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IN SEARCH OF MARTHA ROOT: AN AMERICAN BAHA'I FEMINIST AND PEACE ADVOCATE IN THE EARLY TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

JILING YANG

Under the Direction of Ian Fletcher

ABSTRACT

Martha Root (1872-1939) was an exceptional religious and spiritual activist, a leading figure in the international women's peace movement, and a new organism of a new world in the early twentieth century. This thesis represents Martha Root from three aspects: the early life of Martha Root, her four world teaching trips from 1919 to 1939, with a focus on her peace advocacy, and an investigation into her gender awareness and identity construction by reflecting on *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman,* Martha Root's only book.

INDEX WORDS: Martha Root, Baha'i Faith, World peace, Internationalism, Global feminism, Women in cross-cultural perspective

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by

JILING YANG

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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Georgia State University

2005

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JILING YANG

2005

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by

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December 2005

For Jim Milstead

A Praiseworthy Baha’i Pioneer

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Duette Masumi, the sectary of Local Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of College Park in 2004-2005, first suggested to me that I should work on Martha Root, the foremost Baha'i teacher in the Faith, as my thesis. The Baha'i communities of College Park and Atlanta gave me infinite encouragement and valuable suggestions during the writing. I was blessed to live with a very devoted Baha'i community. Their selfless service to the goodness of their fellow human beings was my ultimate motivation in the writing of Martha Root. This work is also blessed with the help and kindness from the National Baha'i Archives of the United States in Wilmette, IL. Roger Dahl, the Archivist, lent me kind suggestions and generous help during my research.

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INTRODUCTION

Martha Root (1872-1939) was a unique figure in the international peace and women's movement in the early twentieth century. Abdu'l-Baha, the Master of the Baha'i Faith, praised her: "Anyhow thou art really a herald of the Kingdom and a harbinger of the Covenant, and doest self-sacrifice. Thou showest kindness to all nations; thou art sowing a seed that shall in the long run, give rise to thousands of harvests; thou art planting a tree that shall, till eternity put forth leaf, blossom, and fruit, and whose shadow shall day by day grow in magnitude."[1] Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, called her "the leading Ambassadress of His Faith and Pride of Baha'i teachers, whether men or women, in both the East and the West."[2] Queen Marie of Romania, the granddaughter of Queen Victoria of England and Czar Alexander II of Russia, wrote to her expressing that "my heart overflowed with gratitude for the revelation you brought me."[3] People in India extolled her as "the fulfillment of the Qur'anic Prophecy" and "the living monument of renunciation."[4]

This thesis will reveal to Women's Studies readers who Martha Root was, what she had done that had earned her such high praises from the Master and the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith, a crowned head, and millions of people worldwide. In retracing her peace advocacy based on her Baha'i beliefs, I argue that Martha Root was an exceptional religious and spiritual activist, a

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[1] Abdu'l-Baha to Martha Root, January 27, 1920, Roy Wilhelm Papers, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, IL (hereafter, NBA).
[2] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 4th ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1995), 386.
[3] Delia L. Marcus, *Her Eternal Crown: Queen Marie of Romania and the Baha'i Faith* (Oxford: George 2000), 63. Queen Marie's grandparents were among the heads of state who received Tablets from Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith, during His exile in late nineteenth century.
[4] The Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Bombay to "Miss Martha Root, the champion of the Baha'i cause," December 27, 1938, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

leading figure in the international women's peace movement, and a new organism who challenged mainstream knowledge of the "New Woman," female identity, and the East-West division of the world.

Scholarship and Sources

Martha Root was revered as the foremost Hand of the Cause of God, the Herald of the Kingdom of Baha (Glory), and the leading Baha'i teacher in the Baha'i Faith, the youngest but second most widespread world religion. However, there is little or no scholarship about her life and work, especially her peace advocacy between the wars. The existing research about Martha Root is pretty rudimentary. Mable R. Garis's *Martha Root—Lioness at the Threshold* (1983) is a comprehensive biography of Martha Root. The whole book is a tribute to her courage and service. Shoghi Effendi's *God Passes By* (originally published in 1944, reprinted in 1995) is the only religious study I am aware of which discusses Martha Root. In fact, it is likely that my thesis is the first attempt to investigate Martha Root's peace advocacy between the wars. One reason for this scarcity of scholarship is the relative novelty of the Baha'i Faith. Women in Christianity, Islam and Hinduism receive much more attention in Women's Studies research.

Nevertheless, there is a good deal of useful scholarship about missionaries, the international women's movement, and women's involvement in peace movements in the early twentieth century. Such studies provide a broader context for my research. Among them, Kumari Jayawardena's *The White Woman's Other Burden* (1995) has helped me understand the encounter between Western and South Asian women. Maria Chawla Singh's *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia* (2000), Dana L. Robert's

American Women in Mission: A Social History of Their Thought and Practice (1996), and *Western Women and Imperialism*, a collection edited by Nupur Chaudhuri and Margaret Strobel (1992) have also strengthened my grasp of Western women missionaries in Asia, and given me a comparative background for discussing Martha Root's experience of world traveling and teaching.

There is a great deal of scholarly work on women's peace activism, both historical and contemporary. Linda K. Schott's *Reconstructing Women's Thoughts: The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom before World War II* (1997) examines the ideas and activities of a group of educated women who formed the leadership of the U.S. section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). Johanna Alberti's *Beyond Suffrage* (1989) and Leila J. Rupp's *Worlds of Women* (1997) show the close connection between the women's suffrage and equal citizenship movement and the cause of international peace in the 1920s and 1930s. Once again, such studies establish a basis of comparison between Martha Root and other western women active on the international scene.

My thesis depends heavily on published and archival primary sources. Martha Root's published writings are available in two books. One is *Martha Root—Herald of the Kingdom* (1983), compiled by Kay Zinky and edited by A. Baram, and the other is *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman*, published originally in 1938. The former is a collection of Tablets of Abdu'l-Baha to Martha Root, a compendium of Martha Root's international teaching activities, and Martha Root's essays, articles, interviews, and travel reports in the last twenty years of her life (1919-1939), with an introduction by the editor. The latter was written by Martha Root in her late years. It helps us to know Martha Root through Tahirih, and Tahirih through Martha Root,

so it plays an important role in the study of Martha Root. The published Baha'i writings from Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi deserve much attention, because they explain Martha Root's approach to peace issues during her teaching trips. Among them, Abdu'l-Baha's *Paris Talks* (originally published in 1912, reprinted in 1979), *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (the talks delivered during His visit to the United States in 1912), *Selected Writings of Abdu'l-Baha* (1978), have clarified my understanding of Martha Root as a Baha'i woman.

Although Martha Root has not yet been the subject of scholarly research and analysis, I am fortunate that a very large archive of Martha Root's papers exist in the National Baha'i Archives in Wilmette, Illinois. The unpublished correspondence, manuscripts, memos, newspaper clippings, and diaries deposited in the Martha Root Papers substantiate my study. I have also looked into the Roy Wilhelm Papers, and Ella Cooper Papers. Both Roy Wilhelm and Ella Cooper were close, life-long friends with Martha Root. Their collections help me to see Martha Root not only through her own writings, but also from the perspective of her contemporaries.

Writing Women's Studies, Writing Baha'i History

In the thesis, I address the following questions: How did Martha Root present her peace message to a warring world between 1919 and1939? How did her Baha'i beliefs open her to women in the East, the "other" of women in the West?" How did she view the relationship between the East and the West? What is her significance for Women's Studies today? As a Baha'i woman, I found there were both advantages and disadvantages for me in writing about Martha Root. The advantage is that it is easier for me to appreciate the Baha'i influence on her

activities and experiences. The disadvantage is that I must maintain a critical distance between me as a Women's Studies researcher, and Martha Root, a fellow Baha'i and object of my research. It is my goal to achieve a balance between the two sides, and hopefully I have succeeded.

The Plan of the Thesis

My thesis is divided into three chapters. Chapter One focuses on the early life of Martha Root before she started her world teaching trips. Chapter Two reconstructs Martha Root's four world teaching trips between 1919 and1939, with a focus on her peace advocacy. Finally, Chapter Three provides a textual analysis of *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman* to illustrate Martha Root's unique place at the intersection of the Baha'i Faith and international feminism between the wars. I have also appended three unpublished manuscripts by Martha Root, which I believe crystallize her views on women and peace.

CHAPTER ONE: EARLY LIFE OF MARTHA ROOT

Martha Root was an eloquent public lecturer, an ardent world traveler, a passionate promoter and exemplar of a new world order of unity and peace, and a caring daughter and loving friend. She was honored as the Hand of the Cause of God in the Baha'i Faith, one of those outstanding Baha'is honored by the central figures of the Faith[5] for their protection and propagation of the Faith of Baha'u'llah. She was regarded as the foremost archetype of Baha'i teachers, a herald of the Kingdom and a harbinger of the Covenant.[6] In this chapter, we will look into her early years, to see what aspects of her life and times contributed to her future achievements. This chapter is divided into three parts based on her life phases: an atypical girl who grew up in the Gilded Age, a "New Woman" who made her mark in the Progressive Era, and a seeker who converted to the Baha'i Faith on the eve of the First World War.

An Atypical Girl in the Gilded Age

Martha Root was born in 1872 and spent her childhood and young womanhood in the Gilded Age (1870s-1900) in the United States. The Gilded Age was a period of incredible changes. This was the age of the railroad, steel, and oil industries, the rise of the robber barons, and great social, political, and intellectual battles over democracy, race and progress. The lives of average Americans underwent enormous changes in the Gilded Age as the country was

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[5] The central figures of Baha'i Faith are Baha'u'llah, the latest manifestation from God in Baha'i Faith; Abdu'l-Baha, the Master of the Faith; and Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith. After the passing of Shoghi Effendi, there is no further appointment of the Hand of the Cause of God.
[6] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 389.

transformed by the forces of immigration, industrialization, corporatization, urbanization, mechanization, and a revolution in transportation. These changes forced the country from a predominantly rural nation based on a white Anglo-Saxon Protestant ethic into a diverse, industrial, and urbanized society. The United States looked very different by the 1890s than it had in the 1870s.[7] The effects of these dramatic changes were felt by Martha Root and her family.

Martha Root's parents were Timothy T. and Nancy Hart Root. She had two elder brothers, Clarence and Claude. Shortly after her birth on August 19, 1872 in Richwood, Ohio, the family moved to Cambridgeboro, Pennsylvania, which became Cambridge Springs in 1898. Her father was the son of Sylvester Root, who, with his brother Daniel, had bought land in the present Cambridge Springs region of Crawford County, Pennsylvania, in 1818. Timothy T. Root married Nancy Hart of Sherman, New York in 1868 and lived in Ohio for a while before the Root family settled down in Pennsylvania.[8] The Root family was regarded as one of the oldest families in Cambridge Springs. A well-to-do family as well, they took a prominent part in the local political affairs of the communities where they dwelt. They worked to foster the welfare of the churches which they attended alongside other respectable citizens, substantial farmers, and skilled artisans.[9]

Timothy T. Root was a deacon in the local Baptist Church, as was his father before him. He was not a man of many words, but when he spoke, his words carried weight. He also had a sense of humor. He was someone "anybody can get along with," because "he is an angel." "He

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[7] Joel Shrock, *The Gilded Age* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 2004), xiii-1.
[8] Mable R. Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), 7.
[9] Ibid.

put God first and because of his love for God he had learned to love divinely. He was pure in heart and absolutely selfless."[10] He had a great impact on Martha Root, who sensed his influence on her throughout her life. On April 7, 1928, in her correspondence with President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia, she expressed her deep devotion towards and close connection with her father, six years after his death: "But his spirit spoke to her with his same smile and twinkle in his eyes: 'You and I still together. I am going with you every day of your journey. You are going to do all that we talked over and I am going to help until I can tell you: 'the Master is come and calleth for thee.'"[11]

Mrs. Root was a very dedicated housewife and mother with many domestic talents. She would have liked her only daughter to follow her example, but Martha was not fond of sewing, or knitting, or cooking. She was not a typical girl. She preferred the world of books and writing. When she was 14 years old, she earned enough money from writing to travel alone to Niagara Falls. It was not common then for a young girl to spend money on traveling instead of a new dress. Then, when she was 17, she graduated with high grades from the Cambridgeboro High School. In 1889 few girls went to college; even her own brothers did not pursue the idea of higher education. At that time, higher education for women caused uneasiness and doubts among people. For example, in 1873, Dr. Edward Clarke, a former professor at Harvard Medical School and a member of the Harvard Board of Overseers, launched a major attack against women's higher education. In his book, *Sex in Education*, Clarke contended that exposing young women to the rigors of a higher education intended for men "overtaxed their capacities,

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[10] Martha Root to President Masaryk, *Her Father, the Prince Charming* (newspaper clipping, n.p.: n.d.), Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[11] Ibid.

drew energies away from the reproductive system, and thereby led to invalidism, mental collapse, infertility, and worse."[12] Clarke's ideas were very influential but Martha Root did not want to stop her education. Mrs. Root may have been disapproving of her choice, so Martha Root "chose a time when her mother had gone into town, then sat on her father's knee and coaxed him to let her go to Oberlin College in Ohio."[13]

Oberlin College (founded in 1833) was the first college to accept African-American students in the United States and was also noted for its commitment to co-education. It was an important center of abolitionism and feminism. Martha Root attended Oberlin College for five years, from September 1889 to June 1894. She designed her own program. Since she had been interested with language, she worked out a program with a variety of languages: Latin, Greek, French, and German. She also took English for literature, elocution and rhetoric. The broad language training was extremely helpful in later years for her world teaching trips. Then Martha Root moved to University of Chicago and earned her bachelor of arts degree in 1895.

A "New Woman" in the Progressive Era

If we say the Gilded Age was an age of dramatic changes and transformation for the United States, the Progressive Era (1900-1920) was an age of possibility and progress. The first two decades of the twentieth century in America were marked by fantastic scientific discoveries and technical inventions, economic development, and territorial and colonial expansion.[14]

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[12] Nancy Woloch, *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002), 313.
[13] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 14.
[14] Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993).

Expanding opportunity for higher education represented a major advance for late nineteenth-century women. Between 1870 and 1900, when the number of college doubled, the number of women students skyrocketed. In 1870, only 11,000 women attended colleges and seminaries, mainly the latter. By 1900, 85,000 women students were enrolled in institutions of higher learning. From 1870 to 1900, the proportion of women among college students leapt from 21 percent to 35 percent. At the turn of the century, at least one out of three college students was a woman.[15]

The advance of women's education in the nineteenth century gave birth to the phenomenon of the "New Woman" around 1890.[16] By 1900, the college alumna emerged as the leading "New Women" of the twentieth century.[17] They discarded nineteenth century womanhood and adopted qualities formerly associated with men—qualities such as leadership, independence, and self-confidence. They insisted centrally on the right to live and breathe as a separate human being. They stepped out of home into club work and volunteer service, into reform movements, into new work for pay, into politics and the marketplace. They were casting away the limitations that had restricted their activities. Not abandoning their earlier values, they were exercising their identities as women in larger realms.[18]

More jobs opened up for women. Two years before Martha Root was born, there were only 35 women among the 5,286 journalists listed in the 1870 U.S. Census. When she was ready for the career at the beginning of the twentieth century, there were 2,193 women in the total of

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[15] Nancy Woloch, *Early American Women: A Documentary History, 1600-1900* (Boston: McGraw Hill, 2002), 312.
[16] Nancy Woloch, *Women and the American Experience* (New York: Knopt, 1984).
[17] Paula S. Fass, *The Damned and the Beautiful: American Youth in the 1920s* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).
[18] Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*, 19.

30,098 journalists. Female editors, publishers and owners became more common and accepted. Newspaperwomen began working for the newsroom, covering the same range of topics as the men, instead of writing about domestic life, food and fashion. Slowly but steadily, women came to work with men in most areas of journalism.[19]

After she graduated from the university, Martha Root started working as a teacher. A career in teaching soon gave way to a career in writing and lecturing. In 1900 she served as the summer replacement for the society editor of the *Pittsburgh Chronicle Telegraph*, then in the fall worked for the *Pittsburgh Dispatch*. Later, she took a position writing about automobiles for the *Index of Pittsburgh Life* and traveled to France to report on the international automobile races there. She was the only newspaperwoman ever to cover the highly competitive event.[20] Martha Root was regarded as a typical successful journalist woman before an incident changed her life dramatically.

Conversion to the Baha'i Faith

The United States in 1908 was in a very expansive time. Everything seemed to be possible. People were more interested with international affairs and willing to try new ideas. In 1908, an interdenominational missionary convention was held in Pittsburgh, and Martha Root covered it for her paper. One day, Martha Root and her friends went to a restaurant for an after-convention event. Roy C. Wilhelm, an early American Baha'i who happened to be eating at the next table in the same restaurant, described his first encounter with Martha Root:

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[19] Angela Howard Zophy and Frances M. Kavenik, eds., *Handbook of American Women's History* (n.p.: Garland, 1990), 299.
[20] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 20-23.

> Without intentionally eavesdropping I overheard one of these young ladies remark that it seemed a pity that all of the heathen must be lost, or words to that effect. The one sitting next vigorously took up this matter saying that there was one Creator whom she believed was interested in all human beings, and she doubted if really any souls were "lost." … I recalled the old saw that a man once got rich attending to his own business, but the pressure was too great, and as they left and I had to arise to let them pass, I said…that my mother and I had just returned from a visit to the East during which we met those born into other Systems of Religion…[21]

This was the start of a life long friendship. Roy Wilhelm mailed some Baha'i literature to Martha Root in the following months. At first, Martha Root did not want to be seen with a Baha'i book. But the unity of religion in the Baha'i Faith had a strong appeal to Martha Root, and she was struck by the simplicity and grandeur of the teachings. Eventually she began a serious investigation of the Faith.

The Baha'i Faith began in 1844 in Iran with the Bab, who was the martyred Forerunner Prophet of Baha'u'llah, the Founder of the Baha'i Faith. The central theme of Baha'u'llah's message is that humanity is one single race and that the day has come for its unification in one global society. The basic principles of the Faith are the oneness of religion, the oneness of God, the oneness of humanity, the elimination of all forms of prejudices, the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion, the need for a universal language and a world government, etc—all teachings designed to create unity, oneness and universality. God, Baha'u'llah said, has set in motion historical forces that are breaking down traditional barriers of race, class, creed, and nation and that will, in time, give birth to a universal civilization. The

[21] Ibid., 40

principal challenge facing the peoples of the earth is to accept the fact of their oneness and to assist the processes of unification, "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." [22]

M. R. Garis noted that the early Baha'is seemed to share the same attributes: "the ability for independent thinking, the willingness to explore new ideas, a fearlessness of reaction by those insisting on the established beliefs, and the financial abilities to travel, seeking the truth of the new message. Martha had all these qualities."[23] Martha Root traveled to meet other early Baha'is, studied the basic messages of the Baha'i Faith and set out to prove its truth or falseness, and consulted the Old and New Testaments to ponder on the return of the Christ. The history of the Baha'i Faith fulfilled Martha Root's research about the Promise of the return of the Christ. After several months of serious examination and investigation, Martha Root drew her conclusion: "The Baha'i Faith was not a new religion, but religion renewed."[24] She declared her Faith in Baha'u'llah in 1909.

Martha Root became actively involved in Baha'i activities. She wrote articles in newspapers (she was the Society and Religious Editor of the *Pittsburgh Post* when she met Roy Wilhelm), and mailed hundreds of copies when they were printed to friends nationwide. But like so many other American Baha'is of the day, the pivotal event in her life was the visit of Abdu'l-Baha to the United States and Canada in 1912.

Abdu'l-Baha was the son of Baha'u'llah. He was the Center of the Covenant after the ascension of Baha'u'llah. He spent fifty years in exile, imprisonment and privation, sharing the persecution of the authority with His Father. In 1908, the Young Turk Revolution freed most of

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[22] "Basic Teachings of Baha'u'llah" [http://www.Baha'i.org/article-1-2-0-2.html].
[23] Ibid., 41-42.
[24] Ibid., 45.

the Ottoman Empire's prisoners, including Abdu'l-Baha as well. He traveled to Europe and North American in 1911-1912 to promote unity and peace among humanity. He covered the United States from coast to coast. For the non-Baha'is, He called for the unity and agreement be established among the East and the West, to build a more unified and harmonious world. To the Baha'is, His presence was a spiritual as well as a practical boost in their deepening and spreading of the Faith. Martha Root joined Abdu'l-Baha's activities in New York and Washington areas as frequently as possible. Her life was profoundly changed by Abdu'l-Baha.

Energized by the visit and meetings with the Master, Martha Root, in her journalistic manner, began to plan a world trip, to see for herself whether Baha'is in other parts of the worlds lived as Abdu'l-Baha demonstrated. She dauntlessly started her trip on January 30, 1915 to Europe, Africa, Asia and Pacific islands. The trip lasted till August 29, 1915 when she safely sailed back into San Francisco. During this trip, she visited the Baha'is in major European countries, Egypt and the Middle East, India, Burma, Japan, and Hawaii. At that time, the First World War raged on. The turbulence was reflected throughout the world, and she was often unsure whether she could continue with her trip. But at the end of this most ambitious journey, Martha Root began to feel the breadth of her new Faith. She met Baha'is from the West and the East, and had seen their purpose of unity, and their striving efforts toward the oneness of humanity. She found that her questions had been answered, and recognized how the Faith could work for world peace. She felt the pressure to share the world struggling in perplexity the unifying power of the Baha'i Faith. Her life was now geared to another track, a track of teaching the Faith, serving and inspiring her fellow human beings to build a harmonious global society.

Though forbidden by Baha'u'llah from aggressive proselytizing, Baha'is are encouraged and eager to share their message with anyone who expresses an interest to solve the diverse and grave problems facing humanity in this age. Sharing Baha'u'llah's vision is known as "teaching" in Baha'i terminology. A Baha'i teacher means a Baha'i who shares the message with others. Baha'is also endeavor to spread the Faith by moving into or traveling to areas where there are few Baha'is. This is known as "pioneering." This differs sharply from traditional missionary work in that pioneers are generally expected to be self-supporting. They become part of their new community in all aspects: by working there, participating in community activities, and supporting the local government and its institutions. Being a great Baha'i teacher, Martha Root shared the teachings of Baha'u'llah with her fellow humans, covering the globe four times till the end of her earthly life. She is revered as an archetype of Baha'i teachers all over the world.

Conclusion

Martha Root was born in the Gilded Age, grew to be a "new woman" in the Progressive Era, and became a successful journalist woman in the new twentieth century. However, her life did not follow the regular path. She came across the Baha'i Faith in 1908 and became a Baha'i in her later thirties after serious independent investigation of this new religion. The visit of Abdu'l-Baha, the Centre of the Covenant in the United States in 1912, changed her life thoroughly.

From 1919 to 1939, Martha Root traveled around the world proclaiming the new message of universal peace of Baha'u'llah. Her teachings were inclusive, touching upon all the basic

principles of the Baha'i Faith. Her efforts were unprecedented, and her impact will be felt by people centuries to come. In the next chapter, we are going to look into her world teaching experiences. As it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to include all her teachings, I will focus my attention on her teachings about universal peace during the turbulent years between 1919 and 1939.

CHAPTER TWO: HERALD OF UNIVERSAL PEACE

From 1919 till the end of her life in 1939, Martha Root circled the globe four times teaching the Baha'i Faith at her own cost. In an era when women were seldom seen traveling alone, how did she serve as an important peace advocate during the turbulent decades of the 1920s and 1930s? How did her Baha'i Faith open her to different people in different places? This chapter is a humble attempt to answer these questions. It consists of three parts: a brief overview of her life accomplishments, her Baha'i perspective of universal peace, and her four world teaching trips from 1919-1939, with a focus on the teaching of universal peace.

Martha Root's Illustrious Accomplishments between 1919 and 1939

I have to admit that it is hard to list all the accomplishments of Martha Root here. M. R. Garis, the biographer of Martha Root, said that each year of her life after 1919 deserved a book to record all the activities. She traveled constantly for twenty years, to all the nations in the world, except the Soviet Union due to her failure to obtain a visa, though she frequently skirted its borders. She met with hundreds of thousands of people, from the high to the low, and brought them the same loving message.[25] She gave countless lectures all over the world. It might be

[25] Some of the people she met and interviewed were: the royal families of Romania from 1926-1936; King Haakon of Norway; King Feisal of Iraq; King Zog of Albania and members of his family; Princess Marina and Princess Elizabeth of Greece; President Thomas G. Masaryk and President Eduard Benes of Czechoslovakia; the President of Austria; Dr. Sun Yat Sen; Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University; Prof. Bogdan Popovitch of Belgrade University; the Foreign Minister of Turkey, Tawfiq Rushdi Bey; the Chinese Foreign Minister and Minister of Education; the Lithuanian Foreign Minister; Prince Muhammad-'Ali of Egypt; Stephen Raditch; the Maharajas of Patiala, of Benares, and of Travancore; the Governor and the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem; Dr. Erling Eidem, Archbishop of Sweden; Sarojini Naidu; Sir Rabindranath Tagore; Madame Huda Sha'ravi, the Egyptian feminist leader; Dr. K. Ichiki, minister of the Japanese Imperial Household; Dr. Tetrujiro Inouye, Professor Emeritus

helpful for readers to consider that she gave lectures to over four hundred universities and college in the East and the West, including multiple visits to all German universities except two and to about one hundred universities in China. She wrote articles for magazines and newspapers in practically every country she visited.

Martha Root had an amazing mixture of characteristics. On the one hand, she was very businesslike, highly efficient and strong-willed. This ensured the success of seemingly impossible tasks. The ultimate goal of her mission was very simple: to spread the Faith as soon as possible, as wide as possible. Her mastery of her profession—journalism—ensured the utmost exposure for the Faith throughout her mission. Her pattern of visiting a new place went like this: her credentials were presented, letters of introduction were shown, meetings with the head of the nation or city and the newspaper editors were set. She made friends, gave public talks, supplied individuals with literature about the Faith, wrote articles, put books in libraries, and sought the maximum publicity of the Faith. She was also very efficient in time management. She once said: "Every minute, not every other minute, belongs to Baha'u'llah." Therefore she employed a very tight schedule for her traveling and teaching. Take her trip to Australia in 1924, for example. She spent the month of July in Perth, Australia, giving thirty-eight public lectures in one month. Then she visited the city of Melbourne, and gave twenty-five lectures there. She made the fullest use of modern technology, too. The West Australia Wireless invited Martha Root to broadcast a talk on the Faith on July 28, 1924, followed by another one in August.[26] This pace was not unusual at all in her twenty years of world teaching trips, and millions of

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of the Imperial University of Tokyo; Baron Yoshiro Sakatani, member of the House of Peers of Japan; and Mehmed Fuad, Doyen of the Faculty of Letters and President of the Institute of Turkish History—From *God Passes By*, 388.

[26] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 189-91.

people became aware of the messages from Baha'u'llah because of her. When she died in 1939, the Baha'i message has been delivered to every corner of the world and Baha'i Faith became a true world religion less than 100 years after its birth.

On the other hand, she was very meek, gentle, caring and loving, and physically small. For those people who had heard her fame, it usually was a surprise when they saw her face to face. As the newspaper in Australia commented on her:

> I do not think Miss Martha Root would mind if I said that she came as a surprise to most people. She lectures on religion and universal peace, and lecturers are apt to have deep voices, earnest manners, and burning and intolerant eyes. Not even those who know and admire her workmanlike style in writing would expect to find her quite so little and gentle and sweet.[27]

Martha Root could not afford fancy clothes, and often traveled with third class trains and stayed in small hotels. She had passed her prime and youthful years when she started world teaching trips in 1919. She was plain, and often suffered from her lingering illness. However, it was hard not to notice her. There was a quiet strength about her that was not threatening, a determination without aggressiveness. Her inner strength attracted people towards her. Though she traveled alone in foreign lands constantly without knowing a soul, she usually gathered a company of people around her. When asked about her memories of Martha Root some 50 years later, Princess Illeana (daughter of Queen Marie of Rumania) wrote: "I retain rather a general impression of a very charming, small woman whose coloring was grey, with a remarkable inner

[27] Elizabeth Leigh, "Ways of the World: A Traveling Journalist's Observations," *The Register*, November 11, 1924, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

fire of her own deep Faith which made her stand out in a crowd in spite of her extreme modesty…one just had to like her."[28]

She traveled. And she taught. She once answered a question about her traveling in this way: "I do not travel the world uninterrupted so many years simply as a journalist, but because I am so deeply interested in writing the constructive articles that will help to bring understanding among nations and to promote the highest ideals for enduring peace."[29]

The messages she delivered were very bold and challenging for a world of conflicts, confrontation, desperation and depression, revolutions and wars in her mission from 1919 to 1939. But "she was received with friendliness by all classes because she wrote and spoke for goodwill between all countries, all religions, all races."[30] She shared the core doctrines of Baha'i Faith with those who would like to listen and ponder: equality of men and women; universal auxiliary language; universal peace under a world commonwealth; elimination of prejudices based on differences of race, nationality, ethnicity, and religion; spiritual solutions to economic problems; and the oneness of humanity, religion and God. She possessed a world-embracing vision, rather than confined to her own self, her own sex, her own race, or her own nation, which generated from her belief that "the earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." She held that the world was suffering from a crisis that was political, economic, religious and global in nature. What was needed was a world plan that took all these factors into

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[28] Mable R. Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983), 496.
[29] Martha Root, "How I Interview" (broadcast manuscript), August 13, 1935, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[30] *Martha Root, High Baha'i Leader, Dies,* newspaper clip from *Honolulu ?* (title cut short), September 29, 1939, Ella Cooper Papers, NBA.

account, and the solution was at the hand of Baha'u'llah, who has taught the oneness of Humanity.[31]

Martha Root traveled alone on and on, and sent the message from Baha'u'llah to millions of people, till her death from her lingering cancer in Hawaii on September 28, 1939. There is no better comment on her life than the words that flowed from the pen of the Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi:

> Neither age nor ill-health, neither the paucity of literature which hampered her early efforts, nor the meager resources which imposed an added burden on her labors, neither the extremities of the climates to which she was exposed, nor the political disturbances which she encountered in the course of her journeys, could damp the zeal or deflect the purpose of this spiritually dynamic and saintly woman.… There in that symbolic spot between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres, in both of which she had labored so mightily, she died, on September 28, 1939, and brought to its close a life which may well be regarded as the fairest fruit as yet yielded by the Formative Age of the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah.[32]

Baha'i Teachings on Universal Peace

I will briefly introduce the peace plan from Baha'u'llah to help readers to understand Martha Root's stance in her teaching. Baha'u'llah envisioned a world peace plan. The unity of human race implies the establishment of a world government (including a world legislature, a world executive, and a world tribunal), in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united. The unity of human race also includes a world metropolis, a world

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[31] Root, "My World Travels in the Interest of Universal Peace" (lecture manuscript), Nov. 12, 1928 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[32] Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, 388.

language, a world script, a world literature, a universal system of currency, weights and measures, a world economy organizer, and the equality of men and women.[33]

Many people may consider this plan as impractical and unrealistic. But for many others, it is an inevitable stage in the development of human society. Here I would like to quote from Abdu'l-Baha to provide an alternative thought to our future:

> A few, unaware of the power latent in human endeavor, consider this matter as highly impracticable, nay even beyond the scope of man's utmost efforts. Such is not the case, however.… Many a cause which past ages have regarded as purely visionary, yet in this day has become most easy and practicable. Why should this most great and lofty Cause—the day-star of the firmament of true civilization and the cause of the glory, the advancement, the well-being and the success of all humanity—be regarded as impossible of achievement? Surely the day will come when its beauteous light shall shed illumination upon the assemblage of man.[34]

Baha'u'llah not only pictured this global form of society, He also designed a practical administrative system to ensure its realization. As it will deviate our attention to discuss this system here, readers who are interested in this issue are recommended to read *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* by Shoghi Effendi (1982).

In the following, let me explain in a few words several aspects of the peace design: the nature of religion, world government, disarmament, universal language, and equality between the sexes.

Firstly, the religious basis of human unity

Baha'u'llah asserted that religion was the cause of harmony and unity. "The purpose of religion as revealed from the heaven of God's holy Will is to establish unity and concord

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[33] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, 201-02.
[34] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1983; reprint, 2nd), 66.

amongst the peoples of the world; make it not the cause of dissension and strife."[35] The religion of God and His law are the most potent instruments for the dawning of the light of unity among men. "If religion becomes a cause of dislike, hatred and division, it were better to be without it, and to withdraw from such a religion would be a truly religious act." [36] For those people who incited war and confrontation in the name of religion, Abdu'l-Baha warned: "Any religion which is not a cause of love and unity is no religion. All the holy prophets were as doctors to the soul; they gave prescriptions for the healing of mankind; thus any remedy that causes disease does not come from the great and supreme Physician."[37]

Secondly, the need for world government

In the past century, two historical events deserve our attention. One is the establishment of the League of Nations, which is the first body ever in the history to view the world as a whole. The second is the establishment of the United Nations. These brilliant attempts of far-seeing world leaders to view the world as one body and design the common future for humanity were a breakthrough in the organization of human activities. A close examination of the two world organizations and the design of Baha'u'llah's world government reveals some similarities between them. As a matter of fact, the Baha'is believe that the famous Fourteen Points, the basis of the League of Nations proposed by President Woodrow Wilson of the United States, were

[35] Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah Revealed after the Kitab-I-Aqdas*, 129.
[36] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911*, 11th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), 130.
[37] Ibid.

influenced by the teachings of Baha'u'llah.[38] The United Nations is an improvement of the League of Nations, and it is still calling for a future reformation appropriate to fit the world today. However, the Baha'is believe that until it reaches the maturity designed by Baha'u'llah over one and a half centuries ago, the permanent establishment of universal peace and disappearance of war will not be attainable. The failings of the League of Nations and the United Nations stem from the lack of commitment by their component parts. The United Nations today remains mostly a public forum for states to voice their opinions of international affairs. It lacks the authority to limit the sovereignty of its national components.

Thirdly, the relationship between peace and simultaneous disarmament

Baha'u'llah pictured a world where a world government secures the peace of the world, and the nations of the world will no longer require any armaments, except for the purpose of preserving the security of their realms and of maintaining internal order within their territories. This will ensure the peace of peoples and governments around the world. All nations must disarm at the same time. It will not work at all, and it is not proposed, that some nations lay down their arms while others keep theirs. Such a course would not be just. The peace of the world must be brought about by international agreement. All nations must agree to disarm simultaneously. No nation can follow a peace policy while its neighbor remains warlike.[39]

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[38] "Heretics in Islam," *Time*, June 6, 1955. Martha Root also mentioned it in her lecture in 1924 in Australia. See the appendix on "Homoculture."
[39] Ibid.

Fourthly, the importance of universal auxiliary language to universal peace

The world needs a universal auxiliary language to better communication, understanding, co-operation and trust between people. This universal language shall be adopted and taught by all the schools and institutions of the world. A committee appointed by international bodies should determine whether to devise one or choose one from the available languages to use as a medium of international communication. In the future, one only needs to learn two languages, his/her mother tongue to keep cultural distinctions, and the universal tongue to communicate with other people worldwide. In this case, each culture preserves its uniqueness by saving its language, and people from all cultures can communicate and nurture mutual understanding and unity by the universal language. Unity in diversity is the watchword in the Baha'i Faith. Abdu'l-Baha said that the human heart is like a box, and language is the key. "Unless the unity of languages is realized, the Most Great Peace and the oneness of the human world cannot be effectively organized and established because the function of language is to portray the mysteries and secrets of human hearts."[40]

Lastly, gender equality and peace

In past ages, humanity has been divided, with one half oppressing the other half. Women were regarded as inferior to men in the past because mankind depended more on its physical than intellectual strength to face the world. Today, we depend more and more on spiritual and intellectual power, and women are not inferior to men in this aspect. Men and women are like

[40] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 61.

two wings of humanity. Both wings have to develop for the bird to fly. Until women have the opportunity to exercise fully their virtues and faculties, humanity cannot achieve success and prosperity.

Abdu'l-Baha asserted that women were advocates of peace.[41] Many other religious and social reformers hold the same opinion. The education of women will be a mighty step toward abolishing and ending war, because woman will try her best to stop war. Women by nature are against war. When the men are thinking about fame and rewards, women will refuse to give their sons for sacrifice on the field of battle, no matter in whatever name. Children are educated by the women. The mother experiences the troubles and anxieties of bearing and rearing the child. Therefore, it is most difficult for mothers to send to the battlefield those upon whom they have lavished such love and care. As the feminist Emmeline Pethick-Lawrence argued:

> The solidarity of the world's motherhood, potential or otherwise, underlies all cleavages of nationality. Men have conflicting interests and ambitions. Women all the world over…have one passion and one vocation, and that is the creation and preservation of human life.[42]

So many times we have heard stories that a mother or a wife took care of wounded soldiers, no matter they were from their side or from enemy's side. Because they are child-bearers, women see soldiers as living beings, not as tools of warfare. Abdu'l-Baha stated:

> So it will come to pass that when women participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, when they enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics, war will cease; for woman will be the obstacle and hindrance to it. This is true and without doubt.[43]

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[41] Ibid., 375.
[42] Quoted in Susan Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to Be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 1 (1996).
[43] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1982).

In an era when women were seldom seen traveling worldwide alone, Martha Root tirelessly covered the planet, including isolated islands and remote lands. She lectured in universities around the world, met with kings, queens, princesses and princes, presidents of republics, ministers and statesmen, professors, clergymen, and people from all walks of life. She made contact formally and informally with religious organizations, governments, peace societies, women's movement organizations and various groups wherever she went, bringing a Baha'i message of unity and peace for a global world society. Her indefatigable efforts exhibited an immense influence on peace-building in a warring world. The rest of this chapter will recount her unprecedented promotion in universal peace in the years between the wars.

Herald of Universal Peace

From 1919 to 1939, Martha Root traveled around the world four times, teaching the message of universal peace from Baha'u'llah to people from every part of the planet. She introduced the basic Baha'i teachings to the world, including equality of men and women, universal peace, universal language, universal education, spiritual solution to economic problems, oneness of God, oneness of religion, and oneness of humanity, etc. In this part, we examine each of her teaching trips, relating her efforts to the crying needs of a world in crisis.

First Trip: July 22, 1919—November 15, 1919

New York—Para (now Belem)—Ceara (now Fortaleza)—Pernambuco (now Recife)—Bahia—Rio de Janeiro—Sao Paulo—Santos— Buenos Aires – Valparaiso—Iquique—Arica—Callao—Lima—Panama—Colon—Key West

January 18, 1919 the representatives of victorious states of the First World War gathered in Versailles for a peace treaty conference. The total war, with annihilation of millions of human lives, drew to an end. Europe was filled by a bitter sense of anger, sorrow and despair.[44] Certain new features of the conduct of the First World War (poison gas, aerial bombing) added to the horror of the war, and these reinforced fears about future conflicts.[45] People's disillusionment in science, technology and "western civilization" posed a challenge for the post-war world order.

President Wilson of the United States proposed that the end of the First World War should be "a victory without a victor." His proposal included self-determination for nationalities, open diplomacy, freedom of the seas, disarmament, and establishment of a league of nations to keep the peace, "a peace without victors." Germany agreed to an armistice on the basis of the Fourteen Points (when the Germans found out that the peace treaty they were required to sign was quite different from their expectations, they felt tricked and cheated,[46] which set the stage for the outbreak of the next even more destructive world war). The war had brought together the

[44] Robert Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present* (New York: W ·W · Norton, 2002), 349.
[45] Roger Chickering and Stig Forster, eds., *The Shadows of Total War: Europe, East Asia, and the United State, 1919-1939* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 23.
[46] Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 284-85.

whole world in a terrifying way. Consequently, the world leaders pledged to build a more harmonious world. A spirit of unity and peace tentatively hovered over the world in 1919.

On November 7, 1918, as the war was ending, Martha Root wrote to Abdu'l-Baha of her desire to travel the world on behalf of the Faith. Her request produced great joy for Abdu'l-Baha. He praised her benevolent purpose, and the right choice of time. He said: "At present the whole world is prepared for the Call of the kingdom; the past war has given rise to a wonderful capacity among men, for the underlying foundation of the teachings of God rest upon the comfort and the well-being of the denizens of the world and upon the establishment of Universal Peace!"[47] Furthermore, He encouraged her: "As ears are awaiting the summons for Universal Peace, it is therefore advisable for thee to travel, in case comfortable journey was possible, to the different parts of the globe, and roar like unto a lion the kingdom of God. Wide-reaching consequences thou shalt witness and extraordinary confirmations shall be exhibited unto thee."[48]

Martha Root was assured of the divine help and success. She started the first of the four world teaching trips on July 22, 1919. Her destination was nearby South America, as a compromise between her duty to her aging father and her obligation to the Cause.

Two days before the sailing of her ship, on July 20, Abdu'l-Baha sent her another Tablet (letter), which set the tone and theme for her teaching in South America. He encouraged her to "strive as much as possible to be ever active, travel to the north and south of the land and summon all to the Oneness of the World of Humanity and to Universal Peace." Although South America had not been directly involved in the First World War, Abdu'l-Baha suggested

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[47] Tablet from Abdu'l-Baha to Martha Root, January 10, 1919, Roy Wilhelm Papers, NBA.
[48] Ibid.

universal peace be her main theme in teaching: "at present all the peoples have realized what a great calamity war is…as all men have been awakened and are hearkening to the call, it is time for the promulgation of Universal Peace—a Peace which has for its basis right and justice, so that mankind will not be exposed to danger."[49]

But of course Martha Root could not have read it before she set out because of the sluggishness of communication back in the early twentieth century. Before she left her home in Cambridge Springs in June, she had prepared well for presentations on some of the basic principles of the Faith, especially gathering materials on the Baha'i economic solution. This and the equality of men and women, a universal language, and universal education, would be heartily welcomed by the eager seekers of truth in South America. Martha Root would have adjusted the focus of her teachings if she had received the tablet in time. But she did accomplish the other requirements from Abdu'l-Baha, traveling to the north and south of the land, visiting major cities on both east and west coasts of the continent, and proclaiming the oneness of humanity.

This was the first teaching trip for Martha Root, and also the first time for Baha'is to share the Baha'i Faith in South America. Without knowing a soul in that land, she set out with full confidence to bring the love of God to South American people. This first teaching trip was also a learning trip. Martha Root had to learn how to live together with people from many different backgrounds before she could share her message with them.

A strike delayed Martha Root's departure for a month, during which time she became seriously ill. On July 22, when she went aboard the ship *Albah*, she found that she had to face yet another challenge: many of the passengers spoke a spiritually different language: smoking,

[49] Tablet from Abdu'l-Baha to Martha Root, July 20, 1919, Roy Wilhelm Papers, NBA.

drinking, bridge-playing, and gambling. The majority were not visibly interested in the life of Spirit. For two days, she did not even try to teach the Faith. A middle-class white American woman, she thought that she "of all people was the least fitted to meet such a group. She did not dance or play cards, neither was she an enthusiastic sportswoman."[50]

But prayers and readings of the writings of Abdu'l-Baha showed her a path to follow. Abdu'l-Baha called the years after the First World War as the dawn of universal peace, and he stressed that peace must first be established among individuals, until it led in the end to peace among nations. "Wherefore, O ye Baha'ís, strive ye with all your might to create, through the power of the Word of God, genuine love, spiritual communion and durable bonds among individuals. This is your task."[51] What was very instructive for her was the following teaching from Abdu'l-Baha: "let not conventionality cause you to seem cold and unsympathetic when you meet strange people from other countries—be kind to the strangers…help them to feel at home…ask if you may render them any service…try to make their live a little happier…let those who met you know without your proclaiming the fact that you are indeed a Baha'i." [52]

Many of the Baha'is had given Martha Root gifts for her first teaching trip. These were all distributed for the comfort of the other passengers. Soon a sports meeting was coming up. She gave her best small article as the prize, and joined the "family party" and went in all except the heavy weight contest, though she did not know much about sports. Her efforts of reaching out brought interest and friendship for the Faith. She gave lectures on the ship, and distributed booklets to many people who were interested. The experience on the ship opened the door to a

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[50] Root, "A Baha'i Pilgrimage to South America," *Star of the West* 11, no. 7 (1920): 107.
[51] Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha*, 246.
[52] Root, "A Baha'i Pilgrimage to South America," 107.

very successful teaching experience in South America. The friends she made on the sail subsequently lent her help to overcome language barriers and traveling difficulties.

The trip to South America required Martha Root to endure storms, yellow-fever, a dangerous Andes crossing in the winter, and language and cultural clashes. She managed to visit every stop along the coast in South America, even though sometimes it meant that she had to jump onto the small sailboats struggling in rough seas to transfer passengers to the shore. Most of the cities were stopping-off points for the passengers of only a few hours or perhaps a day. Martha Root always found the way to major newspaper editors in the cities and presented them Baha'i literatures. She explained the Baha'i cause to government officials, business people, missionaries, Esperantists, Theosophical societies, and people of the interior, down to the poorest Afro-Latin Americans.[53]

The biggest barrier for Martha Root's teaching in South America was language. Portuguese was heard everywhere in Brazil, and Spanish on the west coast of South America. She set out to South America without any idea of these two languages. Fortunately she met some American business men and women, British and American missionaries, and South Americans who spoke English. They helped her tremendously by translating her messages. Martha Root also found that Brazil had the most complete collection of Esperanto literature she had ever seen. Using her elementary knowledge of Esperanto, she managed to teach the Faith among the Esperantists. She recommended that any Baha'is who went to South America later on should learn Portuguese and Spanish well. But one of the lessons she internalized from this trip

[53] Root, "A Baha'i Pilgrimage to South America."

was the importance of a universal language, with which people from different lands could communicate and let the information and thoughts flow freely between one another.

Martha Root became aware of the cultural differences between North and South America. She observed that the pace of life was slower in Brazil:

> South Americans meet people socially before they do any business. 'Paciencia amanha' (Patience, tomorrow) is the first lesson to be learned. Brazilians do everything slowly and with ceremony. The Portuguese and Brazilians are born aristocrats.[54]

Martha Root had been concerned about the social codes about a woman traveling alone in South America. She learned that she would be shown respect if she was a good woman, a good woman from the United States who came to South America for a beneficial purpose. She observed the acceptance extended by the South Americans: "The very fact that Miss Root was a woman traveling alone, not knowing their language, touched their hearts."[55]

The first trip lasted about five months. During this period, Martha Root visited almost every major city in South America, along the coasts and in land. I have not located any manuscripts of her articles and lectures during this trip, but her narratives and reports of the trip provide a very informative account of her travels. We can see she made a good use of her profession for the widest coverage of the Faith as possible. After she fulfilled her goals and returned to the United States in late 1919, and sent detailed letters of all the events and services she rendered in South America, Abdu'l-Baha bestowed another Tablet on her: "thou art really a herald of the Kingdom, a harbinger of the Covenant, and does self-sacrifice. Thou showest

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[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid.

kindness to all nations; thou art sowing a seed that shall in the long run, give rise to thousands of harvests."[56]

Second Trip: March 22, 1923—January 22, 1931

Seattle—Japan—China—*Hong Kong*—Australia—New Zealand—Tasmania—South Africa—Egypt—Palestine (*Haifa*)—Egypt—Switzerland—Germany—Austria—Hungary—Serbia—Rumania—Bulgaria—Hungary—Austria—Czechoslovakia—Germany—the British Isles—Spain and Portugal—Germany—Poland—Czechoslovakia—Baltic states (Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia)—Norway—Sweden—the Balkans—Bulgaria—*Constantinople*—Greece—Yugoslavia—Czechoslovakia—Germany—Albania—Italy—Turkey (*Constantinople*)—Rumania—Egypt—Palestine (*Haifa*)—Iraq—Iran—India—Burma—Malaysia—*Singapore*—*Hong Kong*—China—Japan—Hawaii—*San Francisco*[57]

President Wilson hoped that the postwar world would be more harmonious and peaceful, under a newly organized League of Nations. The League of Nations formally came into existence on January 10, 1920. The aims of the League were to promote international co-operation and to achieve international peace and security. The states had pledged themselves, through signing the Covenant, not to go to war before submitting their disputes with each other,

[56] Tablet from Abdu'l-Baha to Martha Root, January 27, 1920, Roy Wilhelm Papers, NBA.
[57] It would be too long if I listed all the places that Martha Root visited during 1923-1931. Here are some of the countries and cities that she spent time. I have italicized the cities, some of which she visited several times.

or states not members of the League, to arbitration or enquiry. The two official languages of the League were English and French. The headquarters of the League was Geneva, Switzerland. The organization of the League of Nations included the Council, the Assembly and the Secretariat. Autonomous but closely connected to the League of Nations were the Permanent Court of International Justice and the International Labor Organization. The League also established subsidiary bodies to promote co-operation on economic, social, health, and intellectual matters.[58]

The League of Nations was the first world organization that realized the whole world as one body and started to face world challenges by planning the future together. Unfortunately, no states really took it seriously when it came into being. The United States never joined the League of Nations. Others joined but later left when their interests were challenged: Brazil (1926), Japan (1933), and Italy (1937). Germany was only a member from 1926 to 1933, and the Soviet Union from 1934 to 1940.[59] It had no armed forces and had to rely on boycotts to control the behavior of its members. In January 1923 France occupied the Ruhr. Six months later Italy bombed the Greek island of Corfu. When the League of Nations discussed these events, the government of France and Italy threatened to withdraw from the organization. As a result, the League of Nations decided not to take any action. Konni Zilliacus, a member of the Information Section of the League Secretariat, wrote to his friend: "I feel depressed and fed up. Who could have imagined things would turn out as badly as this?"[60]

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[58]"League of Nations, Photo Archives, Introduction" [http://www.indiana.edu/~league/intro.htm].
[59] "League of Nations" [http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/FWWleague.htm].
[60] Ibid.

As the first modern attempt to view the world as one body, the Leagues of Nations deserves a measure of praise. It was a breakthrough in the concept of collective security, and marked the first decisive step toward world order. However, it failed to prevent the Second World War, only twenty one years after the First World War ended. The vision of the world government devised by Baha'u'llah suggests some of the reasons of the League's failure.

First of all, the League of Nations was not based on justice for all. The covenant of the League bound its members; this was generally seen as a device to ensure the security of the victorious powers. What Germany learned from the peace treaty was betrayal and cheating and unfairness. The exclusion of Germany and Soviet Union from the League of Nations signified its lack of evenhandedness. Secondly, the League of Nations was not inclusive. Even for those who did join the League, they kept their national sovereignty and continued to pursue their national interest. Thirdly, the League of Nations didn't have armed forces to ensure and enforce its administration, and virtually lost control over its member states. It lacked the resolution and ability to keep the world order by punishing those states which violated it. Fourthly, though the victorious powers, like British and France, carried out disarmament after the war, they did it because of the disgust and fear of the First World War, hoping that they would not have to go to war again. It was not a unanimous disarmament carried out by all the countries. Lastly, promotion of equality between men and women, universal education, universal language and other conceptions which would enhance global communication and harmony were not introduced into the agenda of the League of Nations. In a word, the League of Nations grew out of the goodwill of its advocates, but it lacked any real consensus in the peaceful negotiation of conflicts among states and peoples, or any efficient measures when conflicts did occur.

The colonies and semi-colonies saw an opportunity in the weakness of the imperial states shattered by the First World War. Africa, India and China fought for their freedom and independence. Women's movement increased their attacks on the old world system. They began to shift from suffrage activism to campaigns utilizing enfranchised women's new power as citizens, to influence international as well as domestic affairs. At its first congress after the war, the International Women Suffrage Alliance amended its goals. To the "promotion of woman suffrage" was added "and such other reforms as are necessary to establish a real equality of liberties, status, and opportunities between men and women."[61] In 1919, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) was set up to work towards a peaceful solution to international problems. In 1931, over three million signatures were collected by American women for the opening of a disarmament conference.[62]

In the middle of fumbling forward to an "open, just and honorable" future promised by the Covenant of the League of Nations, the collapse of Wall Street stock market in the United States in October 1929 plunged the whole world into the darkness of the Great Depression. It lingered on till the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939. Industries were destroyed, people lost jobs, and many societies fell into despair and poverty.

Historians have many explanations for the causes of the Great Depression. Years ago, some blamed the excess capacity in the United States economy, some blamed the unstable world

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[61] Johanna Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-28* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), 191.
[62] Cambridge Women's Peace Collective, ed., *My Country Is the Whole World: An Anthology of Women's Work on Peace and War* (London: Pandora Press, 1984), 275.

monetary system, and some blamed the weakness of capital spending.[63] Later on, historians and economists started to view the issue from a global standpoint. Some blamed the United States' handling of the debt of Europe after the First World War.[64] When Europe failed to repay the loans from the United States, the latter raised the rates of interest on the loans. One by one, the financial institutions in Europe collapsed. The panic then spread to the world market and eventually led to the Wall Street crash. This perspective touched upon the interdependence of world economy, which has become a more obvious fact today. When the politicians and statesmen were trying to build a new political world order on the foundation of the League of Nations, they could have done a better job by recognizing the interdependence of the world economy, stopped the punishment of fragile Europe, and thus reduced the impact of the Great Depression.

In the mid of uncertainty after the blow of the First World War, Abdu'l-Baha saw the urgency and possibilities of sharing the divine solutions to current collected and weighty problems. Unfortunately, His feeble health prevented Him from taking a second teaching trip like the one between 1911-1912. [65]

> "O that I could Travel, even though on foot and in the utmost poverty, to these regions, and, raising the call of 'Ya Baha'u'l-Abha' in cities, villages, mountains, deserts and oceans, promote the Divine teachings! This, alas, I cannot do. How intensely I deplore it! Please God ye may achieve it!"[66]

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[63] Clarence L. Barber, "On the Origins of the Great Depression," *Southern Economic Journal* 44, no. 3 (1978).
[64] Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present*. 360.
[65] Abdu'l-Baha spent most of His lifetime (over 50 years) in prison and exiles, accompanying His Father Baha'u'llah. Long time imprisonment and maltreatment damaged His health permanently.
[66] Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets of the Divine Plan: Revealed by Abdu'l-Baha to the North American Baha'is*, rev. ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1977), 39. "Ya Baha'u'l-Abha" means "O Thou the Glory of Glories."

His lament and His supplication to the Baha'is in this Tablet set the course for the life of Martha Root. She tried to "love as He loved, try to serve as He served, sacrifice as He sacrificed, be happy as He was happy…" to serve Abdu'l-Baha.[67] Her understanding of the utmost service to Abdu'l-Baha was to carry out what Abdu'l-Baha could not do, and travel and teach the Faith as widely as possible.

Four years after the South America trip, on March 22, 1923, Martha Root became the only American passenger on the Japanese ship of *Kaga Maru* sailing for Japan. This trip turned out to be the most intensive and comprehensive teaching trip in her life.

The sailing was not an enjoyable one. "Mrs. Ocean does not mollycoddle her travelers or play any 'I am better than thou' favorities. After people came innocently aboard the *Kaga Maru*, the much lauded Mrs. Ocean (who calls herself 'pacific,' what a misnomer!) begins and shakes them hard in a four days roughness of weather."[68] During the three-week voyage, there was only one day of sunshine. This tough journey brought a much turbulent yet fruitful teaching experience.

Japan did not suffer any loss of power and pride as did European countries from the First World War. But it went through a political ferment in the early 1920s. Students, university professors, and journalists, bolstered by labor unions and inspired by a variety of democratic, socialist, communist, anarchist, and other Western schools of thought, called for political reforms. Fear of democracy, radicalism, and social change engendered by the influx of Western popular culture together led to the passage of the Peace Preservation Law (1925), which forbade any

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[67] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 143.
[68] Martha Root, "What it is Like on the Kaga Maru" (circulated letter), n.d., 1923, Ella Cooper Papers, NBA.

change in the political structure or the abolition of private property. The law served as a club against the mass leftist parties, such as the Japanese Communist Party, which was founded in 1922.[69] When Martha Root visited Japan in April 1923, she did not expect the trouble awaiting her.

A conservative Japanese newspaper published an article stating that Martha Root was preaching "a doctrine practically the same as communism which was inconsistent with the Japanese Government's policy."[70] The Japanese police suspected her of being a "Red", or Communist, and tailed her for more than one week. All people connected with her were questioned, and the government threatened to disrupt her plans. She had to appeal for protection from the United States Embassy. Though she declared that she had no intention of offending Japanese officials, and hoped to explain successfully why Baha'ism did not menace Japan politically or religiously, she was forced to leave the country in ten days. She felt that any new idea that the Japanese government did not understand was put under the heading of dangerous thoughts. [71] But she was happy that her message was welcome among the intellectuals in Japan. The founder of Waseda University, Count Okuma, said to her: "What the young men of Japan need more than anything else today is the pure teachings of Christ or the pure teachings of the Buddha, but not the creeds of Christ or the dogmas of the Buddhists. Perhaps this Baha'i movement will offer this."[72]

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[69] Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present*, 370.
[70] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 165.
[71] Ibid.
[72] Ibid.

She left Japan for China on April 25, 1923. From the mid-nineteenth century on, China had lost its privileged position in the world. China suffered the invasion of foreign powers. The Opium War with the British in 1848 and the China-Japan War in 1894 ended the legend of the "Middle Kingdom." The failure of the Self-Strengthening Movement (1868-1911) dragged China to a further weakened and semi-colonial status. Dr. Sun Yat Sen overthrew the Qing Dynasty and founded Republic of China in 1911-12. However, this revolution did not save the Chinese people from the chaos of warlords or invasions of foreign powers. Russia, British and Japan invaded Mongolia, Tibet and Shandong respectively. China did not obtain an equal status with the Western powers or regain its sovereignty until the Cairo conference of 1943.[73]

In an age when China was feeble and semi-colonized by other states, Abdu'l-Baha voiced His opinion quite differently from the mainstream views in 1917:

> China, China, China, China-ward the Cause of Baha'u'llah must march! Where is that holy, sanctified Baha'i to become the teacher of China! China has most great capacity. The Chinese people are most simple-hearted and truth-seeking…had I been feeling well, I would have taken a journey to China myself! China is the country of the future…[74]

When Martha Root visited China again in 1924, the political situation was a tangled web, infinitely complicated in both the center and the provinces. Warlord domination brought constant fighting throughout the country. Keeping to the Baha'i principle of noninvolvement in politics, Martha Root resisted the urgings of editors and publishers to write political news. She focused on full time teaching in China, and had a very fruitful experience there. She traveled throughout China. Wherever she went, she brought the teachings of Baha'u'llah to as many

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[73] "Japan, China and Hong Kong in the twentieth century," [http://hkuhist2.hku.hk/studentprojects/japan/1997b/jap2.htm#Cairo].
[74] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 167

people as possible. In the city of Wuchang, she gave lectures to Wuchang university (1600 students), Men's Normal University of Wuchang (550 students), and the Young Men's Christian Association (350 young men). Chinese professors and scholars, government officials, social reformers, Esperantists, theosophical societies and women's clubs lent her their best help. Their modesty, humility and gentleness moved Martha Root deeply. When the other western missionaries were working hard to "save the lost souls," "rule out evil," and "battle the darkness, ignorance, and idolatry of heath lands,"[75] Martha Root just found her love for Chinese people deepened: "It is a Favor and a Bounty of God to have the privilege to do anything for China. I do not think one of you will ever come who will not love the Chinese people."[76]

There was a fundamental difference in the attitudes of Martha Root and her Western missionary sisters towards non-Christian Asians, which I will discuss in Chapter Three. Here I would like to mention Martha Root's relationship with Christian missionaries. Martha Root met constantly with many missionaries during her twenty years of world teaching trips, especially in China, India, and South America and Africa. She usually had a harmonious relationship with them, both sides loving Jesus Christ dearly. Her best experience in China was in 1924 when she went to the Christian Mission to the Buddhist in China, a place for Buddhists to investigate Christianity. She praised it as the newest and finest thing the Christians were doing in China, as it was true Christianity, and an effort for Christianity and Buddhism to unite.[77] Her love of Christ was keenly felt by Christians. Some of them insisted on labeling her "as a missionary

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[75] Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)* (New York: Garland Publishing, Inc., 2000), 116
[76] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*., 180. Quoted from a letter from Martha Root, March 1924.
[77] Root, letter to "dearest beloved ones," Shanghai, China, March 19, 1924, Ella Cooper Papers, NBA.

worker," because she did "educational work similar to that done by missionaries," though they were somewhat confused by the fact of her "working her own charges," and that she "receives no compensation for her work" and "makes her own way by writing and newspaper work."[78]

The Baha'is believe that all the major religions flow from the same divine origin and that the Prophet-founders are the Messengers from the same God. This belief excluded any sectarian religious prejudices from Martha Root. She saw the reflections of the Holy Spirit in the followers of Jesus Christ, Krishna, Muhammad, Buddha, Moses, and Zoroaster. This fundamental belief opened her heart to all religious followers, and it was just natural for her to recognize the bond between her and other people from different cultures, different religious background, and different locations. It was not surprising that she could enjoy such a good relationship with the missionaries. Moreover, in the early twentieth century, it was still rare for any woman to travel alone in all the lands. Though Martha Root received a great deal of help from the Baha'is worldwide, the Faith was still in its budding phase, and quite often Martha Root would be the first Baha'i ever who worked in an area. As for the missionaries, the message of Christ had already circled the globe by the 1840s. The Gospel was being taught in all the continents. The missionaries were working diligently in all the lands, even in the interior of Africa.[79] When Martha Root started her world trip in 1919, sometimes it was still hard for her to find a hotel for women to stay in and she would stay with other women missionaries.

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[78] Letter from the general executive of Y.M.C.A of Shanghai, March 19, 1924, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[79] William Sears, *Thief in the Night*, 18th ed. (Oxford: George Ronald, 1992), 8.

The Baha'i belief that Baha'u'llah is the latest Messenger from God, and that He is the return of the Christ, opened the eyes of Christians like Martha Root to answer His call, [80] but this belief aroused dubiousness and resistance from many other Christians. An incident happened in Ningpo, China is a good illustration of this situation. Martha Root went to Ningpo on the last day of February, 1924. As she heard that there was no hotel in Ningpo where women could stay, she stayed with the missionaries. From a letter to the United States, we learn what then happened:

> The missionaries went around with me. The Y.M.C.A said that they would be very glad to have me speak, etc., then the missionaries handed him a letter and after he read the letter he said he did not wish any talk. The missionaries asked for the letter to show at the next place we were going. I woke up! I declined to go to the next place. I went to the newspaper office –they went too—explained the Cause to the editor and took the same boat back to Shanghai that I had come on. I said to the missionaries that if they wished to reach the "thinkers" of China they would need to broaden their viewpoint. Everything was friendly. I told them I would return to Shanghai and reach Ningpo in another way. We all felt a great sadness, they wished to be kind – I wished to be kind to them. I think I had better say nothing more. They thought they were kind and doing just right. Standing on the deck and passing out of Ningpo with its population of 260,000 and suburbs of 150,000, I felt that a little group of people with ultra-narrow viewpoint could never stop the onward march of the Cause of God in Ningpo or anywhere else.[81]

Martha Root spent almost a year in China. In March 27, 1923, she left China to her next stop. But she always felt a special affiliation with the Chinese. She came back to China twice in the following years.

Martha Root went to Hong Kong. Then she traveled to Australia, New Zealand, Tasmania, and South Africa. She followed the same busy schedule, or an even more ambitious

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[80] From a very early stage, the Baha'i Faith incorporated both the East and the West. The Faith originated in Iran, with Mullahs as its first followers, and its administrative system was born in the United States, where thousands of Baha'is from a Christian background carried the design of Baha'u'llah into reality.

[81] Root, letter to unnamed "dearest loved ones" (circulated letter), Shanghai, China, March 19, 1924, Ella Cooper Papers, NBA.

one, because there were already some Baha'i pioneers who had been working in these lands, and they helped Martha Root to reach out to a wider public. For example, when she stayed in Sydney for nine days, she gave a minimum of two lectures per day. In one lecture in the Domain Park on a Sunday afternoon, she lectured to over 1,000 Australians. Her record in Australia was five lectures in one day.[82]

Martha Root spent two months from early December 1924 to early February 1925 in South Africa. She witnessed the heated conflicts in this ancient continent, "the last continent to be explored, but the first to figure in history." She saw the British and the Afrikaner colonizers had problems with each other, and they both had problems with the indigenous Africans and people of mixed ancestry. "Prejudices between the white races and between the white and the orientals, prejudices also in religions, in politics, in economic questions are in the noon-day of their strength."[83] She asked the woman editors of the Cape Town papers: "What is your solution for all these big problems of your South Africa?" One of them replied: "I don't know unless maybe it is this Baha'i world religion with its basic principles you are lecturing so much about. I don't think anything else will ever solve them."[84]

Martha Root spent four and a half years from May 1925 to September 1929 in Europe during her second world teaching trip, visiting and teaching the peace message in Geneva, Zurich, Stuttgart, Frankfurt, Mainz, Karlsruhe, Vienna, Budapest, Belgrade, Romania, Sofia of Bulgaria, Greece, Warsaw, Prague, Dresden, London, Edinburgh, Manchester, Madrid, Copenhagen, Danzig (now Gdansk), Gera, Leipzig, Berlin, Hamburg, major cities in Lithuania, Latvia and

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[82] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 194.
[83] Root, "Cape Town--the Tavern of the Seas," *Star of the West* 16, no. 3 (1925).
[84] Ibid.

Estonia, and many more. She visited most places more than once. She met with kings and queens, princes and princesses, professors, bankers, businessmen, and newspaper editors. She appeared before the Peace Society, the Theosophical Society, and many women's clubs. She spoke at international conferences like the Universal Esperanto Congresses, and the Religious and Ethics Committee of the League of Nations. She oversaw the distribution of thousands of booklets. She believed that Baha'i teachings enjoyed a unifying power among people.

From Europe Martha Root visited Middle East. Then from May to August 1930 Martha Root visited India. It was the hottest time of the year, which damaged Martha Root's health. More than the heat, Martha Root had to worry about her security. She arrived within days of the Dharasana Encounter, when twenty-five hundred volunteers marched on the Dharasana Salt Works, leaded by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, who was appointed by Mahatma Gandhi to continue the salt campaign after he was jailed. The volunteers were mercilessly beaten by the authorities, and this incident changed the attitude of the Indian people from one of subservience to one of self-determination.[85] Martha Root had to be very cautious because the Indians might mistake her as an English woman. She tried to pay her visit to Gandhi in Yeravda Prison but was rejected by the prison authorities. She was allowed to see Mrs. Naidu though, confined in the same prison, and brought her gifts. In the eyes of Martha Root, Indian people were highly spiritual. She valued Mrs. Naidu as "India's best known woman, and most eloquent woman speaker, a poet whose works are translated into many languages, the greatest worker for women in India so far

[85] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 353.

in this century."[86] Many inconveniences occurred this time because of her identity as a Westerner, but Martha Root managed to continue her teaching with the help of local Baha'is.

From India she returned to Hong Kong, China and Japan. Then she sailed on the *Taiyo Maru* back to Honolulu. Hawaii was her last stop after eight years away from her home land. She had been working tirelessly on all the world's continents. Every minute was devoted to the teaching of the peace message of Baha'u'llah. She gave hundreds of talks to thousands of listeners—rulers, peasants, scholars, simple folks. Everything done during these years was because of Martha Root's love toward her fellow human beings, and her belief that humankind was in a new era, and needed a new mode of thinking: elimination of all religious, racial and national discriminations, equality of men and women, oneness of humanity, religion and God, universal language, universal education, and universal peace.

Here I would like to make a comparison between Martha Root and Jane Addams (1860-1935), the chair of the International Congress of Women at the Hague in April 1915, the first president of Women's International League of Peace and Freedom, and the first American woman to be awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for her efforts for international peace in 1931. She remained the president of WILPF until her death in 1935. WILPF had been established to address the immediate crisis facing women in 1919, declaring that women's position must be included in the peace treaty of Versailles. In 1920s, WILPF continued to work towards peaceful solutions to world problems, and ensured women's interests in international affairs within the Leagues of Nations.[87]

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[86] Martha Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*, Revised ed. (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1981), 113.
[87] Alberti, *Beyond Suffrage: Feminists in War and Peace, 1914-28*.

Martha Root employed a more comprehensive plan for international peace. Women's situation part of her teachings, but she did not confine her attention to Europe or America. She covered every part of the world with her own feet, and presented a most inclusive world plan about building international peace not only to world leaders in Geneva, but also to hundreds of thousands of common people in Asia, Africa, Australia, South America, and the Pacific islands.

In order to have a better idea of her approach, now let us view one of her lectures in Australia in 1924. The theme of the lecture was to build a new world culture, which she called "homoculture." She interpreted "culture" as the scientific cultivation of the human being to its highest perfectability. At the beginning of a great new universal cycle, we need new cosmic education to achieve a universal system of cultures in which "the distinctive educational expression of each nation will be united with a new cosmic ideal. We must evolve a universal world culture, a common aim, a common purpose."[88] This was what she meant by the neologism "homoculture."

She stressed the urgency of building this homoculture: "through the last World War and through all the modern space annihilating inventions, the aeroplane, radio, and all the others, we have come so close together as nations. We have become a neighborhood, and we must learn to live together or we perish, and the one problem which you and I as individuals and of nations must solve is this one problem of LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER!! Whether we wish it or not, we must learn it and we must bring into solid reality a world plan, otherwise we are lost."[89]

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[88] Root, [Homoculture], untitled lecture, Oct 15, 1924 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[89] Ibid.

Even though the League of Nations was unsuccessful in keeping international peace, the Baha'is viewed it as a sign of the dawning world government pictured by Baha'u'llah. "But the League of Nations has done something never before achieved in history—it is the first organized political institution to awaken the world's consciousness to universal peace and arbitration. It is one of the greatest cultural impulses of this century, or any proceeding century."[90] With a prophetic fore-knowledge of the future world government, they saw clearly the flaws and limitations of this organization. As Martha Root told an audience in 1924, "the League of Nations is not perfect we know; it has failed because it cannot enforce peace, it has no International Police Force, and it does not have the support of all countries."[91]

Martha Root called upon people to study what a Universal League of Nations could be and how to establish it. Above all, people worldwide had to cultivate their mind and consciousness to be united and harmonized before they could enjoy a peaceful world. "Nothing but a World Federal State, and nothing but mind disarmament and a strong spiritual foundation can ever save our culture from hopeless disintegration and our world from complete cataclysm."[92] In the meantime, in order to have world culture there must be an international auxiliary language, because it would bring forward the union between the East and the West.

Martha Root argued that gender equality was not a women's issue, it was a human issue. Man cannot attain his highest until woman was educated equally with him, and no world peace could be possible with the inequality and injustice between man and woman, the two persons who formed the whole humanity. Actually, Martha Root told her audience that the education

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[90] Ibid.
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.

and well-being of women was more important than men's, because women were the mothers and first teachers for the next generation, and they shaped our future.

This world culture required universal or cosmic education, which was a spiritual as well as intellectual training process. Martha Root called for the inclusion of a vision of the unity and the interdependence of all human beings. Only in this way can we become world citizens, with the capacity to share in and help direct a world civilization, a divine world culture. For young men and women educated in colleges and universities, it did not matter how many degrees they had acquired. If they still believed in the "old, worn-out" national, racial, religious and political prejudices and superstitions, they were not truly cultured and truly educated.

Third Trip: January 23, 1932—July 27, 1936

New York—France—*Geneva*—*Prague*—Poland—Hungary—Yugoslavia—Albania—Bulgaria—Greece—*Adrianople*—Rumania—Greece—Austria—Lithuania—Stockholm—Norway—Denmark—Iceland—Yugoslavia—Greece—*Helsinki*—*Stockholm* and *Olso*—*New York*

Martha Root's third trip was made to Europe. At that time, the international situation was rapidly changing in a negative direction. The bitterness remaining from the First World War was driving states towards an even more destructive war. Whole societies were sunk deeply in the Great Depression. In early 1920s, the worsening economic situation and mass strikes had brought Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) to power in Italy. His skillful use of propaganda maintained popular support during the Depression. The economic crisis and nationalist and anti-

semitic politics helped Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) into power in Germany in 1933. His call for the abrogation of the Versailles Treaty gained wide support from Germans, who had held grievances against the world that "cheated" them at the end of the First World War. Both Mussolini and Hitler were dictators, repressing political opponents and preparing for the re-division of the world. In 1935, Hitler launched his vast rearmament program. Very soon, Germany remerged as a great power with expansionist aspirations. In Asia during the 1930s, militarism and expansionism also became dominant themes in Japanese politics and policy. In 1931, the Japanese army invaded the northern part of China and founded its puppet Manchurian government. Only the United States and the Soviet Union could hold back Japan's aggression in East Asia, but neither of them were members of the League. China turned to the League of the Nations to settle this international affair, but no real action was taken to punish Japan for its invasion. The weakness of China and fragility of the League of Nations fed the appetite of Japan, which became increasingly aggressive in the following years.[93]

Martha Root set out her third trip on January 23, 1932. The degradation of the world situation made her feel the urgency to spread the peace message before it was too late. She made her way to the historic disarmament conference in Geneva in 1932 and stayed there for three months. During that period, she met personally with over fifty statesmen from countries throughout the world, many she had met before during her journeys to the different continents. Martha Root gave each of the representatives Baha'i literature, including Shoghi Effendi's newly published *The Goal of a New World Order*. Many speeches at the conference about disarmament,

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[93] Tignor et al., *Worlds Together, Worlds Apart: A History of the Modern World from the Mongol Empire to the Present*. Donald Kagan, *On the Origins of War and the Preservation of Peace* (New York: Doubleday, 1995).

unity of religions, world peace building, etc. resonated with Baha'i teachings. A few of the delegates either were Baha'is or at least had heard and approved the universal principles of Baha'u'llah for world peace.[94]

Martha Root cheered the appearance of women in international activities. She noted that one of the very impressive moments at the conference was "when the delegation representing forty-five millions of the women of the world from fifty-six countries, presented resolutions adopted at that time for actual limitation of armaments and for moral disarmament."[95]

Martha Root had gone to Europe to report on this historic disarmament conference. Afterwards she stayed there for four and a half years according to the guidance of Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith. She was engaged in the same overwhelming schedule, visiting most cities, giving lectures, meeting with states heads, intellectuals, women's clubs, Esperanto society and Theosophical societies, and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. She renewed old friendships, and made new friends. The rapidly disintegrating political and economical situation in Europe added more challenges to her already crushing amount of work. Long and hard work injured Martha Root's health. Her back and neck hurt, and she had been suffering from the lingering breast cancer for quite a long time. She looked very tired, but she could not afford to rest. During both her second and third teaching trips, she spent a great deal of time in Europe, because she saw the building-up of another war threatening the world. "There is

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[94] Root, "Disarmament Conference and the Extraordinary Session of League of Nations," *Star of the West* 23, no. 1 (1932): 15.
[95] Ibid., 18.

such a need of teaching in Europe!"[96] She still kept her mountainous correspondence with old and new friends worldwide, besides her intense teaching. She could not afford a typist, and had to "continue, continue…"

In the 1920s and 1930s, the world was struggling against the very real threats of war. Some historians claim that war in human history has helped the redistribution of resources, and been inevitable and necessary for the development of humanity. I can only say that such a view is very ignorant and arrogant. From the very beginning till today, wars break out when human selfishness overcomes servicefulness. "Peace is the foundation of God; war is satanic institution." "Peace is the illumination of the world of humanity, war is the destroyer of human foundations." "Peace is life; war is death."[97] Human civilization felt aghast at the First World War, while the stubbornness of human selfishness and ignorance welcomed the Second World War. This unprecedented era of total war warned people around the globe: "live together, or die together."

Some men and women really got the message, and worked hard to educate their fellow human beings to see it too. Martha Root was one of the hardest peace workers. Her Faith revealed to her the threats of, and the solution to, the warring world before the message sunk deep in the heart of the majority. Although Martha Root covered almost every corner of the globe with her teachings, she spent much longer time in Europe because "there is such a need of teaching in Europe!" Europe, which was regarded as the most advanced, most civilized, most

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[96] Letter from Martha Root to "Beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi, beloved friend Roy Wilhelm," September 19, 1935, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[97] Abdu'l-Baha, *Baha'i World Faith*, 6th ed. (Wilmette: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1976), 231.

"modern" part of the world, but which was unfortunately, the origin of the two world wars, needed education more than anywhere else in the first half of the twentieth century!

Martha Root shared her message with the Europeans "through pains and fatigues and thousands of ups and downs." While Martha Root's body grew weaker, her spirit soared always. "I know the steed (the body) is slipping down as the years go by, but the rider (spirit) is upheld by the Supreme Concourse those Chosen and Favored Angels." [98]

Her world traveling experience became legendary not only for her Baha'i friends, but also for people who met her. She was interviewed and written about in different languages in various countries. During one of these interviews, she told her audience that "I do not travel the world uninterruptedly so many years simply as a journalist, but because I am so deeply interested in writing the constructive articles that will help to bring understanding among nations and to promote the highest ideals for enduring peace."[99]

Fourth Trip: May 20, 1937—June 7, 1939

San Francisco—Hawaii—Japan—*Hong Kong*—*Shanghai*—*Manila*—India (*Calcutta, Hyderabad, Sind, Jammu, Sialkot, Gujranwala, Lahore, Simla, Amritsar, Jullundur, Ludhiana, Patiala, Delhi, Aligarh, Agra, Rampur, Lucknow, Cawnpore, Allahabad, Benares, Patna, Calcutta, Bombay, etc.*)—Australia—Hawaii

[98] Letter from Martha Root to "Beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi, beloved friend Roy Wilhelm," September 19, 1935, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[99] Root, "How I Interview" (broadcast transcript), August 13, 1935, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

Martha Root was forced to take a full rest by the Guardian and her friends before she started her next extensive teaching in East and South Asia, where war and unrest was widespread. Her ticket showed her planned traveling around the world, via Japan, China, Manila, Singapore, Calcutta, Colombo, Port Said, Italy, France, London and New York.[100] She said good-bye to her relatives and friends in Cambridge Springs, and gave her last talks in Chicago and California before she went to San Francisco for her next trip.

During that time, the situation in Japan and China was very dangerous. The war between China and Japan became inevitable with the triumph of militarism and Fascism in Japan. The League of Nations did not dampen Japan's ambition to control East Asia, for no action had been taken against the occupation of Manchuria. Moreover, the restoration of central political authority in China under the Nationalists made Japan anxious to launch a full-scale war against China as soon as possible. In 1937, Japan invaded China.

Agnes Alexander[101], the famous pioneering Baha'i in Japan who had accompanied Martha Root during her last visit to Japan and China, postponed her return from her pilgrimage in Haifa indefinitely because of the dangerous situation in East Asia. In January 1937, the Baha'i Spiritual Assembly in Haifa sent a letter to "the friends throughout the East and the West," quoting from Baha'u'llah:

> Witness how the world is being afflicted with a fresh calamity every day. Its tribulation is continually deepening…at one time it has been agitated by contentions and disputes, at another it hath been convulsed by wars, and fallen a victim to inveterate diseases. Its sickness is approaching the stage of utter hopelessness, inasmuch as the true Physician is

[100] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 433.
[101] Agnes B. Alexander, an early Baha'i from Honolulu, and later a Hand of the Cause of God. Martha Root and she shared a lot of teaching experiences in Japan and China.

> debarred from administering the remedy whilst unskilled practitioners are regarded with favor, and are accorded full freedom to act.[102]

Martha Root was undeterred, even though it required great courage to go to East Asia at this time. She left San Francisco on May 20, 1937, sailing to Honolulu and then on to Japan. Martha Root never ceased sharing her Faith. She always taught on board ship. An episode during her sail from Honolulu to Japan provides a good example:

> …Coming from Honolulu on to Yokoham, this servant gave a public lecture "what is the Baha'i movement?" before the II and I Class passengers of this steamship "Tatsuta Maru," in the lounge of the I Class. The Captain himself introduced me. I spoke for one hour and questions and answers followed for an hour. There were ten religions and ten nations represented. A few missionaries … who had not heard of the Baha'i Faith until they heard this lecture…arose and spoke against it. One said only the Christians ever have or ever will be saved. I asked her if she thought all the Zoroastrians, Buddhists, Confucianists, Hindus, Jews, Mohammedans are not saved? She replied no, they are not saved. The majority of the people in the audience were Easterners born and reared in these other religions.[103]

What was Martha Root's reaction to this incident? She simply wrote: "but there was really sweetness and understanding at the meeting. Each one said exactly what he thought." Then she added another sentence: "and some were much interested in the Baha'i teachings."[104]

Martha Root was living another principle of the Baha'i Faith: independent investigation of truth. She found the Faith by independent investigation, and she never forced the others to accept it, though she had devoted her life to the Faith. Proselytizing is forbidden in the Faith. There are no clerics in the Faith. The Baha'i Faith believes that today humanity has grown mature enough to make the judgment of right and wrong on its own, and everyone has the right

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[102] Letter from the Baha'i Spiritual Assembly in Haifa, Palestine to "the Friends throughout the East and the West through the Spiritual Assemblies," January 1937, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[103] Root, letter to "beloved friends in El-Abha," Shanghai, China, July 6, 1937, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[104] Ibid.

and responsibility to investigate the truth for himself or herself. Many times during Martha Root's travels, she would listen first, discover the common belief, and develop her teachings around that topic.

She carried out a remarkable amount of work in Japan and generated positive publicity for the Faith. She managed to visit almost every Baha'i in Japan, sought out the leaders of the government, religious communities and social movements, and handed out many copies of *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, and other Baha'i literature. When she left Japan on June 26, 1937, she would be the last Baha'i to visit Japan until the end of the Second World War.

She stayed in Shanghai during July and August. The Japanese army was sweeping over China, but Martha Root managed to give talks, send books to libraries, and meet other Baha'i friends. Later on she had her most unforgettable experience. Though foreign residents in Shanghai had been saying "oh, nothing will happen in Shanghai International Settlement!," they were greatly surprised and shocked when on August 14, 1937, the air-raids came over the district for the first time during the war. Martha Root prayed and bowed her head, thinking that the bombs were falling on her. A bomb destroyed a building just one-half block away from her. "The whirring, the staccato louder and louder of a fleet of warring aeroplanes over our heads, then a silence, then the horror, the shock, the swaying houses, the awful explosions of bursting bombs, it was HELL UPON EARTH!"[105]

She fled from Shanghai to Manila. With a deep sympathy towards the Chinese, before she left Shanghai, she said farewell to her two Chinese servant boys, put her arms about them,

[105] Root, "My Experience in the War Zone in Shanghai" (lecture manuscript), 1937, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

prayed for them, and gave them a little sum of money which was given to her by her friends before she left San Francisco. She told the boys not to use the money now, but to use it later when they had no rice, and would need to buy a little every day. What else could she do? "We Americans go out, but they have no one to take them out."[106]

Five minutes after Martha Root landed in Manila, the most powerful earthquake of the century struck the Philippines. She moved on and arrived safely at Bombay, India on October 15. She certainly spoke with conviction when she told the India people that "Armageddon is lurking at the gates of the whole world. If another world war explodes, as certainly it will if we do not arise as one nation to establish a new international world order, then we shall all lose our civilization." There was a particular stress when she told her audience:

> This must be our aim: a world united politically, religiously, culturally; educated under a common curriculum. A world in which war is forever banned, and the energies of humanity are devoted solely to constructive enterprise. A world of plenty in which individual wealth is limited and poverty is abolished, and above all, a world which knows God and seeks to follow ways of righteousness and peace.[107]

Martha Root, with the help of local individual Baha'is and Local Spiritual Assemblies, initiated intensive teaching efforts in Ceylon, India, Australia, and Hawaii. Her pace, which was routine for her, amazed the others working with her. She covered India from northwest to southeast, giving talks daily—morning, afternoon, evening. It was a most intensive teaching trip, lasting fifteen and a half months. India was quieter than it had been in 1930, for Mahatma Gandhi used the years between 1934 and 1939 for negotiation and planning.

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[106] Ibid.
[107] Ibid.

Martha Root had always been reaching out to both Eastern and Western cultures and uniting them for a more harmonious world. She frequently introduced Eastern scholars' thoughts and philosophies in her writings. During the third visit to India, Martha Root made a point to join the Second Indian Cultural Conference in Calcutta during the first week of December 1937. She was one of the speakers for this conference. Rabidranath Tagore was to have presided at the cultural conference, but he became ill, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu was asked to officiate.

Mrs. Naidu had met Abdu'l-Baha in London in 1911, and kept a present from the latter dearly. Her friendship with Martha Root started in 1930, when Martha Root visited her in jail. Her husband, Dr. Naidu, had been Martha Root's doctor for a while during 1930. When she noticed Martha Root sitting in the front row at the conference, she had her escorted to the platform and sat beside her.[108] To have a western woman sit on the platform next to the chairperson at this national cultural conference showed how much the Indians had accepted and honored Martha Root for her work done in India!

Mrs. Naidu was an influential and praiseworthy figure in the eyes of Martha Root: "Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, India's best known woman, a poet whose works are translated into many languages, and the most brilliant and enchanting woman speaker I ever heard, a member of the Indian Congress, strong in public life."[109] Martha Root caught and shared the deep love and pride of Mrs. Naidu for India in her opening speech for the conference: "The co-ordinated cultures of the many races that have become Indian in the process of time shall be the

[108] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 453.
[109] Root, [the Second Cultural Conference] (untitled article), December, 1937 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

consolidated gift of India to the world."[110] Mrs. Naidu showed a special interest in the Baha'i teachings. She told Martha Root that "The Baha'i teachings have a much more modern appeal, and they are a measure of social emancipation as well as a religion."[111]

The Baha'i Faith teaches that the East and the West must unite. In the past, as in the present, the Spiritual Sun of Truth (Religion of God) has always shone from the horizon of the East. It would exhibit a strong illumination when it shines in the West, as in the case of Christianity. In the twentieth century, the East was in need of material development, while the West was in want of a spiritual idea. "White/Western supremacy" does not exit in the Baha'i Faith, nor does "Eastern supremacy". It would be well for both to unite and give to each other what is lacking. "This union will bring a true civilization, where the spiritual is expressed and carried out in the material."[112]

Martha Root noted down particularly a conference speech by Sir S. Radhakrishnan, "one of India's most forward-looking, erudite scholars" on the increasing influence of Eastern thought on Western civilization:

> The civilization of the East, India and China, which is built upon passivism, tolerance, non-aggressiveness, cultivation of the inner life are long-lived while those based on ambition and adventure, aggression and courage are short-lived. The Eastern civilization has endured centuries of wars, pestilence and human misrule and yet has survived. No Western civilization has lived over a thousand years. The West by its great scientific achievements has made the world outwardly into one, has provided us with all the material appliances essential for the development of the world culture, but it has not touched the basis of culture, further growth in the old moulds is not possible, so as on previous occasions the eyes of the West are turned towards the East.[113]

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[110] Ibid.
[111] Ibid.
[112] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911*, 11th ed. (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1979), 21.
[113] Root, [Second Cultural Conference] (untitled article), December, 1937 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

Martha Root had been trying to meet Mahatma Gandhi since 1930, but when both Gandhi and she were at Calcutta for the conference, she did not even ask to "have an audience," because "he was very ill." This action showed how much she revered this Indian leader. She wrote: "I say audience because to be in his presence is not an ordinary event in anybody's life! But I do hope to meet him later. Friends of mine who have visited him say that he knows the Baha'i Teachings, had read a number of the books and thinks very highly of the Baha'i Faith."[114] The fact that all three of India's three greatest souls, Mahatma Gandhi, Rabindranath Tagore, and Mrs. Sarojini Naidu had encountered the Baha'i Teachings, and thought highly of them made Martha Root very happy.[115]

On 13-14 February 1938, Martha Root finally met Rabindranath Tagore in his Visva-Bharati University, where she had lectured during her last visit in 1930. She learned that Tagore had met Abdu'l-Baha in Chicago in 1912 and had ever been impressed with the Baha'i Teachings. Martha Root felt "deeply privileged" to have this audience with Tagore.[116]

Another Indian Educator that she met was Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, "this sage, seer, one of the four great men of India," who also had met Abdu'l-Baha. He arranged for Martha Root to go to Hyderabab, Sind to give a series of twelve lectures. He personally presided at most of them.[117]

During this fifteen-and-a-half month intensive teaching, Martha Root covered most parts of India, accompanied by Indian Baha'is. She recognized the importance of meeting the

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[114] Ibid.
[115] Ibid.
[116] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 457.
[117] Ibid., 467.

"thinkers of India," the scholars and notables, but she did not overlook those who had been looked down upon by the society. There was no stratification in her eyes. Many times she offered her hand to "the untouchable," which astonished and embarrassed the latter. Once she heard that a man who desperately wanted to hear her lecture fell ill. She went visit his dark tiny hovel at the back of a restaurant. She sat down by him, took his hand, and said a healing prayer.[118] Few if any western women in those days had ever treated an Indian man of the lower classes like Martha Root did. Indeed, how many elites members of Indian society would do that for their fellow brothers and sisters? But this was what Martha Root did every day: "Be the source of consolation to every sad one, assist every weak one, be helpful to every indigent one, care for every sick one, be the cause of glorification to every lowly one, and shelter those who are overshadowed by fear."[119]

Martha Root left for Australia after she finished her plan in India. When she arrived in Adelaide, Australia on January 28, 1939, it was clear that her health had dropped to a precarious state. But after the caring and praying of all the Baha'is, she was able to walk, and immediately devoted herself to work again. She gave sixteen lectures in Hobert and Launceston during her week there. Beginning on April 27, 1939, she visited New Zealand for a month, and gave two lectures each day to clubs, churches, societies, and the people's universities.[120]

During her next stop in Hawaii on June 7, Martha Root couldn't urge her body to go on. She prayed for help to endure the pain of her body, but life was ebbing away. On August 10,

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[118] Ibid., 464.
[119] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 453.
[120] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 466-78.

1939, she marked her sixty-seventh birthday. Letters, cables, flowers and gifts arrived from many parts of the world. On September 28, 1939, she slipped into unconsciousness and another world.

Conclusion

During the twenty years from 1919 to 1939, in an era when women were seldom seen traveling worldwide alone, Martha Root forsook her comforts as a successful woman journalist in a middle class family, and labored instead tirelessly to spread the message of universal peace to millions of people struggling in war, poverty, hunger, depression, and despair. She assiduously covered almost all the nations over the planet. She lectured in over 400 universities in the world, met with heads of the state, ministers and statesmen, professors, clergymen, and vast numbers of people in various walks of life, and contacted religious organizations, peace societies, women's clubs and leagues, and other civic groups wherever she went, bringing a Baha'i message of unity and peace for a global society. Her indefatigable efforts exorted an immense influence on the peace-building attempts in the warring world. She was praised as the "Herald of Kingdom," and the "Foremost Hand raised by Baha'u'llah since Abdu'l-Baha" within the international Baha'i community, and her unprecedented efforts and worldwide influence stationed her highly in the women's peace advocacy movement between 1919 and 1939. People will remember her in the centuries to come, but she viewed herself as the "humble servant of His Covenant,"

> I had not thought of myself as a peace fighter, but I would not travel the world uninterruptedly for so many years just as a journalist and certainly not as a tourist. I travel and write and speak because I know there can be an education to peace…I write

> constructive articles to bring understanding between nations; and I speak and write on these peace teachings. Human nature can change, but there needs to be an immense spiritual force exerted if human nature is to change with sufficient speed to overcome the imminent danger of cataclysm and Armageddon that face the world at this moment."[121]

Martha Root was praised as both a "hero" and a "saint" with all human virtues by the Baha'is. She had utmost Faith in universal unity and peace, and overcame many obstacles to promote this ideal during her world teaching trips. However, she was not born a hero and a saint. Besides her utterly reliance on the guidance from Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi, Tahirih, the woman disciple of the Bab, stood as a illuminating example for Martha Root to ponder on and define her identity of being a woman in this new age. In the next chapter, I will introduce Martha Root's only book *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman* to the reader, to show how Martha Root viewed gender and the East-West relationship through her evaluation of Tahirih, Iran's greatest woman.

[121] Broadcast of Martha Root, over the All India Station, Bombay, India, March 18, 1938, at 9:50pm, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

CHAPTER THREE: UNDERSTANDING TAHIRIH, UNDERSTANDING MARTHA ROOT, UNDERSTANDING THE NEW ORGANISM

Chapter One and Two tell us how Martha Root grew to be a leading Baha'i teacher and an indomitable universal peace advocate during 1919 and 1939. What is more interesting to women's studies readers, though, is how she envisioned gender, built a sense of female identity and selfhood, and challenged the patriarchal mode of viewing the world. We will address these concerns by reflecting on *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman* by Martha Root. This chapter consists of three parts: firstly, an introduction to the making of the book; secondly, a textual analysis of the book; and thirdly, an examination of Martha Root's gender awareness, female identity construction, and de-construction of the old mode of West/East, subject/object.

The Making of Tahirih the Pure

Martha Root was a very prolific writer. She wrote numerous essays, articles, letters, lectures and reports during her twenty years of teaching trips. For example, she sent a report of over 200 pages to Abdu'l-Baha about South America after her first teaching trip in 1919. She also corresponded with thousands of people from every corner of the planet. However, she did not write books about herself, her teachings, or her travels, which obviously required more time and effort than letters and reports and was highly difficult to fit into her busy schedule. Significantly, she did leave us one book, *Tahirih the Pure*. I believe this text can tell us something important about its author as well as its subject.

Martha Root set out on her second world trip on March 22, 1923. This was the longest and most extensive trip among her world teaching experiences. She included the birth place of the Baha'i Faith—Persia—in her plan. In 1925, Reza Shah came to power,[122] and his rule saw a renewed persecution of the Persian Baha'is. There were troubles in Adhirbayjan and Maraghih. Baha'i material was confiscated by the postal authorities unless it was sealed in plain envelopes. Baha'i schools were closed, anti-Baha'i demonstrations occurred, and Baha'is were excluded from public baths and barbers. In 1926 twelve Baha'is were martyred in the southern town of Jahrum.[123]

On Christmas Day 1929, Martha Root set out from Haifa to Syria, Iraq, and Iran. Shoghi Effendi was aware of the dangers inherent in such a trip. The possibility of martyrdom was very real, and he warned Martha Root that she should never be alone anywhere. Letters were sent out to the Baha'is in Iraq and Iran to receive and escort Martha Root during her visit.

Martha Root and her friends joined a caravan of many cars for the desert trip from Syria to Iran. This trip required two days and one night of driving in the desert, with a few hours of rest at night. There was no paved road or signs to mark the way. The drivers followed the existing wheel prints. Most people found the trip to be difficult, but for Martha Root, "it was the easiest trip I ever took." [124]

On the border of Iran, Martha Root was stopped by security officials. They went through all her boxes and belongings, warning her that she would have to burn any Baha'i books with her.

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[122] In 1933 Reza Shah passed a law in parliament changing the name of the country for diplomatic purposes from Persia to Iran.
[123] "Travel Through Persia" [http://Baha'i-library.com/asia-pacific/EBpersia.htm].
[124] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 333.

Martha Root meekly followed the instruction, though later on she questioned why the government would allow Christians to keep their books freely, as they did not believe in Muhammad, while the Baha'is acknowledged Muhammad and yet they could not take the books across the borders. In another place it just happened that Martha Root found herself left alone in the car, and a great number of young men approached her, and told her to get out. Martha Root said she did not wish to get out, because in that place every one knew this American woman was a Baha'i teacher. But they told her that they were soldiers and she had to get out. Martha Root got out very slowly, and was ordered to walk toward a rushing river to "see a doctor." A little boy with a bottle of white powder caught up with the group. Martha Root wondered what her fate would be, to be drowned, poisoned, or shot. Fortunately, after she was taken to several places, questioned and her answers recorded, the chief of the police told her everything was all right and she could leave.[125]

After traveling to other cities with the escort of local Baha'is, she arrived in Qazvin, the hometown of Tahirih. No westerner had ever been to Tahirih's home, and Martha Root determined to make a pilgrimage to the house. The local Baha'is, aware of the intense hostility in Qazvin, warned her that nothing about Martha Root would go unnoticed in this city. There were five soldiers watching her door across the hall in her hotel, day and night. Martha Root asked the Baha'is: "Why are those men always watching me?" "Everyone in Persia is watching you," they answered.[126]

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[125] Ibid., 336-37.
[126] Ibid., 340.

Nevertheless, Martha Root persuaded the owner of the hotel, who knew Tahirih's relatives, to arrange a visit. When Martha Root reached the little room where Tahirih studied, she knelt, bowed her head to the floor, and prayed. Tahirih's relatives came to see this stranger. Martha Root described her encounter with Tahirih's relatives in this way:

> When I kneeled to kiss the floor of her room and to pray, the relatives all came and stood silently. They were reverent and friendly. As I stepped out of her dear room, this relative said to me: "You are the first Baha'i who has ever come from the West to ask about Tahirih and see her descendents and her room." I replied: "No one came because he had not the courage. I tell you the truth, we were very afraid of you all!"[127]

This relative, whose mother was the younger sister of Tahirih, walked Martha Root to her hotel and had a long talk. He told Martha Root that he had felt for twenty years he should be a Baha'i, but "I have never had the courage to do it." But he was going to change it. Martha Root remarked that "on that day was begun a true friendship between a descendant of Tahirih and a Baha'i from the West."[128]

This visit, the stories told by Tahirih's relatives, and by descendants of early Baha'is whom Martha Root met during her visit to Iraq, Iran and Egypt, and the mood of the place and the times made Tahirih's life an irresistible topic for Martha Root. She started to think seriously about writing a book on Tahirih in 1930. Meanwhile, traveling throughout of the world, Martha Root found that people knew about Tahirih everywhere. She knew how Tahirih's poems were sought by scholars in every land, and how her life had influenced men and women alike throughout the world. A book about Tahirih would meet this need.

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[127] Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*, 49.
[128] Ibid.

Another reason for Martha Root to write the book was to spread the Baha'i teachings to a wider audience. During Martha Root's years of teaching trips, she had felt keenly the scarcity of the Baha'i literature for the mass of people. All of the original holy writings, though they were abundant, were in Persian or Arabic, and few of them had been translated in the early twentieth century. Roy Wilhem put out two teaching booklets in English (nicknamed as Big Ben and Little Ben) in 1917, which became Martha Root's best friends during her world trips. Dr. John E. Esslemont published his classic book of *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* in 1923. Martha Root found it an excellent teaching tool to supplement Big Ben and Little Ben, as it provided an extensive history of the Baha'i Faith and a summary and explanation of its principles and teachings. Shoghi Effendi called it the "textbook for the teaching of the Baha'i Faith." Martha Root had met so many people who had heard about Baha'i Faith, or read several lines from newspapers about the Faith, and wanted to know more. One task during Martha Root's teaching trips was to help the translation and publication of Dr. Esslemont's book in other countries. Indeed, it was translated into about ten languages. But for Martha Root, "My dream was to have the Bab, Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and Tahirih go together, in this book, on a teaching tour around the whole world!"[129] Especially during the later years, when serious illness had made her more conscious of her personal limitations, the idea of a book which would carry the message down to the ages was very appealing for her. As she said: "Very reverently I say

[129] Root, "letter-report home, from Karachi, India, August 1, 1938" (circulated letter), Martha Root Papers, NBA. This letter was actually drafted on July 26, 1938.

it—A preacher preaches to a few hundreds or thousands or tens of thousands, but a book can be a preacher for centuries and to millions yet to be born."[130]

From 1930 to 1938, Martha Root worked on the book whenever she could find the time. The notes and manuscripts of the book visited the five continents before they finally came into shape. In 1938, she published the book in Karachi, India. The first 3000 copies soon were distributed around the world, including 1500 in India, several hundred to the National Spiritual Assemblies of India and United States and Canada, and 100 for Iran. "I did not take any money for that book. I gave it to humanity."[131] Copies were sent to universities, libraries, and newspaper editors. She urged friends to speak of Tahirih in women's clubs, in universities and high schools, and over the radio. The book's reception was positive. Verily, she witnessed the effect of the book very soon. On July 26, 1938, in her letter to home, she told her friends that "just tonight a college boy of Karachi said to me: 'I read the book yesterday and I could not sleep, I was thinking all night of the glory of Tahirih's beautiful life.'"[132] In less than a month, letters from many places of the world reached Martha Root thanking for her great efforts on the book. In 1939, less than a year later, the book was being translated into seven languages. The young Persian poetess, brought to life in the pages of Martha Root's book, enjoyed a new surge of interest and influence almost 80 years after her death. Martha Root asserted that "I truly think the book is a 'Baha'i teacher'." [133] Her dream came true.

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[130] Ibid.
[131] Root, "beloved friends" (circulated letter), February 10, 1939, Melbourne, Australia, Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[132] Root, "letter-report home, from Karachi, India, August 1, 1938" (circulated letter), Martha Root Papers, NBA. See note 129.
[133] Root, "beloved friends" (circulated letter), February 10, 1939, from Melbourne, Australia, NBA.

Towards a Textual Analysis of Tahirih the Pure

The book consisted of four parts: introduction, three chapters on the early history of Tahirih's life, events in Qazvin and Tehran, and Tahirih's martyrdom, an epilogue, and three appendices (including Tahirih's poems, Baha'u'llah's tribute to the Bab, and an introduction to the Baha'i Faith by Shoghi Effendi). The book was based on the writings of early Baha'i historians and contemporary Western historians, oral history from Tahirih's relatives and descendants of early Baha'is, and field trip researches. Both English and Persian sources were consulted.

In the introduction, Martha Root explained why she chose Tahirih as the subject of a book. She was deeply touched by Tahirih. She explained that in order to understand Tahirih well, one had to acquire a knowledge of Iran during her life time and the religion of the Baha'i Faith. Women had been more or less subjected to men for thousands of years. But suddenly, in a very short period of time, women awoke to new ideas and sought a new status. The balance was shifting, men and women were becoming more equal, and the masculine and feminine elements of the civilizations were becoming more evenly adjusted. According to Martha Root, "It should be of thrilling interest to them (Western women) to know that the first women's rights martyr was not a Westerner at all, but a young woman poet, Tahirih, sometimes known as Qurratu'l-Ayn, of Qazvin, Iran."[134]

Persia in the middle nineteenth century was a weak state, divided against itself by corrupted practices. The Persians, once distinguished as a people of conquest and civilization, were almost extinguished by lack of knowledge, organization and zeal for truth. The nation,

[134] Ibid., 33.

once so powerful, now seemed so pitiful. Abdu'l-Baha called this degradation "the tragedy of a people." At the time when the Bab declared His Mission (1844), the government of the nation was a "Church-state." Orthodox Shi'a Islam was its basis and permeated the social lives of its people. There was no direction to public affairs. There was no parliament, no law. The Shah was a ruler whose words were the law. When the Bab, a meek, gentle, but resolute young man of twenty five declared that He was the Bab, meaning the Gate to a greater Messenger Who was coming soon, and later on when He claimed to be the Qa'im, the High Prophet or Messiah so long promised and eagerly expected by the Muslim world, He must have expected his fate at the hands of the mullahs. As soon as He made himself known as the Qa'im, persecution followed Him. He was martyred in 1850. All of His chief disciples were killed save Baha'u'llah. Some 2,000 Babis gave their lives to His Cause. Tahirih, the ardent follower of the Bab, the first women who unveiled her face at her own initiative, who conversed with men and vanquished them always in debating about religion, and called for the emancipation of women, was imprisoned, stoned and strangled to death.

Tahirih was a beautiful daughter of a leading mullah of Qazvin. She was born in 1817-1820 (no specific date can be decided, as all her clothes, books, poems, birth certificate and other artifacts of her life were burned after her martyrdom). She married her cousin at the age of thirteen, and became a mother of two sons and one daughter. She acquired an excellent Islamic education. But her understanding of the Qur'an was different from her father's. In early 1840s, she had become a famous leader in the Shaykhi sect. When the Bab declared His Mission in 1844, she rightly recognized His station and was pointed as a "Letter," the word the Bab used for Him and His eighteen disciples.

Tahirih immediately started the teaching of the Bab in the cities of Karbila, Qazvin, Hamadan, Baghdad, and Tehran. She sat always behind a curtain, because women were not allowed or expected to appear without a veil. It was already a remarkable innovation for a woman to permit her voice to be heard outside the harem, the women's quarters. Her courageous appearance, fervid eloquence and rare intellectual gifts in the proclamation of the New Manifestation caused great uneasiness and turbulence in Persia.

She invited influential mullahs wherever she went to explain the teachings of the Bab, and vanquished them all in their conversations, which was like waving a red flag before a bull. When she was planning to go to Tehran to meet the Shah in person and explain the new teachings, a mullah secretly wrote her father saying that his daughter was disgracing the reputation of the mullah and his family. His father at once sent his son and other relatives to Hamadan, where Tahirih was teaching, to take her back home.

Arriving in Qazvin, Tahirih stayed in her father's house, and her followers took a place in a caravanserai. The first night there was a family council, and her father, her husband, and her uncle reproached her for the dishonor she had brought to the family. Her husband demanded she submit to him, but Tahirih replied: "He, in that he rejects God's religion, is unclean; between us there can be naught in common." She explained her rejection in these terms:

> If your desire had really been to be a faithful mate and companion to me, you would have hastened to meet me in Karbila and would on foot have guided my howdah all the way to Qazvin. I would, while journeying with you, have aroused you from your sleep of heedlessness and would have shown you the way of truth. But this was not to be. Three years have lapsed since our separation. Neither in this world nor in the next can I ever be associated with you. I have cast you out of my life forever.[135]

[135] Ibid., 70. Martha Root quoted it from *The Dawn-Breakers* by Nabil.

In few weeks her husband divorced her, and he and his father pronounced her a heretic and strove day and night to undermine her position. He accused Tahirih of a murder, and later on tried to poison her. Tahirih fled to Tehran and sought protection from Baha'u'llah, then the son of the Shah's minister. While the authorities searched for her, she continued teaching individuals from behind a curtain in the palace of Baha'u'llah.

The next significant event in the history of the Cause was the Conference at Badasht in 1848. Eighty-one believers joined the conference as the guests of Baha'u'llah. Each day, Baha'u'llah revealed a Tablet, and upon each believer He bestowed a new name. It was at this conference that Tahirih got her new Title—Tahirih, the Pure One. Subsequently the Bab, who was confined in prison, revealed a Tablet to the participants, referring to each of them by their newly obtained titles.

The primary concern of the conference was the plight of the Bab. They were anxious to find a way to rescue him. But as the Bab only claimed Himself as the Gate, and by Qa'im was meant the promised Imam, His followers needed clarification about His mission. Was His message a rejuvenation of the Islamic truth? Or did He intend to establish a new and independent religion? Was the Bab the Qa'im? These questions were irrelevant to the loyalty of the believers, but vital to the establishment of the status of the movement and the identity of its participants.

This mystery was revealed in a most dramatic and astounding way. Baha'u'llah rented three gardens in Badasht, one for Himself, one for Quddus, a leading Babi, and one for Tahirih. Then one day Baha'u'llah fell ill and stayed in His tent. Quddus hurried to see Bah'u'llah.

Tahirih sent word and asked Quddus to come to her. Quddus rejected her request. Martha Root described the following drama in this way:

> When he did not comply with this request, Tahirih herself came to the garden of Baha'u'llah without her veil, saying to them that the New Revelation had become manifest. At the sight of the woman, all the believers present were astonished and disturbed, as they realized the Proclamation of the Cause and the cancellation of some of the old laws. There was so much excitement about this unprecedented action that Baha'u'llah told one of the believers to read aloud the chapter of the Qur'an called Al-Qiyamat, about the Resurrection. In this it states that something astonishing would happen on the promised day. When the believers witnessed this happening they all fled away.[136]

Some believers left the Faith at the sight of her unveiling. But for those who remained in the Faith now understood the full implication of the Bab's revelation. When the local villages found out the nature of the conference, they attacked the believers. The Babis fled into different directions. Tahirih hid herself from village to village for about a year before she was caught. Then she was brought before the Shah in Tehran.

The Shah looked at her face (because the women had to reveal their faces in front of the Shah), and said: "I liked her looks: leave her, and let her be." Later on a letter came from the Shah, urging her to deny the Bab, return as a true Muslim, and become one of his wives. She replied on the back of his letter:

> Kingdom, wealth and ruling be for thee.
> Wondering, becoming a poor dervish and calamity be for me.
> If that station is good, let it be for thee.
> And if this station is bad, I long for it; let it be for me![137]

She was confined in the mayor's house in Tehran, but her influence was felt outside of the house. Leading women in Tehran were eager to enter her presence and benefit from her

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[136] Ibid., 83.
[137] Ibid., 95.

knowledge. Her sayings spread all over Iran, and no one had the least doubt about her immense knowledge. Her influence was so evident that the mullahs had prevented all women from study lest they should become like Tahirih. In August 1852, still in her thirties, she was secretly strangled at night, and her body was immediately dumped into a well in an isolated garden. Her last sentence was said to be this: "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you can not stop the emancipation of women."

Martha Root recorded how Tahirih's influence was felt in all five continents. Many historians wrote about Tahirih. A French diplomat, who lived in Tehran in the years of 1855-1858, wrote about her in his classic book, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (1928). She aroused awe and amazement from Lord Curzon in *Persia and the Persian Question* (1892), Valentine Chirol in *The Middle Eastern Question* (1903), Sir Francis Younghusband in *The Gleam* (1923), Dr. T. K. Cheyne in *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions* (1914), and many more.

Understanding Tahirih, Understanding Martha Root, Understanding the New Organism

If an author spends almost a decade writing a book, the book must be very important for him or her. It is interesting to ask why Martha Root, a Western woman, would identify with and devote so much time and effort on an Eastern woman. How did this book, *Tahirih the Pure*, and its subject reflect Martha Root's understanding of gender, the construction of the female identity, and relations between the East and the West?

First of all, Martha Root believed that Tahirih was a vital figure in the women's rights movement worldwide, and she deserved renewed attention in 1930s. I will explain this by

focusing on two aspects: the relationship between Tahirih and the global women's movement, and Tahirih's new construction of female identity.

During her twenty years of traveling around the world, Martha Root gained remarkable opportunities to know her sister women from many cultures and countries. What she saw were women, who had been more or less subjected to men in almost all lands for thousands of years, awakening suddenly to new ideas and striving to new positions. People wondered what was the motivation for this unprecedented historical phenomenon. Martha Root believed that it was very important to introduce Tahirih, the young women's rights martyr, to women worldwide. She believed that the example of Tahirih would inspire and encourage modern women in the struggle for their emancipation and establishment of a better world based on justice and equality.

For Martha Root, women possessed great potentiality. Their emancipation determined whether and how humanity could achieve the heights of civilization. She was very clear about the position of women in this world: "We women are not like India, perhaps one-fifth of the population of the globe, or like China, one-fourth of the population of the world, we are one-half of the whole human race! And if we, one-half of the world's population arise, as we ought to arise, to help build a better world, it can be done."[138]

Martha Root felt that "it should be of thrilling interest to them to know that the first women's rights martyr was not a Westerner at all, but a young woman poet, Tahirih, sometimes known as Qurratu'l-Ayn, of Qazvin, Iran."[139] This assertion challenged the landscape of internationalism and feminism and the picture of the global women's movement. According to

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[138] Root, "women's place in the new World Order," lecture in Ceylon, Australia, 1936 (?) Martha Root Papers, NBA.
[139] Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*, 33.

the historians Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy, and Angela Woollacott, much of the literature on the international women's movement has focused on women's organizations from the 1880s to 1940. The resulting picture of the international women's movement reflects the experiences of those Euro-American women's groups that were dominant in the movement.[140] Their emphasis in the diverse histories of women's movements around the world, therefore, helps uncover the multiplicity of locations in the study of internationalism. In this way, they present "a broader refocusing lens through which the discussion on feminism and internationalism has hitherto been framed."[141] However, Martha Root's rediscovery of Tahirih broadens the study of international women's movements not only geographically, but also chronologically. Tahirih, along with some 2,000 fellow Babis, gave their lives to a better world where women would share full equality with men, spiritually as well as economically, and "participate fully and equally in the affairs of the world, enter confidently and capably the great arena of laws and politics."[142] This is what Martha Root meant by saying "Tahirih had to die for these great ideals, but today our task is to live for them."[143] This sacrifice seems all the more astounding and heroic when we take the time and place into consideration. Martha Root quoted Professor E. G. Browne of Cambridge University, who said: "The appearance of such a woman as Tahirih in any country and in any age, is a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Iran it is a prodigy – nay, almost a

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[140] Mrinalini Sinha, Donna Guy, and Angela Woollacott, eds., *Feminisms and Internationalism* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), 5-6.
[141] Ibid. Critics have suggested that their research touches upon *the international* rather than *internationalism*, and that there is much about feminism, (anti-)imperialism, and nationalism rather than internationalism.
[142] Abdu'l-Baha, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by Abdu'l-Baha During His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*, 134.
[143] Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*, 35.

miracle…Had the religion of the Bab no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient – that it produced a heroine like Qurratu' l-Ayn (Tahirih)."[144]

Martha Root saw how Tahirih had influenced men and women's life worldwide. Here are two examples. Mrs. Marianna Hainisch of Vienna, the mother of the president of Austria and an active supporter of human rights who did special work to improve the status of women, said to Martha Root: "The greatest ideal of womanhood all my life has been Tahirih of Qazvin. I was only seventeen years old when I heard of her life and her martyrdom, but I said: 'I shall try to do for the women of Australia what Tahirih gave her life to do for women of Persia.'"[145] Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, the great Indian woman who was fighting for the freedom of her motherland side by side with Mahatma Gandhi, took Tahirih, the woman disciple of the Bab, the first martyr for the cause of woman suffrage, as her model.[146]

Another important contribution to women's studies from Martha Root's depiction of Tahirih is the construction of the new female identity. Each religion has produced an ideal woman. However, Tahirih stood as an unanticipated contrast to her previous counterparts. The scholar Susan S. Maneck makes a comparison between Tahirih and other ideal religious women:

> Nearly every religion has its paradigm of the "ideal" woman. In Hinduism this has been Sita, the perfect wife who remains Faithful to her husband at all costs. In Christianity the most eminent women is the Virgin Mary, symbol of motherhood. Islam has Fatimih, daughter of Muhammad, who models the roles of mother, wife and daughter together. Tahirih, the most well-known woman in Babi-Baha'i history, presents a startling contrast to the former models. This gifted poet of nineteenth-century Iran, far from being a dutiful daughter, continually opposed the theological positions of her father, Mullah Salih, a prominent Muslim cleric of Qazvin. Neither is she admired for her

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[144] Ibid.
[145] Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*, 112.
[146] Root, [Second Cultural Conference] (untitled article), December 1937 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

> success as a wife and mother, since her estrangement from her husband resulted in her forced separation from her children as well.[147]

The Baha'i Faith places great value on family and home. The central theme of the Baha'i Faith is to establish unity in a global society. Family is regarded as the basic unit of the society, and unity of the family is regarded as vital for the unity of the society and the world. But it is believed that unity should be based on justice, not on subjection of one party to another. Equality of men and women has been one of the basic principles of the Faith. In this way the Baha'i Faith differs from the other religions in the evaluation of women. The perfect woman is no longer defined by her role as mother, wife or daughter of a man. Woman is defined by herself, by her independent investigation of the truth, and by her service to humanity.

Martha Root's book consolidated this viewpoint. She did not criticize Tahirih as a defiant daughter, an insubordinate wife, or an incompetent mother. Martha Root looked upon Tahirih as a praiseworthy warrior who would rather die for the ideal of emancipation of women than capitulate to restrictions imposed upon women by patriarchal beliefs. She valued Tahirih as the first women's rights martyr. Martha Root had a different standpoint in the evaluation of men and women from her contemporary religious sisters, who had to find a balancing point between their feminist beliefs and their religious loyalty.

It would be interesting to compare two images used in Christianity and the Baha'i Faith to depict the relationships between men and women. In the Christian image, the woman is the rib of the man. Christian feminists explain that the rib signifies that women stand side by side

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[147] Susan S. Maneck, "Women in the Baha'i Faith" in *Religion and Women*, ed. Arvind Sharma, 211 (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

with men. Women are the helpers of men, and men have to love their wives as they love themselves. But it would be quite difficult for them to picture men as the rib of women, as a relationship of subordination is involved in the image. A common image in the Baha'i Faith, however, is two wings of a bird: humanity (the bird) has two wings, one is woman, and the other is man. Not until the two wings are equally developed can the bird fly. This image signifies three meanings: equality between men and women, complementarity of men and women, and most importantly, gender equality is not a gift from men to women, but rather the prerequisite for women's, as well as men's, achievements.

Another one of Martha Root's contribution to Women's Studies field lies in this fact: Martha Root's devotion to an Eastern woman revealed her unconventional opinion of the East. In her book we can see that she had a different viewpoint in the evaluation of Eastern women from many of her Western sisters in the 1920s and 1930s. In the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries, more and more western women left home and traveled the world as journalists, tourists, reformers, or missionaries. The journey enlarged the vision of these women and they used their pens to picture the world they experienced. But these writings frequently harbored a notion of civilizational and racial superiority.[148]

Martha Root characterized herself not as one who "traveled the world just as a journalist and certainly not as a tourist," but one who believed that she traveled to teach the Word of God. During her time, there were other single western women who traveled the world for the spreading of the Word of God as well, the missionaries. So it would help the reader to

[148] For example, Katherine Mayo, an American woman, visited India in 1925, and published her notorious book *Mother India* in 1927, which depicted India men and women as pitiful victims of superstitions and ignorance, and questioned whether backward Indians were capable of progress and civilization without British colonial rule.

understand Martha Root better if we could make a comparison between her and her contemporary single Western missionary sisters in their view of Eastern women.

A missionary is a propagator of religion, who works among those outside of his or her religious community, to bring people to worship God. Various religions have different interpretations of "God." For example, we can see many Western Christians who went on missions to India and other parts of the world, and who brought the "heathens" to worship God, because they believed that no other faiths could save humankind. As most of the single missionary women, if not all, from the West were from Christian backgrounds, my comparison is between Martha Root and the single Western Christine missionary women.[149]

Mission work was traditionally men's work. Nevertheless, in 1861, the Women's Union Foreign Missionary Society of America for Heathen Lands (WUFMS) was founded in the United States. It was the first organization to "form an agency whereby unmarried women might be sent abroad as teachers and missionaries to enter the homes and carry the gospel to those who could not receive it any other way."[150] Its formation encouraged single women to go to foreign missions. In the last three decades of the nineteenth century, women's mission societies in the United States gained dramatically in power as thousands of churchwomen were influenced by the "plight" of the "helpless and secluded heathen women." In the 1860s there were less than ten missionary boards; by 1900 there were ninety-four boards with several supporting agencies. By

[149] Christian missionary gave woman opportunities which were not allowed to other missionary religions (Buddhism, Islam), but these women more often than not participated in very sectarian and racist projects that were linked to colonialism.

[150] Maina Chawla Singh, *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), 109.

1910 organizers of women's missionary societies in North American claimed to have raised four million dollars through their two million supporters.[151]

All of the missionary women were educated, and some possessed professional qualifications. Moreover, for a young woman to choose a life overseas which entailed long separation from family, friends and homeland, required a great deal of courage and commitment. Women who did resolve to go in such circumstances were clearly bold, decisive, and self-confident.[152]

Many missionary women were single. Lydia Huffman Hoyle argues that many single women became missionaries because they wanted to be useful. Women were "not content with being domestically useful—making their homes 'abode of order and purity,' but rather wanted to be useful in securing order and purity for the world."[153] Missionary work provided them space for being professionally useful, which was more constrained by the patriarchal context at home. Usually American women's national and racial identity enabled them to overcome the restrictions of gender in their mission area. But still, most of them started their mission work at an older age, in their late twenties, early thirties or even older, because they had to fulfill certain domestic responsibilities like taking care of parents, siblings or other families before they could take up independent careers.[154] Hoyle also suggests that these women felt the call from God to "carry the glad news of salvation to the benighted heathen who are perishing for lack of

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[151] Ibid., 106.
[152] Ibid., 217.
[153] Lydia Huffman Hoyle, "Nineteenth-Century Single Women and Motivation for Mission," *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20, no. 2 (1996).
[154] Singh, *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)*, 211.

knowledge."[155] While the primary motivating factor in women's determination to go on missions was their concern for the spiritual well-being of the "heathen people." These women held a strong belief in eternal happiness for the Christians and eternal damnation for non-Christians. "Heathen" was a word reproduced widely in mission reports and pamphlets. This construction of the "other" situated in a world of "darkness and dirt" sustained the enthusiasm of Christian women to bring salvation to those "perishing souls." Many missionary women were sectarian and chauvinist in their attitudes towards other Faiths and spiritual traditions. For example, Mrs. E.R. Pitman asserted that "it is only in Christian lands that women occupy their proper place. In all other countries they are drudges, slaves, or victims; but equals or companions, never!"[156]

As a single woman traveling to foreign lands to promote the message of universal peace from Baha'u'llah, Martha Root shared some similarities with single Christian missionary women from the United States. She did not start her world traveling until her mother died. Then she moved back home to take care of her father. The bulk of her work was done after her father died in 1922. As we have seen, Martha Root also felt a strong calling from Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha. Her goal was clear, and her action was resolute.

Martha Root was different from single Christian missionary women in several aspects. First of all, of course, her message was different from that of the Christian missionaries. While Christian women missionaries were sent to particular places by missionary boards, she traveled and shared the Faith in every part of the world at her own cost. But the primary difference lay in the attitudes towards Easterners and Eastern cultures. Martha Root did not hold the patronizing

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[155] Hoyle, "Nineteenth-Century Single Women and Motivation for Mission."
[156] Singh, *Gender, Religion, and "Heathen Lands": American Missionary Women in South Asia (1860s-1940s)*, 105.

and provincial attitudes of "saving the heathens" during her twenty years of Baha'i teaching. She saw all human beings as the children of one loving God, reflecting the image of God. Martha Root would see the uniqueness and beauty of any people who came across her road, no matter whether they were religious or atheistic, and no matter their religion, race, and nationality. She loved all, and shared her message of peace with all. She praised the Portuguese and Brazilians as the "born aristocrats."[157] Her love and respect towards the local people during her visit to Iran, Iraq and Egypt won her great numbers of friends, which basically helped motivate her writing of Tahirih. As for China and the Chinese people, she asserted: "I love China…You will find the Chinese perfectly beautiful souls."[158] She praised the Indian people for their "great spiritual capacities."[159] Given that she was an American "new woman," Martha Root's tribute to Mrs. Naidu in India is all the more impressive. Her attitudes stood in a sharp contrast against many other westerners.

The Baha'i Faith recognizes that all the major religions, the "radiant light and impregnable stronghold for the protection and welfare of the peoples of the world," have always risen from the East. All the great Spiritual Teachers arose in the Eastern world. The Sun of Christ dawned in the East, while its radiance of glory was more clearly seen in the West. In the Baha'i Faith, the East and the West are not severed as two separate domains, nor are they seen as surpassing or objectifying each other. The relationship between the East and the West is like the Baha'i understanding of men and women, equal, complementary and essential to each other. In the twentieth century, as the East needed material development and the West needed spiritual

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[157] Root, "A Baha'i Pilgrimage to South America."
[158] Garis, *Martha Root: Lioness at the Threshold*, 172.
[159] Ibid., 355.

renaissance, the East and the West must unite, give each other what they lack, and through this exchange of gifts bring about a true civilization and create a more harmonious world.[160]

This notion of equality and complementarity is a derivative of the basic concept of Oneness in the Baha'i Faith. This concept calls for the elimination of all prejudices: national, racial, religious, gender, class, etc. However, it does not advocate false universalism. As Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, explained: "It (the Baha'i Faith) does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress the diversity of ethnical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It calls for a wider loyalty, for a larger aspiration than any that has animated the human race."[161]

Martha Root's wider loyalty to humanity enabled her to recognize and appreciate the greatness of an Eastern woman. Moreover, her understanding and larger aspiration enabled her to identify with this Eastern woman. On the surface, Tahirih and Martha Root were very different. Tahirih grew up in the Islamic world—a world where women was told by mullahs that they were without souls and had to be obedient to men at all costs, and Martha Root grew up in a Western culture with long tradition of struggles for women's rights. Tahirih had to address the men from behind a curtain, Martha Root could talk face to face with thousands of people in public. Tahirih gave her life at an early age for the ideals of emancipation of women, Martha Root began to share the Teachings of Baha'u'llah worldwide when she was already in her late forties.

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[160] Abdu'l-Baha, *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911*, 21.
[161] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, 41-42.

Nevertheless, Martha Root felt a strong sense of affinity with this Eastern woman. She endeavored to know her, and was "thrilled to understand her."[162] Both of them courageously embraced the new religion when it appeared. Both of them practiced "independent investigation of truth" instead of surrendering to traditional restrictions. Tahirih practically discontinued any relationship with her family after she found her right path, and Martha Root tried to win sympathy for her Faith from her relatives and neighbors but seldom succeeded. No offers of wealth and power, or threat of death could divert Tahirih from her pursuit and promotion of the truth. No amount of hardships or even dangers could make Martha Root stray from her goal—the proclamation of the nearness of a New World Order at the dawn of the universal peace. Martha Root freed herself from the subject/object, Western/Eastern mode in her choice of her heroine. Her keen loyalty to the oneness of mankind enabled her to surpass the man-made subdivisions of the East and the West, and identify herself with another one who bore the same purpose in life: serve the whole humankind to her utmost capability—her life.

Both Tahirih and Martha Root could be called "New Women," those women "emerged in the early twentieth century who discarded nineteenth century womanhood and adopted qualities formerly associated with men—qualities such as leadership, independence, and self-confidence, and insisted centrally on the right to live and breathe as a separate human being." [163] "New Women" were the type of women who had outgrown the old patriarchal mode of womanhood (subjection and appendage to men), and risen to the equal level of manhood, independent and self-defined. However, further investigation into Tahirih and Martha Root has shown that they

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[162] Root, *Tahirih the Pure: Iran's Greatest Woman*.
[163] Schneider and Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920*, 19. It is an awkward categorization for Tahirih, though, as she didn't quite fit into the time slot.

had outgrown the old mode of "manhood" as well—leadership through supremacy, independence through objectification, self-confidence through self-centeredness, exploration through colonization. In a word, they had outgrown the old mode of "New Women." They were free from all prejudices which derived from this old mode of living and which were harassing the present world: Western/White/male/ supremacy, authoritarianism, racism, nationalism, sexism, and religious fundamentalism. They viewed the world as one at the threshold of a global world society with world government, universal language, universal education, universal peace, elimination of all prejudice based on petite differences of nationality, race, sex and religion. Were they dreamers? Or, were they a new organism for a new world?

Let's look at Martha Root again. Martha Root had nothing to depend on. She was not wealthy, constantly staying in small hotels, eating an apple for a meal, traveling in third-class, having two or three dresses for clothing. She was not strong, suffering from breast cancer and various bodily pains from working too hard. She was small, in a fragile frame. She was not scholarly. She was not a person with power and privileges. In her own word, she was a "poor Baha'i."

However, this "poor Baha'i" accomplished this: traveling for twenty years, she covered most parts of the world, from Iceland to China, to Hawaii, in an era when transportation was quite slow, tiring and even dangerous, when women rarely went out.

"This poor Baha'i" performed this: she felt at home in palaces of kings and queens, made friends with Western and Eastern thinkers and scholars, made speeches in universities all over the planet including Harvard and Oxford, Berlin, and numerous social societies and clubs. She published her articles in practically every country on the planet, met influential states(wo)men,

religious leaders, social reformers, leaders of various international organizations, as well as "untouchables" in India, the "natives" in Africa, the foot-bound women in China, the devastated broken families in big cities.

But these were not what had made her "new."

Wherever she went, whoever she met, she brought a new message: world unity, universal peace, elimination of all prejudices, equality between men and women, oneness of humankind, religion and God …in a word: she brought a world-embracing vision—"the earth is but one county, and mankind its citizens," a vision that surpasses barriers of nationality, races, gender, religious varieties, cultural diversities, a vision that answers the up-coming globalization, de-centralization, worldwide spiritual awakening, and a world liberating itself from centuries-long beliefs, traditions, customs, formalities, sectarianisms, isolationisms, and chauvinisms.

And she said: "Rely upon God. Let Baha'u'llah use you to do all these."

Human beings live on beliefs. Some believe in a big rock, or an old tree. Some believe in idols. Some believe in themselves, vaguely or strongly thinking that they have a capacity that could be sufficient if they work hard enough to cultivate it. Some believe in a God that is fit to their imagination, and millions of others who don't recognize their God are supposedly doomed. Some believed in a God, Who is compassionate to all, loving to all without discrimination based on religious varieties, colors, races or any other petty categorizations that human beings have created among themselves.

Respective beliefs determine respective heights they will aim at and rise up to. A Chinese poem said: "If you ask, why is this spring so clear? Because it is from a living water."

For Martha Root, this "Living Water" is the Holy Spirit, which once flowed through Abraham, Moses, Zoroaster, Krishna, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, the Bab, and now flows through Baha'u'llah. This belief made Martha Root, as well as Tahirih, a new organism for a new global world.

Nevertheless to say, Martha Root was not alone in seeing the beauty of the "other" part of the world beyond Europe and America. As a matter of fact, from the age of enlightenment and revolution in the Atlantic world, when many Europeans and Americans saw the East as decadent, some became more and more serious about Asian religions and civilization.[164] Germany became an important center for Oriental research from the 1790s onward, and the same with France. This interest in the Orient spread to America in the nineteenth century. [165] Though we have seen some westerners who demonized the Oriental people as "heathens" and "savages," we can also see some feminists and socialists romanticized Asian religions and traditions, especially Hinduism and Buddhism in South Asia. Christianity was not regarded as the one true religion. While many saw "differences" in the age of imperialism and colonialism in terms of superiority and inferiority, some understood it as parity and diversity.

Conclusion

Chapter Three looks into Martha Root's contribution to women's studies through an analysis of *Tahirih the Pure, Iran's Greatest Woman,* Martha Root's only book. Martha Root spent eight years writing the book, and it served as an important tool in Martha Root's teaching

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[164] Kumari Jayawardena, *The White Woman's Other Burden: Western Women and South Asia During British Colonial Rule* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 110.
[165] Ibid.

trips, as well as supplementary literature for Women's Studies scholars for the study of the international women's movement in the early twentieth century. Tahirih, the most well-known Babi-Baha'i woman, signifies the beginning of a new Dispensation, by fearlessly forsaking the old social conventions and striving for the emancipation of women. She was praised by Martha Root as the first women's rights martyr, and influenced women and men worldwide. Tahirih set as a model for Martha Root to tirelessly and intrepidly promote equality and unity among humankind, and build the universal peace in a warring world. Tahirih and Martha Root are relevant for Women's Studies, from Tahirih's relationship to the international women's movement, to the reconstruction of the female identity from a Baha'i perspective, and emergence of a new organism from the transcendence of white and Western male supremacy.

Tahirih the Pure works as a window which shows how Martha Root viewed herself as an American woman traveling the world to promote the universal peace for twenty years. She enjoyed many similarities with her contemporary American sisters who were independent, confident, and courageous in their career pursuit. Yet her religious belief enabled her to overcome many national, racial, religious, sexual boundaries and see an organic world society where global unity and universal peace will come as an inevitable phase in the ongoing process of human development. Her accomplishments will enrich Women's Studies in the early twenty-first century, and encourage women in the future to struggle for a better world, for, as Martha Root asserted: "if we, one-half of the world's population arise, as we ought to arise, to help build a better world, it can be done."

CONCLUSION

My thesis presents three major findings. First of all, Martha Root was an important figure in the international women's peace movement in the early twentieth century. Her worldwide travels and the scope of her peace message make her worthy of much more attention than she has so far received from Women's Studies scholars.

Secondly, her conception of men and women challenged prevailing constructions of female identity. A representative of the "New Women" in the early twentieth century, she outgrew the historical constraints on her generation of women. More significantly, she further transcended again the historical inhibitions on "New Women" themselves after her conversion to the Baha'i Faith, and thus outgrew her era.

Thirdly, her understanding of the East and the West also went beyond the global yet essentially imperialist consciousness of her era. She was a new organism, free from national, racial, and religious prejudices, which seems all the more impressive in a world still suffering from these conflicts today.

I believe my thesis is significant for several reasons. First of all, Martha Root traveled tirelessly to spread a message of unity, peace, and the oneness of humanity during the devastating years of 1919-1939. She covered almost every corner of the planet, meeting heads of states as well as people from all walks of life, and sharing with them a comprehensive plan for universal peace. She was not only an important figure in the international women's movement, but also recognized notable female figures in different countries and cultures. We might say that her encounters with Third World women offer an important insight to the range of Western

women's views of and interactions with Third World women. My thesis represents a beginning. Welcoming Martha Root into women's studies enriches the field.

Secondly, the study of Christian women once dominated women's studies. The development of women's studies has gradually included Muslim women, Jewish women, and Hindu women. There is still little scholarship about Buddhist women, still less about Baha'i women. This thesis broadens the lens through which to view women in the world of spirituality by presenting the experience and ideas of a Baha'i woman.

Thirdly, Baha'i understandings of women and men, and the East and the West stand in sharp contrast against some traditional patriarchal understandings of other religions. As women's studies continues to de-construct sexism, racism, classism, nationalism, and other restrictions imposed on human society, the Baha'i notion of "wider loyalty, large aspiration" will serve this purpose well.

Martha Root's rich experience and extensive writings, both published and unpublished, suggest many possibilities for future research. For example, universal peace is just one among her many teaching topics in her trips. As she said: "However, no one universal principle… will bring the peace of the world, but all these universal teachings … are goals towards a new world order …"[166] She advocated oneness of religion, God and humanity, elimination of all kinds of prejudices, universal languages, universal education, world commonwealth, equality of men and women, spiritual solutions to economic problems, independent investigation of truth, etc. Each of these topics deserves a book. We have already seen that Martha Root can be compared and

[166] Root, "women's Place in the New World Order" (lecture manuscript), Ceylon, 1936 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

contrasted with her white, Western, and Christian women contemporaries. Future research can also explore her interaction with Third World women during her twenty years of world traveling. For example, Martha Root visited India three times and her contacts with Indian women should arouse much interest from women's studies scholars. The same is true of her interaction with Chinese women during her four visits to China. I certainly look forward to pursuing my studies of the life and times of Martha Root.

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APPENDIX 1: MARTHA ROOT, "[HOMOCULTURE]" (1924?)[167]

Dear Friends: As you know, the world "CULTURE" has several meanings, and I shall define exactly the sense in which I shall use this world this afternoon. Just as agriculture is the tilling of the soil to produce its best, and horticulture is the training of trees to yield their most delicious fruits and greatest shade, so the highest culture on this earth-plane is homoculture, for this is the scientific cultivation of man to his highest perfectibility.

We are just at the beginning of a great new universal cycle, and we need new cosmic education to achieve a universal system of culture in which the distinctive educational expression of each nation will be united with a new cosmic ideal. We must evolve a universal world culture, a common aim, a common purpose.

I should like to express to you the kind of culture the world needs. World peace and culture are like the two wings of the bird of humanity, and both wings must be equally strong and equally balanced for the bird of humanity to make its most perfect flight. We need new international thinking which will train us to realize the patriotism of all mankind. I always say that man is the most cultured nationalist who is a true internationalist.

This is collaborated with what I heard Dr. Nicholas Murray Butler, President of Columbia University in New York, say to the more than 30,000 students when he addressed them in the great Autumn Convocation. He said: "we must have new universal thinking,

[167] Source: Root, [Homoculture] (lecture manuscript), New South Wales, Australia, October 15, 1924 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

thinking in the terms of all humanity, and the universities and colleges of the world must take the lead in this new cosmic research."

Through the last World War and through all the modern space annihilating inventions, the aeroplane, radio, and all the others, we have come so close together as nations. We have become a neighborhood, and we must learn to live together or we perish, and the one problem which you and I as individuals and of nations must solve is this one problem of LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER!! Whether we wish it or not, we must learn it and we must bring into solid reality a world plan, otherwise we are lost. When nations and continents are utterly demolished through Armageddon, culture too, will be murdered. We have come into a great new universal cycle to put to the test whether we can be worthy of it or not.

These principles for peace and culture are from my teacher, a great world educator, Baha'u'llah, who more than seventy years ago, in 1868, 1869 and 1870, wrote to the Rulers of the world urging a universal League of Nations, a Super-state, a Federation of the States of the world with every country on the planet a member, a World Court and International House of justice, and a strong International Police Force to ensure arbitration and non-violence. He said: "It would not do if some nations disarmed and others kept their weapons, they must agree and all lay down arms at the same moment, keeping only enough soldiers for their national police defense force, and their quota in the International Police Force."

The late President Wilson of my country, the United States, did not originate the idea of the League of Nations. He studied the principles of the great Persian teacher for two months before he wrote those famous Fourteen Points. The League of Nations is not perfect we know; it

has failed because it cannot enforce peace, it has no International Police Force, and it does not have the support of all countries; but the league of Nations has done something never before achieved in history – it is the first organized political institution to awaken the world's consciousness to universal peace and arbitration. It is one of the greatest cultural impulses of this century, or any preceding century. if you ask yourself "would the world be better off or worse off if there had never been a League of Nations?" I am sure you would say it has done immeasurable good to the world.

And dear listeners, who is the world? The world is you and I, we are the ones responsible for high culture and for world peace. If the League of Nations is not perfect, our task is to study and learn thoroughly what a Universal League of Nations can be and establish it, and dear Friends, nothing but a World Federal State, and nothing but mind disarmament and a strong spiritual foundation can ever save our culture from hopeless disintegration and our world from complete cataclysm. Why are we sleeping upon our beds, heedless, when the Armageddon is at the door of our world? There is a way to peace and culture, God has given us the great gift of intellect and the potential spirit that can be awakened to take on divine spiritual qualities. In our hearts we know that the only world brotherhood we shall ever have, is a spiritual world brotherhood, and the highest culture we shall ever know will be that which has a universal spiritual foundation. When we have the love of God in our hearts, culture and universal peace and politics will take care of themselves.

World statesmen today say that in order to have world culture and peace we must have some kind of an international, auxiliary language. A world auxiliary language would add greatly to the culture of this planet, and anything we do toward bringing into reality an international

tongue, we are doing it directly for the peace of the world. A great means of progress toward the union of the East and the West will be a common language. It will help make the whole world one home and become the strongest impulse for human advancement. It will bring the oneness of humanity. It will help to make the earth one universal commonwealth.

Our part is not to choose the language, but to interest our different governments to appoint an International Language Committee, composed of their best language scholars, to study this whole question, and they choose one of the present languages or create a language which, when it is approved by all governments, should be made compulsory in every school in the world as the auxiliary language. This does not take away anything from our own native language, but it will put us into touch with the heart and soul, and the spirit of peoples of every land, and then wherever we go we can understand and be understood.

I have been deeply interested in the plan of your Senator, Mr. McCartney Abbott, for a Fellowship of International Understanding and the use of a common language. I think it would add very much to the culture and understanding of the whole world. Also when women, the world over, have equality and equal education with men, it will be a great forward impulse to culture and world peace. Man cannot attain his highest until woman is educated equally with man. In fact, the education of girls is even more important than that of boys, for in time these girls will become mothers, as as mothers they will be the first teachers of the next generation. We can think of children as green and tender branches; if the early training is right they grow straight, and if it is wrong they grow crooked, and to the end of their lives they are affected by the training of their earliest years.

It is a wonderful blessing that in Australia you have universal suffrage and co-education. And so many of your women have said to me: “We are thankful for these wonderful opportunities, and because we have had them we feel the responsibility to help all our sisters in other countries who have not yet this freedom and advanced cultural opportunities.”

What impresses me, perhaps most of anything in Australia, is how the men and women are working for the health, the education and the cultural welfare of everybody in this land. They are truly altruistic, large-hearted and golden-hearted. I expect great things of Australia. This nation, so strong, so virile, so young—if the world cataclysm comes—will protect and keep culture inviolate until the time of peace and tranquility, when it can be given forth again to the world.

And as you members of all women’s organizations in New South Wales know, that in such matters as health, temperance, peace and the reverence and value of the individual life, women of Australia are very strong, and their work has brought very far-reaching and beneficent results. Throughout the world in this new universal age just beginning, force is losing tits dominance, and mental alertness, intuition, insight and the fine spiritual qualities with which women is gifted ,are considered just as important as force; in fact, the masculine and feminine elements of culture are becoming more evenly balanced. We cannot say that man is greater than woman, nor that woman is greater than man, for sex neither enhances nor diminishes the human qualities. That one is the greater, be he man or be she woman, who is the greater servant to all humanity.

Also, for world culture, this new universal age requires universal education, cosmic education, and this is a spiritual process as well as the training of the intellect. Universal

education is the complete unfolding and perfect functioning of the human soul. In addition to our A.B.C's we must think about the universe and our world and our relation to them both, and think about the oneness of all humanity. As my great teacher said: "we are all the leaves of one tree, all the drops of one sea." We are all created of the same dust, so that no one can boast himself one over another; we are all the children of one father Adam, we can't say we come of a superior race, one above another. Our universal education should train us to look upon all the peoples of the world as our brothers and sisters. We should catch the vision of the unity, the interdependence of all human beings. Thus we become world citizens, with capacity to share in and help direct a world civilization, a divine world culture.

"Whole-hearted service to the cause of education, the unfolding of the mysteries of nature, the extension of the boundaries of science, the doing away with the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction."

"Second, service to the cause of morality, raising the moral tone of the students, inspiring them with the highest ethical ideals, teaching them altruism."

"Third, service to the oneness of the world of humanity, so that each one may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of race or religion."

One of the hindrances to culture and world peace is national, racial religious and political prejudices. Young men and women who come out of colleges and universities with all these old, worn-out prejudices and superstitions are not truly cultured and truly educated, no matter how many degrees they may have acquired. To quote my teacher: "This prejudice of race; it is an illusion, a superstition pure and simple, for God created us all of one race…In the beginning also

there were no limits and boundaries between the different lands; no part of the earth belonged more to one people than to another. In the sight of God there is no difference between the various races. The only real difference lies in the degree of Faithfulness, of obedience to the laws of God. The lovers of mankind, these are the superior men, of whatever nation, creed or color they may be."

You know, dear friends, culture and civilization have been built upon our primitive emotions, evolved through religion and inspiration. When religion is removed from or human motives, our culture perishes. It has been like this, down through the ages, and now in this mid-twentieth century, let us not deceive ourselves—an unspiritual humanity cannot save itself from Armageddon. Only the spiritual forces can save civilization and culture. Only divine love, spiritual love to our fellowmen and kindliness and service to all humanity can establish the World Plan, the World Order, and bring an enduring peace and a universal culture.

And with it all, we have more than one world to think of; we are on this earth-plane perhaps thirty, forty, sixty or even eighty years, but we shall spend millions of years in Higher Worlds. On this earth-plane we are in the womb-life of the Life Eternal, and we must develop here the spiritual qualities ready for use in the Heavenly Kingdom. Those qualities are a knowledge of God, radiance of spirit, and love and loyalty and Faithfulness. These are the highest cultural fruits of our lives and these qualities are the spiritual foundation for an enduring peace and a universal world culture.

APPENDIX 2: MARTHA ROOT,

"INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION FOR WORLD PEACE" (1931)[168]

Friends of the United States: it is a great pleasure to speak to you for a few minutes on international education for world peace. With the broadcasting, the talking film, the aeroplane and all the other modern inventions the nations are coming very close together, and it is necessary to have international education to learn to live together as a family of nations. First, I should like to tell you of the kind of universal education that our high schools, colleges and universities should teach. Sir Abdu'l-Baha Abbas who was knighted by the British Government for his work toward universal peace said that "The universities and colleges of the world should hold fast to three cardinal aims: first, whole-hearted service to the cause of education; the unfolding of the mysteries of nature; the extension of the boundaries of pure science, the elimination of the causes of ignorance and social evils, a standard universal system of instruction, and the diffusion of the lights of knowledge and reality."

"Second, service to the cause of students, inspiring them with the sublimest ideals of ethical refinement, teaching them altruism, inculcating in their lives the beauty of holiness and the excellency of virtues, and animating them with the excellencies and perfections of the religions of God.

"Third, service to the oneness of the world of humanity; so that each student may consciously realize that he is a brother to all mankind, irrespective of religion or race. The

[168] Source: Speech broadcast by Miss Martha L. Root, American journalist and international lecture, on Tuesday afternoon, March 3, 1931, over K. O. I. N., Portland, Oregon. Root, "International Education for World Peace" (broadcasting manuscript), March 3, 1931, Martha Root Papers, NBA.

thoughts of universal peace must be instilled in the hearts of all scholars. The mother in their homes, the teachers in the schools, the professors in the colleges, the presidents in the universities must teach these ideals to the young from the cradle to the years of manhood."

The universities of the world should have similar courses of study and the basis of ethics should be the same. Then great groups of students will be exchanged from one country to another for a year or two years' study and this great interchange of students will do a great deal to abolish prejudice, promote the oneness of humanity, and establish good will among the nations.

Every child in every country must have education, so that there will not remain one single individual without education. They must be taught those sciences which profit the people of the earth, and not alone those studies which begin in mere words and end in mere words. Each boy and girl must be taught a trade, an art, or a profession so that each individual member of society will develop capacity to earn his own living and at the same time serve the community. Work done in the spirit of service to humanity is the same as worship to God. From this universal system of education, misunderstanding will be expelled among mankind.

The new liberalized schools of Europe are introducing a happy adjustment of individual and group activity to replace the old order of class routine. The school becomes a small social unit, promoting self expression, self-discipline, and mutual helpfulness. The spirit of competition is succeeded by a spirit of cooperation and real comradeship. Children are no longer actuated by the will of the teacher driving them on. And "herein lies the germ of a great social reform, for one who is engaged in governing himself has his feet set in the way of peace, sought in vain in a world where man's chief interest is in the domination one of another." Too long the

order of the day has been to “dominate.” The new age needs a new ideal, that ideal shall be to SERVE!

When education on right lines becomes general, humanity will be transformed and the world will become a paradise. At present really well educated people are rare, for nearly every one has false prejudices, erroneous conceptions and bad habits drilled into him from babyhood. How few are taught from their earliest childhood to love the spiritual and to dedicate their lives to the infinite; to regard service to humanity as the highest aim of life; to develop their powers to the best advantage for the general good of all! Yet surely these are the elements of good education. Mere cramming of the memory with facts about arithmetic, grammar, geography and languages has comparatively little effect in producing noble and useful lives.

Also, the universal education must be shared equality with the girl as well as the boy. Man and woman are as the two wings of the bird of humanity, and the bird cannot attain its perfect flight unless the two wings are equally poised and equally strong. In this new international age, masculine and feminine elements of civilization will be more evenly balanced.

You will be interested to know of the new solution of the economic problem by Baha’u’llah, the great World Educator, by which every child in every country may have education. This is the way the money is to be raised: every village, every town, every city will have its Central Storehouse for education and for more comfortable life for the poor. Of course the very poor will not pay taxes to this Central Storehouse, but all taxes should be in proportion to income and the rich should pay higher taxes for education, at least higher than they are paying now in the United States. In addition, there should be a tax on all animals; also, one-third of all mineral wealth under the earth, such as gold, silver, iron, cooper, coal and the others should be

given to the Central Storehouse. Also, if a man dies leaving no will and having no relatives, all his estate should go to the Central Storehouse. All treasure found and for which there is no claimant should be placed in the Central Storehouse. There are other ways of raising funds for this Central Storehouse, and the author states that when this plan is tried and people see how this improved education raises humanity to become super-men and super-women as compared to the progress now, they themselves will make gifts to this Central Storehouse. From this fund money is at hand for education. If the parents are able to educate their children they will pay, the same as they do now, but if parents are not able to send their children tot school money must be taken from this Central Storehouse, because every child in every country must and can be properly educated to prepare him for his life.

There are many other practical teachings on the new economic solution which you could with profit study. I do not think I have ever seen the economic situation so clearly diagnosed, nor have I seen the remedy more clearly set forth than in the following two paragraphs from this same author, I read them to your: "Now by the fear that is based on poverty either actual or prospective, the human soul is ever turned downwards into nature, where the predominant law is the law of struggle for existence, and being dominated by this law and captive to it, the soul's struggles only the more heavily burden its own chains. For the struggle for existence sets off the powers of one soul against the powers of another, and this mutual division of powers means mutual defeat. Thus in this day the science and inventions which shadow forth a new universal order, and dumbly signify the existence of a reality whose law is cooperation, have become, through perversion, the greatest menace to the existence of mankind."

"The disease which afflicts the body of humanity is lack of love and absence of altruism. In the heart of men no real love is found, and the condition is such that unless their susceptibilities are awakened by some power so that unity, love and accord develop within them, there can be no healing, no relief among mankind."

Another part of universal education is to work for some kind of a universal auxiliary language. Your task and mine is to urge the rulers of the world to appoint an international committee of their best linguists, then this committee should either choose one of the existing languages or make a language which could be approved and then introduced into every school. So then in every school of the world have two languages taught, one the native language, the other the universal auxiliary language. I do not care whether this auxiliary language is English, French or German, or Chinese, but as I have traveled in all countries except in Russia, I find that the majority of the nations of the world prefer a neutral auxiliary language. Therefore, I have learned Esperanto. It is a made language composed of root words from all the western tongues; it is musical, it breathes the spirit of brotherhood, *and one can learned to speak and write it well in six months time(this line was crossed out in the manuscript)*. The League of Nations appointed a committee to look into the question of an auxiliary language and after months of study they recommended Esperanto. Broadcasting Directors are looking into Esperanto and so are managers of talking films, for some kind of a universal auxiliary language is absolutely necessary. All of you can learn to speak and write Esperanto fluently in six months' time, and then you can correspond with people in more than two thousand cities in the five continents who have regular Esperanto delegates. These delegates will get you into touch with Esperantists throughout the world. Esperanto is a great commercial asset, but far higher than that is its power to bring to you

the culture, the soul, the ideal of people in every land. If you travel through Europe as an Esperantist you will see far more and enjoy much more than the ordinary tourist will ever find out. Most Esperantists belong to the new day, they are people with progressive ideas. You can become a member of the Universal Association of Esperanto, and thus get a year book of Esperanto and know the great Esperantists of the world. The address to write for information is: Universal Association of Esperanto, 12 Boulevard du Theatre, Geneva, Switzerland. An American address to get beginners' books to study Esperanto is:

Esperanto Association of California, Inc.

Room 309, 630 Market Street,

San Francisco, California.

Perhaps I should speak a few lines in this universal auxiliary language for you to hear its sound, and see how musical it is and how easy to learn. I speak the words of Baha'u'llah to Professor Edward G. Brown of Cambridge University, England. I speak first in English and then in Esperanto and if you listen closely I believe you will understand some of the words: "We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations, that all nations may be one in Faith, and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled.---Yet so it shall be: These fruitless strifes, the ruinous wars shall pass away and the Most Great Peace shall come."

"Ni deziras nur la bonfarton de la mondo kaj la felicon de la nacioj; k eke ciuj nacioj povu unigi je fido kaj ciuj homj interfratigu; ke la ligoj de amemo jaj unigo inter la homidoj plifortigj; ke

religia diverseco cesu kaj rasaj doferencoj nuligu. Tamen, tiel estos; tiuj ci senfruktaj malpacoj, tiuj ci reinegaj militoj nepre forpasos kaj la plej Granda Paco venos."

The world is sick and no one single remedy will bring the universal peace, but all these universal principles of the oneness of humanity, universal education, universal auxiliary language, international arbitration and the world court, a new solution of the economic problem, the doing away of prejudice, racial, political, national and religious will create such a spiritual world brotherhood that war will be impossible. Thus there must be universal education for world peace. When I was invited to the home of President Thomas G. Masark, the President of Czechoslovakia, while I was in Praha, he asked me to tell him about these universal teachings. When I asked what he thought was the best way to promote universal peace, he replied: "Take these universal principles and teachings of Baha'u'llah to the peace societies, to the high schools, colleges and universities and above all take them to the diplomats in Geneva, Switzerland." The sovereigns, the ministers of foreign affairs, the ministers of education, the world economists and millions of other people are today studying deeply these principles of international education for world peace. I thank our Broadcasting Director and I thank you and I know that you, as citizens of our great Republic, are eager to stand in your places and do your part to help humanity to learn to think internationally. We do not boast that we love our own country alone, we are much better nationalists when we are earnest internationalists, when we are working for the good of all humanity.

APPENDIX 3: MARTHA ROOT, "WOMEN'S PLACE IN THE NEW WORLD ORDER" (1936?)[169]

Dear friends of Ceylon, we live in a new, universal cycle: with the aeroplane, the radio, the telephone, the television, yes and the world war, we are coming so close together as nations, that we must learn to live together or we perish. One great Professor in Bryn Mawr College, in my country said to me that there is only one problem in the world and that is –LEARNING TO LIVE TOGETHER. Certainly that is the problem of nations today, as well as of individuals.

We women are not like India, perhaps one-fifth of the population of the globe, or like China, one-fourth of the population of the world, we are one-half of the whole human race! And if we, one-half of the world's population arise, as we ought to arise, to help build a better world, it can be done.

Man and woman are as the two wings of the bird of humanity, and the bird of humanity cannot attain its perfect flight until those two wings are equally strong and equally poised. I was glad when I heard Miss Eleanor McDougall, Principal of the Women's College of Madras, say in Colombo recently that the education of girls is more important than that of boys. We as women must work for the equal education of the girl and the boy, but the education of the girl is more important in this sense, that she is the potential mother of the human race. If the mother is ignorant, how can she train her children for this new world order? Also, I hold that omen not only have the ordinary five senses, but they have a sixth sense of intuition and when women all

[169] Source: Root, "women's Place in the New World Order" (lecture manuscript), cyleon, 1936 (?), Martha Root Papers, NBA.

over the world are educated equally with men and this sixth sense of intuition is highly developed, the children born will become supermen and superwomen compared to what they are today. Man will never know to what heights he may attain until men and women throughout the world are equally educated. Therefore, whatever we do for the equal education of the girl and the boy we are making good preparation for a better world.

We women can also work for universal education and the great interchange of students, both girls and boys, in the different universities of the world, for a year or two of study. The youth of all countries meeting one another, will come to understand one another, and this will help world peace.

There is also a new solution of the economic problem by which every child in the world can have education and by which there can be this interchange of students. I am only sorry I have not time to tell you about it today. It is very conservative and would be carried out with the approval of all governments.

"What kind of education should we have today, in this new age?" Perhaps you ask. The greatest knowledge if the knowledge of God, and it is spiritual, moral education that can change the hearts and create such love that war will be impossible. We need mind disarmament, we need to see the good in all religions and co-operate with all with joy and good-will. Woman has a great part in this spiritual education, and every woman in her heart knows there will be no lasting brotherhood among nations except soul brotherhood. My great teacher, Baha'u'llah, said that we are all leaves of one tree, drops of one sea. He also said that humanity has come of age in this universal cycle just opening, and that a world growing to maturity must abandon these old methods of fighting, must recognize the oneness of human relations and establish once and for

all a new world order that can incarnate, establish a federalism of countries. All his teachings are for peace and for obedience to just governments. I remember so well his words to Professor G. Browne of Cambridge University, when He said: "We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations—that all nations should become one in Faith and all men as brothers; that diversity of religion should cease and differences of race be annulled—Yet so it shall be: these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars cease and all men become as one kindred and one family. Let not a man or woman glory in this alone that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this that he loves all mankind."

Women can study and teach and radiate the oneness of the world of humanity. They can co-operate with the teachers in the schools to see that universal peace is stressed; that great humanitarians and scientists are glorified rather than wars. They can world that the schools of the world put into the curricula the studies, not that begin in words and end in words, but studies that teach us how to live together happily, how to become unselfish, altruistic, and how to serve humanity. My teacher said we must learn in this universal age, to seek after truth—not to be something just because our grandfathers and fathers were that, but to study all truth and to be true to the highest in our generation. There is a progression of thought in every age. We must do away with national prejudices, racial prejudices, religious prejudices. We can only do this if we love people for the sake of God. I know Sir Abdu'l-Baha Abbas. He came to my city and I heard some one say to him: "Why is it that every one who comes to see you is so happy?" He replied: "I do not know, but I know on every face on whom I look, I see the Face of God." Certainly, we cannot "like" everybody, but we can love them, because we know God has created them, and given them a potential soul that can be evolved into great beauty. If your life is shining, dear

woman, every one who ever meets you will be ennobled, cheered and refined just because she has come into your presence.

Now that this new world order that we should have, we can work for a Universal League of Nations in which every country will be a member. There will be a World Court and nations will disarm simultaneously. There will be an International Police Force. Through the Power of God it can and it will come.

Then there is the matter of a universal, auxiliary language for which women can work. World statesmen today say we never have world peace until we have some kind of an international, auxiliary language. So anything we women do to study the language question, we are directly helping world peace. I became an Esperantist because I found that the nations of the world prefer a neutral, auxiliary language. Esperanto, as you know, is a made language, composed of some of the root words of all European languages. It is musical, it breathes the spirit of brotherhood, and one can learn to speak and write it well in lesson than six months' time. I have found it a great help in my travels that I can speak and lecture in this language. More than twenty five hundred cities in the world have groups of Esperantists with an Esperanto Consul to welcome travelers coming from other lands. The League of Nations favored Esperanto as a universal, auxiliary language. Personally I do not care whether the universal, auxiliary langue is Sinhalese or Tamil, or English or French, but the work we have to do, is to interest the governments of the world to convene a committee of their best linguists to study the whole, auxiliary language problem and either to choose one of the existing languages or create a language, which when it is approved by all the governments, should be made compulsory in every school in the world. We know from experience that governments for the most part, do in

the end, what their peoples wish. And if we become convinced that an auxiliary language is necessary, we can help to promote the idea.

Now that broadcasting is becoming so international, I think it is only just that those who will be chosen to sit on this international committee—and it may be you—should choose a simple language, easy to be learned, so that the millions of farmers, laborers everywhere who cannot go to colleges and universities and learn many languages, those who perhaps only go through the first grade of a schoolroom, that they too, can learn this auxiliary language and listen in to the radio and know what is going on in the world. I have recently finished writing a book, entitled "Qurratu'l-Ayn, one of Iran's Greatest Women." If I could only have it translated and published in one language from the English, I would choose Esperanto, because thus, it could easily be translated into more than fifty languages of the East and the West. Esperanto will have a rich literature because contemporary literature and the classics of all countries are being translated into this new auxiliary tongue. Just as there are International Educational Congresses such as that just held in Tokyo and the New Education Conference which has recently taken place in Australia, so there are annual Universal Congresses of Esperanto which have been held in Oxford, in Cambridge and in Washington, as well as in most of the capitals of Europe. The Jubilee of Esperanto was held in August, in Warsaw, Poland, because Warsaw was the home of the Creator of the Esperanto language, Dr. Ludovic Zamenhof. Sometimes more than a thousand women delegates represent their cities in these congresses. The men and women delegates are just about equal in number.

However, no one universal principle, not even a common auxiliary language will bring the peace of the world, but all these universal teachings of which I have spoken, namely, the

equal education of the girl and the boy, and a new solution of the economic problem by which every child can have the proper education to fit him for his life; new social studies in the curricula of the universities; the unity and collaboration of all the religionists, the oneness of the world of humanity, a Universal League of Nations and a World Court, a universal auxiliary language—all these are goals towards a new world order which we women can help to bring into reality. We can do our part to change this earth-plane into a garden and a paradise. This century, I believe, will witness the establishment of universal peace and disarmament, even if we have another world war first. Victor Hugo said: "You might as well try to keep the sun from rising as to try to hold back an IDEAL when the hour for its fulfillment has come!" And this is the century of lights. Never has the world's consciousness been so awakened to peace as it is today. The people of the world are groaning for universal peace and disarmament. God has promised peace and we are His Channels through whom peace can become a solid reality.

One point I wish to mention to you, women of Ceylon, is this: women must not only do their own work towards peace, but they must enthuse, inspire others. The trouble is most people do what other people ought to be developed to do, and therefore it deprives these latter souls. Everybody ought to be trained to do, not only his own work, but to get many others to heighten, accelerate their work. You must do what you have not given them the inspiration to do. They may be able to do it better than you. The Chazi Kemal Pasha of Turkey, Ataturk, revered his mother more than any one else in the world. The late President T. G. Masark, founder of the Republic of Czechoslovakia said that he and his wife were so close, that even when he was away in far continents, they thought the same thoughts. She was always in his companion. Wherever you meet great men, they almost always speak with reverence of the women who have given

them high ideals. I liked so much what Mrs. Fonseka said recently: “Do not forget that mother is the individual who makes Heroes!” And during my visit here in Colombo, I saw how Miss Eleanor McDougall has impressed the lives of many fine girls here. Also, although I know Miss Dr. Abusha Marikar, the Ceylonese Muslim lady Doctor, only by the newspaper articles, she is doing so much to make Ceylon wish education for Muslim girls. This is the way the world is moved: first the vision, then the plan, then the fulfillment!

So dear women of Ceylon, I know you agree with me, that the superwomen of the world, of whatever nation, religion or race, will be those who love and work for the whole humanity in their homes and beyond their homes. This is our task in the new world order.

I thank you.