

Martha Root's tours, 1924, 1939.

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In order to describe the manner in which Martha Root presented the Baha'i Faith during her Australian visits, 1924 and 1939, her press articles have been given some content analysis. Obviously, this method suffers in that she had no control over what was printed, but she had control over what she said. Given that the Baha'i Faith contains a wide range of subject matter, specific selection of topics would have had to be done for inclusion in brief articles. The Faith could have been presented as a personal religion, stressing the individual development it strives for; or theologically, as the fulfillment of biblical prophecy, (the millennial motif); it could have been presented as a program for social reform.

table 16. Points made in Martha Root press articles, 1924.  
(other than mere references)

	1:	2:	3:	4:	5:	6:	7:	8:	9:	10:	11:	12:	13:	14:	15:	16
highlight travels	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*
Baha'i	*	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	*	*	*	.	.	.	.	*
Bab	*	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	.	*
Baha'u'llah	*	.	.	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	*	*	.	.
Abdu'l-Baha	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.	.	.
Shoghi Effendi	*	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Christianity	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*
Muhammad	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Esperanto	.	.	.	.	*	*	.	.	*	.	*	*	.	.	.	.
Universal Peace (and basic principles)	.	*	*	*	*	.	*	*	.	.	*	*	*	*	*	**
Capital and Labour	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	*	.	.	.	.
Spiritual Healing	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	.	*	.

PRESS ARTICLES

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1. Perth, unknown, n.d.
2. Argus, August 15
3. Adelaide, unknown, n.d.
4. West Australian, July 3.
5. Daily News, July 14.
6. West Australian, July 26.
7. New Zealand Herald, September 22.
8. Sydney Morning Herald, October 11.
9. The Sun, October 14.
10. Hobart, unknown, October 22.
11. Examiner, 25 October.
12. Daily Telegraph, n.d.
13. The News, November 6.
14. The News, November 7.

15. Saturday Journal, November 8.  
16. The Register, November 11.

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#### ERRORS AND QUESTIONABLE STATEMENTS

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In these press articles, a number of errors or questionable statements are made. These points being raised do not help make clear if they are the errors of the individual papers, or of Miss Root. Newspapers often generated fanciful claims about Baha'i to 'improve' the story:

1. The claim that the Baha'i movement had 30,000,000 or even 17,000,000 followers is clearly incorrect. The correct figure was probably closer to 400,000. (1) (3).

2. The claim that President Wilson spent two months studying the Baha'i teachings before writing his 14 point peace plan is yet to be proven. (2)

3. The claim that the Baha'i movement had 'no leaders' was demonstrably false. This may have been a reference to the fact that there is no clergy, and that individual Baha'is decide the truth or falsity of religious claims, experiences, or teachings. (2)

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(1) Perth, unknown, n.d.,

(2) West Australian, July 3, President Wilson, "no Leaders"

(3) Register, November 11, 17,000,000 followers

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#### Classification of known engagements, (excluding Baha'i)

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##### EDUCATIONAL 7

- 1- Blind Institute
- 1- Society of Arts
- 1- Auckland Teacher's Training College
- 2- Y.W.C.A.
- 1- Comrade's Boys Club
- 1- Boy's Institute Boys Club

##### SOCIAL REFORM 6

- 2- Esperantists
- 1- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom
- 1- Peace Society of the Australian Church
- 1- National Council of Women
- 1- Rotary

##### RELIGIOUS 15

- 1- Australia Church
- 7- Theosophists
- 1- Spiritualist churches
- 3- New Civilization Centre
- 1- Occult Church
- 1- All Saints Church Boys Club
- 1- Auckland Unitarian Church



## Press Articles

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1. Sydney Morning Herald, Nov 30, 38
2. Daily Telegraph, November 30, 38
3. The Mail, Adelaide, February 25
4. Sydney Morning Herald, December 1, 38
5. West Australian, January 11
6. Daily News, January 19
7. West Australian, January 21
8. West Australian, January 25
9. Advertiser, Feb 7
10. Advertiser, Feb 8
11. Sydney Morning Herald, Feb 9
12. The Dawn, Feb 15
13. The Sun, Feb 28
14. The Examiner, Mar 6
15. Mercury, Mar 6
16. Mercury, Mar 7
17. Mercury, Mar 10
18. Mercury, Mar 11
19. Examiner, Mar 11
20. Woman, Mar 13
21. Sydney Morning Herald, Mar 22
22. Daily Telegraph, Mar 22
23. Peacewards, Apr 1
24. Wireless Weekly, Apr 5
25. Manly Daily, Apr 8
26. Manly Daily, Apr 20
27. Auckland Star, Apr 26
28. New Zealand Herald, Apr 27
29. New Zealand Herald, Apr 29

## Errors and questionable statements

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As with the 1924 publicity, again some statements can be questioned.

1. The Baha'i writings state that in the future, the work-day will be shortened. The statement that there will be only five hours work, so as to allow time for "soul development" is not an accurate statement of "Baha'i teachings". (5)
2. The statement "The beautiful Baha'i Temple in Chicago was surrounded by chapels in which many varied religious services were conducted" (16) is incorrect. Concerning this Effie Baker had written to Hyde and Clara Dunn as early as September 1925:

I was giving Martha's description of the Universal Temple to Mrs Wheeler one evening and Mirza Fazel was much amused. I gave it as she said about the 9 avenue gardens, and fountains, and the building being circular, with 9 dens leading into 9 chapels where all the seven different religions would be

able to put in their own paraphernalia and worship God in their own way and the other two allotted to New Thought, Theosophists, and other modern religions... he laughed and said this was a very nice explanation, but was purely imagination...all people are permitted to enter any door. If it were restricted to different doors leading into different chapels for the different religions, it would at once mean separation and be contrary to the Baha'i principle of universality..." (A)

Classification of known engagements, 1939

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13 EDUCATIONAL (14%)

2 W.E.A.

- 1 Hobart State High School
- 1 Commercial High School
- 1 Trinity Grammar
- 3 Women's League of Health
- 1 Kilvingston Girls School
- 1 Friends High School
- 1 Board of Social Study and Training
- 1 Headmaster, Knox Grammar
- 1 People's University

19 SOCIAL REFORM (21%)

- 1 Women's Services Guild
- 1 Radiant Health Club
- 1 Women's International League of Peace and Freedom
- 2 National Council of Women
- 1 Peace Message to World Women
- 2 Rotary
- 4 Esperantists
- 1 Australian League of Nations
- 1 New World Movement
- 1 Femenist Club
- 1 United Women's Peace Movement
- 1 Rationalist and Sunday Freedom League
- 1 Women's Crusade for World Peace and Brotherhood
- 1 Crusade for Social Justice

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A. Effie Baker to Hyde and Clara Dunn, September 22, 1925.  
Euphemia E. Baker Papers.

12 RELIGIOUS (13%)

1 Adelaide Spiritual Mission Church  
1 Women's Christian Temperance Union  
3 Theosophical Society  
1 Hobart Christian Spiritual Church  
1 Australian Church  
2 Unitarian Church  
2 Y.M.C.A.  
1 Chinese Church

6 POLITICAL (6%)

1 Hobart Lord Mayor  
1 Senator Macartney Abbott  
1 Chinese Consul  
1 United Australia Party  
1 Polish Consul  
1 Fabian Club

18 CULTURAL (20%)

1 Overseas Club  
1 World Relations Club  
1 Lyceum Club  
1 Country Women's Association  
1 Writers Cultural Club  
1 Chinese Women's Society  
1 Bellerive and Sandford Country Women  
1 Millions Club  
1 English Speaking Union  
1 Quota Club  
1 Penwomen's Club  
1 Travel Club  
1 Fellowship of Australian Writers  
1 Business Girls  
1 Guest Club  
1 Optimists Club  
1 Overseas Club  
1 New Women's Club

14 BROADCASTS (15%)

Comparison of press coverage 1924 and 1939

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(other than mere mentions)

Topics	1924		1939	
	No.	%	No.	%
Travels	2	4.8	4	5.9
Baha'i	6	14.6	17	25.3
Bab	4	9.7	1	1.4
Baha'u'llah	5	12.1	2	2.9
Abdu'l-Baha	2	4.8	-	-
Shoghi Effendi	1	2.4	-	-
Christianity	1	2.4	1	1.4
Islam	-	-	-	-
Esperanto	5	12.1	6	8.9
World Peace	12	29.2	18	26.8
Economics	2	4.8	1	1.4
Spiritualism/Universalism		2.4	6	8.9
Queen Marie			2	2.9
Politics			1	1.4
<b>Totals</b>	<b>41</b>		<b>67</b>	

On the basis of these figures, a number of comments can be made. Firstly, the issue of world peace dominated the press coverage. This mostly included reference to the Baha'i principles. These principles were not always given with reference to the Baha'i Faith. The second most dominant theme was Esperanto. Christianity was mentioned only once in each period, and Islam was not a topic at all. The issue of world peace was discussed with very little reference to current economic or political conditions.

Comparison of Speaking Engagements, 1924 and 1939

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Kind of engagement	1924		1939	
	No.	%	No.	%
Educational	7	14.5	13	15.8
Social Reform	6	12.5	19	23.1
Religious	15	31.2	12	14.6
Political	11	22.9	6	7.3
Cultural	4	8.3	18	21.9
Broadcast	5	10.4	14	17.0
<b>Totals</b>	<b>48</b>		<b>82</b>	

These figures show that Martha Root spoke before a significant number of political groups - significant partly because such a large degree of contact would not have happened at a later date. The Religious organizations addressed were mostly 'fringe Christian' groups, the most orthodox perhaps being Reverend Strong's Australian Church, which was in fact a radical Australian Christian group. The majority of the groups addressed were single issue reform or cultural groups, many of which have disappeared. We could speculate that some of these groups served the function that modern media now caters to - learning about current affairs, overseas conditions, etc.

#### Sources used in this survey

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##### Primary

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Baha'i Quarterly

Euphemia E. Baker Papers

Martha L. Root Papers - United States National Baha'i Archives.

Martha L. Root Papers - Australian National Baha'i Archives.

##### Secondary

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Garis, M.R., Martha Root, Lioness at the Threshold.