

Therefore, it is with utmost pleasure that with this issue we introduce you to the new Editor for the journal, Michael Sabet, who, over the course of the past six months, has already proven himself extremely capable and an inspired appointment by our beloved institutions.

Dedicated to Bahá'í scholarship and inaugurated by the founders of the Association of Bahá'í Studies more than three decades ago, the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* has garnered the respect of scholars by maintaining the highest of standards and by establishing a vital space for those who wish to explore the integration of the Bahá'í teachings with the vast variety of fields that can find in those teachings and beliefs the *mizán*—the standard—by which they can assess their efforts in whatever academic endeavors they pursue.

In conclusion, I am confident that with Michael's guidance—assisted ably by Editorial Coordinator Nilufar Gordon (without whom this effort would not be possible), and greatly inspired by the sterling efforts modeled by the noble forebears, Arbab, Danesh, Hatcher, Martin, and Rogers—the journal will continue to serve an increasingly important function for both the Association of Bahá'í Studies and the Bahá'í community at large.

## A Note from the Executive Committee of the Association for Bahá'í Studies

JULIA BERGER, SECRETARY

As we welcome the new Editor of the *Journal for Bahá'í Studies*, Michael Sabet, the Association for Bahá'í Studies wishes to recognize the rich and wide-ranging contributions of Dr. John Hatcher, now retiring from that role, under whose gifted leadership over the past seven years the stature and content of the *Journal* advanced markedly. In November 2013, he assumed the position of Editor with enthusiasm and vigor, pouring his talents and creative energy into this arena of service. Many readers were already familiar with his distinguished academic career, which included forty years as Professor of English Literature at the University of South Florida, and with his illustrious contributions to Bahá'í scholarship with over twenty-five published books and over one hundred poems and articles spanning the fields of literature and philosophy as well as Bahá'í theology and exegesis. In addition to his vast erudition, he brought to the role of Editor a penchant for frank and honest discourse, a jovial spirit, and a subtle sense of humor.

Over the past seven years, the *Journal* advanced in a number of significant ways. Publication increased in frequency from one to three issues a year, offering a growing range of topics, including seminal articles on the Bahá'í approach to racial unity, the intellectual life of the Bahá'í community, a framework for Bahá'í scholarship, and the nature of the harmony between science and religion; further, poetry and photography were added as new features. To promote greater access to the intellectual fruits of the *Journal*, the publication transitioned from print to digital, with each issue becoming immediately publicly available for download at no cost, while a print version remained available for those who prefer that format. In close collaboration with Nilufar Gordon, Editorial Coordinator, and with the support of the Editorial Committee, John oversaw significant advances in the systematization of all aspects of the editorial process.

Among Dr. Hatcher's greatest contributions to the advancement of the *Journal* was his tireless outreach to scholars to continually expand and diversify the pool of perspectives represented in its intellectual output. He encouraged younger scholars and underrepresented voices, including women and people of color, to contribute their work and gave generously of his time and energy to assist and mentor authors as they worked to refine their submissions. His framing of every issue, "From the Editor's Desk," broadened our vision, deepened our appreciation of the significance of the content,

and with a personal and refined touch invited us to engage thoughtfully with the articles presented therein.

To attempt to summarize Dr. Hatcher's multifaceted contributions to the *Journal* is to fail, inevitably, to do them justice. The theme underlying them all is his dedication to devoting his talents and energy to the advancement of Bahá'í scholarship, in service to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prayer that God's loved ones might become "piercing rays of the mind shedding forth their light in this, the 'first life'" (*Bahá'í Prayers*). In tribute, then, we can do no better than to bring to mind a passage from one of his favorite poems, "The Windhover," in which the poet sees, in the aerial feats of a falcon, the harmonious alignment of a creature with nature—which, as in the Bahá'í conception, is ultimately an expression of the Will of God—and a reminder of the Manifestation's perfect alignment with that Will:

. . . how he rung upon the rein of  
a wimpling wing  
In his ecstasy! then off, off forth  
on swing,

As a skate's heel sweeps smooth  
on a bow-bend: the hurl and  
gliding

Rebuffed the big wind. My heart  
in hiding  
Stirred for a bird, – the achieve of,  
the mastery of the thing!

Brute beauty and valour and act,  
oh, air, pride, plume, here

Buckle! AND the fire that breaks  
from thee then, a billion

Times told lovelier, more dangerous,  
O my chevalier! (Hopkins)

As we survey Dr. Hatcher's achievements in scholarship and mentorship during his tenure as Editor, our hearts are indeed stirred at the mastery of the thing!

We express our deep gratitude to Dr. Hatcher for the inspired and distinguished years of service which have brought the *Journal* to its present stage of development. We look forward to his continuing engagement as Editor Emeritus and wish him all the best as he directs his talents and focus to a host of other scholarly undertakings, which will undoubtedly continue to enrich our understanding of the vast ocean of the Bahá'í Writings and their significance for our time.

## From the Editor's Desk

MICHAEL SABET

Before you begin to read the articles contained in this edition of the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, I encourage you to close the journal—or scroll back to the start—and spend some time with the artwork featured on its cover. “So High a Calling” is an illuminated calligraphical rendering of a passage whose English translation can be found in *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*. The artist, Reza Mostmand, has divided his canvas in two. The lower half of the piece is broken up and textured by rows of sharp mountains, jagged and foreboding. But the eye is drawn upwards to the golden orb, rising behind the bare mountains as if in answer to Bahá'u'lláh's call in the Fire Tablet: “Thou seest the Dayspring of Thine utterance in the darkness of creation: Where is the sun of the heaven of Thy grace, O Light-Giver of the worlds?” (*Bahá'í Prayers*). The mountains are separated into distinct ranges, each range further divided into individual peaks; yet, the light illuminating them is one. As if to represent that illumination, flowing down from the orb onto the peaks—and thus bridging the two halves of the canvas—is the Word.

The text of the Persian calligraphy reminds us: