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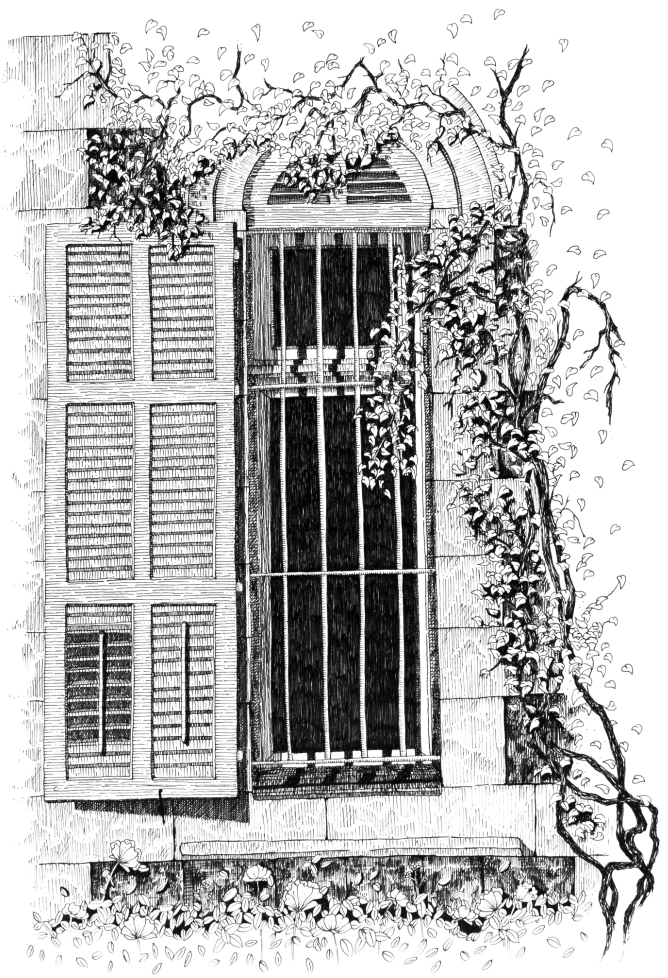

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Many articles published in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* allude to the institutions and central figures of the Bahá'í Faith; as an aid for those unfamiliar with the Bahá'í Faith, we include here a succinct summary excerpted from http://www.bahai.org/beliefs/bahaullah-covenant/. The reader may also find it helpful to visit the official web site for the worldwide Bahá'í community (www.bahai.org) available in several languages. For article submission guidelines, please visit journal.bahaistudies.ca/online/about/submissions/.

About the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith, its followers believe, is "divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men." The mission of the Bahá'í Faith is "to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, 'abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith'" (Shoghi Effendi).

The Bahá'í Faith began with the mission entrusted by God to two Divine Messengers—the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Today, the distinctive unity of the Faith They founded stems from explicit instructions given by Bahá'u'lláh that have assured the continuity of guidance following His passing. This line of succession, referred to as the Covenant, went from Bahá'u'lláh to His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and then from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. A Bahá'í accepts the divine authority of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and of these appointed successors.

The Báb (1819-1850) is the Herald of the Bahá'í Faith. In the middle of the 19th century, He announced that He was the bearer of a message destined to transform humanity's spiritual life. His mission was to prepare the way for the coming of a second Messenger from God, greater than Himself, who would usher in an age of peace and justice.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892)—the "Glory of God"—is the Promised One foretold by the Báb and all of the Divine Messengers of the past. Bahá'u'lláh delivered a new Revelation from God to humanity. Thousands of verses, letters and books flowed from His pen. In His Writings, He outlined a framework for the development of a global civilization which takes into account both the spiritual and material dimensions of human life. For this, He endured torture and forty years of imprisonment and exile.

In His will, Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921), as the authorized interpreter of His teachings and Head of the Faith. Throughout the East and West, 'Abdu'l-Bahá became known as an ambassador of peace, an exemplary human being, and the leading exponent of a new Faith.

Appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), spent 36 years systematically nurturing the development, deepening the understanding, and strengthening the unity of the Bahá'í community, as it increasingly grew to reflect the diversity of the entire human race.

The development of the Bahá'í Faith worldwide is today guided by the Universal House of Justice (established in 1963). In His book of laws, Bahá'u'lláh instructed the Universal House of Justice to exert a positive influence on the welfare of humankind, promote education, peace and global prosperity, and safeguard human honor and the position of religion.

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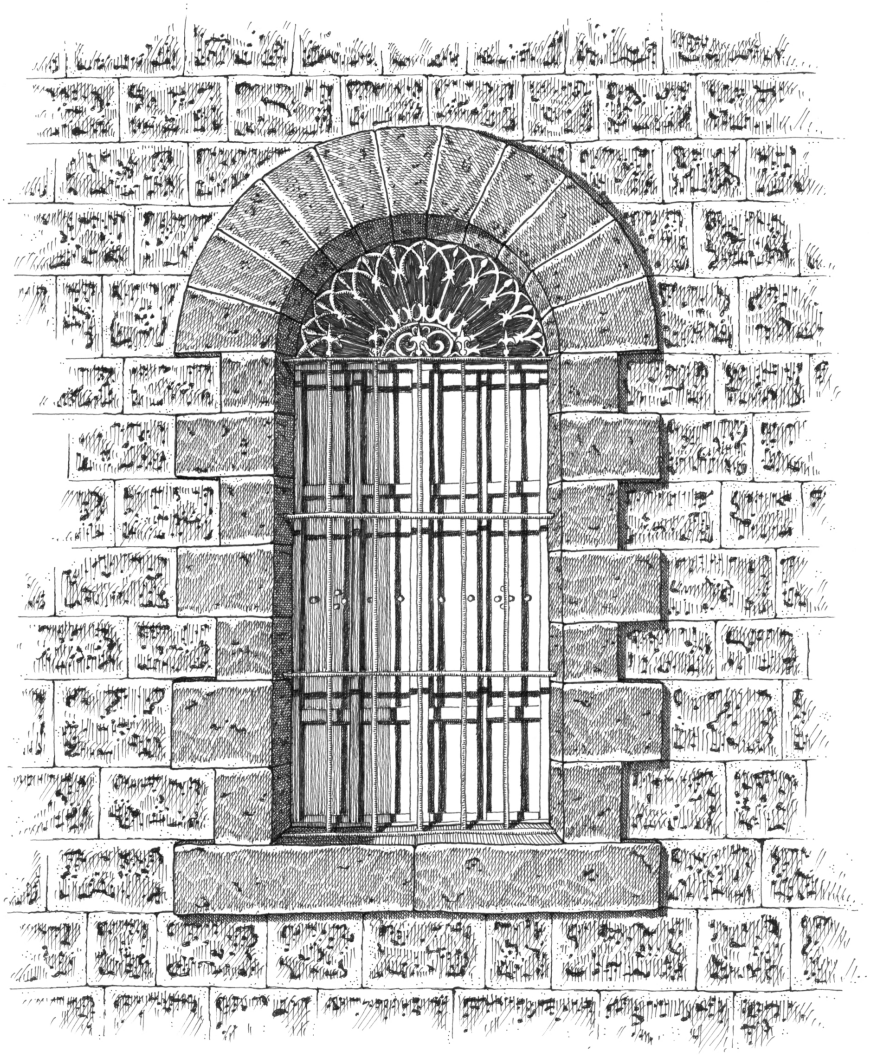
Contents



Window, Shrine of the Báb

JUAN PABLO RUIZ MORALES

From the Editor's Desk

MICHAEL SABET

This issue of the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies* provides us with an opportunity to reflect on the power of words. Each of us can find ample evidence from our own experience that speech, "this activity which so distinguishes human beings from other forms of life" (Universal House of Justice), has power—to persuade and inspire, instruct and illuminate, fragment and wound. In the religious context, of course, words take on a particular significance. The Bahá'í Faith, like many of the revelations whose work it continues, is centered on the Revealed Word, the tangible expression in letters and phrases, "syllables and sounds" ('Abdu'l-Bahá 71), of that ineffable spiritual reality that is the Word of God—"God's all-pervasive grace, from which all grace doth emanate" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 141).

If the Manifestations' use of the Word as Their chosen metaphor to help us understand how the divine interacts with creation were not enough to impress upon us the importance of words, we have explicit statements from Bahá'u'lláh on the subject: "Through the power of thine utterance," He tells us, "subdue the hearts of men" (*Tablets* 84). "Open, O people, the city of the human heart with the key of your utterance" (*Gleanings* 304).

Bahá'í history provides ample proof of the power of words over that most precious of created things, the human heart. All of the achievements of the Bahá'í community since its inception flow, in the final analysis, out of the stream of divine utterance pouring from the Manifestations themselves, a stream that waters the lives—and deeds—of teachers, martyrs, pilgrims and seekers. While the words of the Manifestation are, of course, incomparable, the story of the Bahá'í Faith cannot be understood without also considering the speech and writings of those whom Bahá'u'lláh invested with the authority of the Covenant.

Ann Boyles' "The Epistolary Style of Shoghi Effendi," first published in the 1993 volume *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi*, explores the sources of inspiration for the Guardian's masterful English language writings. This is a particularly apt time to revisit the career, life, and achievements of Shoghi Effendi; having recently commemorated the centenary of the ascension of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we also mark a hundred years since the inception of the Guardianship, and further pieces from *Vision* may be published in subsequent issues. In this piece, we are shown how the master craftsman chose his materials from amongst the finest available models of English prose writing, and then honed and refined them to his great purpose: the galvanization of a world community into actions unprecedented in the history of organized religion, including the construction from the grassroots of a system of self-administration capable

of channeling the divine confirmation that flows from adhering to the Manifestation's design. In his words to the Bahá'ís of the world, the Guardian held up a mirror to their efforts, one that not only brought accomplishments, past and present, into focus, but inspired with a vision of what could follow, and what the far future would hold.

June Thomas' "Reconsidering the Civil Rights Era in the Footsteps of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" similarly highlights the extraordinary power and perceptiveness of the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in particular those spoken to audiences in America. This piece also, however, illustrates how the words of ordinary people can be used to extraordinary effect. Drawing on the example of her own grandfather, a Christian minister whose sermons were "not so much spoken as sung" in "a style only truly gifted Southern Black preachers mastered," Thomas shows how words can sustain a community, particularly when reflected in, and amplified through, deeds of loving service. Yet her work also shows us how the power of words can be misused: she highlights the pain of uncovering racist writings during archival research, in which echoes of hatred and disunity from those long gone can still be heard. "For the tongue is a smoldering fire," as Bahá'u'lláh warns us, "and excess of speech a deadly poison. Material fire consumeth the body, whereas the fire of the tongue devoureth both heart and soul. The force of the former lasteth but for a time, whilst the effects of the latter endure a century" (*Kitáb-i-Iqán* 193).

Lev Rickard's "New Knowledge from Old: Conceptions of the Library in the Writings of Shoghi Effendi" gives us a further reflection on this theme of the potential permanence of words. Our ability to preserve our words, reflected in the institution of the library, is one of our greatest strengths as a species; whether in oral tradition, stone engraving, printed book or digital encoding, our thoughts can travel further than our feet, and long outlive our tongues. What, then, is the role of the library in light of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh? Is the library to preserve indiscriminately all words? The words of those with the power to secure their permanence? Or should it look to carry the best of our words forward? This piece is an excellent resource for anyone trying to think about these questions, and correlate the Revelation to this important area that impacts the generation, dissemination, and application of knowledge that are at the heart of all efforts of the Bahá'í community.

As we read these pieces, we can reflect on our own words, and the responsibility that the power of speech and writing entails. "Indeed through the power of good words, the righteous have always succeeded in winning command over the meads of the hearts of men" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 85). In particular, what deeds might our words inspire, in ourselves and others?

> It behooveth the people of Bahá to render the Lord victorious through the power of their utterance and to admonish the people

by their goodly deeds and character, inasmuch as deeds exert greater influence than words. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets* 57)

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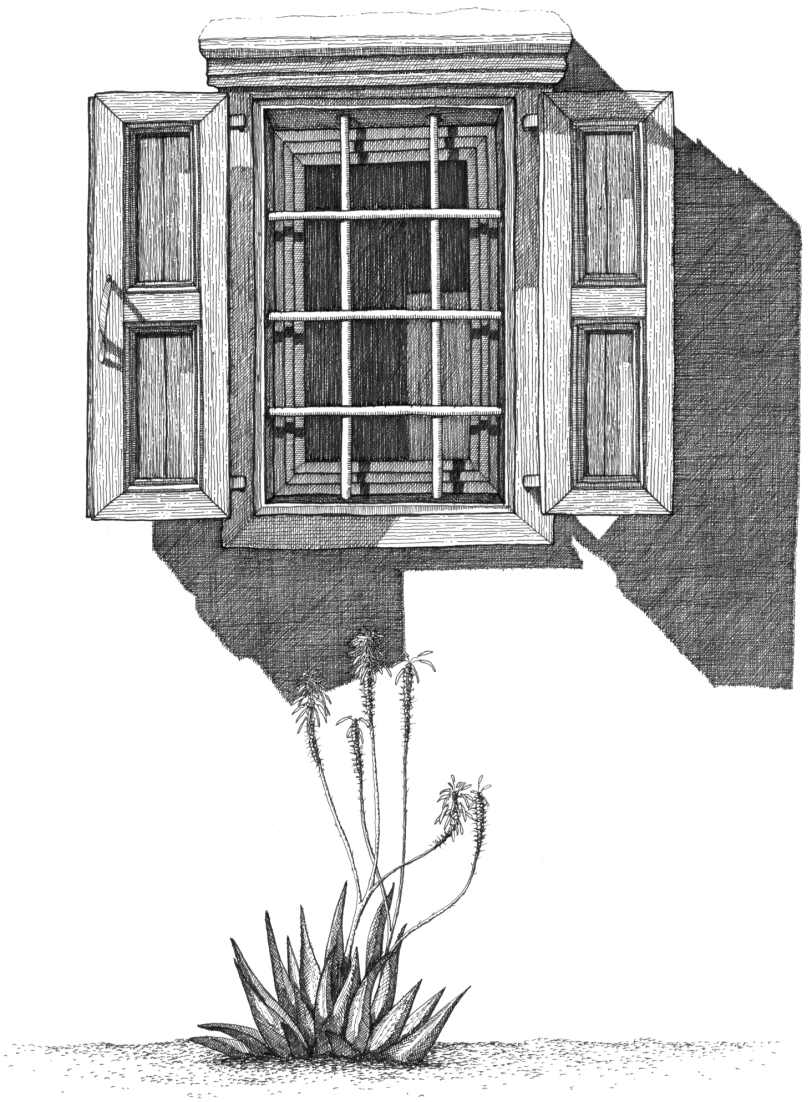

Window, Junayn Garden
JUAN PABLO RUIZ MORALES

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As a service to our readers, we are including links to articles related to the subjects presented in this issue. These are articles that have been previously published in the *Journal* and are available for free on our website.

Bahá'í History in the Formative Age
The World Crusade, 1953–1963
by *Graham Hassall*
https://doi.org/10.31581/jbs-6.4.1(1995)

The evolution of the Bahá'í community from its obscure and persecuted origins to world encirclement has been rapid. This article considers the essential features of the last significant phase of Shoghi Effendi's ministry, the decade of the World Crusade, 1953–1963. In doing so, it seeks to raise questions concerning the contemporary practice of historical Bahá'í scholarship.

Some Insights from the First Century of the Formative Age
by *Paul Lample*
https://doi.org/10.31581/jbs-27.1-4.3(2013)

This article explores six concepts: the Covenant from a historical perspective; the range of authority and powers of the Universal House of Justice; learning within an evolving framework for action; organic growth and development; relationships among individuals, communities, and institutions; and society-building power.

Race, Place, and Clusters: Current Vision and Possible Strategies
by *June Manning Thomas*
https://doi.org/10.31581/jbs-27.3.4(2017)

This paper considers how division by place affects the possibilities for racial unity, especially in severely fragmented US metropolitan areas. It reviews how the Universal House of Justice has promoted use of the institute process as a way of framing action in places such as neighborhoods and villages. We also consider the challenges that place-based action poses for racial unity and suggest how the "institute process" as a strategy could possibly overcome these, especially in places—such as metropolitan Detroit—that are severely segregated by race.

Race Unity: Implications for the Metropolis
by *June Manning Thomas*
https://doi.org/10.31581/jbs-6.4.440(1995)

This article briefly reviews some of the universal principles of unity which apply to the metropolis, summarizing some of the major ways in which racial disunity has been imprinted upon the metropolitan landscape in the United States. For each era, more social attention to specific Bahá'í teachings could have played a significant role in reducing fragmentation. The article ends by summarizing some of the major spiritual principles necessary to improve the fragmented metropolis, in the United States, and around the world.

In the House of my Faith

IMELDA MAGUIRE

When you come to the house
of my Faith,
may you find the door ajar,
your presence welcomed
with a warmly-lit porch
and a greeting that says *Friend*.
Here, may you find comfort
to be yourself, to ask
what you need, to be satisfied,
Here may you be free always.

There will be many a room
to settle in and read – words of joy
and promise, words of hope.
Here may you find answers
and questions.

In this house, may you sit at table
with all people, may you share
their music, and may you dance.
Open the windows.
Let the music be heard.
May you find that this house
that welcomes you feels,
as it should,
like *Home*.

The Epistolary Style of Shoghi Effendi[1]

ANN BOYLES

The English letters of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'í world during his tenure as Guardian of the new faith reflect the revolutionary nature of the Revelation, not only in their vast and astounding range of content but also in their form and style. Aside from the historical *God Passes By*, letters constitute the bulk of Shoghi Effendi's written communications with the Bahá'í world, and many of these epistles were written in English. Since Shoghi Effendi must rank as the master literary stylist of the Bahá'í Faith in the English language, in addition to being the Revelation's unique Guardian, his choice, use of, and adaptations to this literary form are significant to Bahá'ís both now and in the future. The purposes of this paper are to investigate the new style of the epistle, to examine the roots of its development, and to demonstrate thar elements of the form have been modified to accommodate the great vision of Shoghi Effendi, architect of the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

Before embarking upon this investigation, however, it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the terminology that will be used. The words *epistle* and *epistolary* have been chosen in preference to the words *letter* and *literary* because of the former pair's associative rather than definitive meaning. As C. Hugh Holman states, "Theoretically an epistle is any letter, but in practice the term is limited to formal compositions written by an individual or a group to a distant individual or group." Holman further says that an epistle differs from a letter because it is "a conscious literary form," which concerns itself with "public matters and with philosophy as well as with religious problems" (199). While Shoghi Effendi did write letters that were less formal in tone and that were in answer to an individual's private questions, in his role as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, one could not really class any of this correspondence as "private," since his answers to any questions always constituted the authoritative interpretation of Bahá'u'lláh's and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings. Thus, "epistle," with its more public and formal connotations, suits the nature of Shoghi Effendi's communications much better than does "letter" with its chatty and private connotations, especially since in the twentieth century the latter term has come to be associated only with the familiar letter.

In the Guardian's usage, the former type of communication might be classified loosely as an "epistolary essay." This is the Guardians most striking

1 This a slightly revised version of an essay originally published in *The Vision of Shoghi Effendi: Proceedings of the Association for Bahá'í Studies Ninth Annual Conference, November 2-4, 1984, Ottawa, Canada*.

contribution to English letters. The relation between letter and essay here is tailor-made for the Guardian's purpose. The "essay" aspect allows for breadth of subject matter, use of historical analysis, a world-encompassing perspective, and a scholarly, definitive treatment of the issue at hand. Yet, the direct nature of the address, often intimate in tone, as well as the striking blend of formal and highly informal levels of rhetoric—perhaps a reflection of the Guardian himself—make these letters tremendously powerful on the level of personal appeal.

Shoghi Effendis choice of the more formal epistle form is wholly befitting to the style of his writing. Again, referring to Holman for a working definition, style may be said to be "the arrangement of words in a manner which at once best expresses the individuality of the author and the idea and intent in his mind. . . . Style is a combination of two elements: the idea to be expressed, and the individuality of the author." Holman goes on to say:

> It is impossible to change the diction or to alter the phrasing of statement and thus to say exactly the same thing; for what the reader receives from a statement is not alone what is said, but also certain connotations which affect his consciousness from the manner in which the statement is made. And from this it follows that, just as no wo personalities are alike, no two styles are actually alike. (514)

In the case of Shoghi Effendi, his elegant English prose style reflects perfectly his station as Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, elucidating the teachings and giving direction to its adherents in language that would endure for the entire duration of the Revelation. When deciding on the design and materials for the buildings at the World Centre of the Bahá'í Faith on Mount Carmel, Haifa, the Guardian chose as his models the structures of the classical world because of their enduring qualities. His choice of English prose style is as timeless and as enduring, as meticulously fashioned and as majestic in the realm of words as those architectural models are in the realm of physical structures. Bearing in mind Holman's definition of style, the reader sees that it is impossible to change even one word of the Guardian's communications and retain the identical meaning. Rúhíyyih Khánum Rabbani, in *The Priceless Pearl*, describes the conciseness and density of his style, a style lofty enough to carry the complex ideas that he had to communicate to the Bahá'í world. She says, "In his translations of the Bahá'í writings, and above all in his own compositions, Shoghi Effendi set a standard that educates and raises the cultural level of the reader at the same time that it feeds his mind and soul with thoughts and truth" (Rabbani 197). For Shoghi Effendi, then, style was not merely an affected use of language; it was his vehicle for rendering the divine teachings into a definitive and accessible language for growing numbers of English-speaking believers around the

world who urgently required inspiration and direction.

The roots of Shoghi Effendi's finely honed English style must lie in the original Persian and Arabic languages of the Revelation, the power and beauty of which are exemplified in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The delicacy and allusiveness of the Oriental languages, their role as the first media of God's most recent Revelation, and their strength as the communicators of God's new laws and principles for the spiritual well-being and development of humankind can be best understood and appreciated by native Arabic- and Persian-speaking Bahá'ís. These, too, were Shoghi Effendi's first languages. Yet Shoghi Effendi was chosen and trained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to translate the major sacred writings of the Bahá'í Faith into English. It was to this end, he himself said, that he was educated at Oxford. Shoghi Effendi was uniquely endowed with the talents for this monumental task of translation, not only steeped in the original writings but also possessing an exquisite sense of language and the ability to convey its shades of meaning. It is obvious thar the requirements of translation, with the inherent necessity of fixing the exact meaning of the text for the Western believers, so as to eliminate any possible ambiguity in interpretation, would certainly leave their mark upon the style of the Guardian's original works.

In addition to his appreciation for Persian and Arabic style, Shoghi Effendi possessed an ear finely attuned to the virtues of the great English stylists. In the translations of Bahá'u'lláh prayers, one senses the influence of that great Renaissance model of style, the King James version of the Bible. This turning to a more archaic style on the part of Shoghi Effendi reflects his great respect for the elegance of Shakespearean English and also makes use of the most scholarly example of religious writings rendered into English.

In Shoghi Effendi's original work, the style and technique of Edward Gibbon and Thomas Carlyle exert influence. Rúhíyyih Khánum has noted the Guardian's fondness for Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and it was nor for the content alone that Shoghi Effendi had admiration. She records, "It was his own pet bible of the English languag and often he would read to me excerpts from it, interrupting himself with exclamations such as 'Oh what style; what a command of English; what rolling sentences" (Rabbani 38).

Gibbon's penchant for lengthy, balanced sentences and his stylistic habit of building a paragraph that cannot be broken apart without serious rupture to the meaning of the whole are features also apparent in the writings of the Guardian. A brief passage taken from Gibbon's examination of the early history of the Christian church in the Roman Empire will serve to indicate comparable aspects of style. Gibbon writes:

> The promise of divine favour, instead of being partially confined

> to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the Gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret pride which under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart, was still reserved for the members of the Christian church; but at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favour, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful Deity. (92)

One notes, in the first sentence, the listing of balanced prepositional phrases appearing in pairs of opposites, a syntactical technique designed to demonstrate the truth of the universality of Christianity. In the second sentence, multiple verb phrases are embedded in the first of the two major clauses, while the second major clause qualifies and elaborates upon the first. The final sentence of the quotation includes vocabulary usage such as "most sacred duty," "inestimable blessing," and "a benevolent but all-powerful Deity" all of which bear great resemblance to the usage of the Guardian two-hundred years later.

Trevor-Roper's introduction to *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* points out that in addition to syntactical expertise, Gibbon combined "beneath a majestic style and the appearance of ease, an equal mastery of the new 'philosophy' and the old 'erudition'" (viii). An example of this philosophy and erudition is evident in Gibbon's passage on the early miracles of Christianity, when he states:

> The duty of an historian does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy; but he ought not to dissemble the difficulty of adopting such a theory as may reconcile the interest of religion with that of reason, of making a proper application of that theory, and of defining with precision the limits of that happy period, exempt from error and from deceit, to which we might be disposed to extend the gift of supernatural powers. (110)

Shoghi Effendi's philosophy and erudition were, perforce, much broader than that of the eighteenth-century Gibbon, but the technique of reasonable and thorough scholarship throughout his epistles shows how Shoghi Effendi built upon Gibbon's solidly laid foundations. In *The World Order*

of Bahá'u'lláh, Shoghi Effendi clearly outlines the historical perspective of the rise of the Bahá'í Faith. He writes:

> Should we look back upon the past, were we to search out the Gospel and the Qur'án, we will readily recognize that neither the Christian nor the Islamic Dispensations can offer a parallel either to the system of Divine Economy so thoroughly established by Bahá'u'lláh, or to the safeguards which He has provided for its preservation and advancement. (20)

From this point, the Guardian proceeds with historical analysis of the development of Christianity and Islam, demonstrating their deviations from the original teachings of their divine Founders. Certainly Gibbon's call for a reasoned examination of religion is answered here. Thus, not only in style but also in approach, Gibbon served as one major model for Shoghi Effendi.

Nineteenth-century historian, man of letters, and stylist, Thomas Carlyle was also admired by the Guardian. Again, the style is complex, reflecting the complexity of thought present in the writer himself. Carlyle's power of rhetoric was perhaps his most important talent as far as Shoghi Effendi was concerned, and for an example of this power it is instructive to examine a paragraph of the "Captains of Industry" chapter in the philosophical history *Past and Present*. Carlyle's rallying cry to his fellows, that they arise and attain their salvation from present evils through work, follows:

> Awake, ye noble Workers, warriors in the one true war: all this must be remedied. It is you who are already half-alive, whom l will welcome into life; whom I will conjure in God's name to shake off your enchanted sleep, and live wholly! Cease to count scalps, gold-purses; not in these lies your or our salvation. Even these, if you count only these, will not be left. Let bucaniering be put far from you; alter, speedily abrogate all laws of the bucaniers, if you would gain any victory that shall endure. Let God's justice, let pity, nobleness and manly valour, with more gold-purses or fewer, testify themselves in this your brief Life-transit to all the Eternities, the Gods and Silences. It is to you I call; for ye are not dead, ye are already half-alive: there is in you a sleepless dauntless energy, the prime-matter of all nobleness in man. Honour to you in your kind. It is to you I call: ye know at least this, That the mandate of God to His creature man is: Work! The future Epic of the World rests not with those that are near dead, but with those that are alive, and those that are coming into life. (166)

Carlyle had no way of knowing the true significance of that final sentence, written in 1843, but certainly the air of expectancy and prophecy found in this

brief passage is representative of much early Victorian writing. Content aside, however, Carlyle's literary techniques of exhortation, caution, praise, and promise are apparent in passages of the Guardian's writings as well. Witness the following from the conclusion of his letter "America and the Most Great Peace," included in *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*:

> Fellow-believers in the American continent! Great indeed have been your past and present achievements! Immeasurably greater are the wonders which the future has in store for you! The Edifice your sacrifices have raised still remains to be clothed. The House which must needs be supported by the highest administrative institution your hands have reared, is as yet unbuilt. The provisions of the chief Repository of those laws that must govern its operation are thus far mostly undisclosed. The Standard which, if 'Abdu'l-Bahá's wishes are to be fulfilled, must be raised in your own country has yet to be unfurled. The Unity of which that standard is to be the symbol is far from being yet established. The machinery which must needs incarnate and preserve that unity is not even created. Will it be America, will it be one of the countries of Europe, who will arise to assume the leadership essential to the shaping of the destinies of this troubled age? Will America allow any of her sister communities in East or West to achieve such ascendancy as shall deprive her of that spiritual primacy with which she has been invested and which she has thus far so nobly retained? Will she not rather contribute, by a still further revelation of those inherent powers that motivate her life, to enhance the priceless heritage which the love and wisdom of a departed Master have conferred upon her?
>
> Her past has been a testimony to the inexhaustible vitality of her faith. May not her future confirm it? (Shoghi Effendi 94)

The same basic rhetorical stance is taken by the writers in both of these lengthy passages; the authors are seeking to move their audiences to action. Both overtly challenge their audiences to respond to their calls; both praise their audiences, Shoghi Effendi for the Americans' accomplishments in the past and Carlyle for the inherent capacities of people; both, in a sense, temper their praise, Carlyle by cautioning the workers not to be "bucaniers" and Shoghi Effendi by listing the tasks that still lie ahead. Carlyle, too, looks to the future, but he lacks the specificity of vision that Shoghi Effendi expresses. This lack gives Carlyle's exhortation a tentative air, on the whole, while that of the Guardian radiates confidence in its challenge to the American Bahá'í community.

A comparison of Carlyle, Gibbon, and Shoghi Effendi not only reveals the influences of the former two upon the

Guardian but also shows their points of difference. Certainly, the scope of the Guardian's vision was beyond that of Carlyle, and while this breadth of vision may be more a legacy of Gibbon, who wrote not only history, as Hugh Trevor-Roper points out, but also "universal history" or "philosophic history" (viii). Still, there are further differences. Gibbon wrote the history of a civilization long dead, where historical interpretation was made easy because of the era's remoteness. Shoghi Effendi, however, used this technique of historical interpretation and analysis to clarify the significance of the clouded, ever-changing events that were taking place around him as he wrote. Astonishingly, these writings still read as if they were written only yesterday.

Stylistically, one of the most striking differences between the Guardian and his predecessors is the nature of rhetorical address. Of course, in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the rhetorical stance of the writer was conventionally formal, and although there might occur the occasional address to the "gentle reader," the distancing of writers from their audience was a rhetorical device designed to enhance the authority of the authors over their addressees. Shoghi Effendi completely reverses this form of address. Throughout his writings are scattered numerous intimate addresses to the communications' recipients, such as the "fellow believers" of the passage quoted earlier, "beloved co-workers," "fellow laborers in the Divine Vineyard," "dearly-beloved friends," "friends and fellow-heirs of the grace of Bahá'u'lláh," "friends and fellow-defenders of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh," and numerous other loving and tender appellations.

Throughout the letters, he rallies the troops of his followers around him, giving the authoritative interpretation of events, yet including himself in the numbers of believers undergoing the turmoils of the age, as in the following example: "Dearly-beloved friends! Can our eyes be so dim as to fail to recognize in the anguish and turmoil which, greater than in any other country and in a manner unprecedented in its history, are now afflicting the American nation . . . ?" (Shoghi Effendi 79). Many times the eyes of the average Bahá'í were "so dim," but Shoghi Effendi's eyes, possessing that sweeping perspective with which he was endowed as Guardian, were never dimmed. Another example of the Guardian's including himself with the rest of the Bahá'ís occurs in his letter "The Goal of a New World Order" where, in speaking of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, he states:

> How well we, the little band of His avowed supporters who lay claim to have recognized the Light that shone within Him, can still remember His repeated allusions, in the evening of His earthly life, to the tribulation and turmoil with which an unregenerate humanity was to be increasingly afflicted. (29)

At the close of his communications, he signs simply as "your brother and co-worker" or "your true brother," his name given simply as "Shoghi" rather than the more formal "Shoghi Effendi" that one might well expect from the appointed head of a world religion. It is a mark of the Guardian's humility and his great sense of the necessity that Bahá'ís work together in order to achieve enduring victories that he included himself in the number of the rank and file, much like a general marching to the front lines with his troops. This, in itself sets him apart from his stylistic models and indicates that he is willing to put his words into action, not merely to write academic tomes.

The choice of the epistle form is also indicative of the Guardian's desire to inspire to action. He could conceivably have written straight essays, nor directly addressing anyone, but the purpose of his communication was always to move his audience to deeds, not merely to inspire them with his words. To this end, the epistle form with its direct address is uniquely suited. It is difficult for the recipient of a letter (be it a nation or an individual) to miss the purport of a document that bears the recipient's name at the beginning, while a formal essay written in the third person can easily be put out of mind once read.

Historically, the epistle has been the vehicle for teachings in former religions, notably Christianity. One thinks immediately of those written by the Apostles of Jesus and included in the New Testament of the Bible. Paul's epistles to the Romans, the Corinthians, the Thessalonians, and numerous other groups are prime examples of these communications. Other apostles also addressed groups of early Christians in the epistle form. It was their only means of communicating with scattered groups of believers, to encourage them, to clarify what they perceived Christ's teachings to be, to exhort the people to live by their new beliefs, and to go out and teach others. These were the same objectives with which Shoghi Effendi sat down to write his letters to the Bahá'í world. The important and obvious difference in the two cases is that Shoghi Effendi possessed divine authority in his interpretations of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, while the apostles had no definitive authority and incorporated their personal ideas into the small body of Christ's teachings. In so doing, they may have diluted the strength and changed the intention of the original Word of God.

The epistles of Christianity, then, while providing an early example of communication, are not suitable models to which one may turn for explaining Shoghi Effendi's choice of this form. Infinitely more rewarding is a turning to the tablets of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The English translation of one of Bahá'u'lláh's most comprehensive writings is, in fact, titled *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, addressed as proof of His teachings to the son of the eminent Muslim leader who was responsible for the execution of two devoted and innocent Bábís.

Numerous others of Bahá'u'lláh's works, such as *The Seven Valleys and The Four Valleys*, are addressed to leading intellectuals, and his tablets to the kings and rulers of the world provide an important example for Shoghi Effendi, dealing directly as they do with the problems and challenges of the immediate future. The many, more intimate personal addresses of 'Abdu'l-Bahá serve as models for the render, understanding, and intimate aspects of Shoghi Effendi's letters. Still, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets were written in Arabic or Persian. In Shoghi Effendi's own letters to the Bahá'í world, humanity received for the first time in its history divinely inspired direction originating in the English language.

The differences between Shoghi Effendi's communications and those of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá are many. Significantly, the contents of the Guardian's letters are much more concerned with the practical aspects of building the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith, a project which was advanced primarily in the West, and particularly in North America. For this purpose, English was more functional than Persian or Arabic. Also, during Shoghi Effendi's lifetime there existed the means to disseminate such letters widely and efficiently to the rapidly growing number of English-speaking believers. Because of improvements in worldwide communications, as well as the spread of the Bahá'í Faith, the Guardian was able to give much more up-to-date and comprehensive reports of the global progress being made and to analyze extensively the global challenges confronting Bahá'ís. Historical perspective on the Bahá'í Faith, was possible by Shoghi Effendi's time, as well, and played a large part in the Guardian's messages. The sense of urgency as an effect of the Guardian's use of direct address is also a result of the convergence of his historical analysis and his world-encompassing perspective of the future.

This same sense of urgency lies behind another method of communication employed by the Guardian and for which he adapted the English language to suit his purpose. Whenever a matter was too urgent for conveyance via letter, or whenever Bahá'ís did not arise in response to his direction, the Guardian would send a cable. In composing cables, he did not abandon his majestic epistolary style; he merely pared it, eliminating connectives unnecessary to the meaning but retaining always his unmistakable dignity of language.

Shoghi Effendi was never dominated by form or convention in his communications. Rather, he adapted and used form and convention (as any good craftsperson uses tools) to accomplish the task before him—the building of the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh. It is illuminating to note the enduring influence of the Guardian's style in communications from the Universal House of Justice since its establishment in 1963. In continuing the same use of epistolary and cable forms initiated by the Guardian, in its blending of formal and intimate language, in its dignified yet loving tone, in its

dual historical and futuristic perspective, and in its world-encompassing yet personal scope, this second "twin pillar" of the Administrative Order has, in turn, upheld the standard toward which all Bahá'í institutions must strive.

While it is difficult to choose one passage that exemplifies all of these features, the opening sentences of the 1979 Naw-Rúz message from the Universal House of Justice indicated the similarities of style. "Dearly-loved Friends," the Institution writes:

> The decline of religion and moral restraints has unleashed a fury of chaos and confusion that already bears the signs of universal anarchy. Engulfed in this maelstrom, the Bahá'í world community, pursuing with indefeasible unity and spiritual force its redemptive mission, inevitably suffers the disruption of economic, social and civil life which afflicts its fellow men throughout the planet. (¶ 1)

This passage reflects the lofty style and world-encompassing vision of the Universal House of Justice, while the tenderness also apparent in the Guardian's writings can be seen in the concluding paragraph of the 1984 Riḍván message to the Bahá'ís of the world:

> Beloved friends, the bounties and protection with which the Blessed Beauty is nurturing and sheltering the infant organism of His new world order through this violent period of transition and trial, give ample assurance of victories to come if we but follow the path of His guidance. He rewards our humble efforts with effusions of grace which bring not only advancement to the Cause but assurance and happiness to our hearts, so that we may indeed look upon our neighbors with bright and shining faces, confident that from our services now will eventuate that blissful future which our descendants will inherit, glorifying Bahá'u'lláh, the Prince of Peace, the Redeemer of Mankind. (¶ 11)

The features seen in these messages are indeed the legacy bequeathed to us by the beloved Guardian, who not only gave to the Bahá'í World his great vision but also set the example of how to carry forward this "ever-advancing civilization" in language, style, and form worthy to be its medium.

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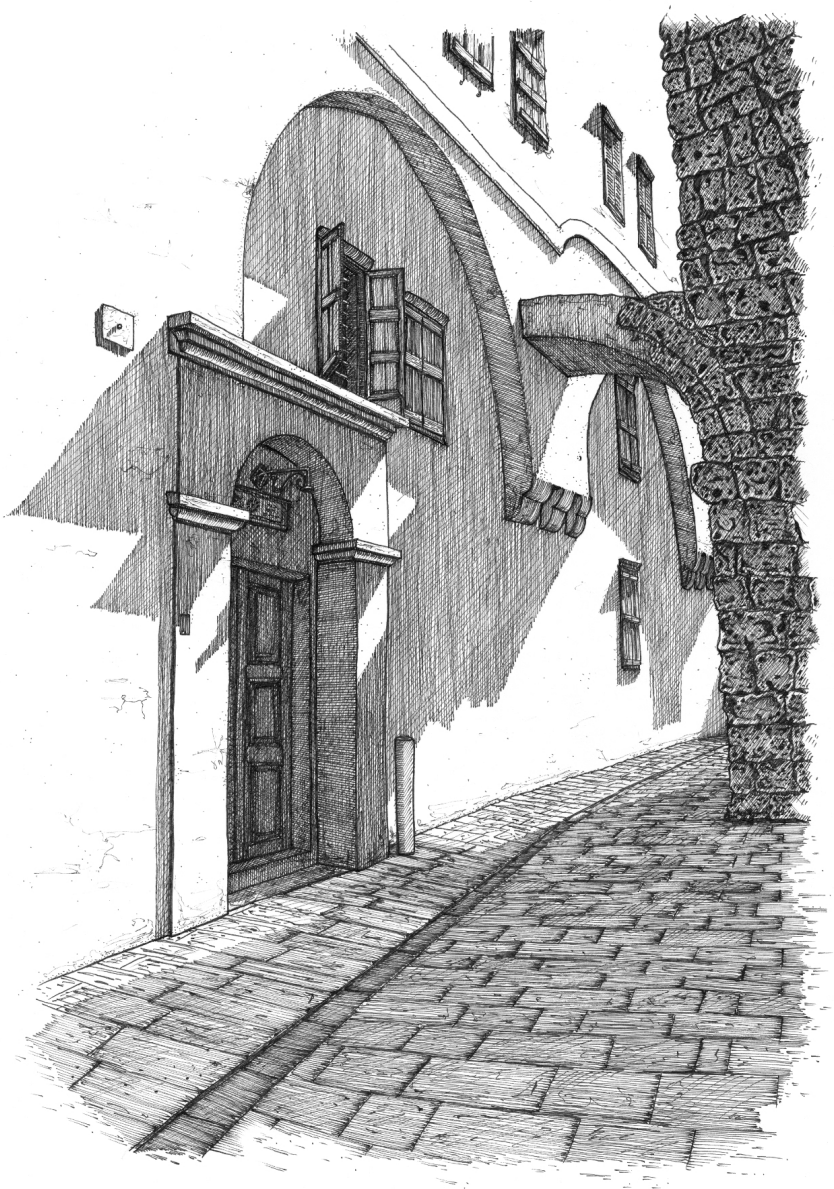


Entrance, House of Abbud
JUAN PABLO RUIZ MORALES

Reconsidering the Civil Rights Era in the Footsteps of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá[1]

JUNE MANNING THOMAS

Abstract
This article reviews major principles concerning racial prejudice that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained during His 1912 visit to North America. Three of the principles that emerged from talks He gave during that trip were the fallacy of racial prejudice, the need to judge people by their moral character rather than their race, and the mutual responsibilities of different races toward each other. The article describes how these principles helped the author research and then write a combination history and memoir of race relations and desegregation in South Carolina during the civil rights era. The author comments on the difficult task of writing academic material that caters to a secular audience but draws on Bahá’í insights, and then explains attempts to do so in this research project.

Résumé
Le présent article passe en revue des principes essentiels en matière de préjugés raciaux que ‘Abdu’l-Bahá a explicités lors de sa visite de 1912 en Amérique du Nord. Trois des principes ressortant des conférences qu’il a données au cours de ce voyage sont le caractère erroné des préjugés raciaux, la nécessité de juger les gens sur leur caractère moral plutôt que sur leur race, et les responsabilités des différentes races les unes envers les autres. L’auteure décrit comment ces principes l’ont aidée dans ses recherches et dans la rédaction d’un ouvrage alliant histoire et mémoires sur les relations raciales et la déségrégation en Caroline du Sud à l’époque des droits civiques. Soulignant la difficulté d’écrire un ouvrage universitaire qui s’adresse à un public laïc tout en s’inspirant d’idées bahá’íes, elle explique comment elle a cherché à y parvenir dans le cadre de son projet de recherche.

Resumen
Este artículo revisa importantes principios relacionados con prejuicio racial explicados por ‘Abdu’l-Bahá durante su visita a Norte América el 1912. Tres de los principios que emergieron de los discursos que El dió durante ese viaje fueron la falacia del prejuicio racial, la necesidad de juzgar a la gente por su caracter moral y no por su raza, y las responsabilidades mutuas de las diferentes razas, una hacia otra. El artículo describe como estos principios ayudaron a la autora investigar y despues escribir una historia de unión y memorias de las relaciones raciales y la desegregación en Carolina del Sur durante la era de derechos civiles. La autora comenta sobre la dificil tarea de escribir material académico dirigido a una adudicnca laica pero se inspira en visión bahá’í, y explica los esfuerzos de hacerlo en este proyecto de investigación.

One of the enduring challenges of our times is continuing social disunity, a major barrier to social progress. In North America, one manifestation of this problem is racial disunity, caused

1 This paper was originally presented at the Association for Bahá’í Studies 45th Annual Conference, 23-31 July, 2021.

by the continuing effects of centuries of racism that have translated into both prejudiced behavior and systemic injustice. The Universal House of Justice has called out this particular problem several times, such as in its message of 22 July 2020, addressed to the Bahá'ís of the United States. In that letter, this worldwide governing body labeled racism "a profound deviation from the standard of true morality," and called on Bahá'ís to "grasp the possibilities of this moment to create a consequential reform of the social order that will free it from the pernicious effects of racial prejudice."

The challenge that this call to action offers to Bahá'í scholars—meaning those who strive to study relevant Bahá'í guidance and to consider its implications for intellectual discourse—is significant. Many of us have been writing about matters related to racial injustice for many years, but in the above passage the Universal House of Justice called for renewed efforts informed by the Revelation and leading to "consequential reform." Of the three main tools the House of Justice identifies as fundamental ways to undertake social reform at this time—community building in clusters, social action projects, and participation in elevated discourse in whatever situations we find ourselves—the third has particular relevance to this context. This route is open to all believers. In an earlier letter, the Universal House of Justice noted: "every believer has the opportunity to examine the forces operating in society and introduce relevant aspects of the teachings within the discourses prevalent in whatever social space he or she is present" (24 July 2013). Bahá'í scholars may find opportunities with compelling chances to promote social reform, such as in academic writing.

But how to do this? The academic world is crowded with writings about racism and interracial relations, and books, articles, blogs, conferences, organizations, and journalistic offerings abound in both academic and more general public settings. Given the resulting quagmire of commentary and discussion, how should one attempt to offer insights informed by the crucial concepts that the Bahá'í teachings offer? What concepts are of particular use in such a discussion, in addition to the necessarily constant call for racial unity?

This article discusses a few of the principles offered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that appear to relate particularly well to scholarship about the history of racism in the United States and that were helpful in my recent writing about the civil rights era (Thomas, *Struggling to Learn*). The first portion of this article will summarize relevant personal background and explain the unique characteristics of this research project. The second major portion will first highlight the importance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 1912 visit for the study of American race relations and then address 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanations of (1) the fallacy of racial prejudice, (2) the need to judge people by their character, and (3) the mutual responsibilities of different races toward each other. The third

major portion of the article will offer additional commentary on the process of scholarly inquiry as discourse. The main purpose of the article is to revisit the relevance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance to contemporary scholarship on race relations and to highlight the nuanced insights such guidance might offer to historical research. A secondary purpose is to show how the process of writing about such a topic can itself pose considerable challenges to a Bahá'í scholar wishing to contribute to public discourse.

A Research and Writing Project

The research project partially described here was a combination archival history and family/ personal memoir, a very different approach than I had previously used. I had undertaken historical research before, using archival sources, but that had been in the field of urban and regional planning, and with the purpose of writing books and articles that addressed contemporary issues of social equity in cities. Writing about racial inequity was also a familiar pursuit, but again this had been in the field of urban planning, with a primary aim of publishing reading material for university courses that addressed racial inequality in a field with major influence over minority-race people and communities. A third professional effort was to co-found a national organization that strengthened the racial diversity of faculty in American urban planning schools. A belief in racial unity and the need for social betterment, nurtured by association with the Bahá'í Faith, therefore, transmuted into a series of collaborative professional efforts to improve racial equity, but often lacked direct reference to people outside of urban planning or to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In more Baha'i-centered projects, I had studied spiritual principles of leadership in planning via various writing and service projects,[2] possibly contributing to needed discourse within the Bahá'í community but not always reaching a wider public as audience or participants.

This project, however, would have to be different. Given the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the project would need to be outwardly oriented, meaning it should aim for an audience beyond the comfort zone of fellow Bahá'ís, but also reflect professional-standard caliber in order to join an established, crowded discourse in the world at large. The anticipated topics of school desegregation and civil rights in the U.S. South were unusual in my field, not being amongst the accepted areas of focus in urban planning—such as housing, transportation, land use, urban design, or planning history. Writing about such matters would mean reaching beyond the familiarity of my own academic community. The project would also demand emotional strength

2 Projects that offered formal and informal lessons in leadership included volunteer service for Bahá'í institutions such as the Auxiliary Board, regional councils, and local spiritual assemblies. See also June Manning Thomas, *Planning Progress: Lessons from Shoghi Effendi*.

to address a painful personal topic long set aside: my experiences growing up in the Jim Crow South and surviving the traumas of both racial segregation in public spaces and court-ordered racial desegregation of our local public schools. Not having kept personal journals during those years, I would also have to conduct archival research to unearth sources for something more than a memoir. While I was familiar with the basic methodology of historical research and the overall approach to the study of racial inequity, I was relatively new to the substantive field of educational inequality and the other areas of research involved; all of this required setting forth into new realms.

Baha'u'llah has said "At the outset of every endeavor, it is incumbent to look to the end of it." (*Tablets* 168). The end set at the beginning of this research project was to write an outwardly oriented book that diverse faculty could use in university classrooms that studied race relations, Black history, Black education, Southern history (especially for South Carolina), or the civil rights movement. The content would offer some autobiographical or family history, increasing its value to scholars and other people interested in race-related topics, but surround this with creditable historical research to encourage adoption in standard university courses. It would include information about the Bahá'í community and its precepts, but this would need to emerge carefully, as an integral part of the narrative. Given such goals, the best publisher would be a secular university press with an established audience. To be accepted by such a publisher (none would commit until the very end of the project), the book would have to appear "secular" and yet draw upon spiritual insights.

Once this overall goal was clear, the next task was to consider the timeframe and conceptual framework. The heart of the narrative would be my own family and race relations in my hometown, but stories of their lives and this place unfolded over many decades. Sources, then, could not focus just on the 1960s—the school desegregation decade—but rather needed to include considerable primary and secondary sources about the late nineteenth and early-to-mid twentieth century.[3] Some years ago I had begun writing occasional pieces about my high school experiences. These short narratives, supplemented by personal memories and writings by family members, helped to extend the perspective and create

3 Primary sources are raw, direct historical materials such as reports, letters, minutes, and other matter often located in protected archival collections. Secondary sources are books and articles written by authors who did not have first-hand experience of the events being researched. I have consulted about two dozen archival collections of primary sources, mostly within the state of South Carolina. These included many boxes of materials covering the classic civil rights era (1954 to 1968) as well as several decades leading to it, in addition to occasional oral histories, some of which had been recorded (and transcribed) by archivists or previous researchers.

an undertone of personal subjectivity, but the bulk of the work would need to look to other sources.

From the beginning, my lens was that of the oneness of humanity. Racial unity was an integral component of this fundamental concept. This perspective was honed through years of life as a Bahá'í, living in Bahá'í communities that were well aware of these specific teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. It seemed apparent, as well, that constructive resilience would be a key concept; the heroic experiences of South Carolina's Black people connect very clearly to the Universal House of Justice's explanations of the concept of constructive resilience.[4] A seminar on constructive resilience (sponsored at the Highlander School by the Association for Bahá'í Studies some years earlier) had helped me see this concept's potential. Beyond this, however, the specifics were unclear; how would this project evolve?

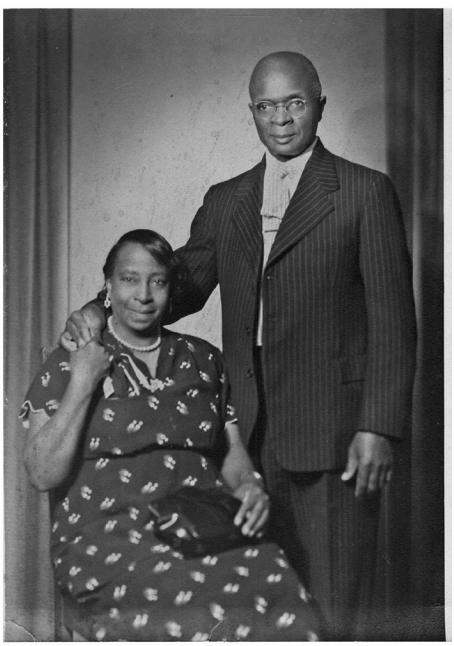
The research and resulting narrative began chronologically by exploring white missionaries' attempts to set up educational institutions for Black children and youth in South Carolina starting in 1869, just after the U.S. Civil War. The project then reviewed the subsequent history of the state's educational system for Black children and youth over the next century, giving special attention to the evolution of two Black colleges, Claflin and South Carolina State, located in Orangeburg, my hometown until early adulthood. The project described both Jim Crow segregation and the statewide civil rights movement, particularly during the classical civil rights era of 1954 to 1968[5], but before and afterwards as well. Some authors refer to a longer period of civil rights activism, extending from Reconstruction to the present (Hall), and this project included some commentary about that longer time span of struggle for human rights. The memoir portion, interwoven throughout, included personal reflections from the classical civil rights era, family stories, and commentary on the lingering effects of that era.

Family history became an integral part of the project, much more so than originally expected. My family struggled mightily to raise its children in the Jim Crow South, rife as it was with racial suppression. My maternal grandparents, Bahamian immigrants, managed to raise eight children despite living in extreme poverty in one of

4 The Universal House of Justice has written a series of letters explaining and elaborating upon the concept of constructive resilience, usually addressed to the Bahá'ís of Iran. See, for example, the letter dated 21 March 2010 "to the believers in the cradle of the Faith."

5 Some scholars consider the classic civil rights era as extending from 1954, the date of the U.S. Supreme Court's desegregation decision in *Brown v. Board of Education (Topeka)*, to 1964, date of a landmark U.S. Civil Rights Act. Some argue that the ending date for the classical era was 1965, with the Voting Rights Act of that year, or 1968, the date of another civil rights bill sometimes known as the Fair Housing Act.

Miami, Florida's Black neighborhoods. This project, however, referenced only my paternal grandparents, who lived their whole lives in rural and small-town South Carolina. These Carolina grandparents, the Reverend and Mrs. Irvin V. Manning, were extraordinary people.



Rev. and Mrs. I. V. Manning, the author's paternal grandparents. This couple is representative of South Carolina Black residents in mid-twentieth century South Carolina in the way they displayed admirable qualities in spite of racial oppression.
Family album photo.

They struggled to educate themselves as far as society allowed Blacks to in early twentieth century South Carolina, which meant some form of high school for my grandmother, but, for my grandfather, probably little schooling beyond a few grades and then some ministerial training. Nevertheless, in their roles as an ordained Christian minister (Methodist Episcopal Church, now the United Methodist Church) and minister's wife, they then encouraged hundreds to attend school. They served up to four rural and small-town congregations at a time, rotating to a different congregation each week, mostly in the northern Piedmont and Pee Dee sections of the state. My talented grandmother exhibited the best qualities of rural Black women in the South, plus more, including thrift, creativity, and household skills such as canning, sewing her own clothes, gardening, crocheting, cooking, and playing the piano (to accompany her husband in church services). My cheerful, charismatic grandfather exemplified many noble qualities, such as principled leadership and extreme generosity of spirit. These grandparents—who as far as I can tell lived just above the poverty line until rescued by my father, once he and my mother gained stable incomes—managed to educate my father, according to his own written testimony, by paying close attention to their only living child's psychological, physical, emotional, and spiritual health. They sent him to one of Orangeburg's two Black colleges, Claflin, by making many financial sacrifices and encouraging him to work his way through school, which he did in part by serving as a resort waiter at Myrtle Beach, a vacation spot even then. He graduated from Claflin in 1940, well before the classic civil rights era began.

My parents married, obtained master's degrees, and eventually settled in Orangeburg as they began to work for Claflin. As they raised my sister and me, they endeavored to ensure that we received excellent academic instruction as well as spiritual nourishment through their own ironclad faith, our steady attendance and participation in local church activities, and relatively infrequent but seminal exposure to grandfather's inspirational and affecting sermons, not so much spoken as sung. (Grandpa Manning's was a style only truly gifted Southern Black preachers mastered; exhortations toward virtue and Bible verses mixed with hymns led to a musical call and response dialogue between the preacher and his congregation. From what I could see, many people loved and respected my grandfather.)

Along with my Black schoolmates, pictured here in our campus-based elementary school, Felton Training School, I grew up in Orangeburg during the classic civil rights era. As everyone else in that state and time, I attended racially segregated schools until 1964. That year, my parents joined a lawsuit filed by several parents supported by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP); they filed the suit on behalf of me, their older child. In this way I was able to help desegregate our local white high school under court order, the only way white schools in the state would open to Black pupils in those days. I attended that desegregated school for three years, suffering harassment and trauma throughout, as did my fellow pioneering Black students, few in number.

Classroom scene, Felton Training School, Orangeburg, South Carolina, circa late 1950s. June Manning is at right, head bowed, with glasses. Family album photo.

Such research and narrative topics as these lie firmly within the flourishing tradition of Black or race relations studies of nineteenth, twentieth, and early twenty-first century America, but usually such work is academic and secular. What insights could we gain about those times from the Bahá'í teachings? How should we approach such subjects as Bahá'ís? How might 'Abdu'l-Bahá look at that critical time period? If we were specifically studying Bahá'ís or the Bahá'í community, the task would be clearer. Several Bahá'í authors have quite ably done such work (Venters, Etter-Lewis and Thomas, Abercrombie and Borovicka). When studying those who were not adherents of this faith community, such as most of the actors in this particular research project, what Bahá'í concepts would be particularly helpful? How might it be possible to discuss this era in a way that is illuminated by and benefits from concepts learned as a Bahá'í? This is exactly what the Universal House of Justice has asked us to do, as we bring knowledge gained from Bahá'í teachings into insights that can help the world at large. Can we, that is, learn to speak to or write for a secular public while engaging readers in a discussion that references Bahá'í experiences and concepts?

'Abdu'l-Bahá Counsels Racial Unity

'Abdu'l-Bahá helps us with such a task. His talks were models of critical analysis that nevertheless offered insights accessible to people of all faiths or backgrounds. He explained to Jewish audiences how their own history demonstrated the importance of valuing upright character over generations-old rituals. He achieved this engagement with His listeners partially because, in such talks, He referred to Jewish history and prophets, enhancing His audience's ability to hear and understand what He was saying. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to Christian churches, He exhorted them to consider the admirable pathway of Christ as a model of how to interact with various peoples of the world, and again His deep knowledge of the Bible gave Him the vocabulary and the stories necessary to gain His audience's attention. Likewise with His talks to peace societies or to impoverished people in the Bowery Mission; the message was conveyed in a manner that fit the circumstance and the audience. 'Abdul-Bahá spoke to the generality of humanity, explaining key principles in practical terms understandable to audiences unfamiliar with the Bahá'í Faith, thus exemplifying for Bahá'ís the standard of outward-looking orientation ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*).

One of the first inclinations for North American Bahá'ís investigating racial unity is to consult the extraordinary writings of Shoghi Effendi, such as *The Advent of Divine Justice*. In that 1938 book-length letter—designed to prepare North American Bahá'ís for their first Seven Year Plan, a monumental task that required refining their personal and community life—Shoghi

Effendi directly addressed several challenges facing North Americans in general and members of the Bahá'í Faith specifically. Concerning the challenge of racial prejudice, he clearly indicated that lingering prejudice could undermine all Bahá'í teaching efforts, which were essential in order to reach the goals of the Plan. He counseled that Black and white Bahá'ís each had specific tasks necessary to create greater racial unity, and he gave detailed advice about the responsibilities of each. He also warned that overcoming racial prejudice required both mutual action and long-term commitment: "Let neither think that the solution of so vast a problem is a matter that exclusively concerns the other. Let neither think that such a problem can either easily or immediately be resolved" (40). Shoghi Effendi continued to offer such guidance until his death in 1957 and, through his writings, beyond. After its establishment in 1963, the Universal House of Justice took on the mantel of leadership of the worldwide Bahá'í community and itself offered cogent guidance concerning racial unity and related matters.[6]

Both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice based their guidance upon interpretation and careful extension of concepts emanating from the three Central Figures of their faith, the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Of these three, only 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited North America in person, traveling, speaking, and observing for over eight months in 1912. While His insights were firmly rooted in the teachings of His father, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's first-hand engagement with this continent makes His thinking, writing, and speeches particularly valuable commentaries on American race relations. We have a record of many of His North American talks collected in one volume, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

We should revisit the guidance 'Abdu'l-Bahá presented in these talks—still as relevant today, as we mark the 100th anniversary of His passing on 28 November 1921, as it was when He offered it in 1912. We have abundant evidence of the continuing dilemma of racial disunity. When 'Abdu'l-Bahá visited, He saw for Himself the sorry state of race relations at that time. Already the perniciousness of endemic racial prejudice had solidified in the form of casual and systemic racial subjugation. Steps undertaken just after the American Civil War to protect citizenship rights for formerly enslaved Black residents and their progeny had faltered catastrophically. After 1877, most Reconstruction-era steps toward Black social, economic, political and human rights dissipated in southern and bordering states when protective federal troops withdrew from that region, as a result of a political compromise. Legalized white supremacy regained its stranglehold. Other regions of the United States and Canada reflected sometimes-subtler

6 See, for example, its recent guidance to American Bahá'ís in a series of letters addressed to individuals ("Extracts from Letters").

but clearly manifest forms of white supremacy, racial segregation, and oppression as well. 'Abdu'l-Bahá arrived well after the unfolding of this process, but this did not deter Him from openly addressing its blatant injustice. He began to visit a wide range of audiences, remarking favorably upon any visible racial diversity among His listeners, offering tangible evidence of His high regard for Black people, and providing cogent guidance—by His talks and by the example of His personal conduct—on many subjects, including race relations.

The three principles described here—the fallacy of racial prejudice, the need to judge people by their moral character rather than their race, and the mutual responsibilities of different races toward each other—have been particularly useful for my own research, but they may have broader applicability to scholars and others trying to live in this multiracial but fragmented society. These principles are, of course, only a sample of the insights gained when considering 'Abdu'l-Bahá's contributions to this specific discourse. Shoghi Effendi pointed out that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "courage, His genuine love, His informal and indiscriminating fellowship" had great influence as well, as he notes in *The Advent of Divine Justice*. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "example and conduct," demonstrated at several "historic episodes and occasions," were key; such episodes included His purposeful invitation to Louis Gregory to sit as the head of a banquet table that was otherwise filled only with white guests, and His active encouragement of Gregory's interracial marriage, the first of its kind in the Bahá'í community. Shoghi Effendi also cites 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "keen sense of justice, His spontaneous sympathy for the downtrodden, His ever-abiding sense of the oneness of the human race," and "His overflowing love for its members," among other qualities that modeled appropriate conduct (Shoghi Effendi 34). In this context, while 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks offer just one dimension of this multi-dimensional influence, they nevertheless provide helpful insights into the challenges and potential for North American race relations. Let us take each of the three principles in turn, citing as appropriate from *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

The Fallacy of Racial Prejudice

The first of the three insights of direct relevance to this discussion that 'Abdu'l-Bahá offered concerns the nature and origins of prejudice, and the need to become free of *all* prejudice, particularly racial. 'Abdul-Bahá often spoke to His audiences about prejudice, sometimes referencing the world of nature, or explaining by comparison the origins of religious prejudice.

On many occasions, the natural world offered 'Abdu'l-Bahá the opportunity to gently chide His audiences for their insistence on highlighting racial differences among human beings and acting on those perceived differences. Many are the examples in His talks, but this one from 10 November 1912,

given in the Washington, D.C., home of two white Bahá'ís, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Hannen, who had nurtured into this Faith a Black man, Louis Gregory, is illustrative: "Among the animals colors exist. The doves are white, black, red, blue; but notwithstanding the diversity of color they flock together in unity, happiness and fellowship, making no distinction among themselves, for they are all doves. Man is intelligent and thoughtful, endowed with powers of mind. Why, then, should he be influenced by distinction of color or race, since all belong to one human family?" (425–26). Later in that same talk ʻAbdu'l-Bahá offers a detailed description of Isfandiyar, a Black servant of Bahá'u'lláh, who demonstrated many noble qualities: "If a perfect man could be found in the world, that man was Isfandiyar. He was the essence of love, radiant with sanctity and perfection, luminous with light" (426). ʻAbdu'l-Bahá then offers many details about Isfandiyar and his extraordinary honesty, loyalty, and courage, thus championing a person who many whites would have disparaged simply because of his skin color.

ʻAbdu'l-Bahá also commented on the origins of prejudice, blaming it on upbringing and blind imitation, such as in religious bias. He lamented the fact that "the nations and religions are steeped in blind and bigoted imitations." He noted that parents passed on their biased views of life: "A man is a Jew because his father was a Jew. The Muslim follows implicitly the footsteps of his ancestors in belief and observance" (141). As He explained in His talk to the Fourth Annual Conference of the NAACP, an organization that was at that time interracial, with perhaps one-fifth of its members white but with interracial tension within its own ranks (Sullivan 33), "color or race is of no importance. He who is the image and likeness of God, who is the manifestation of the bestowals of God, is acceptable at the threshold of God" (70). In another talk, given in a Baptist Temple, he states: "Prejudices of any kind are the destroyers of human happiness and welfare. Until they are dispelled, the advancement of the world of humanity is not possible; yet racial, religious and national biases are observed everywhere. . . . As long as [prejudice] prevails, warfare, animosity and hatred will continue" (181).

When we discuss the Jim Crow segregationist or civil rights eras, it is important to state that no genuine basis existed for the rampant racial prejudice and oppression that characterized that time. Many books and articles about that era speak of the heroism of the civil rights workers and of the dastardly deeds of their opponents, but without a full explanation of why the standoff existed in the first place, and with little or no explanation of the motivations of the opponents. The same problem exists today; many writings, talks, or presentations on Black history or racial prejudice offer historical detail, surely necessary, or analyze institutional racism, also essential, but fail to acknowledge the flimsy basis for such prejudice, analyze its continued existence,

and champion the essential unity of all humankind.

For the purpose of my research project, I decided to review the archival papers and published writings of a prominent southern white journalist based in Charleston[7] who was a firm opponent of racial desegregation in the 1950s and 1960s. Although this review seemed necessary at the time, in hindsight perhaps it was not; it was discouraging, debilitating work, to put it mildly. It was disheartening to sit in well-organized and carefully stored archival collections, located mostly in air-conditioned library rooms at the University of South Carolina, and read the elaborate justifications this journalist put forth for keeping whites separate from and dominant over Blacks. He kept racist pamphlets as well, some of them sent to him by adoring fans. My graduate assistant—hired for this project—explored another of his collections on her own, also noting the careful way that archivists preserved this racist material. It was necessary to fortify this young Catholic woman for the material she would encounter and verbalize to her, on several occasions, the essential unity of all people, but we occasionally needed to console each another. We prayed together in devotional meetings and repeated truths about racial unity in order to survive the assault of such overt racism, a dangerously one-sided discourse of hate.

It was clear that this white journalist, long dead, believed these justifications—and that he was not alone. He was a major adviser and speechwriter for prominent politicians including at least one U.S. Senator, and very popular among his readers. The concepts that 'Abdu'l-Bahá propounded, such as the fundamental truth that differences in race are illusory and stem from ignorance, were not widely accepted, while racist practices, instead, were vehemently defended at that time. Defenders of white segregation tapped into not only their own prejudice but also that of their parents, grandparents, teachers, and political leaders. This suggested the need for a profound change in attitude about the nature of reality, just as 'Abdu'l-Bahá encouraged. The civil rights movement itself did manage to change some hearts but, with certain exceptions, (King) this was not the primary strategy during the classical era, meaning that prejudice and resentment lingered for decades afterwards, up to and including the present.

Here are several lessons we might take from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's approach. The first could be that, somewhere in our scholarship, it is important to declare the fallacy of racism and assert

7 Because of the intended secular audience and the historical methodology, in the resulting book it was necessary to name this journalist, William D. Workman, as well as one of the U.S. Senators he advised, Strom Thurmond, referenced in the next paragraph. The effort made in the book was to mention historical facts without resorting to disparaging name-calling (for example, by labeling policies, pamphlets and other materials pro-segregationist or racially oppressive but not calling individuals racist).

the essential oneness of all humanity. It was possible to state this principle in the book that emerged from my research project, although, in hindsight, I feel that it deserved even more attention. A second approach for scholars would be to describe the nobility of Black citizens as a way of highlighting the absurdity of racist arguments. One way to do that for this project was to immediately counter racist narrative with descriptions of praiseworthy Black citizens and local civil rights leaders; this was a pale reflection of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's praise of Isfandiyar but echoes that example. Another possible strategy would be to recount the personal damage done to members of the suppressed race because of fallacious assumptions and repressive actions. This approach emerged in the narrative we are describing in quite a few places, to encourage readers and audiences to recognize the fundamental injustice of practices and privileges widely accepted by the larger society.

How We Should View the Racially Oppressed

A second helpful principle apparent in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks during His 1912 visit concerns how to view the racially oppressed, or even more specifically for this project, how the racially oppressed should view themselves. The previous section already begins to approach this subject, laying out the fundamental principle concerning the equality of all human beings, but we can push this discussion farther by considering self-views of the racially oppressed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's guidance for this topic was a wonderful gift for all, but especially for minority-race people. Although many of His talks focused on the need to overlook racial differences, and although He expressed on several occasions great pleasure in speaking to interracial audiences, He did talk about different races, persistently emphasizing that quality of character rather than color was the true measure of a human being. He said this in different ways, one of which was to point out that the "spirit and intelligence of man is essential, and that is the manifestation of divine virtues, the merciful bestowals of God, the eternal life in baptism through the Holy Spirit" (70). Again at the Hannens' house, before describing Isfandiyar, He noted that "anyone whose heart is pure is dear to God—whether white or black, red or yellow" (425). 'Abdu'l-Bahá was calling people of all kinds, including minority-race people, to refine their own personal character, to manifest purity of heart and "divine virtues." This was, in some ways, a precursor of what we now think of as "constructive resilience," the call to an oppressed community to uphold spiritual standards and values even in the face of cruelty and injustice. The Universal House of Justice has similarly urged the long-suffering Baha'is of Iran to display such constructive resilience as a response to their continued and systematic persecution by the Iranian government.

My research project uncovered

strong evidence of the kind of quiet heroism that characterized African Americans throughout much of the twentieth century. Examples included those Black South Carolinians in the 1920s who used philanthropic funds from the Rosenwald Foundation to build schools for their children when local white school authorities would not build such schools or provide money for their operation. The Rosenwald grants required hefty local matches from the Black community, which was chronically impoverished and mired in agricultural sharecropping and peonage, a modern form of slavery. Even so, those Black residents gathered the material resources and hand labor necessary to provide the match necessary to raise exactly 500 school buildings (schools plus a few teachers' houses) for Black children in that state. This they did as they continued to pay taxes to public school systems that built brick schools for white children but nothing more than wooden shacks—at best!—for Black children. These thousands of unnamed Black parents and fellow community members had a vision: that life for their children would be better than their own lives, and that Black people had great potential even if the larger society said they did not. Black adults, even those without children, were willing to make the sacrifices necessary to make this a reality, displaying faith, tenacity, thrift, and ingenuity in the process. South Carolina's history includes many such stories of Black constructive resilience.

Another example was the visible work of civil rights activists, such as the officers of my hometown NAACP, one of whom was my own church's minister, Matthew D. McCollom, whom I looked up to, when I was a child, as an extraordinary role model because of his courage, leadership, and eloquence. Other Black characters described in my book include more famous people such as the Southern Christian Leadership Conference's Septima Clark—consummate educator, Charleston native, and compatriot of Dr. Martin Luther King—and Rev. Isaiah DeQuincey Newman, our state's field secretary for the NAACP, organizational counterpart to Mississippi's assassinated Medgar Evers, and family friend. Also highlighted is Rev. Joseph De Laine, Clarendon County community leader and driving force behind South Carolina's *Briggs v. Elliott* lawsuit against segregated public schools. It was important to discuss these people. Their names are familiar icons in the state's civil rights history, and Clark and King hold national recognition as well; they would be familiar to many in the intended reading audience. Archival collections particularly for Newman and NAACP state secretary Modjeska Simkins provided much useful information as well as insights into motivations, conflicts, and accomplishments.

While much of the civil rights movement needed heroic action by such Black leaders, the best of these actors were moral, not just civil rights, leaders. Furthermore, many ordinary people were steadily improving life for their families and for their

communities out of the glare of publicity and fame. They did this by carrying themselves with nobility in the face of oppression; encouraging honesty, truthfulness, belief in God, forbearance under tribulation; and in other ways exemplifying admirable qualities. From ʻAbdu'l-Bahá's perspective, we might view such people as heroic. They survived Jim Crow segregation, often raised excellent families, and, at the same time, contributed service to their own communities. They supported community development projects and created educational institutions for Black Carolinians' children and youth. I found and described many examples of such people, in my hometown and state but also within my family.

The project, in fact, required me to reconsider the value of my forebears, people generally unknown whom I nevertheless knew quite well. ʻAbdu'l-Bahá taught that character and virtues are the supreme measures of a human's worth—not color, fame, or social standing. When I understood this, much of the intended "civil rights era" data I was finding—that is, the facts, narratives, stories, and personal memories emerging as part of this research—began to make more sense. Some of this it was possible to interpret through a family lens.

To my knowledge, my grandfather never heard of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá, but his selfless service to his parishioners was unmatched. Grandpa's particular forte—in addition to great sermons—was urging the members of his several congregations to become the best human beings they could; helping them undertake social action projects such as building new churches (of brick, to replace shabby wooden structures typical for impoverished rural folk);

New brick church and rural South Carolina Black congregation served by Rev. and Mrs. I. V. Manning; date and place unknown. Rev. Manning is in the front row, extreme far left, wearing a light suit, and Mrs. Manning, white dress, is in the front row to the right. Family album photo.

and encouraging them to educate their children all the way through college, if possible. His unfailing courtesy, lack of materialism, willingness to give away food and clothes to whomever arrived at his door (if Grandma was not around to temper his largesse), and purity of heart endeared him to all who knew him. Because as a child and teenager I loved those qualities in my grandfather, I was later able to recognize the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who exemplified similar qualities though magnified many times over.

Although my father and mother were not recognized locally as civil rights "leaders" and were, therefore, at first peripheral to my research project, I soon grew more appreciative of their quiet contributions to what Bahá'u'lláh calls "the betterment of the world."[8] They became respectively president and mathematics professor of Dad's alma mater, the Methodist college now named Claflin University, where Black students were both educated in secular knowledge and nurtured in spiritual growth. An ordained minister and former faculty member, Dad served as college president for twenty-eight years, beginning in 1956 and so covering most of the classic civil rights era. My parents saw their work at Claflin as both spiritual and professional mission. They dedicated their lives to the survival and success of that college, weathering many devastating setbacks, helping to uplift thousands of Black youth out of poverty, and setting them forward toward adult lives filled with purpose. As I read archival copies of my father's inspirational speeches to students and faculty, studied and absorbed his master's thesis, recalled my parents' support for civil rights activities, reviewed records of their professional lives, and considered the courage it took to file a school desegregation lawsuit on my behalf, their unassuming heroism became increasingly apparent. They were striving to provide the best for Black South Carolina youth as well as for their two daughters.

'Abdu'l-Bahá exhorted all people, no matter their religion, to exemplify noble character and strive to bring themselves up to the standards with which God would be pleased. As He notes: "Man must be a lover of the light, no matter from what dayspring it may appear. He must be a lover of the rose, no matter in what soil it may be growing. He must be a seeker of the truth, no matter from what source it come" (56). This suggests the need to recognize exemplary spiritual qualities regardless of a person's race or religious background. If we were to adopt 'Abdu'l-Bahá's strategy of uplifting any nobility of character found among the racially oppressed, both history and contemporary society would look much different. Our definition of heroism would shift; our view of critical events in the history of race relations bend and expand; our respect for ordinary citizens of extraordinary good

8 "The betterment of the world can be accomplished through pure and goodly deeds, through commendable and seemly conduct" (Bahá'u'lláh, qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* 24–25).

character increase. From this enlightened perspective, we would admire the station of Black families and communities who weathered peonage, Jim Crow segregation, denial of human rights, and systemic institutional racism and yet managed (and still manage) to survive and to raise children who believe in healthy spiritual principles such as truthfulness, faith, fortitude, generosity, and forgiveness. This approach would require us to write about the racially oppressed differently, delving into honed community assets and virtues, rather than dwelling exclusively on racial oppression and inferior material conditions.

The Mutual Responsibilities of Different Races toward Each Other

A third illuminating principle that 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained during His North American talks concerned how people should treat each other—more specifically, how Blacks and whites should treat each other. Again, He pointed out that since God does not consider skin color, we should not pay so much attention to it either. However, He was reading the reality of America in 1912 (and beyond); people did and do pay attention to race, and they erected an elaborate system designed to ensure the oppression of one race by another. He saw and commented upon all-white meetings and dinners, and He pointed out the unjust economic handicaps and social mores that kept Blacks from associating freely with whites. Even so, foreshadowing what Shoghi Effendi would later describe as mutual responsibilities of Blacks and whites to resolve issues of racial prejudice, He specifically called on whites to show love to Blacks, and, amazingly, for Blacks to feel gratitude toward whites.

This too is a corollary of the first principle we outlined, the fallacy of racial prejudice, or prejudice of any kind. It is also a natural extension of the second principle, the need to focus on judging people by their character rather than their color. This third principle extends beyond these, however, by specifically addressing actual treatment and behavior. Because all human beings are equal and race is an illusory barrier, He urged His audiences to mingle and to treat each other equally, as doves do. This would bring great benefit to both Blacks *and* whites, as He noted in a talk given to a mixed-race—but perhaps predominately Black— audience at Howard University, one of the most prominent Black institutions of higher education in the United States at that time: "Today I am very happy that white and black have gathered together in this meeting. I hope this coming together and harmony reaches such a degree that no distinctions shall remain among them, and they shall be together in the utmost harmony and love" (45). He went on to say in this talk, in words that echo through the ages: "You must try to create love between yourselves; and this love does not come about unless you are grateful to the whites, and the whites are loving toward you, and endeavor to promote your advancement

and enhance your honor. This will be the cause of love" (46).

The advice for whites was clear: not only should they *show* love towards Blacks, they should also try to promote the "advancement" and "honor" of Black citizens. This is a standard with stunning implications. Whites should not only forego prejudice and show love, they must also work for the advancement of the Black race? Whites should be champions for a race of people they have oppressed for centuries? At first this standard seemed too high to have any meaning for my research project, which documented strong white opposition to civil rights campaigns; few whites at that time met even the rudimentary requirement of foregoing prejudice.

Just as important was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's call for Black people in His audience to feel gratitude. This must have seemed very difficult to accept in 1912. At that time, especially, there may not have appeared to be much for which to be grateful. Even now this is a challenging call. Yet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that part of the reason for gratitude was that some whites had fought against slavery in the American Civil War and, earlier, fought for Black freedom through the abolitionist movement. His references to the soldiers from white Northern families who fought in a bloody war for the freedom of the Black enslaved surely affected the hearer then, as they do now. This approach sets a spiritual standard for Black people that is very much in keeping with the concept of constructive resilience: even in the midst of oppression, He was calling on the racially oppressed to forego hatred and resentment and to rise to divine standards of conduct and attitude.

Describing such a duality of responsibility was perhaps 'Abdu'l-Bahá's way of trying to find a meeting point for the two races to unite.[9] In terms of my own research, this concept of Black gratitude was helpful not because I entered the project expecting to use it, but rather because of findings that made sense only by recognizing this principle. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, a few whites did fight for Black freedom from oppression, and they did deserve some form of recognition as well as gratitude. My first intention was to focus on Black actors, as does much of civil rights literature. Indeed, the bulk of my project material highlights heroic Blacks, some of them named in above sections. However, evidence revealed white anomalies, people who, in spite of their privileged racial background, supported the Black struggle in South Carolina. The white majority greatly outnumbered these anomalies, but still they offered essential service. This fact forced me

9 Shoghi Effendi later added insight into this particular exhortation, giving many specifics relevant to institutions and to individuals. For example, he called upon Blacks to react to genuine efforts by white Bahá'ís to overcome their own racial prejudice by responding in turn with warmth, with "their readiness to forget the past, and their ability to wipe out every trace of suspicion that may still linger in their hearts and minds." (*Advent* 40).

to notice them, and then to search for some way to understand them and recognize the markings of "the other tradition" of interracial cooperation.[10] It became necessary, that is, to feel and express gratitude.

First among these anomalies in the project's chronology, starting with the end of the American Civil War, were those white missionaries who founded churches and schools for formerly enslaved people; this was the origin of Claflin University, chartered in 1869 as an interracial institution, open to all. Men and women, missionaries and others, migrated from the North to the South specifically to help educate Black children and youth attending Claflin and other Black schools. Some of these exceptional whites I had heard about all my life—because Claflin had named buildings after them, making their names intimately familiar to us faculty members' kids living on or near campus—but I had not recognized them for what they were: champions of the formerly enslaved.

Another, singular example emerged from the next era, the 1920s and 1930s, with evidence of the lonely but essential efforts of J. B. Felton, a white man and the state's head of education for Black children. Felton, who administered the Rosenwald Foundation program in South Carolina, fought hard to help build the aforementioned 500 school buildings for Black children. This feat required him to work both with white school or political officials and with the Black communities that needed to provide a substantial match to the Foundation's disbursement. Felton, in fact, supported construction of my own elementary/junior high school building, then named after him, Felton Training School. This was cause for gratitude, indeed; that school, located on the campus of South Carolina State College (now University), gave many of us a wonderful education. Felton focused largely on improving physical school facilities. In the process he and his Black collaborators countered repressive state legislation, miniscule public expenditures for Black schoolchildren, plantation policies that discouraged Black education by requiring children to labor in the fields, and anti-Black violence in the form of pogroms and lynching parties. The success of this school building program in the face of such obstacles and opposition honors both Felton and hundreds of stalwart, self-sacrificing local Black communities.

Just before the classical civil rights era, in the 1940s, other whites for whom many of us feel grateful emerged. One of these would be recognizable to any South Carolina reader familiar with civil rights history in that state. Julius Waties Waring was a federal circuit judge who in the 1940s experienced a change of heart about racial matters and, in spite of his privileged white Charlestonian upbringing, began to make racially fair judicial decisions concerning Black South Carolinians'

10 See, Richard W. Thomas, *Racial Unity: An Imperative for Social Progress* and *Understanding Interracial Unity. A Study of US Race Relations*.

voting rights and teachers' salaries. Judge Waring was a true civil rights hero; one of his many contributions was a dissenting opinion in *Briggs v. Elliott*, the lawsuit that predated and became absorbed within the more famous *Brown v. Board of Education* (Topeka, Kansas) case. Judge Waring's dissent in *Briggs* was a stunning commentary on the fallacy of racial prejudice and significant enough to influence Thurgood Marshall's arguments before the US Supreme Court, leading to that court upholding *Brown* and striking down the legality of enforced racial segregation in public schools (Waring, Gergel).

Research also revealed that during the classical civil rights era not all South Carolina whites were die-hard segregationists. When the white pro-segregation journalist described earlier wrote to several of the state's white religious and nonprofit leaders just after the 1954 *Brown* decision, soliciting their opinions about what he considered an objectionable court ruling, several whites wrote back refusing to defend racial segregation; these letters too are on file in the journalist's archives. Some of their statements were magnificent rebuttals of legalized racial prejudice. Few whites spoke in public about those sentiments, however, without reprisals such as job loss, a high risk for outspoken white dissenters during that era. A notable exception who did speak out was a courageous white woman, Alice Spearman Wright, who headed the South Carolina Council on Human Relations (SCCHR) during the 1950s and early 1960s. Not only did she work to support interracial dialogue, she also provided tangible support for Black civil rights leaders and for Black children and youth desegregating schools, social activism that earned her repercussions and deep enmity from local whites but heartfelt expressions of gratitude from Black people familiar with her work (Middleton and Barnes). She kept meticulous records for SCCHR, records now safely housed in the University of South Carolina's archival collection and also reviewed for this project.

Integrating Bahá'í Concepts

Although some are reluctant to reference Bahá'í concepts in academic work, many of these concepts have powerful applicability, in diverse areas of inquiry. Examples cited above related to race relations, including constructive resilience, the need to judge people by their character, and the fallacy of racial prejudice, but similar depth of spiritual insight comes from exploring the applicability to a wider society of Bahá'í concepts such as the harmony of science and religion, the equality of men and women, consultation, or sustainable agriculture, for example.

While scholars can describe and illustrate such concepts, deeds have much greater power than words. Books, articles, and lectures constantly exhort exemplary principles, urging the population to be more sociable, more communicative, more resourceful, less prejudiced, *ad infinitum*. At some

point, however, people want to read, or hear about, or meet those who act on their principles, either as individuals or as groups.

The fact that Bahá'ís living in a state that legally enforced racial segregation gathered in mixed-race groups and families throughout the mid-twentieth century offered an important counterpoint to legalized racism and sent a powerful message. While writing about the period from the 1930s to the 1960s, it first became possible to mention the courageous efforts of the South Carolina Bahá'í community. The book chapter that recounts the odious writings of the segregationist journalist, for example, ends by describing the small Bahá'í community that was gaining a presence in the state and refusing to support racial segregation in its community life. As another example, one book section, written largely in memoir mode and dealing with harassment in high school, ends by describing my meeting a Black college student who recommended study of that Faith as an antidote to the daily expressions of racism I was experiencing. Discussion of Greenville's Furman University, which I attended during the school year 1967-68, references the Bahá'ís I met in Greenville. Such discussions help integrate Bahá'í concepts into a narrative that a secular university press would publish and that an intended audience of university students, faculty, and adults might read. This occasional inclusion was, therefore, a purposeful strategy that hopefully will be successful.

The Bahá'í Faith becomes, in essence, the hidden surprise, the reward for steadfast readers. Bahá'ís were the ones who met together interracially even through all the racial turmoil described above. It was possible to describe that community as a place of respite; the Bahá'ís were different, examples of an alternative vision, steadfast proponents of racial unity. The work that Bahá'í scholars had undertaken concerning the South Carolina Bahá'í community became essential reference points that readers could explore further.[11]

The narrative's epilogue, a cursory update of family life, includes an account of my personal journey toward the Bahá'í Faith. At other places I mentioned my own concerns about white Christian behavior and observations about interracial unity among Bahá'ís; the epilogue describes more fully my initial conversations with Bahá'ís about racial unity and how these affected my own life. The last story in the book describes a 2020 campus commemoration held for Joseph Vaughn, a Bahá'í man from Greenville, South Carolina, who first desegregated Furman University and now has a statue erected there in his honor. This account offered another opportunity to integrate reference to the Bahá'í Faith into the text.

Surely it could have been possible

11 See, Richard Abercrombie and JoAnn Borovicka, *Crossing the Line: A Memoir of Race, Religion, and Change*, and Louis Venters, *No Jim Crow Church: The Origins of South Carolina's Bahá'í Community*.

to say much more; the necessary balancing act was how much could be said that would still be accepted by a secular publishing outlet located in a religiously conservative state. I held my breath as the acquisitions editor at the University of South Carolina Press read the draft epilogue after having read several other draft chapters in previous months without committing. My husband lovingly warned me that the epilogue read like "a fireside" (an introductory talk on the Bahá'í Faith), but soon after the acquisitions editor read that epilogue, he sent me a book contract. That was a firm commitment to publish.

Conclusion

'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks offer many concepts and practical principles that could help North Americans overcome the problem of racial disunity. I have highlighted here only three of these, selecting those that seemed particularly helpful for my own research and writing project, but these three principles are only a small part of the guidance contained in His talks during that 1912 visit and explained in other Bahá'í Writings as well. The source material used here, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, will prove useful for generations to come, as different scholars plunge into its depths and uncover the wisdom that lies within.

The principles selected for discussion include the indefensible nature of racial prejudice, the need to judge people by their virtues rather than by their external characteristics, and the importance of Blacks and whites treating each other with love, support, and gratitude. It is impossible to explore fully even these few. The number of direct passages from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks that support each principle; the way each quotation offers yet another subtle inflection concerning definition and implications; and the actions that 'Abdu'l-Bahá undertook to illustrate His spoken words are myriad. Yet we can continue to pursue such analysis; 110 years has not been enough time for this, but future scholars can continue to draw meaning from such source material.

These three principles assisted my own research into a critical period in the history of race relations. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's assurances about the fallacy of racial prejudice helped make it psychologically possible to survive deep dives into archival source materials filled with racial hatred, and to counter such falsehoods with an alternative perspective. The affirmations concerning the importance of virtue and character expanded the research project's realm of heroism, allowing more confident exploration of unsung Black survivors of Jim Crow segregation in a Southern state. The exhortation that Black people feel gratitude toward white people as a part of their responsibility for racial unity, a challenging concept for many, opened a conceptual door to a different interpretation of history, one that uncovered several white allies who helped Blacks advance in a racially oppressive time and place. The background of a

steadfast Bahá'í community, striving to serve as a model of racial unity, provided examples of the possibilities for social reform. It is essential to recognize that 'Abdu'l-Bahá laid the groundwork not only for racial amity within North America, and not only for Bahá'ís, but also for the general public. Even now, we can go back to His talks and writings for guidance that can help us interpret the world as it unfolds around us now or in our past.

The Universal House of Justice's request mentioned at the outset of this article—that all members of the Bahá'í Faith look at the social situations in which we find ourselves and seek to engage in discourse as well as to promote "consequential reform"—is a challenging one. It is possible that we are living in just the early stages of this process, but progress has emerged. With the worldwide Bahá'í community's new series of global plans continuing throughout the next twenty-five years, recently described (Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021), it will be possible to make much further advances.

The first strategy designated by the Universal House of Justice as a way to bring social reform—community building within the geographic framework of clusters—has gained much from cumulative effort undertaken over the previous twenty-five year time frame, 1996-2021. During that time, the strategy of promoting social and economic development has also evolved, with such social action characterizing a growing set of initiatives worldwide.[12] Public discourse as a strategy has evolved as well, at national, local, and individual levels. The Universal House of Justice praises in particular projects or organizational initiatives that promote informed discourse,[13] but it continues to mention the essential role of individuals. As it notes: "Historically and now, social action and efforts to participate in the prevalent **discourses** of society have

12 Social action takes place in myriad ways, but one way is the creation of educational initiatives for children, junior youth, youth, and adults in the context of neighborhoods, villages, and cities. As recently noted, "in the field of social action the provision of education remains the signature contribution of Bahá'ís in most parts of the world. Pre-eminent among the structures and agencies created by the Bahá'í world to offer education is, of course, the training institute" (Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021).

13 Guidance continues to evolve, but here is a recent passage: "Projects, both large and small, have been started in order to respond to a range of social issues. Numerous Bahá'í-inspired organizations have been established by groups of individuals to work for many different objectives, and specialist entities have been founded to give attention to a particular discourse. All of these efforts, at whatever scale they have been undertaken, have benefited from being able to draw on the principles and insights guiding the activities occurring at the grassroots of the worldwide Bahá'í community, and they have also benefited from the wise counsels of Local and National Spiritual Assemblies" (Universal House of Justice, 30 December 2021).

emerged not only in the context of growth, but also as a result of individual Bahá'ís striving to contribute to society's progress in ways available to them" (30 December 2021).

The path of discourse leading to "consequential reform" is a difficult one for those individuals working in academic fields dedicated to secular thought and not attuned to basic spiritual principles. It helps to remember that the efforts made are only part of the grander scheme, which is a worldwide community of fellow believers, and their friends, striving to undertake social reform through discourse in ways "available to them," ranging from simple conversations to project and organizational development. As we continue to engage in specific discourses and then to share and build on our experiences, we will continue to see positive change. No way exists to succeed in helping to create transformational discourse without trying.

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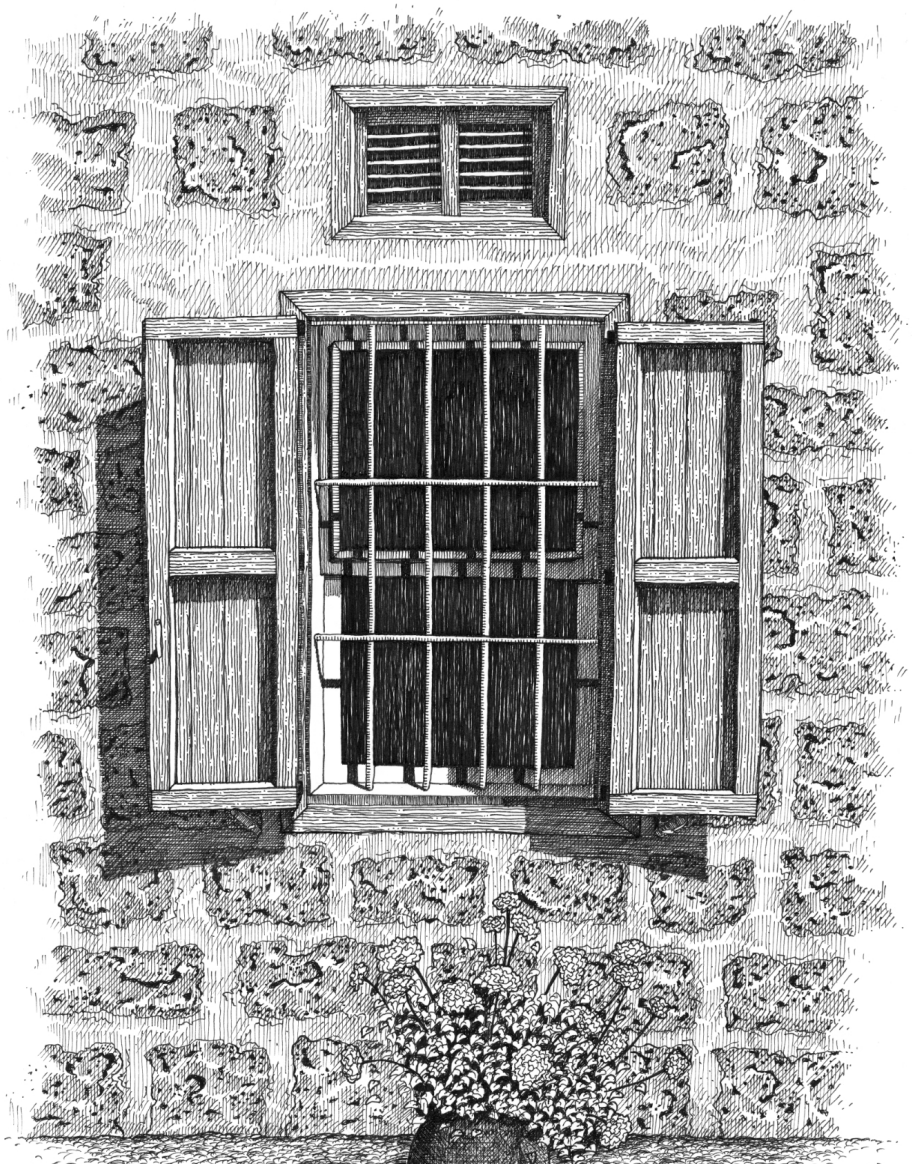

Window, Mansion of Mazra'ih
JUAN PABLO RUIZ MORALES

New Knowledge from Old: Conceptions of the Library in the Writings of Shoghi Effendi

LEV RICKARDS

Abstract
The meaning of the library as a social institution has changed over time. The library's role in human progress and in the generation of knowledge is alluded to briefly by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and, more frequently, by Shoghi Effendi. These references have historical precedents but are an expression of unique ontological and epistemological commitments in Bahá'u'lláh's vision of an emerging global civilization. This paper compares conceptions of libraries in the writings of Shoghi Effendi to different meanings assigned to libraries throughout history, comments on Bahá'í beliefs that could inform the practice of librarianship, and suggests a number of avenues for future research.

Résumé
La bibliothèque comme institution sociale a changé de sens au fil du temps. Le rôle qu'elle joue dans le progrès humain et dans la diffusion du savoir est brièvement évoqué par 'Abdu'l-Bahá et, plus fréquemment, par Shoghi Effendi. Ces références, fondées sur des précédents historiques, sont l'expression d'engagements ontologiques et épistémologiques propres à la vision de Bahá'u'lláh d'une civilisation mondiale émergente. L'auteur de cet article compare les conceptions de la bibliothèque qu'on retrouve dans les écrits de Shoghi Effendi par rapport à différentes significations attribuées aux bibliothèques à travers l'histoire. Il aborde ensuite des concepts bahá'ís qui pourraient éclairer la pratique de la bibliothéconomie et suggère un certain nombre de pistes pour de futures recherches sur le sujet.

Resumen
El significado de la biblioteca como una institución social ha cambiado de tiempo a tiempo. Al papel de la biblioteca en el desarrollo humano y en la generación del conocimiento, hace breve alusión 'Abdu'l-Bahá, y mas frecuentemente Shoghi Effendi. Estas referencias tienen precedentes históricos pero son expresiones de un compromiso ontológico y epistemológico en la visión de Bahá'u'lláh de una civilización global emergente. Este artículo compara las concepciones de las bibliotecas en los escritos de Shoghi Effendi con diferentes significados asignados a las bibliotecas a los largo de la historia, comenta sobre las creencias bahá'ís que podrian informar la práctica del cargo de bibliotecario, y sugiere un número de opciones para investigación futura.

Libraries have been a part of human societies since the advent of the written word. While their role and context has changed over time, libraries have always been connected to the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge and, by extension, to the advancement of civilization. Bahá'í conceptions of libraries reflect these connections. In fact, libraries have played a role in the

progress of the Bahá'í Faith since the very inception of the religion. Táhirih's first encounter with the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad-i-Aḥsá'i occurred in the private library of her cousin, Mullá Javád ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Memorials* 189). Beautifully depicting the thirst for knowledge as a motivating force, 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes Táhirih's response: "For a long time now, I have thirsted after this; I have yearned for these explanations, these inner truths. Give me whatever you have of these books" (189). Shoghi Effendi, writing to the Bahá'ís of the West on 6 December 1928, lists libraries as one element of the flourishing Bahá'í communities in Persia in the 1920's (*Bahá'í Administration* 150). Later, in *God Passes By*, he includes libraries as one of the many buildings that signaled the spiritual and material progress of the Bahá'í community in 'Ishqábád (361). In each of these examples, libraries play a supporting role; they are not the central focus of the narrative. Yet there is a sense, particularly in the account of Táhirih from *Memorials of the Faithful*, that libraries can be the site for radical discovery. What more can be gleaned about the role of the library in social life from such references?

In all, there are twenty passages that mention libraries in the English writings of Shoghi Effendi available on the Bahá'í Reference Library website. Across these twenty passages, three conceptions of the library come into view: as a locus for the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, as a support to the Administrative Order, and as a contributor to the future Bahá'í university. To place these roles in their historical context, this paper begins with a brief summary of the development of libraries prior to the start of the Bahá'í Revelation. The next three sections examine how each conception of the library both builds on and transcends its historical antecedents. The conclusion presents further areas for investigation that have been illuminated by this analysis.

History of Libraries Around the World

The history of libraries is bound up with the development of writing, government, science, and religion; it mirrors the history of human progress. A complete review of this history is beyond the scope of this article, but a brief survey of examples will help to place Bahá'í conceptions of libraries in a broader context.

Some of the earliest libraries include the ancient collections of clay tablets at the Sumerian city of Uruk, dating before 3000 BCE, and the thousands of tablets that archeologists uncovered at the city of Ebla dating from prior to 2250 BCE (Tolzmann 2; Lerner 15). In the intervening millennia, the invention of new writing technologies, the advent of new religious dispensations, and their interaction with governmental institutions have all contributed to the changing roles of libraries in society.

Knowledge of ancient libraries is greatly influenced by the media in which different civilizations captured

the written word. Lerner dates the earliest Chinese libraries to the Chou dynasty in the first millennium BCE, where writing was captured on tablets made by splitting bamboo cylinders lengthwise to make long and narrow pages (52–53). In contrast, the civilizations of the Fertile Crescent relied on clay tablets. During the seventh century BCE, for example, the library of Assurbanipal at Nineveh contained tens of thousands of these tablets in addition to rooms dedicated to baking the requisite clay (Tolzmann 3). Less is known of the libraries of the Egyptian and Hebrew peoples because they wrote on the comparatively fragile media of papyrus and animal skins; nevertheless their reverence for the written word is well documented (Lerner 16).

Moving into the period of classical antiquity, historical accounts of libraries become more common. In Greece, references to libraries date to the sixth century BCE, and it is clear that both Plato and Aristotle had access to a "considerable library" (Tolzmann 5). The famed library at Alexandria was constructed in the third century BCE by Ptolemy, who gathered together a "community of scholars" (Tolzmann 4; Battles 30). During the first and second centuries BCE in China, libraries were explicitly mentioned in imperial plans from the Han dynasty (Lerner 53). Around the same time, authorized texts of the Confucian classics were carved into stone *stele*, and the introduction of paper at the Imperial Library contributed to greater scribal efficiency (54).

The rise of Christianity in Europe, accompanied by the spread of the parchment codex book, inaugurated a period of growth in church libraries and the trade in books (Lerner 35). Under Constantine, the church was a state institution and "the disciplinary, organizational, and dogmatic duties of each bishop forced him . . . to maintain a library" (Tolzmann 19). The imperial library at Byzantium was constructed in the fourth century CE (Lerner 49). In the sixth century CE, the presence of abbeys containing libraries extended all the way to Ireland, with monks and pilgrims carrying books from one abbey to another (40).

The advent of Islam provided further impetus to the development of libraries. In his article "The History of the Arabic-Islamic Libraries: 7th to 14th Centuries," Ribhi Mustafa Elayyan provides a comprehensive explanation for the flourishing of written literature during the early period of Islamic civilization and the necessity of establishing "new institutions to collect, arrange and preserve this literature" (120). The Sankoré mosque and the manuscript libraries of Timbuktu, in present-day Mali, were renowned throughout the Islamic world as centers of learning, science, and Islamic jurisprudence (al-Wangari 278). In addition to libraries such as these, within mosques and private collections, Elayyan identifies the three great libraries of the Abbasid, Fatimid and Umayyad caliphs. He emphasizes that these "were not just store houses where books were seldom used," but, rather, "centers for learning and teaching" (126). The knowledge

generated in these centers by people striving to put the teachings of the Prophet Muhammad into practice spread across the world. In *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes how "the peoples of Europe acquired the sciences and arts of civilization from Islám as practiced by the inhabitants of Andalusia" (89). He goes on to describe how these works affected European civilization and persist to the present day: "all the writings of Muslim scholars and divines and philosophers were gradually collected in Europe and were with the most painstaking care weighed and debated at academic gatherings and in the centers of learning, after which their valued contents would be put to use. Today, numerous copies of the works of Muslim scholars which are not to be found in Islamic countries, are available in the libraries of Europe" (89).

The advent of the Bahá'í Faith in the mid-1800s opens new possibilities for the role of libraries in society. In the Lawḥ-i-Dunyá, Bahá'u'lláh states that He has "breathed a new life into every human frame, and instilled into every word a fresh potency" (*Tablets* 84). Surely this "world-wide regeneration" includes libraries, but it is up to humanity to realize the potential of these words (84). One good starting point is to sift through the Bahá'í writings for any mention of this particular social institution. However, references to libraries are scarce in the works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá that have been translated into English. For this reason, I will primarily draw on passages from the writings of Shoghi Effendi to explore three conceptions of the library.

Dissemination of Bahá'í Literature

The majority of Shoghi Effendi's references to libraries arise in connection with the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, a strategic goal that continued throughout his ministry and into the present day. It is clear from the relevant passages that the Guardian's goal was to increase opportunities for the "reading public" to engage with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh (*God Passes By* 385). For example, in a letter dated 5 June 1947 written in the midst of the Second Seven Year Plan,[1] the Guardian references libraries in connection with the growth of the Faith in Europe:

> The translation, the publication and dissemination of Bahá'í literature, whether in the form of leaflets, pamphlets or books, in the nine selected languages, should, as the work progresses and the demand is correspondingly increased, be strenuously carried out, as a preliminary to its free distribution among the public on certain occasions, and its

1 One of several consecutive global plans for the expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í Faith. The first plans were initiated by Shoghi Effendi, and they now unfold under the direction of the Universal House of Justice.

> presentation to both the leaders of public thought and the numerous and famous libraries established in those countries. (*Citadel* 23)

Later in that same message he lists a number of goals to be achieved in the United States and Alaska, noting that the

> beneficial and highly responsible activities undertaken by the Publishing, the Reviewing, the Library . . . Committees, designed to disseminate and insure the integrity of Bahá'í literature, should, however indirectly connected with the purposes of the Plan, and within the limits imposed upon them through its operation, be steadily expanded, consolidated and be made to promote, in whatever way possible, its paramount interests. (*Citadel* 9)

Both of these passages demonstrate that libraries, inasmuch as they supported the dissemination of Bahá'í literature, played a strategic role in the Guardian's plans.

The work of disseminating literature, including placing books in hundreds of libraries, was pursued both by individuals and institutions. In *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi notes that both these protagonists have a "duty to place this literature at the disposal of the public in state, university and public libraries, thereby extending the opportunity to the great mass of the reading public of familiarizing itself with the history and precepts of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh" (385). This shared responsibility to increase the availability of Bahá'í literature went hand in hand with the international expansion of teaching activities. In describing this process, the Guardian notes that "books [in many languages], mostly through the initiative of individual Bahá'ís, and partly through the intermediary of Bahá'í assemblies, were published, widely distributed, and placed in private as well as public libraries in both the East and the West" (381).

In these documents, libraries are seen as repositories for Bahá'í literature, a conception with strong historical precedents. The development of libraries across the Near East, Europe, northern Africa and the Sahel was frequently driven by the dissemination of the Gospel and the Qur'an, as well as works by Christian and Islamic scholars (Lerner 35; Elayyan 120; al-Warangi 278). During the ministry of the Guardian, in contrast, the library was already a familiar social institution around the world. What may be more novel is that the head of a world religion was able to direct the dissemination of literature to "numerous and famous libraries" as part of a world-wide strategic goal to translate, publish and disseminate its sacred texts to a wider audience (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 23).

This conception of libraries as repositories of literature also highlights the relationship between libraries and the collections they house. Different approaches to librarianship can be

characterized by considering this relationship. David Lankes, for example, suggests that an excessively transactional approach to library collections can devalue the role of librarians in supporting the generation of knowledge and obscure the need to ensure adequate training and funding for these professionals (*Atlas* 16). Jaroslav Pelikan, writing in the context of academic libraries, speaks of the centrality of the library collection to the teaching mission of the university. The library collection reflects the "mysterious and ongoing process" by which new knowledge and existing knowledge are transformed through teaching and research (114). He describes the collegial relationship between librarians and faculty, resulting in library collections that contribute "not only to the What but the How of knowledge," and thereby "provide context, balance, and correction" to the evolving scholarly conversations in various disciplines (115).

Clearly, the relationship between libraries and collections can take many forms. For Shoghi Effendi, it was of strategic importance that the writings of Bahá'u'lláh be available in the libraries of the world, so much so that in major messages detailing the goals of global plans he explicitly called for this work to be pursued. Decisions about which titles to include in a library have an impact on the educational experience of the library's patrons, constraining or expanding their opportunities to have a radical encounter with new ideas. History testifies to the importance of such decisions. How different would the course of Táhirih's life have been had her cousin's library not contained copies of the writings of Shaykh Aḥmad? Would she have recognized the Báb, become one of the Letters of the Living, and attended the Conference of Badasht?

In presenting the library as a repository of literature, the Guardian's writings also reflect certain fundamental re-imaginings of the relationship between different protagonists in society. Reflected in these passages, one can see an interplay between the individual and the institutions in relation to the library. Shoghi Effendi speaks of the duty shared by both protagonists to place Bahá'í literature at the disposal of the public. These efforts are distinct but overlapping, perhaps reflecting the shared responsibility that individuals and institutions in the Bahá'í Faith have for spreading the message of Bahá'u'lláh. Furthermore, there is a recognition that the various entities working to disseminate Bahá'í literature have "limits imposed upon them" through the operation of the Plan[2] (Shoghi Effendi, *Citadel* 9). In making this point explicit, he effectively cautions the Bahá'í community that the library will not always be the first priority. A close reading of his letter dated 5 June 1947 reveals the Guardian's nuanced and integrative approach—in this case that the work of disseminating Bahá'í literature through libraries is

2 The Second Seven Year Plan, 1946 to 1953.

important and should be pursued, even though such efforts might sometimes need to be limited in scope or temporarily set aside when priority must be given to other goals of the Plan. This nuanced understanding continues to the present day. Professional librarians and volunteers maintaining small, local Bahá'í libraries may be aware of certain pressing needs related to their work, but Shoghi Effendi's caution to the community in 1947 continues to be relevant. The needs of the Plan at any particular moment may understandably prioritize goals related to teaching the Faith, for example. Those working with libraries should be watchful for ways in which their efforts, such as those related to the dissemination of literature, can "be made to promote, in whatever way possible, [the Plan's] paramount interests" (*Citadel* 9).

The Library and the Administrative Order

A second set of selected passages describes the role of the library in relation to the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith, as one of the agencies contributing to the efficient functioning of institutions, and as a marker of the increasing national endowments and administrative capacity of various national communities. The Guardian describes this relationship in a variety of ways. In a letter to the American National Spiritual Assembly dated 26 November 1923, he lists the National Library, a committee of the National Assembly, as one of the agencies whose "diligent efforts . . . constitute in themselves a convincing evidence and inspiring example . . . of the efficient spiritual administration of the affairs of the Bahá'í world" (*Bahá'í Administration* 56). In *God Passes By,* Shoghi Effendi includes libraries as one of the "factors contributing to the expansion and establishment of the Administrative Order" (341). And in that same chapter, he mentions libraries as an example of the increasing national endowments of Bahá'í communities:

> Whether in the form of land, schools, administrative headquarters, secretariats, libraries, cemeteries, hostels or publishing companies, these widely scattered assets, partly registered in the name of incorporated National Assemblies, and partly held in trust by individual recognized believers, have contributed their share to the uninterrupted expansion of national Bahá'í endowments in recent years as well as to the consolidation of their foundations. (339)

The acquisition and development of land and buildings to support the varied and complex organizational structures that constitute these endowments is not trivial; it requires the development of significant institutional capacity. The capabilities required to maintain a library, both in terms of physical space and in terms of its interaction with the Administrative Order of the Bahá'í Faith, would be fruitful objects for further research.

That libraries would develop in relation to administrative institutions and government agencies is not without precedent. Indeed, throughout history libraries have responded to the information needs of both religious and governmental administrations. They informed legislative and administrative decision-making in the Tang dynasty in China, during the reign of Charlemagne in Europe, and under the ʻAbbasid caliphate (Lerner 44, 55, 70). Today in the United States, the Library of Congress continues to support the deliberations of that legislative body through the Congressional Research Service (Lankes, *Expect More* 23). But Shoghi Effendi makes clear that the Administrative Order of Bahá'u'lláh is unlike any system of governance that has come before: "Neither in theory nor in practice can the Administrative Order of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh be said to conform to any type of democratic government, to any system of autocracy, to any purely aristocratic order, or to any of the various theocracies, whether Jewish, Christian or Islamic which mankind has witnessed in the past" (*God Passes By* 326). Through it, Bahá'u'lláh has called into being institutions and administrative entities that are unique. It is the uniqueness of the Bahá'í Administrative Order that transcends these historical precedents.

One of the ways that libraries support administrative bodies is by providing resources that inform the decision-making processes of these institutions. In the context of the Bahá'í Faith, this role is perhaps most clearly demonstrated through Shoghi Effendi's description of the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds,[3] where the library is listed as one of its "component parts":

> Complementary in its functions to those of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár[4] . . . this institution, whether local or national, will, as its component parts, such as the Secretariat, the Treasury, the Archives, the Library, the Publishing Office, the Assembly Hall, the Council Chamber, the Pilgrims' Hostel, are brought together and made jointly to operate in one spot, be increasingly regarded as the focus of all Bahá'í administrative activity, and symbolize, in a befitting manner, the ideal of service animating the Bahá'í community in its relation alike to the Faith and to mankind in general. (*God Passes By* 339)

In this description of the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds the Guardian does not elaborate on the specific functioning of the library itself but chooses, instead, to emphasize its joint operation with the other agencies of the Spiritual Assembly. This highlights the supporting role that the library (and librarians) play in contributing to

3 "Sacred Fold." The term is used primarily to refer to national, regional, or local centers for Bahá'í administrative offices.

4 "The Dawning Place of the Praise of God." The term is used primarily to refer to Bahá'í Houses of Worship and their surrounding dependencies.

informed decision-making by institutions and implies a posture of mutual support and assistance between the various component parts of the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds. In considering the organization of such systems, the metaphor of the human body that Bahá'u'lláh shared with Queen Victoria comes to mind. Referring to this metaphor in a letter dated September 1964, the Universal House of Justice states: "In the human body, every cell, every organ, every nerve has its part to play. When all do so the body is healthy, vigorous, radiant, ready for every call made upon it. No cell, however humble, lives apart from the body, whether in serving it or receiving from it." In this light one might ask, "Which part of the body is represented by the Library, and how does it interact with the other component parts of the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds and the Administrative Order in a spirit of organic wholeness?" Furthermore, the unique and world-embracing character of the Administrative Order suggests that these libraries are placed in a common, world-wide institutional and conceptual framework unmatched by any previous governmental or religious library system.

The role that libraries play in supporting institutional decision-making continues to the present day. During his tenure as leader of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi began construction of the International Archives Building and placed copies of Tablets and manuscripts in places of prominence (Giachery 148–51). Later, under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, the Centre for the Study of the Texts was constructed on Mount Carmel, and plans were drafted for the International Bahá'í Library. Describing those plans in a letter dated 31 August 1987, the Universal House of Justice states: "This Library is the central depository of all literature published on the Faith, and is an essential source of information for the institutions of the World Center on all subjects relating to the Cause of God and the conditions of mankind. In future decades its functions must grow, it will serve as an active center for knowledge in all fields, and it will become the kernel of great institutions of scientific investigation and discovery." Indeed, in speaking of the slope of Mount Carmel the Guardian alluded to "those world-shaking, world-embracing, world-directing administrative institutions" that would eventually be raised (*This Decisive Hour* 33). While the International Bahá'í Library has yet to be built, one of its key functions—that of making the Bahá'í writings available to the world—is currently addressed through the Bahá'í Reference Library, a website that provides the "authoritative online source of Bahá'í writings" and "contains selected works of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, as well as other Bahá'í texts" ("Bahá'í Reference Library").

These passages regarding libraries and the Administrative Order also reflect some of the ways in which the relationship between individuals and institutions has been recast in the

Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. The individual, conceived of as a soul with an innate desire to understand reality, cannot simply be seen as an information-seeking agent trying to fill a gap in their store of data, nor as a consumer seeking products conforming to their preferences. Thus, the library as an institution of society cannot be reduced to a market mechanism that coordinates matches between readers and books. Nor does it solely exist as a site for resistance to propaganda and oppression—a romanticized view of the library which may stem from its professed value for universal access to information and ideas. Its sights cannot even be set on the relatively narrow purpose of producing informed citizens who participate in democratic processes (Budd, *Self-Examination* 185; Lankes, *Expect More* 20). Many of these views presume a neutral or antagonistic relationship between individuals and institutions. In contrast, the writings of Shoghi Effendi suggest that libraries have the potential to be social spaces in which individuals and institutions support each other in their efforts to work for the betterment of society. The library is an institution that seeks to release the potential of individuals. At the same time, those who work in libraries that serve Bahá'í spiritual assemblies have the unique responsibility of assisting to locate information that informs institutional decisions. These conceptions of the library demonstrate the Bahá'í understanding that individuals and institutions are mutually constitutive and supporting. In the context of the Administrative Order, libraries reflect this mutuality.

The Library and the University

The third role that emerges from a review of Shoghi Effendi's references to the library relates to those schools and institutes "that bid fair to evolve into the Bahá'í universities of the future" (*God Passes By* 341). The Guardian includes the establishment of libraries in a list of developments undertaken by the "embryonic Bahá'í educational institutions" at Geyserville, Green Acre, and Louhelen (341). He suggests that these and other institutions built along the same lines will evolve into Bahá'í universities. This is the only passage where the Guardian makes an explicit link between libraries and the concept of a Bahá'í university. That such a relationship would exist is not surprising. Many of the universities in the Islamic world, such as Al-Azhar in Cairo and Al-Zaitunah in Tunis, grew out of mosques that held renowned libraries (Elayyan 121). In Europe, university libraries have been a feature of the educational landscape since at least as early as that continent's first universities in the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Lerner 83). That a Bahá'í understanding of libraries would encompass university libraries therefore has strong historical precedents, yet it is uniquely shaped by Bahá'í conceptions related to knowledge and education.

The very idea of a university is recast by Bahá'í epistemological commitments. Bahá'u'lláh says, "Knowledge

is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and ends with words" (*Tablets* 51–52). Rather than commodifying knowledge and treating it solely as information that can be bought and sold, the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh teaches that knowledge must be actively generated by individuals, communities, and institutions as they work for the advancement of civilization: "True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world" (Bahá'u'lláh, qtd. in *Scholarship* 8). Others have explored Bahá'í perspectives on knowledge, drawing connections to nonfoundational and consultative epistemologies that emphasize the social processes and social purpose of knowledge generation (Lample 178; Smith and Karlberg 68). The imagery of wings and ladders used by Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes the transformative effect of knowledge on the knower: it elevates one's understanding and enables one to see reality with greater and greater perspective. A university that reflects these conceptions might deliberately move away from educational approaches that place undue emphasis on the material, transactional aspects of knowledge generation.

A penetrating examination of universities and their role in the generation of knowledge is found in Farzam Arbab's discussion of science, religion, and development in *The Lab, the Temple, and the Market*. Writing in the context of rural development, Arbab envisions the university as "an institution devoted to the formal generation, application, and propagation of knowledge," systematizing a process of learning that lies at the heart of development for the population in a given region (216, 228). In comparison to a materialistic conception of the university that focuses on skill transfer and employability, Arbab's description is rooted in processes of community life and aligned with the needs of the particular regional population served by the university. In particular, universities assist the population to "deal with the generation and application of knowledge, not necessarily in the forefront of modern science and technology, but in areas where the natural and social sciences must together tackle specific problems of specific people" (207). And in so doing, they "break the present pattern of flow of knowledge in the world," more effectively enabling human progress (207). Indeed, "the right of the masses of humanity not only to have access to information but to participate fully in the generation and application of knowledge" lies at the heart of this vision of progress (206). The library associated with this vision might therefore raise its sights beyond questions of access and consider how to assist populations both to engage with an existing body of knowledge and to begin making new contributions.

Sona Farid-Arbab alludes to a similar vision of universities in her book *Moral Empowerment: In Quest of a*

Pedagogy, where she describes "educational programs that . . . would empower the peoples of the world to contribute to a fundamental transformation of their societies" (201). She discusses the relationship between knowledge and action, noting: "The knowledge that students must make their own through education cannot be acquired in isolation from the imperative that they are to act on the reality of their own lives and of society" (199). In a similar vein, a statement on social action written in 2012 by the Office for Social and Economic Development (OSED) at the Bahá'í World Centre describes what happens when a community engages with a body of existing knowledge, putting it into practice. "The application of existing knowledge," they write, "is invariably accompanied by the generation of new knowledge" (335). OSED goes on to emphasize the importance of systematizing the generation and application of knowledge, noting that "appropriate structures have to be put in place at the local level, among them institutions and agencies invested with authority to safeguard the integrity of the learning process and to ensure that it is not reduced to opinion or the mere collection of various experiences—in short, to see to it that veritable knowledge is generated" (336). While the form these structures will eventually take is yet unknown, we can look to the network of training institutes that has risen throughout the Bahá'í world since 1996, as well as the network of sites for the dissemination of learning about the junior youth spiritual empowerment program and the burgeoning number of Bahá'í-inspired organizations for social action, as examples of the potential for educational agencies to systematize the generation of knowledge. Taken as a whole, these perspectives and developments point toward a future Bahá'í university, an institution perhaps distinct from traditional conceptions of the university, yet still concerned with the generation of knowledge for the transformation of society. The continuing need to engage with existing bodies of knowledge in the generation of new knowledge suggests a clear role for the library in supporting this vision.

The relationships sketched out in this section between epistemology, universities, social action, and the institutional capacity needed to support community learning all inform this nascent conception of a Bahá'í university library. With that said, these topics have not gone unexamined in the literature of librarianship. For example, John Budd treats epistemological questions at depth in his *Knowledge and Knowing in Information Science*. He is attentive to a tendency toward objectivism in library and information science, calling for a new approach to knowledge in the discipline (329). He presents hermeneutic phenomenology as a way of knowing (and an idea of knowledge) that admits realism while remaining open to "human action and perception," and he invites further theory and practice to engage with this way of knowing (329). In imagining the future of university libraries, Budd

warns of a tension between instrumental definitions of libraries that see knowledge as existing within things—the objectification of knowledge—and seeing the library as a "place where people encounter ideas" (*Self-Examination* 252). In another example, Jaroslav Pelikan envisions the university library as a space in which scholars can come into conversation with existing knowledge *en route* to the generation of new knowledge. He speaks of the "dynamic interrelation of research with teaching, and of both with the acquisition, preservation, and circulation of documents and artifacts" while noting that "the relation between scholars and libraries is a symbiosis" (113). The relationship between the application of existing knowledge and the generation of new knowledge, described earlier in the social action document from OSED, is alluded to by Pelikan: "In the modern university . . . new knowledge has repeatedly come through confronting the old, in the process of which both old and new have been transformed" (120).

What the future development of Bahá'í universities might imply for academic libraries remains to be seen, but this brief examination has raised a few possibilities. Bahá'í universities of the future may be much more rooted in questions of concern to the specific regional populations they serve. The library collections at such institutions may in part be comprised of works that speak to those more local realities. Eventually, a significant part of the collections would represent that "veritable knowledge" generated by the community itself as it pursues efforts to strive for both material and spiritual progress across a range of community processes (Office of Social and Economic Development 336). Librarians at such institutions would see their patrons as protagonists in an effort to generate and apply knowledge for the progress of their region, pushing back against a dominant ideology that reduces patrons to customers or to information-seeking agents. As our understanding of the generation and application of knowledge for the transformation of social reality continues to evolve, so too will our understanding of the role of the university and the library. While much remains as yet unknown, it is not difficult to see that these new conceptions will move beyond historical precedents.

Conclusion

The conceptions of libraries drawn from the writings of Shoghi Effendi are not unexpected; they build on historical precedents that stretch back millennia. Nevertheless, the structures and institutions called into being by Bahá'u'lláh, including the Ḥaziratu'l-Quds, the institutions of the Administrative Order, and the future Bahá'í university, reconfigure our understanding of what libraries can be. New conceptions of knowledge, human nature, and the fundamental relationships between individuals, communities, and institutions—each informed by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh—have important consequences for the role that libraries

play in human progress. This initial survey presents a number of areas where further contributions can be made to relevant discourses in librarianship and related fields. What role might such libraries play as social spaces in which communities can explore questions of knowledge and progress? How might a Bahá'í librarian assist a Local Spiritual Assembly to compile relevant literature on pressing social questions, as the institutions find themselves "drawn further and further into the life of the society" (Universal House of Justice, Riḍván Message 2008)? Is it possible for such libraries to purchase access to literature from the wider society without contributing to the commodification of knowledge? How can they support burgeoning efforts by training institutes and Bahá'í-inspired educational agencies to articulate experiences, identify patterns, and disseminate bodies of knowledge? Exploring these practical questions will shed further light on Bahá'í conceptions of libraries and the role they play in the generation, application, and diffusion of knowledge for human progress.

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Poem

IMELDA MAGUIRE

We are all God's poems – Philip Metres

I am a poem God wrote
a long time ago.
There are even parts that rhyme,
and strange archaic words,
seldom now used,
still recognised by some.

If there are parts
that seem not to fit,
that's probably the places
where life scratched out a line,
or I skipped a few words,
got creative with the shape of things.

My father told me
I was the perfect poem when I was born.
A good baby, he said,
however that was judged
or measured,
that's how it seemed to him.

These days
I am a scatter of free-verse,
odd allusions, uneven lines,
but somewhere at my core,
the words that I began with
are whispered, over and over.

Biographical Notes

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IMELDA MAGUIRE has been published in a range of Irish literary journals, and has published two collections: *Shout If You Want Me To Sing* (Summer Palace Press, 2004) and *Serendipity* (Revival Press, 2015). Her third collection, also from Revival Press, is forthcoming in 2022. She has lived all her life in Ireland. Originally from Limerick, she has lived in Donegal since 1995 and facilitates workshops in Creative Writing with young people and adults. A retired counsellor, she also works with poetry for wellbeing and therapeutic purposes, frequently combining spiritual and environmental themes.

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range of his artwork. His observations and the countless hours translating silent reflections into artistic expressions enabled him to capture the details of each Holy Place, infusing them with emotive imagery, a serene sense of place and spiritual connection. Juan Pablo's work can be found at https://www.juanpablo.art/.

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