



# The Lamp

A NEWSLETTER PUBLISHED BY THE WILMETTE INSTITUTE

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## Building Spiritual Foundations: The Wilmette Institute Summer Residency Program 2001

The candles were lit, the samovar was bubbling, and Persian desserts were graciously being passed from hand to hand, as pictures of the Greatest Holy Leaf, Bahiyyih Khánum, hung around the room. Students listened with rapt attention to a moving account of her life and service to her beloved Father's Cause.

This special moment, together with many others, brought joy to the summer residents of the Wilmette Institute program, "Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization," held in Evanston, Illinois, from July 28 through August 11. Students, faculty members, and Wilmette Institute Board members described this year's session as the most successful residency held by the Institute since its first one in 1996.

The student body—twelve students who ranged in age from 19 to 79—was diverse. They hailed from Arkansas, California, Florida, Illinois, Kentucky, Oregon, and Tennessee and included an American pioneer from Texas currently serving in Korea.

The students enjoyed the theme of this year's study, "Individual Development and Marriage and Family Life." Additional modules included study of the lives of Bahá'u'lláh

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## Wilmette Institute Plans an Innovative Autumn

The Fall of 2001 will see four new courses launched by the Wilmette Institute. On October 1, a three-month course on '**Abdu'l-Bahá: The Exemplar**' will begin. It will offer a comprehensive biography of the Master, examining His life, writings, talks, travels, accomplishments, and station. Balyuzi's biography of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be the principal text, supplemented by various articles about Him.

On November 1, a course on **Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey** will tackle the ambitious task of

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The 2001 summer students and faculty pose for their group picture on the stairs of the Bahá'í National Center on August 10, just before the session ended.

## Publicity Materials Now Online

The Wilmette Institute website <<http://wilmetteinstitute.org/press>> now includes a collection of visual and informational materials designed for printing. These include monthly press releases about upcoming courses (suitable for printing in local newsletters), a legal-size printable Wilmette Institute poster, one-page fliers in PDF format about all of our courses, photographs for our Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization summer session, and a PowerPoint overview of the Wilmette Institute.

We invite our students and alumni to help us advertise the Wilmette Institute. The more students we have, the better and cheaper the courses become for everyone! You can use some of the downloadable material by including announcements in community newsletters, using photographs in articles about the Wilmette Institute, printing the one-page fliers for our courses to distribute at least or bringing a copy of the PowerPoint presentation if your community has a projector, or printing a copy of our 8.5x14 poster for inclusion in information booths about the Institute at Unit Conventions.

We also ask for any publicity suggestions or material anyone might have or want to create. Do you know of good places or ways for us to advertise that we haven't thought of yet? We welcome suggestions or contributions. Send them to Rob Stockman at <[rstockman@usbnc.org](mailto:rstockman@usbnc.org)> and to <[winters@bahai-library.org](mailto:winters@bahai-library.org)>▲



The 2001 Spiritual Foundations summer session experienced a lively classroom environment.

## Innovative Autumn . . . Continued from page 1

covering the revelation in four months. The course is an overview and will not require students to read all of any of Bahá'u'lláh's texts, except possibly the Four Valleys or the Hidden Words. Instead, the Institute will provide each student a 500-page textbook that includes extracts from Bahá'u'lláh's major works, summary descriptions, and historical contexts.

On November 15, the Institute will offer a course on **The Physical, Mental, Emotional, and Spiritual Development of the Individual**, one of the first courses the Institute is sponsoring on a specific topic (as opposed to a religion or a scriptural text). A distinguished faculty of Bahá'is in psychology and religious studies—including Dr. Leslie Asplund, Dr. Saba Ayman-Nolley, Dr. Rodney Clarken, Dr. Rhett Diessner, and Mr. Peter Terry—are planning the course. The course will involve study of Bahá'í scriptural texts about the spiritual life and psychology texts on human development.

Finally, on December 1, the Institute continues the expansion of its series of courses on religion and world scriptures by offering a three-month course on **The Bible**. The course will examine the history of development of the Old and New Testaments, their meaning to Jews and Christians, and their use in the Bahá'í scriptures, which interpret biblical passages extensively. While the course will not focus on biblical prophecy per se, it will provide much background in understanding biblical texts that bear on the matter of prophecy.

The high enrollment (forty-two students) in the course entitled **The Kitáb-i-Aqdas and Related Texts** that began September 1 suggests that the fall "lineup" may prove equally popular. We suggest that you do not delay your registration.▲

## Spiritual Foundations . . . Continued from page 1

and `Abdu'l-Bahá and their writings, including the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys* and *The Hidden Words*; Bahá'í history from 1892 to 1921; teaching the Faith; consultation; the psychology of spirituality; research skills; and writing skills. The class also took an educational field trip to a Jain Temple in the greater Chicago area to learn about Jainism. They were greeted with warmth and hospitality and received a guided tour of the Jain Temple.



Four students complete a small-group exercise during the 2001 summer session.

Students benefitted from the excellent instructors from all parts of the country, including one from India, who created a loving atmosphere of learning by offering their unique gifts and perspectives. The students have dedicated their studies this year to the Greatest Holy Leaf, who, they learned, was described by Shoghi Effendi as the “orb of the heaven of eternal glory” and the “sweet scent of His garment, shed across all created things.”

As the residency can best be described by the students and faculty themselves, here are some of their sentiments and reflections:

*“The instructors were knowledgeable yet very humble. They imparted their wisdom and their knowledge in such a manner that students were challenged to think for themselves. I really see this as an important aspect of the summer sessions. Classes are not a time for transmission of mere*

*facts but an opportunity to set into motion a more systematic way of looking at the Holy Writings. The history sessions have been the greatest benefit to me personally. Until the Spiritual Foundations program, I merely read the Holy Writings but thought I was studying them. It was like I had been given a most valuable gift. The beauty of its wrapping was sufficient to enkindle my soul. I didn't realize that there was more. History has aided me to unwrap this present and to discern meanings that had previously been hidden.”—Sherry Krannichfeld, Rogers, Arkansas, 51 years old*

*“The Wilmette Institute was in many ways a super Bahá'í experience. It allowed for an intellectual and academic approach to the Faith but all the while was infused with great spirit. I felt that we were able to approach the intellectual aspects of the faith spiritually and the spiritual aspects we approached intellectually which allowed for a perfect balance where we could walk the path of moderation. However, the greatest blessing was the uniqueness, special talents, and beautiful spirit everyone brought to the experience. Some of my fondest memories were just the chances to talk and get to know everyone. The diversity of souls who participated created all the wonderful memories I have as we were able to laugh, learn, and grow together. It was truly a blessing to deepen in the faith with other enthusiastic Bahá'ís in the vicinity*

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During the summer session Habib Riazati drives home a point about the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

## Wilmette Institute Responds to September Events with Islam Course

**D**ecades ago, Shoghi Effendi urged the Bahá'ís of the Western world to become better acquainted with Islam, its sacred scriptures and teachings, to understand the origin and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith fully.

The need for deeper appreciation of Islam has been underscored by the tragedy of September 11, 2001, and the world-shaking events since then. Because of its timeliness, the Wilmette Institute is offering the distance learning course "Islam for Deepening and Dialogue," January 15-April 15, 2002.

This course is designed as an essential introduction to the religion in whose midst the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths were born. Understanding of Islam is particularly important for Bahá'ís of the Western world who lack the background to appreciate the beauty and divinely guided role of Islam in world history.▲

### Spiritual Foundations . . . Continued from page 3

*of the House of Worship where it stands with such majesty and peace on the beautiful shores of Lake Michigan.*"—Danton Ford, from Houston, Texas, currently pioneering in Korea, 28 years old

*"I look forward to the Wilmette Institute each summer. This is the second summer that I have attended. The instruction is so valuable. It sparks my interest to study more and more. I know how to get around in the Writings better. Most of all, I attend the Wilmette Institute because of the friends, future friends and the excellent instructors that are brought on board each year. Imagine being in a spirit filled environment for two weeks. We have it."*—Diann Stevens, Sacramento, California, 60 years old

*"This was my first experience in a long-term study program in the Baha'i Faith; and I actually had a lot more fun than I had expected. I'd always seen "study program" and automatically thought it to be too intense. The Spiritual Foundations course is intense,*

*but it's also quite interesting and educational. I definitely recommend it for everyone."*—Shabnam Cyrus, Louisville, Kentucky, 19 years old

*"I thoroughly enjoyed the two-week intensive of the Spiritual Foundations program. It was such a bounty and a genuine pleasure to truly reside in a*



**Dr. David Ruhe, former member of the Universal House of Justice, shared his insights about Bahá'u'lláh with the summer students.**

*Baha'i community for this all too brief period of time. We committed and devoted ourselves to a guided study of the Holy Scripture; shared meals and some of our experiences; participated in a service project together; prayed at the magnificent edifice known as the Baha'i House of Worship; and rededicated our hearts and minds, thoughts and actions to reshaping ourselves and consequently transforming the look and the spirit of our home communities. I will always treasure the time spent with the students of class 2001-2002 and will think of them often as we all strive to become Bahá'ís in each and every moment of our lives and in every breath we take."*—Pamela Solon, Winnetka, Illinois, 47 years old

*"This course is one of initial wisdom and long-term, loving fulfillment of numerous needs in Bahá'í teaching, learning and living. The course description offered much of what I felt I needed to carry out, spiritually, my part of the coming global civilization. Truly it was much more than a wonderful learning experience—it was reaching out and also being touched by the love and spontaneity and the spiritual consciousness of my classmates and teachers, and the*

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## What Do the Students Say?

Ruth Ahern, about the course on **The Báb and the Bábí Faith**:

"The course was really wonderful for me and I did read all of the materials and follow the discussions on line. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have read and thought about the historical events and the ideas relating to the revelation of the Báb. I learned so much more about Him and His supporters. I have a much deeper and closer feeling for Him and His amazing influence. Thank you and all the other instructors and the Wilmette Institute for this learning experience."

Mr. Ashiq Ali, India, about the course on **Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas**:

"Before the study of this Tablet, I didn't feel confident to read, speak and write in English. Nowadays that constraint is gone and there is a better exposure to English. There is a new found confidence in my association with the language of English. Also I now feel more confident with the computer. . . . This course has definitely given a tremendous boost to our attitude of learning. Even though all of us are busy, we would eagerly look forward to our weekly Wilmette classes. The Ruhi method had taught us to develop a capacity of understanding in the group, whereas, the Wilmette method taught us to form our original understanding by reading alone and then to share the understanding in a group."

Mrs. Kabyatara Panigrahi, India, about the course on **Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas**:

"What I have learned from this course is the unique method of learning. There have been distance-learning courses offered by various universities in India but none of them have been so participatory in method. Never did we have the instance of learning by sharing, as we did with Wilmette. Every morning, evening—anytime that I opened my e-mail account—I would find it packed with the reactions of friends, and God knows, what a pleasure it has been to go through almost all of it."

"No sooner had a doubt arisen in my mind, a question cropped up and had difficulty in understanding a certain writing that could not be taken up in our study circle, I would simply run up to the computer to find that it has been answered and solved in detail. Without even talking to most of the participants, we now have a bond. As the Ruhi-1 says

that our souls, in our afterlife will remember all the lovers of God; it is through such courses, it is in this life, the participants of the course have already established a spiritual bond, with the Writings as their common object of love." ▲

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*staff who were the epitome of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's example of a service-oriented life in all the many tasks of conducting the Institutes. The sessions were given in an atmosphere of attraction, which marvelously stimulated the input and output of everyone. I loved the whole Institute and am deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn so much more how to serve.*"—Dr. Bill Love, Tennessee, 79 years old

*"This is my second experience as a faculty member in the Wilmette Institute. This second experience has confirmed what I felt when I participated for the first time several years ago: the Wilmette Institute is one of the most important educational processes underway in the Bahá'í world. What makes it especially useful is the attempt to connect Bahá'í scholarship and metaphysics to other secular and religious systems of thought. The students and faculty who participate in the Wilmette Institute program do*



**Michael Penn offered many perceptive insights about human development to the summer students**

*so fully aware of the fact that '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.'* (Shoghi Effendi, *The Importance of Deepening*, Page 226)" —Dr. Michael Penn, Lancaster, Pennsylvania ▲

# Wilmette Institute Distance-Learning Course Schedule

The Wilmette Institute is offering a strong lineup of courses in the fall and early winter of 2001:

- **The Kitáb-i-Aqdas and Related Texts**  
(September 1-December 31, 2001)
- **'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Exemplar**  
(October 1-December 31, 2001)
- **Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation: A Systematic Survey**  
(November 1, 2001-February 28, 2002)
- **The Physical, Mental, and Spiritual Development of the Individual**  
(November 15, 2001-February 15, 2002)
- **The Bible**  
(December 1, 2001-February 28, 2002)
- **Islam for Deepening and Dialogue**  
(January 15-April 15, 2002)
- **Hinduism for Deepening and Dialogue**  
(February 1-May 1, 2002)
- **Rediscovering the Heroic Age: The Bahá'í Faith during the Ministry of Bahá'u'lláh, 1863-1921**  
(March 1-May 31, 2002)

- **Marriage and Family Life**  
(April 1-June 30, 2002)
- **Spiritual Foundations Home Study (Bahá'í Community and Administration)**  
(May 1-September 30, 2002)
- **The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh**  
(June 1-September 1, 2002)

All distance-learning courses include e-mail listservers for students and faculty, regular conference calls, systematic lesson plans, and a wide variety of learning projects to help students apply their learning in their local communities. All courses are available at the "introductory" level for those unsure they can commit to taking a university-level course, the "intermediate" level for those wishing to go into more depth, and the "advanced" (graduate) level for those wishing to do extensive research or writing. More information on all of them can be found on the Web at <http://www.wilmetteinstitute.org>.▲

## The Lamp



THE LAMP is the newsletter of the Wilmette Institute, established in January 1995 by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States to offer academic, professional, and service-oriented courses related to the Bahá'í Faith. In addition to offering university-level courses on Bahá'í topics, the Wilmette Institute fosters Bahá'í scholarship; develops new, innovative curricular materials; creates high-quality courses on teaching the Faith; and refines Bahá'í concepts of pedagogy.

It aims to produce teachers and administrators of the Bahá'í Faith of great capacity, capable of sharing and demonstrating Bahá'í truths in their lives and speech.

For more information about the Bahá'í Faith, the Wilmette Institute, or its courses, contact:

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