area of several acres in which 2,500 trees of various varieties have already been planted, predominance having been given to palm and cypress which border the four graduated avenues by which one approaches the Shrine.

The Shrine occupies a semicircular eminence clasped by broad green lawns that command a view of the harbor and country for miles around, with the prison fort of 'Akká running out its white arm of remembrance in the blue distance. Behind the Shrine on a slight elevation towers the circle of ancient cypress trees, under whose shadow Bahá'u'lláh conceived and commanded the execution of these gardens, as a suitable resting place for the remains of the Báb. They are now an oasis of joy for all creeds, classes and nations. Travelers on the great ocean liners which anchor in the port seldom miss a visit here . . . and towards dusk shepherds and Arab women carrying their babies on their hips stroll through the dewy fragrance chanting their prayers, or fragments of song. . . .

The above is an extract from *Shrines and Gardens*, an article which appeared in the *Bahá'í World*, Volume III, 1928 - 1930



□As we draw ever closer to the end of this 20th century and the dawn of a new millennium, we are acutely conscious of time ticking away and the importance of completing the Projects on the Mountain of God. While there are many anxious moments on the road to completion, nevertheless there is great hope too for things to come. We call to mind the following words of Shoghi Effendi: "The ultimate completion of this stupendous undertaking will mark the culmination of the development of a world-wide divinely-appointed Administrative Order whose beginnings may be traced as far back as the concluding years of the Heroic Age of the Faith". And we feel a warm glow of gratitude for the opportunity to be a part of this momentous process, as do Bahá'ís all over the world.

Mount Carmel Bahá'í Projects
Office of the Project Manager

