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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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From the Editor's Desk

MICHAEL SABET

The Master Key

The unique status of the Word of God—its nature and influence—is a theme threaded throughout the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. At the highest level, the term seems to be used to describe an ontological reality at the very foundations of creation: "It is the Word of God that standeth supreme over all things. It is the begetter of the world and the educator of its people" (*Additional Tablets*). Simultaneously, the Word's role as "educator" points to both its inextricable association with the Manifestations of God, and to its embodiment, in some sense, in the Revelations that they impart to humanity.

We might conjecture, then, that the very Force responsible for existence itself animates the Revealed Word of the Manifestation. While the precise nature of this relationship must remain mysterious to us, it helps explain the stupendous power attributed to the Word of God as a spiritual and social force in the lives of individuals and communities. In the Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd, Bahá'u'lláh states:

> O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. (*Tablets* 173)

The Word's capacity to unlock "the doors of the hearts of men" has clear implications for the responsibility entrusted to the Bahá'í community: "to raise up the Word […] to spread the sacred verses abroad, reveal the splendors, and make the morning's light to dawn in the hearts of the righteous." (ʻAbdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 203). While Bahá'ís of all backgrounds readily accept the appraisal of Persian and Arabic speakers as to the beauty and power of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb in these original languages, ultimately "[t]hat which is desired of a language is that it convey the intent of the speaker" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Tabernacle* 55). The Word must be cast into a form that allows the hearer to understand its meaning; thus, Bahá'ís have, since the time of ʻAbdu'l-Bahá, been intent on translating their sacred writings into the multitudinous languages of the peoples of the Earth.

In "Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Languages other than English," Craig Alan Volker and Mary Noguchi offer insights from their extensive experience in this vital field of service. Their article both presents a valuable framework for thinking about the

translation work as a whole—reflecting, for instance, on the different roles translations can serve and how these impact the translator's choices—and delves into practical challenges facing the translator. The authors skillfully move from the general features of language that tend to generate these challenges, to a grounded exploration of specific examples, anchored in the practical case study of translating a passage from *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into Tok Pisin and Japanese. This article is sure to be of great value to those engaged in the translation work, not only by presenting approaches to specific issues they encounter, but by suggesting ways in which the community of translators can advance its work of bringing the Word of God to the masses of humanity.

In considering the power of the Word of God, it seems clear that attraction to beauty plays some role. In "Turning a Somersault to Land at the Feet of the Báb: The Spiritual Journey of Ross Woodman," Chris Lowry gives us a story of this attraction. Many readers will see something of themselves in his account of Ross Woodman, a prominent Canadian professor of English Literature and member of the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada, whose richly self-reflective accounts of his journey with faith and with art beautifully illuminate questions that many Bahá'ís encounter on their own paths. Having experienced a profound dream of the Báb after his first encounter with the Bahá'í Faith, Woodman was captivated, and became "a Bahá'í for life" (76). Then, as is the case for every wayfarer who traverses the Valley of Love, the point of arrival became the start of a new journey, one shaped by tensions. On the one hand, Woodman quickly found that sharing his newfound Faith with his students went against "the rules of the game" of academia (74). On the other hand, his ecstatic, aesthetic way of relating to the Faith created challenges in his interaction with the community. Yet even while he made no mention of the Faith in his university teaching, he "was also, on another level, lecturing on the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh" (74); and even during the years in which he withdrew from community life, he grappled with the claim that the Faith—and his dream—made on him**.** Lowry's account shows us a man who, pulled between a professional life that disapproved of overt religiosity, and a young Bahá'í community still at the early stages of learning to accommodate the diverse approaches to understanding an unfathomable Revelation, found a way to make remarkable contributions in both of these worlds, with self-reflective honesty and good humor.

The central theme Lowry explores is the transformational challenge that religion poses to the believer. When the Word penetrates the human heart, it brings it a delight that can take it away from the world, as the Báb Himself beautifully expresses in a prayer:

> Number me, O my God, with those who are privileged to fix

> their gaze upon Thy Beauty and who take such delight therein that they would not exchange a single moment thereof with the sovereignty of the kingdom of heavens and earth or with the entire realm of creation. (*Selections* 216)

Yet delight is not sufficient; the heart, it seems, must transform, and the Word flow back out of it to effect change in the world. In Todd Smith's "Comments on power and authority, historical consciousness, and modes of communication," originally written as the preface to June Manning Thomas' *Planning Progress*, 2nd edition, we find insights into facets of the process of social transformation, rooted in the Revealed Word, that Shoghi Effendi shepherded the Bahá'í community to undertake in its own ranks, and that today, under the guidance of the Universal House of Justice, directs itself to the rebuilding of the world. The seed of this expansive process is "divine love, ignited by the Word of God, [and] disseminated by enkindled souls through intimate conversations" (Universal House of Justice, qtd. in Smith 131). Smith shows how this seed is organically connected to the ever-diversifying activities and processes of a growing community, all of which express a vision for humanity's collective future informed by a new historical consciousness, a reconceptualization of power and authority, and a commitment to modes of communication that unite and ennoble. (These themes emerge even more expansively in Manning's book, which is now available in paperback and e-book format).

We are also pleased to present three new book reviews in this issue. Robert Stockman reviews Brendan McNamara's *The Reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Britain*; Douglas Perry reviews Bryan Donaldson's *On the Originality of Species: The Convergence of Evolutionary Science and Baha'i Teachings*, and Christopher Buck reviews the new edition of Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh***.**

Finally, as a special offering in this issue, we are delighted to include a provisional translation of Bahá'u'lláh's "Mathnaví of the Blessed One," revealed during His stay in Constantinople. In addition to translating the poem, John S. Hatcher, Amrollah Hemmat, and Ehsanollah Hemmat provide a brief introduction to the poem, and helpful annotations on the text.

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

Race, Place, and Clusters: Current Vision and Possible Strategies
by *June Manning Thomas*
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*
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, whether that metropolis is Sarajevo, San Juan, or San Francisco. It then summarizes, for four distinct time periods during the twentieth century, 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.

Religion and Evolution Reconciled: 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Comments on Evolution
by *S. Friberg and C. Mehanian*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-13.1-4.3(2003)

The harmony of science and religion is a central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith that has important implications for the development of society and the emergence of a global civilization. Science and religion, "the two most potent forces in human life," have often been at odds, most notably over evolution and the origins of man. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has commented at length on evolution and man's origins, providing the most extensive exploration of the harmony of science and religion in the Bahá'í canon. We systematically survey 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings on evolution and show that He reconciles two viewpoints—evolution and divine creation—that other thinkers have deemed irremediably in conflict.

On Human Origins: A Bahá'í Perspective
by *Craig Loehle*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-2.4.3(1990)

The question of human origins has been one of the major points of conflict between scientific and religious views. The scientific account of human evolution poses difficulties for those who demand a literal interpretation of scripture and believe in a special, divine origin for humanity. These difficulties are resolved by the Bahá'í writings, which view human evolution, spiritual development in the individual, the advancement of civilization, and the progress of religion as all representing a single fundamental developmental process and spiritual principle underlying all of creation. Rather than being in conflict with the theory of evolution, the Bahá'í Faith itself incorporates an evolutionary worldview.

Translating the Bahá'í Writings
by *Craig A. Volker*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-2.3.5(1990)

Although the difficulties of translating the holy Word are recognized, Bahá'í institutions have always stressed the importance of translation. No approach to biblical or quranic translation corresponds completely to the Bahá'í ideal, just as no former religious leader combined Shoghi Effendi's unique dual role as Guardian and translator. Bahá'í institutions have defined the most salient theoretical issues relating to Bahá'í translation. In translating the Bahá'í writings, faithfulness to the original text is paramount. This is defined as reflecting the beauty of the original and accurately conveying the concepts of the original. Consultation is an integral part of the translation process, and translations of scripture are seen as a tool for education. Bahá'í translators today face a number of practical problems caused by a lack of resources, cultural differences, and linguistic underdevelopment.

Articles by Ross Woodman

"In the Beginning Was the Word": Apocalypse and the Education of the Soul
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-5.4.3(1993)

Metaphor and the Language of Revelation
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-8.1.496(1997)

The End of the World: Whatever Happened? Or Leftover Time to Kill
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-3.3.5(1991)

Bahá'u'lláh's Influence on the New York School of Painting: The "Unapprehended Inspiration" of Newman and Rothko
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-4.1.4(1991)

The Role of the Feminine in the Bahá'í Faith
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-7.2.4(1995)

Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Languages other than English

CRAIG ALAN VOLKER and MARY NOGUCHI[1]

Abstract

Given its belief in the transformative power of the Word of God, the Bahá'í Faith places great importance on the translation of its sacred writings into as many languages as possible. Translations into languages other than English need to be approved by the National Spiritual Assembly of the country in which they are published, but are often initiated by individuals, meaning that institutions and individuals have distinct and complementary roles in the translation process. Most of these translations are from English versions—usually those produced by Shoghi Effendi—of the original Bahá'í writings in Arabic, Persian, and Turkish. As linguists who have been involved in translating and reviewing translations of the writings, the authors have encountered a number of challenges in their translation work, including questions about spelling, terminology, and the politeness strategies employed in the original work, as well as idiosyncrasies of English usage. We illustrate these issues and possible approaches to dealing with them using the case of a short passage from Bahá'u'lláh's Writings translated into Japanese and Tok Pisin. It is hoped that this article will lead to exchanges among translators and reviewers and possibly to the development of a database of exegesis literature on the Writings and other aides to translators.

Résumé

Convaincue du pouvoir transformateur de la parole de Dieu, la foi bahá'íe accorde une grande importance à la traduction de ses écrits sacrés dans le plus grand nombre de langues possible. Les traductions dans des langues autres que l'anglais doivent être approuvées par l'assemblée spirituelle nationale du pays dans lequel elles sont publiées, mais elles résultent souvent d'initiatives individuelles. Les institutions et les individus jouent donc des rôles complémentaires dans le processus de traduction. La plupart des traductions sont réalisées à partir de versions anglaises—généralement celles de Shoghi Effendi—des écrits bahá'ís originaux en arabe, en persan et en turc. En tant que linguistes ayant participé à la traduction et à la révision de traductions de ces écrits, les auteurs ont rencontré un certain nombre de difficultés dans leur travail, notamment des questions relatives à l'orthographe, à la terminologie et aux formules de politesse utilisées dans l'œuvre originale, ainsi qu'à des particularités de l'usage anglais. Nous illustrons ces problèmes et de possibles solutions à l'aide d'un court passage des écrits de Bahá'u'lláh traduit en japonais et en tok pisin. Nous espérons que le présent article donnera lieu à des échanges entre traducteurs et réviseurs, et peut-être à la création d'une base de données de littérature exégétique relative aux Écrits

1 Collaboration for this paper was made possible by a visiting professorship at Kansai University in Osaka, Japan. The authors would like to thank the university, and in particular Professor Fred Anderson, for this opportunity.

ainsi qu'à d'autres ressources à l'intention des traducteurs.

Resumen
Dada su creencia en el poder transformador de la Palabra de Dios, la Fe Bahá'í pone gran importancia en la traducción de sus escrituras sagradas en tantos idiomas como sea posible. Traducciones a los idiomas que no sean inglés necesitan ser aprobadas por la Asamblea Espiritual Nacional del país donde son publicadas, pero frecuentemente son iniciadas por individuos, lo cual significa que las instituciones e individuos tienen papeles distintos y complementarios durante el proceso de traducción. La mayoría de estas traducciones son de las versiones en Inglés—usualmente aquellas producidas por Shoghi Effendi—de los Escritos originales bahá'ís en persa, árabe y turco. Como lingüistas que han estado involucrados en la traducción y revisión de las traducciones de los escritos, los autores han encontrado un número de retos en su trabajo de traducción, que incluyen preguntas acerca de autografía, terminología, y las estrategias de cortesía utilizadas en el trabajo original, asimismo, las idiosincrasias del uso de Inglés. Ilustramos estos asuntos y posibles abordajes de cómo tratarlos utilizando el caso de un corto pasaje de los escritos de Bahá'u'lláh traducido al Japonés y tok pisin. Se espera que este artículo conduzca a intercambios entre traductores y quienes revisan las traducciones y posiblemente al desarrollo de una base de datos de literatura de exégesis sobre los Escritos y otras formas de ayudar a los traductores.

Introduction

This paper represents the fruits of a joint research project, funded by Kansai University in Osaka, Japan. It is aimed at exploring the challenges of translating the Bahá'í writings into languages other than English, especially those used in societies that are not Western or Middle Eastern and in which familiarity with the teachings and Holy Writings of Islam and Christianity is not a given. The authors began by compiling a review of the literature outlining general problems encountered in this specific kind of translation work, as well as summarizing our own experiences in translating the writings into Japanese and Tok Pisin.

Then, to illustrate general and language-specific issues that arise in such work, we selected a short passage from Bahá'u'lláh's *Lawḥ-i-ibn-i-Dhi'b* (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*) that has not yet been translated into either Japanese or Tok Pisin and translated it into these two languages. The passage (shown in Appendix A) was chosen for two reasons. First, it presented a variety of translating challenges, including terms that were difficult to translate or could be interpreted in multiple ways, as well as the names of people and places that might pose problems in transliteration or translation. Second, as linguists we were drawn to the fact that it touched on the burden of dealing with the many languages in the world and Bahá'u'lláh's teaching on the need for a universal language. The translations, shown in Appendix B (Japanese) and Appendix C (Tok Pisin), were made for use in public and private devotions, so both an appropriate style and accurate content were important

in these translations, and a conscious effort was made to avoid footnotes.

In this paper, when we talk about the "Bahá'í writings," we are referring to the canon of sacred texts that include the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, all written in Arabic, Persian, or, in the case of a small number of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's writings, in Ottoman Turkish. These texts are the only recognized scripture of the Bahá'í Faith, and therefore play an important part in private and communal prayer and worship. By 2010 the Research Department of the Bahá'í International Archives in Haifa had identified approximately 20,000 works written or dictated by Bahá'u'lláh, 30,000 by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and 2,000 by the Báb (Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 72).[2] These works range from lengthy books to short letters.

The importance of translating these works is shown by the encouragement 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to translators:

> Regarding the translation of the Books and Tablets of the Blessed Beauty, erelong will translations be made into every tongue, with power, clarity and grace. At such time as they are translated, conformably to the originals, and with power and grace of style, the splendors of their inner meanings will be shed abroad, and will illumine the eyes of all mankind. Do thy very best to ensure that the translation is in conformity with the original. (*Selections* 66)

A few works by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh were translated into European languages by Western travelers and academics during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime. The Bahá'ís began to make their own translations of the Sacred Writings during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and the translation into English and publication of an increasing number of the most important works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá was an important priority of Shoghi Effendi during his Guardianship of the Faith.

In 1998, the Universal House of Justice stated that "the Sacred Writings and other literature of the Bahá'í Faith" had been translated into "over 800 . . . languages, major dialects and scripts" (qtd. in *Bahá'í World* 1043). Some of these are international languages such as French and Spanish, with nearly as much of the Bahá'í writings translated

2 The authors are indebted to Armin Eschraghi and have quoted him at length as he is one of the few academics to have discussed issues related to the translation of the Bahá'í writings into languages other than English. His 2010 annotated translation into German of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* is noteworthy both for being a direct translation from the Arabic original with close attention paid to the English translation by Shoghi Effendi, rather than a translation from the English translation, and for its appendix with copious notes discussing the translation and historical points related to specific passages. These features clarify numerous passages that might be misinterpreted by German readers who have limited or no access to the Arabic original or to an understanding of the cultural and literary environment in which Bahá'u'lláh composed it.

into them as is available in English, while translations into a great many other languages are limited to one or two short prayers. Of course, the quality of the translations varies, as does their acceptance and use by target language communities. Nevertheless, for all practical purposes, these translations are seen and used by believers as Sacred Writings in the same way that the original texts are by their Arabic- and Persian-speaking counterparts.

The authors of this article are linguists who have been involved in translating and reviewing translations of the Bahá'í writings, and who undertook a joint research project to explore some of the specific challenges that we have faced in our work. Mary Noguchi works with Japanese, while Craig Alan Volker has experience with several languages, including Tok Pisin, the most widely spoken language in Papua New Guinea. We each translated a short selection from Shoghi Effendi's English translation of Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into our respective languages of expertise and then used a back translation technique to consult with each other, in order to improve the quality of our translations and discuss the challenges we faced.

Tok Pisin is an interesting language to compare and contrast to Japanese for a number of reasons, the most important of which is the fact that Japan and Papua New Guinea are both Asia-Pacific island countries and are united by what Shoghi Effendi called a "Spiritual Axis" (*Japan* 89). Furthermore, their cultures are neither Western nor Middle Eastern, although the educated members of both societies are very well informed about the rest of the world and take a great deal of interest in it. Moreover, the average person in these countries has little or no knowledge of Islam or the Qur'án.

On the other hand, Japan and Papua New Guinea are vastly divergent societies: Japan has one of the world's strongest economies and a literacy rate of almost 100%, while Papua New Guinea is a developing nation in which much of the population is illiterate. While Japan is culturally quite homogeneous, Papua New Guinea's population of between eight and ten million speaks over 800 languages, making it one of the most linguistically and culturally diverse nations on earth (Jackson and Standish n.p.). The Bahá'í communities in the two countries also differ, both in numbers and relative strengths and weaknesses. The authors therefore felt that the challenges of translating the Bahá'í writings into Japanese and Tok Pisin could illustrate a range of issues faced by other translators into languages other than English, especially those of non-Western and non-Middle Eastern cultures.

We hope that this contribution will encourage a wider conversation among translators of the Bahá'í writings about the service they render, and will help Bahá'í individuals and institutions in a wide range of linguistic contexts become more aware of the nature of the translated writings with which they interact daily.

The Transformative Power of the Word of God

In order to comprehend the role of translated texts in the Bahá'í community, we first need to consider the concept of the transformative power of the Word of God as understood by Bahá'ís. All the world's major religions have sacred texts that are given particular significance in the religious community, with Hinduism upholding the Bhagavad Gita as well as the Vedas, Zoroastrianism honoring the Avesta, Buddhism cherishing a number of sutras, Judaism the Hebrew Bible, Christianity the Bible, and Islam the Qur'án. The well-known beginning of the Gospel according to John in the New Testament highlights the importance religions have attached to the Divine Word: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."

However, many religious traditions do not encourage lay persons to read and comprehend these texts. For example, in Tibetan Buddhism, spinning a prayer wheel is deemed to have the same merit as chanting a sutra or prayer ("Prayer Wheel" n.p.). In Japan, sutras are often chanted in Sanskrit or classical Japanese that is not readily accessible to the lay person. A number of other religions also have liturgical languages that are accorded special religious status, and often not spoken or even understood by the laity, for example, Sanskrit for Hindus, Hebrew for non-Israeli Jews, and Coptic for Egyptian Christians.

As Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste" 76) has pointed out, one reason for this emphasis on liturgical language may be that having a monopoly on the knowledge of a sacred language can be one basis for the authority of religious leaders. In contrast, the Bahá'í community places value on what Eschraghi calls "a democratization of knowledge," with an emphasis on universal literacy and the responsibility of individual believers to interact with the writings daily. This responsibility is reinforced by the fact that the Bahá'í Faith has no clergy or other group of people who are in a position to offer authoritative explanations of the writings; instead, Bahá'u'lláh enjoined universal education ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 99) and made it a duty of all believers to read the texts for themselves each morning and evening (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas* 149).

One compelling reason for this emphasis on the individual's interaction with the Sacred Writings in the Bahá'í Faith is Bahá'u'lláh's teaching that the Holy Word has transformative power. For example, He writes: "We bear witness that through the power of the Word of God every leper was cleansed, every sickness was healed, every human infirmity was banished" (*Gleanings* 36:3) The Universal House of Justice frequently emphasizes the ways in which this transformative power has a real effect in the world, for example noting that "[a]s a person cultivates the habit of study and deep reflection upon the Creative Word, this process of transformation reveals itself in an

ability to express one's understanding of profound concepts and to explore spiritual reality in conversations of significance" (29 Dec. 2015).[3]

In recent years, the Universal House of Justice has continued to stress the transformative power of the Word of God by encouraging the use of a series of books published by the Ruhi Institute in global efforts towards expansion and consolidation of the Bahá'í community. These books are designed to help individuals fulfill their "twofold moral purpose: to attend to one's own spiritual and intellectual growth and to contribute to the transformation of society" (*Reflections* v). The key to this transformation is a focus on understanding quotations from the Holy Writings and applying them to one's daily life. In describing the learning process that the worldwide Bahá'í community has undergone in its focus on the Institute Process during the previous twenty-five years, the Universal House of Justice in its 2021 Riḍván Message writes that it is based on a "vision of personal and collective transformation occurring simultaneously, founded on study of the Word of God and an appreciation of each person's capacity to become a protagonist in a profound spiritual drama."

The Role of Translation in the Bahá'í Faith

Given the emphasis in the Bahá'í Faith on spiritual and societal transformation through a growing understanding of the Divine Word, access to the writings in one's native language is vital to the Bahá'í community. There is thus no liturgical language in the Bahá'í Faith, nor is special status given to the languages used by its Founder and in which its sacred texts were first written. This is in contrast, for example, to the status of Arabic in Islam. Because of the central role of the Qur'án in Islam and because it was revealed in Arabic, many Muslims try to memorize the Qur'án in Arabic, even if they do not speak the language and may have little understanding of what they are memorizing. In spite of ḥadíths claiming that during the lifetime of Muḥammad, the opening surah of the Qur'án was translated into Persian by Salman the Persian, a companion of Muḥammad, and the third surah into Greek as part of a letter from Muḥammad to the Byzantine emperor Heraclius (Tibawi 5–6), the tradition of *i'jaz* ("inimitability") took root. This tradition held that the Qur'án was the literal Word of God, and therefore untranslatable. This, in turn, meant that "translations" of the Qur'án could only be regarded as commentaries or explanations (Tibawi 15).

In contrast, in the Bahá'í Faith, the learning of Arabic and Persian might be seen as an important academic tool for the study of the original texts, but the use of these languages is not required

3 It should be noted here that, while the writings and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the writings of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice are not considered the Word of God in the same way as the Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh, they are also treated with great reverence by Bahá'ís.

for private or public devotions of any kind. Indeed, few Bahá'ís who do not have a Middle Eastern background learn Arabic or Persian, and almost all devotions and studies of the Bahá'í writings are conducted in a language commonly used by the individual or community. These translations of the writings are treated as holy texts, and are memorized, chanted, and studied as such.

This role for translated texts is based on statements in the Bahá'í writings themselves, such as the aforementioned affirmation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. The belief in the ability of the Holy Spirit to bring enlightenment through translations into "every tongue" is not unlike the concept of "heart language" embraced by some Protestant Christian groups, whose attempts to translate the Bible into all languages are motivated by their belief in the special effect that hearing the Word of God in one's own language has on people's "centers of emotion" ("What Do You Mean" n.p.).

In addition to the spiritual uplift-ment of individuals and communities provided by the translated writings, the tradition of striving to have the translations replicate the high literary standards of the original writings means that they can act as tools for the general education of the community. Both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice have said that translations are meant to elevate the believers' general educational level, enabling them to follow the Bahá'í principle of independent investigation of truth and avoid being oppressed or misled by others (Volker, "Translating" 71).[4]

For these reasons, Bahá'í texts are translated into the languages of societies with very different linguistic ecologies. In many countries, such as Japan, translations of the sacred writings of older religions have existed for centuries, so there are established literary standards for scripture which Bahá'í translators need to follow. In others, such as Luxembourg, there is an established written literature in the national language, Letzeburgesch, but the Bahá'í writings are the first scriptures of any religion to be translated into that language. In yet other cases, such as the Nalik language of Papua New Guinea, the Bahá'í writings were the first written literature of any sort in a previously unwritten language, so an orthography—a way of representing sounds in a standard written form—had to be established and taught to the community before translations could begin to be used (Volker, *Nalik Language* 15). Each of these different scenarios presents different challenges and requirements of which translators must be aware before beginning their translation.

In the case of languages such as Japanese, with established translations of scripture from older religions,

4 See, for example, Shoghi Effendi's letter of 14 December 1938 (qtd. in Research Department of the Universal House of Justice, a Memorandum dated 18 September 1988) and the letter dated 20 September 1973 from the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Papua New Guinea.

in order for the new translations of Bahá'í writings to be accepted, established wordings and terminology should probably be retained unless there is a good reason for not using them. Very often an early translation of sacred scripture has become the basis for elevated styles in the language, as was the case for the King James Bible and its impact on English. These elevated styles should be examined and used wherever possible, since, as the Universal House of Justice pointed out in a letter in 1985 (qtd. in Research Department, Memorandum dated 18 September 1988), a colloquial translation of the highly literary styles of the Persian and Arabic Bahá'í writings would be unfaithful to the original. Some issues related to this in connection to translations into Japanese are discussed later.

In a society with established literacy in a second (often colonial) language, but not its first language, the translation of the Bahá'í writings into the society's first language will need to draw on established norms in the second language and any related or neighboring languages. This is the case for Luxembourg, where education has traditionally been conducted in French and German, and a written literature in the first language of most people, Letzeburgesch, has only been widely used in formal education in recent decades. In this case, the absence of both an established corpus of written literature and a translation of the Bible means that the translation of the Bahá'í writings will be a contribution to the establishment of an elevated written style for the language.

For languages that do not have an official orthography or written literature, such as the majority of the indigenous and creole languages of the global South, translations of the Bahá'í writings can be an important step towards establishing a written form of the language and thus foster pride in the language and culture the translation represents. In such cases, translators should identify characteristics of elevated oral styles, such as ritual oratory, and adapt them and the vocabulary they use for the writings. In some cases, as with the Nalik language, the orthography that is adopted for Bahá'í translations will become the recognized norm for writing in the language. Care must be taken in creating such an orthography so that it is phonemically accurate and conforms to speakers' preferences.

No matter what the developmental status of the language is, there are certain standards of faithfulness that translators should try to uphold when translating the Bahá'í writings into it. Foremost among these is accurately conveying the writings' content. Shoghi Effendi has written that "literary considerations are, no doubt, important, but are quite secondary when compared to the ideas and thoughts constituting the Message itself" (14 Oct. 1936).

Bahá'í translator Jeffrey Gruber points out that one facet of accuracy is to avoid diluting the strength of the original writings (2). He discusses Bahá'í translations into many African

languages—in which the strong, focused, and direct speech of the original as accessed through Shoghi Effendi's English translations is often rendered into more general and less figurative language—by using the example of Bahá'u'lláh's prayer "God grant that the light of unity may envelop the whole earth" being translated as the equivalent of "may God make the opinion of the people of the world one."

Faithfulness in translation also requires that the translator try to reflect the stylistic beauty of the original. 'Abdu'l-Bahá expresses the need for both accuracy and beauty in translations: they should be made "conformably to the originals, and with power and grace of style" (*Selections* 66). Between these two ideals of beauty and conformity there would seem to be a dynamic tension; this will be a recurring topic in the following discussions of translations into Japanese and Tok Pisin and in the use of back translation as a tool for examining issues related to faithfulness.

Related to this is the above-mentioned role played by Bahá'í translations as tools for literary as well as religious education. Noting that "[b]ooks of Scripture themselves mould the language in which they are written" (3 Feb. 1988), the Universal House of Justice has echoed the desire expressed by Shoghi Effendi that his Bahá'í translations should help English-speaking children and youth to "use the English language effectively for thought and for expression" (14 Dec. 1938). Presumably the same should be the case for translations of the writings into other languages.

It should be noted that while accuracy and faithfulness mean accuracy in conveying, and faithfulness to, the original content, they do not necessarily mean that the translation must evoke the same response as the original did, which might require significant departures from the original text. For example, the approach favored by Eugene Nida and many other modern translators of the Bible such as the Summer Institute of Linguistics / Wycliffe Bible Translators prioritizes fitting the translation into the semantics and worldview of the audience; these translators will therefore sometimes use the names of local deities for Satan or translate cultural concepts from the Middle East into the culture of the target community. An example of this approach is the Bible Society translation of Psalms 149:3 ("let them sing praises unto Him with the timbrel and the harp") into Tok Pisin with a phrase describing people making musical praises beating a Melanesian slit gong (*garamut*) and a New Guinea handheld drum (*kundu*). There is nothing to suggest that this is an appropriate general approach for the translation of the Bahá'í writings.

Nevertheless, there are instances where such cultural adaptation is unavoidable. For example, the English translation of the end of verse no. 61 of Bahá'u'lláh's Arabic Hidden Words reads, "and from the chalice of imperishable glory quaff the peerless wine." Several problems arose when this verse was being translated into

the Nalik language of Papua New Guinea. The first issue was with the word "chalice." The closest equivalent to a European or Asian "chalice" in that society is a *winwaam*, which is a shell traditionally used as a cup for ceremonial purposes. Moreover, in the Nalik translations of the Bahá'í writings, "glory" has generally been translated as *malagaan*, the word used to refer to the end of the Nalik memorial ceremonies for the dead, when the spirit of a deceased person's soul reaches its most glorious apex in this world and begins to ascend to paradise. This, too, is a cultural adaptation. Finally, although wine has now been introduced to Papua New Guinea, given its absence in traditional culture and its modern connections to Christian communion, it was decided to translate "peerless wine" with the equivalent of "pure medicine" (*makara tuning*), given that the meaning of the word for medicine (*makara*) includes herbal medicines to ensure both physical and spiritual health. Thus, the resulting translation, "*ma pan a winwaam doxo na malagaan a zitung, gu na imin a makara tuning*" (literally, "with the beautiful shell cup of everlasting glory, drink the pure medicine") contained several cultural adaptations.

Thus, while translators must strive to convey the power and beauty of the original writings as faithfully as they can, they are in some ways doomed to failure. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that "[a] translation is like unto a husk, whereas the original is even as a pith, for the [divine] phrases are of the utmost eloquence and clarity, and it is not possible to render them [perfectly]" (*Yádnámiy-i-Miṣbáḥ-i-Munír* 390).

Nonetheless, translators of the Bahá'í writings are asked to recreate the sacred scriptures of their religion in the target language to the best of their ability with "power, clarity, and grace," their success being measured against the extent to which "the splendours of their inner meanings" are expressed and "the eyes of all mankind" are "illuminated" (*Selections* 66). To do this, they need to both convey the content and figurative strength of the original texts and use an acceptably high standard of the language, while remaining heedful of the sociolinguistic environments of both the language in which the writings were originally composed and the language into which they are translating. In doing so, they should keep in mind that the translated texts will both be used in spiritual practices and contribute to developing an appreciation of a written literary style in the emerging Bahá'í communities which they serve.

General Translation Issues

There are certain issues that face translators of the Bahá'í writings into all languages. These include the concept of a "perfect translation," the lack of suitable reference and resource material, decisions related to orthography and transliteration, the translation of set phrases, the use (or non-use) of explanations or footnotes, and problems related to English, rather than Arabic

or Persian, phrasing. The first of these issues will be considered in this section, while the others will be addressed in our analysis of the translations of the short selection from Bahá'u'lláh's *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* and the subsequent summary of issues discovered in previous literature.

Given that the Word of God is, by definition, perfect, there is a tendency to try to find the one perfect translation of that Word. Perhaps as a result of that search, there is also a tendency to view the evaluation of a translation as a binary choice, saying that it is either "perfect and correct" or "imperfect and incorrect," rather than recognizing that translations need to be placed on a continuum, from "poor" to "excellent," and that different translations are needed for different purposes. It is possible for a translation made for one purpose to be excellent for that purpose, but inadequate for another.

Most translations of the Bahá'í writings today are made for private or public devotional or deepening purposes. In such translations, endless footnotes and comments about alternative wording would interrupt the flow of the meditative state that these passages are meant to instill. Where explanations are needed for a particular target audience, these are best incorporated into the text itself. In this type of translation, the use of a high literary standard without unnecessary and unnatural stylistic influence from the Arabic or Persian original is also important.

In contrast, scholarly translations are often meant to act as exegesis with a focus on the content of the original and the context in which it was written. In such works, analyses of the original vocabulary, together with footnotes to give historical, cultural, or linguistic background, are important tools to help the reader, and literary concerns will be secondary to these. Neither approach is better or worse or more or less faithful to the original. Each has its place.

It is natural for Bahá'í translators of the writings to look to the approach taken in the English translations of Shoghi Effendi. These have a special status in the Bahá'í Faith since, in his role as Guardian, Shoghi Effendi was the authorized interpreter of the writings. This has led many Bahá'ís to regard his translations as "perfect." It should be pointed out that this is not a claim that the Guardian himself ever seems to have made. On the contrary, while he asserted that his comments on the writings and explanations of their content were authoritative, he referred to his translation into English of a work by Bahá'u'lláh as "one more attempt" (qtd. in Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Íqán foreword). Through a letter from his secretary dated 14 August 1930 (qtd. in Research Department, Memorandum 1988), he stated categorically that "[t]he translations will continue to vary as more and better translations are made. Shoghi Effendi does not consider even his own translations as final."

As Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste" 98) points out, the Guardian's English translations "did not come to him in some kind of divine revelation so that all he would need to do was

write them down. To insist on the latter explanation would denigrate the great sacrifice of time and the tireless dedication that Shoghi Effendi gave to translating the Holy Writings."[5] He consulted with others and used their suggestions and corrections to improve his translations, acknowledging their assistance. An example of this was his acceptance of George Townshend's observation on the nuances of the different possessive forms in English, so that he changed his original wording of the English translation of a commonly used healing prayer from "Thy remembrance" and "Thy love" to "remembrance of Thee" and "[n]earness to Thee" (Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 100).[6]

In this regard it is also important to point out that occasionally Shoghi Effendi left out a word that was present in the original. Eschraghi has even pointed out a few rare instances where either a mistranslation was made or where a quote by an Iranian poet was mistakenly attributed to Bahá'u'lláh (Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 96–97). When such details were drawn to Shoghi Effendi's attention, he corrected them in subsequent editions. Examples of this are the three revisions he made to his English rendition of The Hidden Words after his initial translation in 1923 (100).

Shoghi Effendi's translations of the writings were primarily designed for devotional use and were therefore made with careful attention to the style of language and largely without footnotes. This was understandable, as the young community in the West at that time had very few translations of the sacred texts to use in private or communal devotions. Shoghi Effendi left the less urgent work of scholarly translations to others. He explained this himself in his forward to his 1925 English translation of The Hidden Words: "The present edition of *Hidden Words* is a somewhat free translation primarily intended for devotional purposes. For a more literal translation, with notes explanatory of Oriental mystical terms and references, readers are referred to the edition published in Cairo under the direction of Mrs. Stannard in 1921" (i). With these words, Shoghi Effendi left the door open for other translations filling different needs, even of works that he himself had translated (Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 95).

Nonetheless, the Guardian's English translations have come to be accepted as the basis for translations into other languages and today, it is the policy of the Universal House of Justice, based on guidance from the Guardian, that translations into languages other than English should be based on English translations. However, the policy leaves translators free to consult the originals, and even encourages them to do so (16 Sep. 1992).

This policy allows translators today to take advantage of both the original language texts (for those translators able to read them), and the insights to

5 Translation from the German by Volker.

6 See Hofman, *George Townsend* 55f, 58.

be gleaned from Shoghi Effendi's translations and from other official translations into English made following the standard he set. This was, of course, not always possible. During ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's time, when nothing comparable to the Guardian's English translations existed, He directed Bahá'ís to translate the writings directly from the original languages: "Wise souls who have mastered and studied perfectly the Persian, Arabic, and other foreign languages, or know one of the foreign languages, must commence translating Tablets and books containing the proofs of this Revelation" (*Tablets* 54).

However, after Shoghi Effendi began releasing English translations, a practice developed of basing translations into other languages on his English translations, without reference to the original writings. This was initially done because of a lack of believers outside the Middle East with a suitable command of Arabic and Persian. However, both of the authors have noticed that in their communities, a feeling has developed among many Bahá'ís that the translations by Shoghi Effendi are somehow clearer than the original writings and that it would therefore be a mistake to translate directly from the original texts. This is an argument that Shoghi Effendi himself does not seem to have ever made.

In fact, ʿAbdu'l-Bahá suggested that ideally, translation of the writings into English be done by a committee of two bilingual and educated Persians and two bilingual and educated Americans. Writing through his secretary to Adalbert Mühlschlegel in 1932, Shoghi Effendi repeated ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's view that it would be ideal to translate from the original languages:

> He is surely very sorry that not knowing Persian you cannot go to the very original. He sincerely hopes that before long we will have some of the younger members of the German Bahá'ís who would make translation their life-work, and with that object in mind make a thorough study of Persian and Arabic. They would surely be rendering a wonderful service to their nation as well as to the Faith as a whole. (*Light of Divine Guidance* 40)

While such scholars are now at work in German-speaking Europe, they are still not available in many other countries, which must continue to depend on translations from English, often by translators who have little or no knowledge of the original languages. This is certainly the case in Japan and Papua New Guinea, the two communities being examined in this paper. Moreover, the lack of the kind of extensive exegesis available to translators and scholars of the Bible and the Qur'án means that translators of the Bahá'í writings in these countries often work in a vacuum, without reference to the original texts to clarify the semantics of certain words and phrases, and often without a clear understanding of the cultural and religious environment in which Bahá'u'lláh and ʿAbdu'l-Bahá were living.

Under such conditions, translators may feel a need to produce translations that are literally true to the English translations of Shoghi Effendi, to the extent that in Japanese, for example, attempts have been made to make Shoghi Effendi's use of capital letters in English somehow evident in the Japanese translation, even though capitalization is a characteristic only of languages with European alphabets and does not exist in Arabic, Persian, or Japanese. In other languages, translations have been criticized for not adhering strictly to the punctuation of Shoghi Effendi's English, or (in the case of European languages) for not capitalizing pronouns referring to God, which is a particularity of traditional English orthography and not common in most other European languages.

Translators of the writings into languages other than English therefore have a number of issues to keep in mind. First, they need to be aware of the purpose of their translation. As mentioned above, different translations are needed for different purposes, and while a translation made for one purpose may be excellent for that purpose, it may be inadequate for another. When making translations for devotional purposes, which is the most common case, translators will have to identify stylistic norms in the target language that are appropriate to the elevated language used in Arabic and Persian by the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ʿAbdu'l-Bahá. As discussed later, this includes identifying standard Biblical and Quranic translations to use in quotations. It may also include following Shoghi Effendi's lead and adopting a slightly archaic form of the target language, which can be seen as somewhat equivalent to the form of the original languages used in the writings.[7] In addition, those making translations for devotional purposes should eschew footnotes, comments on possible alternate wording and long explanations of background information that would be unfamiliar to the target audience.

Secondly, they must ascertain whether they will be able to translate directly from Arabic or Persian (with reference to any translation into English by Shoghi Effendi) or whether, as is more often the case, they will translate from an authorized translation, preferably one by Shoghi Effendi. If using an English translation to make a tertiary translation, they will need to ascertain to what extent there are human, online, or other

7 For example, a letter dated 2 December 1988 from the Universal House of Justice to Maison d'Editions Bahá'íes states: "With regard to your question about the style of English used in the translation of Bahá'í prayers, we are asked to point out that finding an adequate style in English for expressing beautifully the poetic, metaphorical and allusive style of many of the Bahá'í Scriptures is not easy. The Persian and Arabic of the Bahá'í Writings are themselves considerably different from the current styles and usages in those languages" (qtd. in Research Department, *Translations and Provisional Translations*).

resources available to help them make reference to the Arabic and Persian originals to resolve ambiguities or questions arising from the nineteenth century Middle Eastern cultural context in which the Bahá'í writings appeared. Translators should refer to academic analyses of the writings, with attention to specific words and how they have been translated into English, especially by Shoghi Effendi, when such resources exist. It is hoped that in the future, more such reference works will be written and made available for translators to refer to.

Thirdly, translators should strive to follow the recommendations that the Guardian made for "every believer who wishes to adequately understand, and intelligently read, the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh," to gain "a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam—the source and background of their Faith—and approach reverently and with a mind purged from preconceived ideas the study of the Qur'án" (Shoghi Effendi, *Advent* 49). Because the Bahá'í Faith originated in an Islamic cultural milieu, and because Bahá'ís consider the Qur'án the only absolutely authenticated revealed scripture prior to the Bábí and Bahá'í revelations, in numerous places Shoghi Effendi stressed the importance of studying the Qur'án and the history and tenets of Islam, so that, as the Universal House of Justice states in a letter to all the National Spiritual Assemblies of Europe, "the friends would have a background against which to study the Bahá'í Writings" (qtd. in Hornby no. 1892).[8] While these comments were directed to Bahá'ís living in the West, they are perhaps even more pertinent to believers in countries such as Japan and Papua New Guinea that are even further removed from historical and cultural contact with Islamic societies. Of course, if the Guardian emphasized the importance of an understanding of the Qur'án and Islam for ordinary believers, such understanding is arguably even more important for translators who have taken up the challenge of presenting the writings to those who do not have access either to the original Persian and Arabic writings or to English translations. In both Japan and Papua New Guinea there are relatively few opportunities to obtain such training and these topics are rarely covered in depth in Bahá'í meetings or study material.

While translators of Bahá'í writings may be relieved to know that even the Guardian did not consider his translations perfect, they should nonetheless aim to produce the best translations possible in terms of both accuracy and beauty. One problem they face is a lack of research on translation techniques

8 Other places where the importance of the study of Islam and the Qur'án are stressed include the letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to individual believers on 23 November 1934 and on 2 December, 1935 (qtd. in "Deepening"), and the Universal House of Justice letter dated 26 September 1969 to all National Spiritual Assemblies of Europe (qtd. in Hornby no. 1892).

related to specific issues of concern in dealing with Bahá'í texts as well as analyses of existing translations in terms of how issues have been dealt with. Moreover, when new translations of the writings are published in English or other languages, explanatory information on the techniques or issues involved is usually not provided. (The discussion later in this article is a modest example of what this might look like.) Therefore, unless translators can consult with those who made the existing translations, they are generally left on their own.

One possible resource for translators in this situation is translations of the Bible or Qur'án into the target language, where they exist. These can be examined to determine how various terms have been translated; following these conventions may make the Bahá'í works seem familiar to those of different religious backgrounds. For example, the word "Say," which appears in many Bahá'í prayers and writings (e.g., "Say: Praised be God!" The Báb, *Selections* 217) and implies that God has instructed the Manifestation to convey specific information or a commandment, is used in a similar context in the Qur'án. A translator could therefore rely on the wording used in Quranic translations in the target language to represent the same word in the Bahá'í writings. In doing so, however, care must be taken to ensure that the contexts and usage are indeed the same, and also to avoid conflating concepts that may differ between religious traditions. In addition, translators need to be aware of the practice of some Bible translators of converting Middle Eastern cultural concepts such as measurements, food, and currency into terms that are used in the society of the target language and will therefore be more familiar to readers (see the earlier example of Psalms 149:3). Bahá'í translators must ask themselves to what extent, if any, it is appropriate to remove the Central Figures of their faith from their cultural environment in this way and reinterpret not only their words, but the metaphors and images that they used.

An example of this dilemma triggered a long debate when The Hidden Words was translated into the Nalik language. The translators, Michael Homerang and Craig Volker, spent considerable time considering how to translate verses 55 and 56 from the Arabic Hidden Words, which both discuss gold ("for with fire We test the gold" and "Thou dost wish for gold"). There are deposits of gold in New Ireland Province, but before they were discovered by Australian colonizers in the twentieth century, the metal was not valued by indigenous people and there was not even a word in Nalik for gold. The translators therefore needed to decide whether to use the English word "gold," to culturally translate the image using the indigenous word for shell money (which even today is a sign of wealth used for bride price,[9] funeral, and land transaction payments), or to

9 A payment made by the husband's family or clan to the bride's family or clan.

weaken the image by using a Nalik expression equivalent to "wealth" or "material goods." The translators ended up using the English word "gold" because, as Homerang stated at the time, Nalik people today are familiar with Western and Asian uses of gold as a sign of wealth and some even work in local gold mines. Moreover, Homerang noted that Bahá'u'lláh would never have handled shell money, and he wanted to be faithful to the cultural practices with which Bahá'u'lláh would have been familiar and to recognize Him in the translation as a real person who came from a real place with its own cultural practices and references.

The above issues are mainly the concern of individuals who translate Bahá'í writings, but it should be noted that translators normally work under the National Spiritual Assembly or another administrative body of the country they reside in, with individuals and institutions playing complementary roles in the translation process. This process will be outlined in the next section, but a few general issues that institutions in charge of translations should be aware of are presented below.

First, when administrative bodies appoint translators, they should try to appoint a team that will use the consultative method suggested by ʻAbdu'l-Bahá (see above) wherever possible. They should also avoid micromanaging the translations produced by a qualified team that they have chosen, following the advice of the Universal House of Justice to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany in a letter written in 1982 (qtd. in Eschraghi "Schwierigsten Künste" 9)

> It is not possible for a National Spiritual Assembly to undertake the work of translation itself. It must, therefore, choose a group of translators in whom it has confidence, and leave them free to work in the way they best can. Translation is a very difficult art—an art in which absolute perfection is unattainable. However good a translation, there will always be those who would have preferred it otherwise, for taste, which is undefinable, plays such a large part in such judgments. Having given the task to its translation committee, a National Assembly must, therefore, resist temptation to interfere in its work.

While this does not mean that a National Spiritual Assembly should neglect its role of deciding whether to approve a translation based on the criteria of faithfulness to the content of the original and the use of an appropriate style, it does mean that its decisions should not be based simply on an assessment of the translators' literary taste. Any reviewing process must take into consideration the fact that there is no perfect translation and that any translation, even one by Shoghi Effendi, might be improved upon or changed depending on the use to which it will be put.

Having described a number of general issues translators and institutions

face, we will now move on to give a brief description of how the Bahá'í writings are translated into languages other than English, using as examples the two languages under discussion in this paper and describing both the history of translation into these languages and the systems currently in place in Japan and Papua New Guinea.

The Process and History of Developing Translations of the Writings

Japanese

Japanese is one of the world's most used languages, being ranked number thirteen by both *Ethnologue* and *Berlitz* in terms of the number of people who speak it. The first Japanese people who accepted the Bahá'í Faith were immigrants to Hawaii and the U.S. mainland in the early 1900s, while Bahá'u'lláh's teachings were introduced to Japan itself by travel teachers in 1909 and by American pioneers, including Hand of the Cause Agnes Alexander, in 1914 (Alexander). Although the teaching work in Japan was originally conducted in Esperanto and English, by 1915, a local magazine contained an article about the Faith that included a translation of the Faith's twelve principles[10] into Japanese. In her history of the early years of the Faith in Japan, Ms. Alexander notes that by the spring of 1919, five short publications had been translated into Japanese by different groups and individuals and made available in print (27).

That same year, two young Bahá'ís started the first Japanese Bahá'í magazine, *The Star of the East* (東の星 *[Higashi no Hoshi]*), which featured a Japanese (and Esperanto) translation of Bahá'u'lláh's words "Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch" on the cover, as well as a Japanese translation of one of the Persian Hidden Words on the first page (Alexander 38–39). The first complete translation of The Hidden Words into Japanese was made by one of these young Bahá'ís, Yuri Mochizuki, who apparently worked from a translation into French. It was published in 1937 (108).

Since then, many of the major works of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá have been translated into Japanese by a variety of believers or, in some cases, by non-Bahá'í professional translators on commission, and they are now available in print and online. For many years, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan has been responsible for reviewing translations, which have been made almost exclusively from English translations of the works, without reference to the original Persian or Arabic texts. The quality and style of these translations varies considerably.

10 In His talks in Europe and North America, 'Abdu'l-Bahá often explained a number of Bahá'u'lláh's main teachings in terms of eleven or twelve principles. These were compiled into a list of twelve principles and translated into Japanese. They are still widely used in pamphlets and other materials in Japan today.

Tok Pisin

Tok Pisin, an English-based pidgin-creole language, is the most widely spoken lingua franca for the eight to ten million overwhelmingly indigenous people who live in Papua New Guinea, a South Pacific Melanesian country with more than 830 distinct languages—more than any other country in the world (Eberhard et al.). Together with English and Hiri Motu (another pidgin language based on the language traditionally spoken near the national capital, Port Moresby), it is one of the three *de facto* national languages of Papua New Guinea, and is the main language used for inter-ethnic communication in most parts of the country. Tok Pisin is increasingly used as a home language, especially in families with parents of different ethnic backgrounds, and the number of children who acquire it as either one of their native languages or even their only native language is increasing rapidly.

Tok Pisin developed in the nineteenth century on ships and plantations in which Melanesians speaking many mutually unintelligible languages were suddenly brought together as crews and laborers. Because of this, the grammar of Tok Pisin is based on commonalities among the Austronesian languages spoken in the Melanesian islands of the southwest Pacific, where its first speakers came from. Although most of the vocabulary is derived from English, the pronunciation and semantic range of words reflect Melanesian rather than English usage. The word *gras*, for example, comes from English "grass," but can mean "hair" and "fur" as well as "grass," and is used in a number of compound expressions that are calques from indigenous languages, such as *as gras* ("grass skirt," literally "arse grass"), *gras nating* ("weeds," literally "grass nothing"), and *mausgras* ("beard," literally "mouth grass"). In addition to words derived from English, Tok Pisin also contains a number of words that came from indigenous languages as well as from Malay and German, reflecting influences during the pre-First World War German colonial era in the northern part of today's Papua New Guinea.

Although Tok Pisin was used for some religious purposes in the early twentieth century, especially by Catholic missionaries, and by both Allied and Japanese forces for propaganda purposes during World War II, the development of Tok Pisin as a literary language did not become widespread until after the Second World War. In colonial Papua New Guinea, education tended to be mainly administered by Christian missionaries, and after World War II the main churches met to decide on a common orthography. Under Australian colonial control this was then adopted as the standard orthography by the Australian colonial Department of Education in the mid-1950s. This decision about the standardization of Tok Pisin orthography has not been changed since Papua New Guinea gained independence from Australia in 1975.

However, the adoption of an

English-only public education system in the 1950s meant that few people have learned this orthography in formal classroom settings, with only a few mainly rural and officially unrecognized schools run by the Lutheran church giving formal lessons in this Tok Pisin orthography. As the formal school system still uses only English and does not officially use or teach written Tok Pisin, there is great variation in the way that people spell the language. Nonetheless, the standard orthography is used by the weekly *Wantok* newspaper and has become familiar to people around the country through translations of the New Testament (and later of the complete Bible), although it is not necessarily used by them in everyday writing.

The Bahá'í Faith was introduced to Papua New Guinea in 1957, and the first Bahá'í publications in Tok Pisin were newsletters and prayers published in the 1960s. The first Tok Pisin prayer book was published in 1960 and a translation of *The New Garden* (published as *Nupela Laif*) was published and distributed soon after. The quality of these early translations varied greatly. All were made by Bahá'ís from other countries who were living in Papua New Guinea and tended to be heavily influenced by English usage. Many were more at the level of paraphrases than actual translations.

All translations of the writings into Tok Pisin are made from English without direct reference to the Arabic and Persian original texts, as no translators of the writings into Tok Pisin have had more than a superficial knowledge of Persian or Arabic. Although a number of Iranian Bahá'ís, some with a good command of Tok Pisin and some with a knowledge of Arabic as well as Persian, have lived in Papua New Guinea over the years, at the time of writing there are none living in the country to whom translators can turn for assistance. Translators needing clarification based on the original Persian or Arabic texts must rely on the assistance of persons whom they know outside the country or on the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre.

During the 1980s translators began compiling a list of standardized Tok Pisin equivalents for words and expressions that appear often in the English translations of the Bahá'í writings but were not found in the limited bilingual dictionaries available at the time. Many of the expressions on the list were taken or adapted from the Tok Pisin Bible. In the absence of a copy of the working dictionary that the Bible translators had developed for their internal use, Bahá'í translators chose expressions by finding needed words in English versions of the Bible and then seeing how the Bible translators had translated the words into Tok Pisin. The result was that the style of written Tok Pisin used in the Bahá'í writings from this period onward has been closely linked to the style used in the Tok Pisin Bible.

In the 1980s and 1990s, a number of translation workshops were held in which teams of Tok Pisin-speaking foreign Bahá'í residents and English-speaking indigenous Bahá'ís worked

together to produce translations of the writings. Some of these foreign residents had a knowledge of European or Asian languages, so they were familiar with the translations of the Bahá'í writings into these languages and were aware of issues related to translations from English into these languages. At the same time, the Papua New Guinean participants were of the first generation of indigenous Melanesians with university education, so their English was quite fluent and they could see the shortcomings of earlier translations. The result was a considerable improvement in the level of Tok Pisin translations.

Today, a sizable collection of Bahá'í sacred writings is available in Tok Pisin, including The Hidden Words, chapters from *Some Answered Questions*, collections of prayers, a number of compilations on various subjects, and a translation of the complete Kitáb-i-Aqdas that became available in 2022. As of 2024, only approximately sixty of the more than 830 separate indigenous languages of Papua New Guinea have translations of even the short obligatory prayer, so local believers depend on translations of the writings into English and Tok Pisin to have access to the words of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, and ʻAbdu'l-Bahá.

Current Systems of Translating the Writings in Japan and Papua New Guinea

Although the past saw a variety of approaches to translating the Bahá'í writings around the world, today, authorized English translations are prepared at the Bahá'í World Centre though a system created by the Universal House of Justice and coordinated by its Research Department. Draft translations are prepared by teams of translators, reviewed by groups of individuals with the requisite knowledge of the languages, and revised as needed. Any unresolved questions are referred to the Universal House of Justice. The translations are then formally authorized by the House of Justice when it is satisfied with the final result of the process. After this, the translations are published at the World Centre or through one of the Bahá'í Publishing Trusts in an English-speaking country such as the United States.

Conversely, translations into other languages that are spoken in only one country, such as Japanese and Tok Pisin, are normally handled within the country where the language is spoken and require the approval of the National Spiritual Assembly of that country before publication. The copyright is then held by that National Spiritual Assembly.

In Japan, there are currently two approaches taken to the translation process: in some cases, individual translators or teams select a work that they wish to translate and submit their completed translation to the National Spiritual Assembly for review. Often, they consult the Assembly when they begin the project in order to make sure that there is no overlap in the work. At present, the National Spiritual

Assembly of Japan does not have a standing review committee; instead, teams are appointed ad hoc to review translations.

The second approach involves individuals or teams being appointed to translate specific works by an institution, usually the National Spiritual Assembly, the Publishing Trust, or the Institute Board. For example, the National Spiritual Assembly asks individuals to translate Messages from the Universal House of Justice, or, for longer messages or time-sensitive ones such as the annual Riḍván Message, different individuals are asked to translate specific sections of the Message and then other individuals are assigned the task of reviewing the combined translations. This approach was also taken when the Bahá'í Publishing Trust of Japan undertook the revision of a provisional translation of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas in 2017. The Trust asked an individual with a great deal of experience in polishing translations to handle the revision process; the resulting manuscript was then reviewed by a team appointed by the National Spiritual Assembly before the official version was published. Currently, translation of Ruhi books and other Institute materials is handled by the Institute Board, with the proviso that quotations from previously published works such as *Gleanings* not be changed unless they contain mistakes. The Institute Board also conducts the review process and finalizes the translation of these works.

In both approaches, the work is entrusted to a relatively small number of bilingual individuals; some are Iranians and Americans who have lived in Japan for many years or their children, who were often born and raised in Japan, while others are Japanese who have lived abroad for extensive periods of time or have acquired high levels of English proficiency in other ways. In 2022, the National Spiritual Assembly organized its first online training session for translators. While this seminar raised awareness around various issues involved in the translation and review process, it did not result in an immediate increase in the number of translators the institutions can rely on. It is hoped, however, that such training sessions will eventually increase the human resources needed to carry out this important work.

In Papua New Guinea, decisions about which specific texts to translate are sometimes part of the Bahá'í community's development plans (Five Year Plan, Nine Year Plan, etc.) drawn up by the National Spiritual Assembly in consultation with Counsellors and the World Centre. This is usually limited to translations into the national languages of Hiri Motu and Tok Pisin. Sometimes the translation goals of these development plans include goals to translate prayers or a selection of prayers into either a certain number of indigenous languages or specific languages. In these cases, the specific prayers themselves are not usually specified, although in most cases the noonday short obligatory prayer is among the

first prayers to be translated.

Occasionally the National Spiritual Assembly or a Counsellor will request that a specific work be translated into a specific language, usually Tok Pisin. When this is done, specific persons are usually invited to do the translation. At present, there is no translation committee or translation office.

Most translations of Bahá'í writings are, however, private initiatives. The choice of a text to be translated is ideally made in advance through consultation with the National Spiritual Assembly, but often the text is simply one that an individual believer starts to translate and then submits to the Assembly for approval and publication. The approval process is fairly informal. For its translations of the writings, the National Spiritual Assembly relies heavily on a small number of translators whom it trusts to produce translations of a reliably high standard. For translations into local languages, it relies on Local Spiritual Assemblies and Auxiliary Board Members from the relevant communities to check the accuracy of the translations.

At present the only institutions in Papua New Guinea offering training in translation into Tok Pisin and other languages of the country are operated by evangelical church groups, so the training of young Papua New Guinean Bahá'ís in translation techniques is difficult. For this reason, most translations of the writings into Tok Pisin are still made by foreign Bahá'í residents who have studied overseas and learned Tok Pisin.

Translation Challenges Revealed through the Research Project

In this section, we will first discuss the challenges we encountered in translating the selected passage from the *Epistle*, and then summarize the general problems covered in previous literature and our own experience outside of this particular project.

In the discussion of the translation project, reference will be made to the paragraph numbers in Appendix A. These paragraph numbers are provided for the purpose of reference for this article and are not part of either the original text or of Shoghi Effendi's translation.

Historical Background of the Selected Passage

In translating any piece of writing, it is important to understand the context in which it was written. The *Epistle* is an admonishment to, and analysis of erroneous argumentation by, the son of an infamous opponent of the Faith, known as "the Wolf." While there are numerous studies of the *Epistle* that discuss the general background of the work, few of these guides include detailed notes regarding specific points in this book. An exception is the annotated German translation by Armin Eschraghi, to which we made extensive reference in preparation for our translations.

From Eschraghi's notes we learned that paragraph 2 of the passage we

selected is a reference to the ongoing power struggles between the Sháh's government and the Islamic clergy at the time the *Epistle* was written. We also learned that many Bahá'ís have believed that the reference in paragraph 4 to "a new language and a new script" was to Esperanto, but this is unclear. Eschraghi points out that unfortunately, no one thought to ask Bahá'u'lláh further about it, and even Shoghi Effendi said he had no information about what language Bahá'u'lláh was referring to here.

It is important to remember that Bahá'u'lláh lived and wrote within a Middle Eastern Muslim environment. This is relevant in understanding paragraph 6, in which Bahá'u'lláh talks about "the Crimson Ark." Eschraghi has pointed out that elsewhere in the *Epistle* Bahá'u'lláh mentions "the Ark of Bathá (Mecca)," a reference to a ḥadíth in which Muḥammad said that "the secret of His house" is like the safety of Noah's ark in an ocean in which everything is drowning. This image of the ocean is continued in paragraph 6 with the words "enter the ocean of the unity of God," possibly in reference to a Shiite prayer in which the happy believer is compared to someone who enters a deep sea.

The same paragraph contains the Arabic phrase "*inní as'aluka min bahá'ika bi-ab-bahá, wa-kulla bahá'ika bahíyun*"[11] in which Bahá'u'lláh plays with different forms and meanings of the word *bahá* (as indicated by the repetition of the word "glorious" by Shoghi Effendi), using words from a morning prayer composed by the fifth Imam of Twelver Shiite Islam. That prayer in turn calls on a number of the names of God that the Báb used for the names of the months in His calendar.

While it was not possible to recreate or even hint at all these references in the translations, it was important to keep them in mind when choosing wording in the Japanese and Tok Pisin translations.

Methodology: Using Back Translation to Check Translations

As mentioned earlier, 'Abdu'l-Bahá recommended that translations of the writings from Persian into English be undertaken by a committee of translators "composed of several Persians and several Americans, all of whom must have the utmost proficiency in both the Persian and English languages"; He stressed that "one person is not sufficient" (*Tablets* 466–68). However, at present, sufficient human resources do not exist to enable such a committee to be formed for Japanese and Tok Pisin translations, or for many other languages into which the Bahá'í writings are translated.

In the absence of such bilingual associates with whom to collaborate, the authors used back translation to check their initial drafts. Back translation, also known as reverse translation,

11 Translated by Shoghi Effendi as "I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle* 140)

involves taking a translated work, translating it back into the original language, and then giving it to another speaker of the source language, who need not speak the target language. This person compares the resulting translation with the original to identify errors that may have arisen in the original translation process. While the person doing the checking may not be able to comment on the stylistic quality of the translation, s/he is asked to compare the content of the back translation with the original to identify mistakes that may have arisen in the original translation process, including omissions and misinterpretations. A simple diagram of this process is provided in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Back Translation Process

Start	**Step 1**	**Step 2**	**Step 3**	**Step 4**
Original Writing →	Draft Translation →	Translation of Draft into Original Language →	Meaning Check →	Revise Translation
Languages:				
Original (English)	Target Language	Original Language (English)	Discussion (English)	Target Language

This process can be enhanced if the person translating the passage back into the original language in Step 2 is not the same as the person who originally translated it, and if the person checking the back translation in Step 3 is also a different person.

However, in this research project, the person doing the original translation and the back translation were the same, while the second author checked the back translation. Both the authors are native speakers of English with almost no knowledge of Arabic or Persian. Both are fluent in the respective second language into which they translate and have considerable experience translating both into and from those languages and English on a wide variety of topics, including the Bahá'í writings. While Mary Noguchi, the translator of Japanese who checked the back translation from Tok Pisin, does not speak that language, she found that since it is a pidgin that evolved from English, she could understand parts of the Tok Pisin translations, so they were not totally unfamiliar. Craig Volker, the translator of Tok Pisin who checked the back translation from Japanese, lived in Japan for a number of years, so he has a moderate understanding of Japanese and some awareness of where potential translation issues might arise.

The authors began by making draft translations of the passage into the second language in which they are fluent. Over the course of a number of working sessions in which they met in person or online, they went through the passage paragraph by paragraph, with each translator orally making a back translation while the other, looking at

the original English, checked the back translation for accuracy. This allowed them to discover missing words or phrases and other errors in the translations as well as—and perhaps more enlightening—differences in the way words and phrases were interpreted.

They could also consult on questions they faced in the translation process. For example, they discussed how to deal with the vagueness of the referent for the word "it" in the first paragraph ("it shall only increase their loss"). They also considered possible approaches to various challenges they faced, including the handling of culture-specific terms such as Shakyh, Páshá, and Kaaba. Overall, both authors found this exercise a helpful way to get outside input on their translations in the absence of Arabic and Persian speakers who are fluent in Japanese and Tok Pisin.

After this process was finished, Mary Noguchi asked a Japanese Bahá'í friend to check her translation and, based on her feedback, made a number of revisions to make the translation sound more natural in Japanese.

The next sections will present some of the many challenges the authors encountered in carrying out this project.

Terminology

As mentioned earlier, these translations of the Bahá'í writings were made for devotional rather than academic purposes, so in general, they needed to eschew footnotes, comments on possible alternate wording and long explanations of background information that would be unfamiliar to the target audience. The authors decided, however, that unlike prayers, a translation of a text like the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* might benefit from brief labels and explanations within the text itself as long as they did not interrupt the flow of the translated text. Specifically, we considered this option in translating titles for religious and government leaders, Bahá'í-specific terms, words and phrases that are often used in the Bible or the Qur'án or in Islamic works, and terms and phrases whose meaning was unclear in English.

A number of religious and government titles appear in this passage. For example, "Shaykh," which is a variant spelling of "sheikh," a title for an Arab leader or a leader in a Muslim community or organization (*Oxford Dictionary*), would not mean much to the average Japanese or Papua New Guinean reader. One possibility would have been to use a familiar term used to address clergymen—in Japanese, 和尚さん (*oshousan*) for a Buddhist priest, 神父さん (*shimpusan*) for a Catholic priest, or in Tok Pisin, *pater*, *pasto*, or *talatala* for a Catholic, Lutheran, or Methodist clergyman, respectively. It was decided, however, that since there are no equivalent religious positions in Islam, using such a title in the Japanese or Tok Pisin translation would not be appropriate. Instead, the Japanese suffix 閣下 (*kakka*) was attached to the nipponized spelling of "Shaykh," since it was formerly used as a polite way of addressing feudal lords and other

people of high rank. Another suffix, 卿 (*kyou*, meaning "Lord"), was used with the title "Páshá" to indicate Kamál Páshá's noble status.

A similar approach was taken in the Tok Pisin translation, as it was important to keep in mind that Bahá'u'lláh referred to Kamál Páshá and the Shaykh in polite terms. In Tok Pisin it is important to publicly recognize a leader or elder; therefore, as in Japanese, an honorific title, in this case *bikman* "leader," was added to "Páshá" and "Shaykh," with the latter, like "Sháh," being used unchanged as proper names, rather than titles. For "Sháh" in paragraph 5, the title *King* was added, so that "the Sháh" became "*King Sháh*." Papua New Guinea is a Commonwealth nation, and during the reign of Queen Elizabeth II there was a convention of using "*Misis Kwin*" as the equivalent of "Her Majesty." With her passing, a male version equivalent to "His Majesty" has not yet been developed, so this English honorific was left out.

The reference to "divines" in paragraph 2 was translated as イスラムの学識者 (*isuramu no gakushikisha* [scholars of Islam]) in Japanese, and "*bikman bilong lotu*" (leaders of religion) in Tok Pisin. The former is perhaps weaker than the English term, as it does not have the clerical connotation, while the Tok Pisin term emphasizes the political power they have more than their education. Thus, although these seemed to be reasonable compromises, neither translation fully encapsulates the nuances of "divines."

A slightly longer interpolation was added in Japanese when translating "[t]his people" in the second paragraph of the selected passage. Given that Bahá'u'lláh states that they "are assiduously occupied in enlightening the souls of men and in rehabilitating their condition" and in other portions of the *Epistle* He asks the addressee to protect them, it is clear that He is referring to the believers. The Japanese translation therefore incorporated the words バハイの信者たち (*bahai no shinjatachi* [believers of Bahá'í]) in a footnote to explain who "this people" refers to. In Tok Pisin, "this people" was translated as "*ol dispela lain*" (this group or community of people). Thus, in both cases the translations are more specific than the English.

Another point that seemed to warrant explanation was the reference to the Qayyúm-i-Asmá in the sixth paragraph. There, Bahá'u'lláh mentions that the Crimson Ark has been ordained by God for the people of Bahá "in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá." Since most of the Writings of the Báb have not been translated into Japanese or Tok Pisin yet, it might have been advisable to integrate an appositive indicating that the Qayyúm-i-Asmá was the first work written by the Báb. A scholarly text might have even noted an explanation of this reference given by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Epistle* itself:

> We have admonished Our loved ones to fear God, a fear which is the fountainhead of all goodly deeds and virtues. It is the

> commander of the hosts of justice in the city of Bahá. Happy the man that hath entered the shadow of its luminous standard, and laid fast hold thereon. He, verily, is of the Companions of the Crimson Ark, which hath been mentioned in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá. (135)

However, to prevent such expository information from impeding the flow of the passage, in the Japanese translation it was decided to simply provide a Japanese transliteration of the name of the work and add the character for "book" (書 [*sho*]) to give readers a clue as to what it was. The same approach was adopted in Tok Pisin, with the word *Buk* (Book) added to the name "Qayyúm-i-Asmá." In addition, the subtitle of the book was given in the Tok Pisin translation: "*o Buk bilong Stori bilong Josep*" (or the Book of the Story of Joseph).

Another area that concerned the authors was the treatment of terms and set phrases that appear often in Bahá'í works as well as phraseology that is often used in Biblical or Quranic writing. One such term was the phrase in paragraph 1 that Bahá'u'lláh often used for Himself, "This Wronged One." In Japanese there is a set term that has been used in many previous translations: この虐げられし者 (*kono shiitagerareshi mono*), so it was used here as well. The original phrase is an example of the Persian use of a third-person reference to oneself, which is also appropriate in Japanese; however, in English or Tok Pisin, a first-person pronoun would normally be used to refer to oneself. Bahá'u'lláh's wording was therefore made clear in Tok Pisin by the addition "*Mi*" (I) to produce the phrase "*Mi, dispela Man, ol lain i wokim rong long Em*" (I, this Man to whom people do wrong things), followed by the repetition of the first-person pronoun in the next clause ("*Mi singautim*" [I call upon]).

To avoid confusion and link the translations to previously translated works, reference was made to published translations of prayers and other writings to determine already established terms for words such as "Pen" in paragraph 2 (in Japanese the loan word ペン [*pen*], not 筆 [*fude*], a Japanese style brush, and in Tok Pisin the somewhat outdated Biblical term "*Ingpen*" [ink pen]) and use them in our translations. Similarly, previously established terms for "Most Great Ocean" were incorporated in paragraph 6 (最大なる大海原 [*saidainaru oounabara*] in Japanese and *Biksolwara* [large ocean] in Tok Pisin), and for "Crimson Ark" in paragraph 6 (深紅の方舟 [*shinku no hakobune*] and "*Retpela Sip i gat rup long en*" [literally "red ship with a roof on it"] in Tok Pisin).

The word "crimson" brought up some questions, as the English word and the Arabic original both describe a color and give a connotation of "blood." In both Japanese and Tok Pisin it is necessary to decide between a word describing a dark red color and a word meaning "like blood." In both languages, words for a color, 深紅 (*shinku* [dark red]) and *retpela* (red),

have been used in Bahá'í translations, as they were already used in Bible translations, so, as indicated above, the authors decided to use these terms in their translations of this passage.

Another word that had previously been translated into both languages is "ark." In the Japanese translation, 方舟 (*hakobune*) was used for "ark," since it is used in the Bible in reference to Noah's ark. Similarly, in Tok Pisin the description "*Sip i gat rup long en*" (ship with a roof on it) was used, as this is the term used in the Bible to refer to Noah's ark.

This approach did not work in Japanese for the term "wayward," as it has been translated in Japanese Bahá'í prayers and writings as both 強情な (*goujouna*, implying willfully or obstinately wayward) and 迷走する (*meisou suru*, suggesting people who have strayed or gone off course). Initially 迷走する (*meisou suru*) was chosen because of the nuance of going off the straight path—off "the way"—but 強情な (*goujouna*) was left in parentheses as a possible option. The Japanese collaborator who checked the translation suggested that 強情な (*goujouna*) sounded more natural in Japanese, so in the end, that word was used.

In Tok Pisin "the wayward" was translated using the idiomatic phrase "*ol lain i brukim bus,*" which has the literal meaning "the group of people who tear down the jungle," but also refers to those who thoughtlessly break rules without regard to others, so it encapsulates the meanings of both of the Japanese alternatives.

There were also cases where adding any explanatory wording at all was felt to be too much of an interpretation on the part of the translator. For instance, an adjective such as "helpful" or "useful" could have been added to modify the word "things" in the phrase "How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment" in the second paragraph to imply that these things would have been beneficial and not a waste of time. This would have made it clearer that Bahá'u'lláh was pointing out that policies on language should be adopted, as it was possible to do so easily. However, it was felt that this would have been too much of an interpretation and the idea was therefore abandoned.

The limited lexicon of a pidgin-creole language such as Tok Pisin presents particular problems in choosing the terminology used in translations. An example of this was encountered in translating "Sublime Horizon" in paragraph 1. "Sublime" was translated as "*Gutpela"* (good) here, but as "*Naispela"* (nice or beautiful) in paragraph 3, as there is no one word that has both the connotations of "good" and "subtly beautiful" that "sublime" has in English. Moreover, as there is no single word with the meaning "horizon" in Tok Pisin, this needed to be translated using the descriptive phrase "*ples we heven i bungim graun"* (literally, "place where heaven meets earth"). A similar problem was encountered in paragraph 1 with the translation of "vacillation, repudiation or denial." Since Tok Pisin does not have a distinction between "repudiation" and

"denial," this phrase with three components in English was reduced to two in Tok Pisin: "*tubel o tanim baksait*" (doubt or turn aside).

Some of the archaic English terms used in Shoghi Effendi's translation also presented challenges. One example is the phrase "We fain would hope" at the beginning of paragraph 4. The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines "fain," when used with "would" in a sentence as "1) with pleasure, gladly; 2) by preference; and 3) by desire." It is not natural to combine such adverbs with a Japanese verb meaning "hope," so these connotations were left out and a Japanese expression meaning "I ardently hope" (切に望みます [*setsuni nozomimasu*]) was used. In Tok Pisin the opposite approach was taken by using the phrase "*Mipela bai amamas*" (We will be happy), with happiness being emphasized and "hope" remaining unexpressed.

As mentioned in the earlier section, the use of "Say" in paragraph 5 follows Quranic usage and was therefore difficult to translate into both Japanese and Tok Pisin, as it is a wording that is unusual in both languages. However, it has already been translated in a number of Japanese Bahá'í prayers using the phrase 言挙げよ (*kotoage yo*), which has connotations of a ritual that uses words to clarify a Shinto principle. Thus, even though it is not necessarily understandable to the average Japanese reader, Noguchi decided to use this wording here as well. In Tok Pisin the phrase "*tok se*" was used to translate "Say." This wording is used in the Tok Pisin Bible to indicate direct quotations, but in most dialects of Tok Pisin it is an unusual wording. On the other hand, it might be noted that this wording is also unusual in English and that English-speaking Bahá'ís may need to consult others as to its meaning or gradually come to understand it on their own. It was therefore thought that the same process could take place for people who speak Japanese and Tok Pisin.

There were other references to Islam that can be opaque to most Japanese readers and even more so to Papua New Guineans. An example of the challenges this can present to translators can be seen with the translation of "the Kaaba of God" in paragraph 6. Shoghi Effendi may have judged that the Kaaba was sufficiently familiar to English speakers so that no explanation was required, but the authors felt that this would not be true in Japan or Papua New Guinea. Therefore, in the Japanese translation, the Arabic term was not transliterated and instead the phrase 聖なる神殿 (*seinaru shinden* [sacred shrine]) was used. In Tok Pisin, the transliterated Arabic expression was retained, but an explanatory phrase was added: "*Kaaba o Ples Tambu bilong God*" (Kaaba or God's Holy Place).

Echoes of biblical wording can be seen at the end of paragraph 5, where Bahá'u'lláh says, "Happy are they who act; happy are they who understand; happy the man that hath clung unto the truth. . . ." This grammatical structure is similar to that used in the Beatitudes contained in Matthew 5 in the New

Testament (e.g., "blessed are the poor in spirit"). The authors decided to reflect this by using phrasing taken from Japanese and Tok Pisin translations of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3–10).

In addition to the above issues involving culture-specific terms in this short passage, there were also a number of places where the exact meaning of the English wording was unclear. Without access to the original texts through either exegesis material or collaboration with Arabic and Persian-speaking colleagues, it was not possible to ascertain whether the ambiguity in English was a reflection of a similar ambiguity in the original text or the result of the English wording chosen by Shoghi Effendi.

For example, in paragraph 6, Bahá'u'lláh tells the Shaykh to "enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá for the people of Bahá." "Enter" could mean "get on the ship," which is how this was translated into Japanese, or "go into the ship," which is how this was translated into Tok Pisin. In translating "ordained," the translators were unclear whether this meant that God had ordained the creation of the ship or that He had set it aside for the people of Bahá. In both the Japanese and the Tok Pisin translations, the second meaning was chosen. The Shaykh is then told what will happen if he should "enter therein and attain unto it." Assuming that "it" refers to the Crimson Ark that has just been discussed, the question arises as to how one can "attain" a ship. The word "attain" suggests that the Crimson Ark is a station to be reached, rather than a physical ship. With this in mind, the Japanese translation used an equivalent of "attain to this station" (この地位に達せられる [*kono chii ni tasserareru*]), while the Tok Pisin translation retained some of the ambiguity of the English with "*kamap long en*" (arrive[d] at it).

In at least one case, Japanese semantics forced the translator to make a distinction that was not present in English. This involved the choice of a word to translate the relative pronoun "what" in the phrase "through which hath appeared what was concealed and preserved." Japanese has three words that could be used for "what": *koto* (事), which is used to refer to actions, events or abstract things, plus two words, both pronounced *mono*, one written with the character 者, indicating that it refers to a person or persons, and another written with the character 物, which is used for an object or objects. Working on the assumption that reference here is being made to the Divine Word or Teachings, it was decided to use 事 [*koto*]. This issue did not arise in Tok Pisin, in which no relative pronoun is required in this kind of construction.

Pragmatic Considerations—Politeness and Register

One factor that made this passage especially difficult to translate into Japanese concerns the pragmatics of politeness, as in Arabic, Persian, and Japanese, speakers are much more sensitive to honorifics and levels of politeness than

speakers of English generally are.

For example, at the First Bahá'í World Congress held at London's Royal Albert Hall in May 1963, Hand of the Cause Mr. Taráẓu'lláh Samandarí gave a talk on his "Recollections of Bahá'u'lláh." Throughout the talk, he prefaced every mention of Bahá'u'lláh with various titles, such as "the Blessed Beauty," "the Blessed Perfection," the "Supreme Manifestation" and so on. At one point, he follows his use of Bahá'u'lláh's title "*Jamál-i-ghedam*" (the Ancient Beauty) with the invocation, "*Jalla Dhikrihu'l 'aẓam*" ("Exalted be He Who is the most great Remembrance of God"). His interpreter, Marzieh Gail, an Iranian-American Bahá'í who was widely regarded as one of the most capable translators from Persian into English at the time, repeatedly omitted these modifiers, simply saying "Bahá'u'lláh said" or "Bahá'u'lláh did" (Samandarí). Her translation highlights an important difference between Persian and English in terms of their pragmatics and conventions of politeness, and specifically, their use of honorifics. This difference becomes problematic when using translations into English as the basis for translations into a language such as Japanese in which sensitivity to honorifics and polite wording is critical.

Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini stress that politeness is a "culture-specific phenomenon". They note that Lakoff discusses politeness "as a phenomenon by means of which cultures can be categorized." In Lakoff's view, there are three basic rules for conflict avoidance: distance, deference, and camaraderie. Cultures can be categorized according to which of these rules are emphasized more. For example, distance is more prominent in British culture, deference more prominent in Japanese culture, and camaraderie more prominent in Australian culture (2).

While Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini point out that research conducted after 2000 tends to downplay the normative role of culture in analyzing politeness, instead treating it as one of many factors—albeit an important one—that affect the language used in interactions, Wierzbicka stresses the salience of cultural differences in language use and argues that the extent of these differences tends to be underestimated in research into pragmatics and politeness (67). She argues that linguistic interactions are best analyzed using the predominant values of the respective cultures—for example, self-assertion in English as opposed to 遠慮 ([*enryo*] holding back out of consideration for others in order not to cause 迷惑 [*meiwaku*, trouble] to them) in Japanese culture. For instance, an assertion of a need that might be considered polite or at least non-offensive in English may come across as rude if directly translated into Japanese because it would not show the culturally appropriate amount of "*enryo*."

In addition to this emphasis on deference, Japanese culture also stresses the relationship between speaker and listener or writer and reader in the phrasing used in oral communication and letters. For

example, in both spoken and written Japanese, the wording of the invitation "Could you come to dinner?" would be different depending upon whether one was a professor inviting a student, a student inviting a professor, or a friend inviting a friend. The word for "dinner" would change (Nisbett 53–54), and different verbs would be used as well. A student inviting a professor might say, "もしよろしかったら、お食事にでもいらっしゃいませんか" (*Moshi yoroshikattara, oshokuji ni demo irrashaimasen ka* [If it is all right (with you), wouldn't (you) (honorably) go to (honorable) dinner ?]). On the other hand, to a good friend, a young Japanese male might say "飯食いに行かない" (*Meshi kui ni ikanai?* [Won't (you) go (with me) to down some grub?]). In fact, Suzuki argues that you cannot really utter a sentence in Japanese without knowing who the listener will be, because everything about the sentence changes according to the relationship between the speaker and the hearer. This issue of highly specific levels of politeness and the convention of tailoring one's language to indicate an awareness of interpersonal relationships and show social deference through the use of honorifics and humble language is not limited to Japanese: other Asian languages such as Korean and Indonesian also have comparable systems of polite language.

Of particular concern in this research project were the differences between the Persian and English concepts of politeness, since many of the original Bahá'í writings were in Persian but, as pointed out above, it is generally their English translations that are used as the basis from which translations into other languages are made.

According to Izadi, Persian is "an honorific-rich language" (83). Sharifian contrasts Persian and English, noting that the concepts of deference and respect in western English-speaking cultures reflect egalitarianism, while the Persian concept of *ehterám* (deference, respect) reflects hierarchy. Similarly, a study by Kamehkosh and Larina found that British definitions of politeness were consistent with such cultural values as "equality" and "independence" and often focused on respect for equal rights. In contrast, the Iranian participants in their study tended to define politeness in terms of respecting their elders, including parents and grandparents, and honoring those of higher status such as teachers and seniors (606–607).

According to Izadi, the use of honorifics in Persian indicates the speaker's awareness of their own and the hearer's social standing, among other attributes. He also notes that it is linked to the Persian cultural concept of *tárof*, or Persian ritual politeness, which includes compliments, flattery and formality, as well as the concepts of good manners and respect. Hodge (1957) categorized Persian speech into four politeness levels: familiar, polite, deferential and royal in terms of difference in address terms (cited in Yousofi et al. 70). Izadi summarized the use of honorifics in Persian as follows:

> Grammatical honorifics in Persian include the use of plural pronoun [*sic*] (plural form of T/V) to address a singular addressee and a referent, plural form of the verb to implicate a singular person to agree with plural (respected) subject, and switching the second person to the third person pronoun to refer to the addressee. These grammatical honorifics are often combined with a rich constellation of lexical honorifics that involve using the deferential alternative of neutral verbs and nouns, to convey the deferential form of the language, which is used to lower the "self" and elevate the "other" (Beeman, 1976, 2001; Sharifian, 2008) in the form of an extremely hierarchical conversation between a servant and a lord. (83)

Beeman found similarities between Persian and Japanese in terms of the two languages' use of honorifics, although he noted that the grammatical forms of Persian are simpler than Japanese while its morphological system is more complex (31–57). Saberi lists a number of social-cultural values prevalent in Iranian society. Several of these are similar to Japanese values, including "its group-oriented nature," "sensitivity to giving trouble to others," "the importance of seniority in terms of age and social status," and "differentiation between members of the 'inner circle' and the 'outer circle.'"

Given this analysis, the question that faces translators of the Bahá'í writings into Japanese and other languages that have highly complex systems of politeness is whether or not to go beyond the English translation's rather flattened or egalitarian modes of expressions in order to reflect the register of the Persian original. That is, should the translator into Japanese try to find ways to capture the level of politeness that the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, or 'Abdu'l-Bahá used in the original passage and express that in Japanese by adjusting forms of address and self-reference as well as verb forms in spite of the fact that not all of the original politeness strategies are reflected in the English translation?[12]

Many of the translations of Bahá'í sacred texts into Japanese to date have employed a register used by those in authority, such as kings or teachers, to speak to their subjects or students. They also in general have used the plain form of Japanese verbs, which

12 It would be incorrect to say that Shoghi Effendi's English translations reflect none of the original language text's politeness strategies. For example, his translation of phrases such as "magnified be His name," "exalted be His glory," etc., which break up the flow of the English text, do signal to the English reader that there is a level of politeness, and often reverence for God and His Manifestations in the text that goes beyond what is typically seen in English. On the other hand, these English translations do not give much of an indication of how verb forms and other wording are adjusted to reflect the respective social positions and social distance between the writer (Bahá'u'lláh) and addressees such as the Shakyh—adjustments that are required in languages such as Japanese.

is the style preferred in scholarly writing. This may be quite appropriate for a work such as The Hidden Words, in which Bahá'u'lláh is addressing humanity in God's voice. But what about the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, which is a letter written to the son of a powerful Muslim cleric, a man who—like his father—persecuted Bahá'u'lláh's followers? Did Bahá'u'lláh use the language of a superior talking to a subordinate, or did He choose a more "polite" or humble tone? The English translation offers only slight hints as to the answer to this question.

Japanese translators are therefore left with a dilemma when translating Tablets and other writings addressed to specific people. Should they adhere to the flatter English style of wording and create a translation that does not follow Japanese pragmatic conventions, try to guess the level of politeness or humility Bahá'u'lláh might have chosen to use in addressing the recipient of the Tablet or Epistle, or seek out experts who can help them make more informed language choices? It would be helpful to have annotated versions of works such as the *Epistle* with explanations of the tone and types of language (honorific or humble, etc.) used in each portion so that translators into languages with complex systems of polite language such as Japanese could reflect them in their translations.

In translating the passages in Appendix A from the *Epistle*, the authors were fortunate to be able to call upon the assistance of an able Iranian friend who is fluent in Persian and Arabic and has extensive experience in dealing with the Bahá'í writings. In an email, he writes that the *Epistle* contains both Persian and Arabic passages, including some paragraphs that mix the two languages, and comments:

> Generally speaking the tone of the Epistle varies from one subject to another. The Blessed Beauty in some passages uses condemnatory and strong statements, and in other passages He takes up a loving exhortation tone and still in some other passages He employs a humble posture of writing. Referring to the specific paragraphs you have mentioned, Bahá'u'lláh employs a polite yet humble style of writing and the tone is that of loving exhortation. He refers to Kamál Páshá in polite terms. He has used a humble polite loving exhortation tone, like a kind loving teacher guiding his students.[13]

Noguchi drew on these insights in her choice of Japanese wording. For the overall register of the passage, the です/ます (*desu*/*masu*) verb forms that indicate politeness or distance in Japanese were selected. As explained above, in translating "O Shaykh" in paragraphs 2 and 6, the address form 閣下 (*kakka*) was added to the Japanese transliteration of "Shaykh," since "*kakka*" was formerly used when addressing people

13 Email message from Jiyan Ghadimi to Mary Noguchi, 3 November, 2021.

of high rank. Because it is generally not considered polite to use any of the second-person pronouns in Japanese, パシャ閣下 (*Pasha Kakka*), パシャ卿 (*Pasha kyou*) and 閣下 (*kakka*), similar in meaning to "Your lordship," were used in place of "you" in translating Bahá'u'lláh's words to Kamál Páshá, while 陛下 (*Heika* [Your Majesty]) was used when He addressed the Sháh.

In translating Bahá'u'lláh's account of His interactions with Kamál Páshá in paragraph 3, the honorific verb おっしゃる (*ossharu*) and the polite verb ending ます (*masu*) were used for "said." Honorific verbs such as なさいました (*nasaimashita* [did]) and お望みになったら (*onozomi ni nattara* [If thou desirest]) were selected to translate the verbs Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to the Páshá, while humble verb forms such as お伝えします (*otsutae shimasu* [will communicate them to thee]) were chosen to translate the words Bahá'u'lláh used to refer to His own actions.

Similarly, in paragraph 5 honorific verbs were chosen for the words Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to the Sháh (for instance, 努力なさってくださいませ [*doryoku nasatte kudasaimase*] for "exert thyself"), while humble terms such as 向いておりません (*muiteorimasen* [are turned towards naught]) were used to translate the verbs Bahá'u'lláh used when referring to His own actions. At first, Noguchi translated "We" and "Us" as 我 (*ware*), an old-fashioned first-person pronoun which has been used in such works as The Hidden Words to translate "I" and "Me." However, since this usage has the nuance of someone in a higher position talking down to a subordinate, she reconsidered this choice and decided to use 小生 (*shousei* [literally, "little life"]), a first-person pronoun often used by males in letter writing, since it conveys a sense of polite humility.

These considerations of the pragmatics of politeness were less important in the translation into Tok Pisin, as Tok Pisin is a primarily oral language in which politeness and respect are expressed more in body language than in the choice of words. Moreover, as a pidgin-creole contact language, it is even more "flat" than English in expressing deference or social differentiation.

Nevertheless, some adaptations were needed to ensure that Bahá'u'lláh's Tok Pisin voice was polite but firm. One such adaptation was the addition of the word "*nogat*" in paragraphs 1 and 5. This word acts as an intensifier to negative sentences, a kind of oral exclamation point, and is an oratory technique often used in certain areas of Papua New Guinea. By using it here, in addition to emphasizing the particular points being made, it marks Bahá'u'lláh as a skilled orator. It should be noted, however, that it is not a direct translation of any specific part of the English text.

The above list is not exhaustive, but represents examples of the many challenges the authors faced in translating a fairly short passage from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

Further Challenges of Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Japanese

In addition to the challenges of finding appropriate wording in cases where culture-specific terminology was used or when the meaning of the English wording needed to be clarified, as well as the pragmatic concerns outlined in the previous section, the translation of English texts into Japanese involves a number of other challenges.

One is related to the tendency of the Japanese language to rely on context much more than English does, particularly in terms of the use of subjects and objects. Edward Hall explained that in general, communication in English tends to adopt a "low-context" style in which things are explicitly stated so that they can be understood by anyone without reference to background information. In contrast, communication in Japanese, like that in a number of other non-Western cultures, tends to rely heavily on the participants' understanding of who is conversing, where they are, and what they are talking about. Subjects of sentences are generally omitted if they can be understood from context. In many cases, in addition to the context, the form of the verb (e.g., honorific, polite, or humble) also indicates the subject, which therefore is left unmentioned. In fact, Martin estimates that subjects are omitted in approximately three quarters of all sentences in oral Japanese. Hall calls this "high-context" communication. Thus, one choice that a translator from English into Japanese has to make is which subjects to include and which to elide, since a "faithful" rendering of all of the sentence subjects in the source text would result in extremely unnatural sounding Japanese.

In this research project, Noguchi strove to develop a more natural-sounding Japanese translation by omitting many of the subjects of the sentences and implying them by the use of honorific or humble verbs and other wording. For example, in paragraph 4, Bahá'u'lláh writes, "If thou desirest, We will communicate them to thee." Noguchi translated this sentence as もし、お望みなら、それらについて情報をお伝えします。(*Moshi, onozomi nara, sorera ni tsuite jouhou wo otsutaeshimasu* [*if / honorably wish /(conditional)/, them / about / information / (object case particle) / will humbly give*]), omitting "thou," "We" and "thee" but implying them in a natural Japanese manner, by using honorific verbs for those referring to the Shaykh, and humble verbs for those pertaining to Bahá'u'lláh Himself.

Pronouns are another source of difficulty. Takao Suzuki explains that instead of using Western-style first- and second-person pronouns in a conversation, Japanese follows a pattern of choosing terms of self-reference and address based on rules used in family dialogue, where individuals of higher age or status are referred to by their relationship to the youngest person in the family, and those of lower age or status are called by their name. This pattern of self-reference and address is carried

over into conversations outside of the family as well. Therefore, even though Japanese has several words that could be translated as "you" (e.g., 貴方 [*anata*], 君 [*kimi*], and お前 [*omae*]), it is more common for a speaker or writer to refer to the other person by their relationship ("Father") or their title (e.g., "Professor" or "Department Head"), unless the other person is younger and/or of lower status. In fact, there is no personal pronoun that is conventionally used today to refer to someone of higher status in Japanese conversation or writing.

This makes it difficult to translate words like "Thee" and "Thou" in prayers. Japanese translators have generally chosen to use 神 [*kami*] ("God") or 主 [*shu*] ("Lord"), or one of the second-person pronouns usually reserved for use in an intimate relationship (貴方 [*anata*] or 君 [*kimi*], for "Thee", "Thou," and "Thine"). For "you" in passages written in the voice of God or the Manifestation, as in The Hidden Words, 汝 [*nanji*], an old-fashioned second-person pronoun, is used. Similarly, while Japanese has several words that can mean "I" (私 [*watakushi*] or [*watashi*], 僕 [*boku*], and 俺 [*ore*]), they tend to be dropped in conversation and writing whenever the context or verb ending makes such wording unnecessary. Thus, translators of the writings have to choose between "faithful" renderings of all pronouns and dropping the subjects "I" and "you" to make the translation sound more natural.

As illustrated above, Noguchi omitted many of the subjects and objects in sentences in her translation of the selected passage from the *Epistle*, but clarified the content through use of honorifics and humble language. However, she used the title 閣下 (*kakka* [your lordship]) instead of あなた (*anata* [you]) or another second-person pronoun to translate the "You" in the third paragraph ("You have wasted your life."). Also, as explained above, 小生 (*shousei*) was used to translate "We" and "Us" when Bahá'u'lláh was referring to Himself in the above passage and a pronoun was needed to clarify the meaning.

Another difference between English and Japanese that poses particular problems when translating the Bahá'í writings is the lack of capital letters in Japanese. As was pointed out above, Persian does not have capital letters either, but the English translations of the writings clearly distinguish between "He," a reference to God or the Manifestation, and "he," an ordinary human male. In other terms such as "Dayspring" and "Sun," capitalization indicates that the term refers to something divine. Japanese translators have devised several approaches to try to add this nuance. They have enclosed the word in Japanese quotation marks (e.g., 「彼」), printed it in bold or added a dot above or below the characters to signify "He" with a capital letter. Unfortunately, such approaches make the resulting text look messy and do not necessarily convey the intended meaning, so they have been dropped in recent years. Instead, explanatory

wording is occasionally added when translating "He" (e.g., 神におわす御方 [*kami ni owasu onkata*: the honorable One who is God]).

Although there were many capital letters in the selected passage from the *Epistle*, there were not any cases in which the meaning would become unclear if they were not indicated in some manner, so this did not pose a problem in this particular translation.

A third issue are the differences between the Bahá'í way of referring to Middle Eastern place names and the names in use today: for example, Persia instead of Iran, Constantinople instead of Istanbul, and Adrianople instead of Edirne. Japanese translators of the writings have tended to reflect the terms used in the English translations, while adding the current name in parentheses immediately after it (e.g., アドリアノープル (現在のエディルネ): "Adrianople [present-day Edirne]") if it is thought to be important to the understanding of the text. Although "Constantinople" appeared in this passage, Noguchi did not add any explanation because it was simply used by Bahá'u'lláh to refer to the name of the city at that time, and she thought that when the entire *Epistle* is translated, geographical and biographical notes would most likely be included in an index, making explanations in the body of the text unnecessary.

A fourth issue in translating the writings is the difference between English and Japanese grammatical structures. While in an English sentence the order in which words occur clarifies which nouns are subjects and which are objects, Japanese indicates subject and object through the use of particles, so the word order can vary freely. Moreover, as in Persian, Japanese verbs and negations come at the end of a sentence instead of in the middle, as they do in English, so it is not clear until the end of the sentence whether the statement is positive or negative. Finally, the placement of phrasal modifiers differs: complements follow the head in English (e.g., "the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse", paragraph 3, lines 7–8) while they precede the head in Japanese (e.g., 世界のすべての人々が使って談話する言葉 [*sekai no subete no hitobito ga tsukatte danwa suru kotoba:* world / 's / all /people / use to / converse / language]). These major differences in sentence structure can make it difficult to translate complex sentences, especially those written by the Guardian or the Universal House of Justice. In many cases, a long English sentence has to be broken down into smaller segments in order to effectively convey all of the content in Japanese. In translating the selected passage from the *Epistle*, the differences in sentence structure were of course reflected, but the sentences were not so complex as to require breaking them up to facilitate comprehension.

One further issue in the translation of the writings into Japanese is that to date there has been no coordination with academics or other religious groups to help establish consistency in the wording of common religious

terms, so Japanese translations of the Bahá'í writings can seem extremely foreign to the average reader, even if they are active members of another religion. Moreover, the many quotations from the Qur'án in the Bahá'í writings have been independently translated into Japanese rather than copying the wording from one of the existing Japanese translations of this holy book. Quotations from the Bible also tend to be newly translated, although occasionally Japanese translations of the Bible are referred to. Again, this robs Japanese readers of resonance with other spiritual traditions and is a practice that we feel should be reconsidered from now on.

Further Challenges of Translating the Bahá'í Writings into Tok Pisin

Orthography is a major issue that arises in translating the writings into Tok Pisin. Since the 1980s, translations into Tok Pisin have for the most part employed the same standard orthography as that used in the Tok Pisin Bible and the Oxford University Press *Papua New Guinea Tok Pisin English Dictionary* (Volker). However, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre urges Bahá'í translators and writers in languages using the Latin alphabet to strictly follow the transliteration practices used by Shoghi Effendi, thereby standardizing the spelling of Bahá'í names and terms in all Latin-based orthographies (letter dated 11 September 1991). In Tok Pisin, this means breaking the orthographic rules of the language or using letters that do not exist in the official orthography (i.e., the letters *c*, *q*, *x*, and *z*, double consonants, and letters with diacritics and accents), so that the names of prominent early believers are written in Tok Pisin as "Quddús" and "'Alí" instead of "Kudus" and "Ali." In contrast, Bible translations adjust Greek and Hebrew names to fit Tok Pisin orthographic norms. For example, because Tok Pisin does not allow final voiced consonants,[14] the Tok Pisin Bible uses "*Jekop*" for Greek "*Ιακώβ*" [*Iakṓb*: Jacob], and "*Devit*" for Hebrew "דָּוִד" [*dāwīḏ*: David]. Translations of the Bahá'í writings are thus set somewhat apart from the national norm, and it can be difficult for people without education in English to pronounce names such as Chihríq, Qayyúm-i-Asmá, and Quddús which, in Standard Tok Pisin orthography would have been, respectively, "Sirik," "Kayum i Asma," and "Kudus."

Other problems encountered in translating the writings into Tok Pisin relate to its being a relatively young pidgin-creole language with a restricted vocabulary. Translators must often coin new expressions to fill gaps in the language, or use semi-synonyms. For the verb "manifest," for example, translators have used expressions that literally mean "show" (*soimaut*) or "show in an open

14 The voiced consonants b, d, g, and z cannot occur at the end of a word, except in the word *God*.

place" (*soimaut long ples klia*), but the noun "Manifestation*"* ends up being expressed with etymologically unrelated words that literally mean "intermediary" (*Namelman*) or "representative" (*Mausman*); thus, a linguistic connection between the act of God manifesting Himself and the Manifestations themselves is lost. As mentioned above, no translation is perfect, and this loss of an etymological connection between the Manifestation and His being manifest is probably the least imperfect way to express these thoughts within the structures of the Tok Pisin lexicon.

Because formal education in Papua New Guinea is conducted in English, academic discourse among educated people tends to be in that language, not Tok Pisin, in the same way that earlier intellectual discourse in Europe was once carried out in Latin and not the national languages people spoke in their daily lives. Even when they are speaking Tok Pisin, educated people tend to use a lot of the English terminology that they have learned at school, even where more transparent Tok Pisin words or expressions exist. With this tendency to use transliterated English words in written Tok Pisin, passages and concepts are often not immediately comprehensible to people who do not know English. Even if people do know the English word, they may not have a grasp of all of the semantic range of the word in English. Many people, for example, might understand the word "*jastes*," a transliteration of English "justice," but only in the sense of the Department of Justice and its court system, and not with the abstract ethical connotations of English "justice," which can be translated as the more easily understood expressions *stretpela pasin* or *stretpasin* (literally "correct behaviour"). While these are more transparent to most ordinary Tok Pisin speakers, they also do not encapsulate the wide range of both ethical and legal connotations that the English term "justice" does. Luckily, tautology is regarded as a characteristic of good style in Tok Pisin, so that combining these two phrases ("*jastes o stretpasin*") solves this issue to some extent, at least for those with some knowledge of English.

We have seen above that Japanese translators must take into account the differences between the English and Japanese pronominal systems. This is also the case with Tok Pisin. One problem relates to the English word "we." Tok Pisin differentiates between an inclusive "we" (*yumi*) that includes the speaker(s), the person(s) being addressed, and possibly other people, and an exclusive "we" (*mipela*) that includes the speaker(s) and at least one third person, but excludes the person(s) being addressed. The language also does not have the "royal we" used in both English and Arabic by the sovereign speaking about him or herself and in the English translations of the Bahá'í writings in some contexts to differentiate between Bahá'u'lláh speaking as a Manifestation of the Divine and His speaking of Himself as an individual man. In the latter case,

Bahá'u'lláh often spoke of Himself in the third person, using phrases such as "this Wronged One."

Using the first-person pronoun *Mi* (I) for both the "royal we" and the third-person references conflates these two usages in an ambiguity that is not present in the English translation and, presumably, in the original. Using the Tok Pisin first-person plural exclusive pronoun *Mipela* (We, but not you) for the English "royal we," on the other hand, invites the Tok Pisin reader to ask who besides God is doing these things. Translators need to choose between these two options in any particular passage, making a decision based on stylistic preferences and on what kind of ambiguity will be less confusing in that passage.

Another issue that arises is related to third-person pronouns. Unthinkingly following English usage in third-person pronouns can sometimes hide distinctions and lead to confusion that can be avoided by the use of nouns instead of pronouns. In the third-person singular, Tok Pisin uses only one pronoun and, for sentence subjects and objects, does not differentiate between male and female or animate and inanimate like English does with "he," "she," and "it." But after prepositions, the standard dialect used in Bible (*Buk Baibel*) translations employs third-person singular pronouns that differentiate between human (*em*) and nonhuman (*en*) referents. Bahá'í translations have followed this pattern. In translating from English translations of the Bahá'í writings, this means needing to know whether prepositional phrases such as "of Him," "with Him" or "to Him" refer to Bahá'u'lláh, a human (*Em*), or God, a nonhuman (*En*). This is often not clear from the context alone. Reference here to the original text, to a written exegesis, or to a scholar conversant with the original text would be ideal ways to solve this ambiguity. Unfortunately, at present, translators are left to their intuition.

The different time-modal-aspect marking requirements of English and Tok Pisin can also lead to problems when translating. Unlike English, the overt marking of verb tense is optional in Tok Pisin, but the marking of aspect (distinguishing between a single non-repeated action and habitual or extended action as well as between completed or not completed action) is obligatory. Often a translator must make an arbitrary decision about whether an action happened a single short time, over an extended period of time, or was repeated habitually over a longer period of time. It is also necessary to specifically mark any action that has been completed. For example, when faced with the statement by Bahá'u'lláh that "the believers suffered," the translator must decide whether to express this as "the believers suffer(ed) one time," "the believers suffer(ed) over a long period of time," or "the believers suffer(ed) repeatedly." Similarly, the translator must decide whether this suffering had ended or

if it was continuing at the time when Bahá'u'lláh was writing. Finally, the translator must decide if it is absolutely necessary to mark grammatically that this suffering happened in the past or if this information can be omitted for stylistic reasons. The absence of detailed exegesis aids can make these decisions quite difficult. Again, consultation with a scholar of the original text or reference to a detailed written exegesis could help translators solve these problems.

As with the translation of the writings into any language outside the Middle East, expressions related to the social environment of nineteenth century Middle Eastern societies can cause difficulty. Unlike European languages, which have been in contact with Arabic-speaking societies for centuries and have developed vocabulary to describe institutions and concepts in the Muslim world, the only Middle Eastern societies that Papua New Guinea has had exposure to are those described in the Bible, with few written references to societies in the Middle East after the time of the New Testament. Similarly, since Islam arrived in Papua New Guinea even later than the Bahá'í Faith, Tok Pisin has no established vocabulary for Islamic concepts, and Papua New Guineans are even less aware of Muslim beliefs or Quranic and ḥadíth stories or wording than Europeans, in whose languages there are set phrases for concepts such as obligatory prayers, the Qiblih, ḥadíth, and mosques.

Challenges Facing All Translators of the Writings into Languages Other than English

Having laid out issues that the authors faced in their research project involving translating a short passage of the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into Japanese and Tok Pisin, as well as general concerns faced by translators of the Bahá'í writings into these two languages, the authors would like to outline two broader concerns facing translators of the writings into languages other than English. We hope, by this means, to encourage other translators to share the challenges they have encountered as well as approaches they have taken to deal with them.

Issues with Transliteration and Proper Nouns

The original Bahá'í writings were written in Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish, which share a script that is more or less the same. Today most languages in the world (including modern Turkish) use orthographies that are based on the Latin alphabet. Numerous systems of transliterating Arabic and Persian words using the Latin alphabet have been developed. Bahá'í communities have tended to adopt certain choices, so that we can speak of a rather idiosyncratic Bahá'í style of transliteration that sets it apart from norms used in academic or in journalistic writing.

The main reason for this is the continuing adherence of Bahá'ís to the decision made by Shoghi Effendi in

the 1920s to follow the transliteration system adopted "at a recent congress of Orientalists" (*Light of Divine Guidance* 49). That system is no longer in common use today by academics, who normally use macrons instead of accent marks (for example, Bahā'u'llāh rather than Bahá'u'lláh) and avoid underlining consonant digraphs (such as gh or sh). Further confusing the issue is the tendency of journalists and other mainstream writers to avoid the use of idiosyncratic accents and diacritic marks altogether and as a rule to write the names of people and places according to the spelling conventions of the individual languages of their readers. For these reasons, Middle Eastern proper nouns are often spelled differently in different languages using the Latin alphabet.

As noted above, the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Center urges Bahá'í translators and writers in languages using the Latin alphabet to strictly follow the transliteration practices used by Shoghi Effendi.[15] This should be done even when it breaks the orthographic rules of the language or uses letters that do not exist in the orthography of the target language, as is the case for Tok Pisin. One reason for this policy is to facilitate the recognition of names and Arabic and Persian words in all languages using the Latin alphabet. Additional reasons given are to avoid problems with certain words that are written the same in Arabic and Persian, but pronounced differently (for example with *Riḍván*, as discussed later) and to retain phonemic distinctions that are important in Arabic, such as between *Váḥid* (meaning "unity" and often used as a reference to the number nineteen) and *Vaḥíd* (the title given to a prominent early Bábí martyr).

The following explanation of the difference between transcription and transliteration, and the reason for adhering to the rules of transliteration for the original language, are provided on the Bahá'í Reference Library website:

> Unlike transcription, transliteration is not intended as a guide to the pronunciation of the words of one language in the phonetic system of a different language, but rather to provide a key to the spelling of the words in the original language. The symbols used in transliteration thus serve only as an approximate indication of pronunciation. As the symbols are a key to the spelling in the original language, their pronunciation is determined by the context: Arabic pronunciation in an Arabic context, and Persian in a Persian context, while Arabic terms embedded in a Persian text are subject to the rules of Persian. (*Transliteration System*)

In its letter of 11 September 1991, the Research Department does suggest that the conventional spelling of

15 For example, in a letter to Volker dated 11 September 1991. This system is explained in depth in *Transliteration System*, a document available on the Bahá'í Reference Library.

city and regional names can be used for well-known localities, so that in English "Mecca" can be used instead of "Makkah." Changes in the ethnic composition or political status of cities can lead to problems, however, and a choice must sometimes be made between using a well-known historical name or a contemporary name, or between names favored by one or another ethnic group. For example, many Turkish cities in which Bahá'u'lláh lived previously had a Greek name that was often better known in the West than the Turkish name that is in common international use today. Yet Bahá'ís tend to use the Greek name that today is no longer in general use. This means that in translations of the Bahá'í writings, the Turkish city in Europe where Bahá'u'lláh lived for many years is usually called by its Greek name, "Adrianople," rather than by its Turkish name, "Edirne." Similarly, localities in Israel tend to be referred to using their Arabic rather than Hebrew or European names (for instance, Arabic "'Akká" rather than Hebrew "Akko" or French and English "Acre"). However, for localities that are important in the Bible, Bahá'í publications tend to use the name and spelling that is common in the target language (such as, "Mt. Carmel" and "Jerusalem" in English).

Another source of difficulty is the fact that some of the people referred to in both the Bible and the Qur'án have different names in these two holy books. When the names are similar, such as "David" and "Aaron" in the Bible and "Dáwúd" and "Hárún" in the Qur'án, the tendency in English translations of Bahá'í writings is for them to be referred to by the name that is commonly used in the translation of the Bible in the target language, but where the names are different or where the correspondence is contested, the Quranic Arabic name is used, with a complete transliteration, including diacritical marks. This is the case with "Húd" in the Kitáb-i-Íqán (9), who many, but not all, scholars identify with the biblical "Eber."

A further problem with names is that personal titles in the Bahá'í writings are often transliterated strictly from Arabic when equivalent English loan words from Arabic already exist. The use of such transliterations can obscure the actual meaning of the title. An example of this is the aforementioned title "Sheikh," which is usually transliterated in Bahá'í texts as "Shaykh," causing confusion for some English readers, who do not understand that the terms are identical.

The result of all of these transliteration conventions has been the development of a particular register used in translations of the Bahá'í writings in many languages. This register is not limited to the printed page. Because of the influence of Persian speakers, it also affects the way that Arabic words related to the Bahá'í Faith are pronounced by many people outside the Middle East. Persian has many loan words from Arabic, especially words related to religion and theology. While these loan words are written

in the same way in both languages, because Persian does not make many of the phonemic distinctions between consonants that Arabic does, the pronunciation of a number of letters that have different pronunciations in Arabic is collapsed or changed to fit Persian phonology.

Because the overwhelming majority of early Bahá'ís were Persian, and not Arabic, speakers, and it was these believers who first brought the Bahá'í Faith to the West, Persian pronunciations of Arabic words were introduced into many languages. The result is that while words may be transliterated in writing according to a strict system from Arabic, as mentioned in the above quotation, they tend to be pronounced according to the way they would be pronounced in Persian in Bahá'í settings. An example of this phenomenon is "Riḍván," which is written according to its transliteration from classical Arabic, but is given a more Persian pronunciation, *Rizwán*,[16] by almost all non-Arab Bahá'ís.

The peculiarities of transliteration into the Latin alphabet and the use of Persian pronunciations are often carried into languages with other writing systems, as many of the early Bahá'ís taking the Faith to new countries were Westerners who usually had no experience with Arabic or Persian. Often, distinctions not made in these western languages were not made in the target languages of further translations either. An example of this is the transliteration of vowels in Japanese translations of Arabic and Persian names. As in Arabic, vowel length is important in Japanese, with short and long vowel length being phonemically significant. But many of the early Bahá'ís who brought the Bahá'í Faith to Japan were native speakers of English, a language where vowel length is not phonemically important. As a result, an early standardized list of names and terminology still in use in Japan fails to make vowel length distinctions in its transliteration of Arabic terms (National Translation Committee). "Jalál" ("Glory," the title of the second month of the Badí Calendar), for example, is transliterated with two short vowels (ジャラル [*jararu*]) rather than with a second long vowel as in Arabic (ジャラール [*jaraaru*]).[17] This, combined with the use of Persian pronunciations in transliteration, results in transliterations of names or concepts that do not reflect written Arabic and sometimes differ from those used by Japanese media or academics, or by Arabic speakers in

16 This is actually a hybrid pronunciation that mixes elements of Arabic and Persian, as an accurate Persian transliteration would be *Rezván.* The latter has apparently influenced the transliteration into Japanese, レズワン [*rezuwan*].

17 This list was made by two Japanese believers. It is highly unlikely that they had any knowledge of Arabic or Persian and therefore probably made the list based on their knowledge of English and the rules for transliterating English words in the Japanese katakana syllabary. Since vowel length is not important in English, their transliteration did not make vowel length distinctions.

Japan. For example, Naw-Rúz is translated as ノー・ルーズ (*Noo Ruuz*) by Japanese Bahá'ís but as ノウルーズ (*Nouruuz*) by Japanese academics and others referring to the Persian New Year. A similar phenomenon occurs in English, where this holiday is referred to in a variety of ways, including Naw-Rúz, Nowruz, Norooz, and Navruz. Again, this can have the effect of making Bahá'í translations seem somewhat peculiar to academics or others who deal with the Middle East, although they do allow a standardization of pronunciation across the Bahá'í world. The goal of achieving standardization is, in fact, a strong reason for translators to study the Bahá'í transliteration system as a guide to the original Arabic and Persian pronunciations.

Problems Arising from English

While the insights that Shoghi Effendi's translations give us are undeniably valuable in facilitating understanding of the content of the writings[18] it is possible to follow the linguistic aspects of the Guardian's writing too literally.

In fact, the Universal House of Justice, in a letter to an individual believer, writes:

> [T]he Beloved Guardian was not only a translator but the inspired Interpreter of the Holy Writings; thus, where a passage in Persian or Arabic could give rise to two different expressions in English he would know which one to convey. Similarly he would be much better equipped than an average translator to know which metaphor to employ in English to express a Persian metaphor which might be meaningless in literal translation.
>
> Thus, in general, speakers of other European tongues will obtain a more accurate translation by following the Guardian's English translation than by attempting at this stage in Bahá'í history to translate directly from the original.
>
> This does not mean, however, that the translators should not also check their translations with the original texts if they are familiar with Persian or Arabic. There may be many instances where the exact meaning of the English text is unclear to them and this can be made evident by comparison with the original. (Letter dated 8 December 1964)

Keeping this in mind, it must also be remembered that there may be certain phrases in the source text that are ambiguous or that have a meaning that cannot be succinctly expressed when translated into the target language. When the English translation is used as a source text, there is already the possibility that this English source does not completely reflect the original. To compound this, when using the English

18 To borrow the words of the Universal House of Justice in a letter dated 23 July 2006 to the National Spiritual Assembly of Germany, they are "an authoritative interpretation of the Writings" (qtd. in Eschraghi, "Schwierigsten Künste" 96).

translations as if they were original texts, certain aspects of English semantics can introduce further ambiguities or even misunderstandings into the translation into a third language. Without reference to the original text or at least to academic analyses of the English translation and its relationship to the original text, these ambiguities or misunderstandings can create translations that are less than faithful to the original texts.

An example of semantic interference caused by English wording is a passage in the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* where Bahá'u'lláh uses the phrase *'árif bi lláh* to describe a particularly pious martyr. As Eschraghi has explained, this literally means "one who knows God" (*Brief* 171), but presumably because this phrase is used in the same context where one would say "a godly person" in English, Shoghi Effendi translated the phrase as "that godly man." The *Merriam-Webster* online dictionary defines "godly" as "pious, devout". In Tok Pisin, this phrase can be translated as *dispela man i gat save long God* (literally "that man having knowledge of God."), a phrase that is closer to the original meaning than wording such as *man bilong lotu* (literally "a man of religion"), which is a more literal rendering of Shoghi Effendi's English translation.

One situation where reference to the original Arabic or Persian may be particularly useful is in translating phrases to which Shoghi Effendi added words in his English translation. These additions resulted in a much more elevated and natural English style than if he had adhered too closely to the original style. However, the rules of good grammar and style in other languages may make these additions inappropriate. In a conversation about translation that took place in the 1990s with one of the authors, the German translator Udo Schaefer pointed out that Shoghi Effendi often used a tautology in English phrases, giving the example of the addition of "but Thee" to produce the English phrase "there is no other God but Thee." He pointed out that in German this tautology is stylistically poor and that using a phrase in German meaning literally "there is no other God" (*es gibt keinen anderern Gott*) and omitting "but Thee" (*außer Dir*) is both stylistically preferable in German and closer to the original texts.

Armin Eschraghi ("Schwierigsten Künste") has pointed out a notable example where Shoghi Effendi added a number of words to a popular children's prayer. In the translation of this prayer below, all the words in parentheses have been added for grammatical and stylistic reasons: "O God, guide (me), protect (me), make (of me a) shining lamp and (a) brilliant star. Thou art (the) Mighty and (the) Powerful" (ʻAbdu'l-Bahá, qtd. in *Bahá'í Prayers*).

Knowledge of these additions could help a translator of this prayer into a language such as Japanese, in which there are no articles and in which the specification of an understood object (in this case, "me") is optional. The result would be a translation without the

articles and direct object that is stylistically preferable in the target language and closer to the style and rhythm of the original than a cumbersome and wordy version based on the exact wording of the English translation. In fact, the current Japanese version of this prayer omits the second "me" and does not have any articles in it.[19]

It should be noted that Shoghi Effendi did not only add words in his translations; he sometimes deleted words or references. This was the case in his avoidance of references that would have been easily understood to an educated person in the nineteenth century Middle East, but which would be obscure to a twentieth century Westerner. In the *Epistle*, for example, Bahá'u'lláh used a nickname for Bagdad (Zaurá, meaning "curve") because Baghdad was built on a spot where the Euphrates River bends in a curve. Shoghi Effendi simply translated this as "Baghdád," as the curve in the river was not relevant to the point Bahá'u'lláh was making in that passage (49). Nevertheless, in a language such as Tok Pisin, where nicknames and euphemisms are prized, a translator might do well to combine the original reference with Shoghi Effendi's explanation and say something like "*long Zaurá, hap we Wara i Tan o Biktaun Bagdad*" (literally "Zaurá, where the River bends, or Baghdad City").

One final problem with following the English translations unthinkingly is that language changes over the years. A good example of this is the use of "man" to refer to the entire *Homo sapiens* species, both men and women. During Shoghi Effendi's lifetime, it was customary in English to use "man" as a synonym for "human being," so Shoghi Effendi used "man" in many contexts to refer to both human beings in general and, in different contexts, to male human beings in particular. This usage is quickly being lost, and a number of style guides in English today specifically advise against it.[20] Many other languages such as German, have always had different words for "human" (German *Mensch*) and "male" (*Mann*). When translating into languages with this distinction, it is necessary to refer to the original text to ascertain whether the word Shoghi Effendi translated as

19 神さま、わたしをお導きください。お守りください。私の心の灯を明るくして、わたしを輝く星となしたまえ。あなたは偉大なる御方におわし、力に満ちたまう御方にまします。(*Kami sama, watashi wo omichibiki kudasai. Omamori kudasai. Watashi no kokoro no hi wo akaruku shite, watashi wo kagayaku hoshi to nashi tamae. Anata wa idainaru onkata ni owashi, chikara ni michitamou onkata ni mashimasu.*)[God / honorific / me / object particle / please (honorific) guide / please (honorific) protect / my / heart / object particle / make bright / me / object particle / shining / star / make / (honorific) / you / subject particle / great / honorable being / are / power / be filled with / (honorific) / honorable being / honorably are] (*Children's Prayers*)

20 For more details, please see American Psychological Association, *Publication Manual*; Miller and Swift, *The Handbook of Nonsexist Writing for Writers, Editors and Speakers*.

"man" or "men" should be translated in German as "human being(s)" (singular *Mensch* or plural *Menschen*) or "male human(s)" (singular *Mann* or plural *Männer*). Similarly, Japanese does not use the word for "man" to represent all humanity, so in Japanese one needs to distinguish between human being(s) (人間 [*ningen*]) and male(s) (男［達］[*otoko(tachi)*]) when translating this English word.

These issues show problems that can arise for translators working solely from the English translations, without reference to the original texts or to reliable reference notes. Unfortunately, there are very few detailed guides for translators such as exists in German for the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* with the annotated academic translation by Eschraghi (*Brief an den Sohn des Wolfes*). There is also no established mechanism through which Bahá'í translators can refer questions to specialists in nineteenth century Persian and Arabic usage who understand the specific linguistic and cultural contexts of the Bahá'í writings. Translators are left to find their own resources from among the people they know. This means that sometimes Iranians who may not be well versed in the written styles of the nineteenth century or non-Bahá'í academics who are unaware of Bahá'í history or sacred literature are asked to unravel quite difficult Arabic and Persian passages. When questions are asked of the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre, they are answered to the best ability of the Research Department staff, but unfortunately, there is no publicly available collection of their previous answers to such queries to which translators can refer in advance, so a not inconsiderable amount of the Research Department staff's time is taken by looking up how similar questions and their responses have been handled in the past.

To support translations based on authorized English translations, it would be helpful for both individual translators and institutions to have more academic analyses of the Bahá'í writings, with attention to specific words and how they have been translated into English, especially by Shoghi Effendi. Complete translations with academic annotations would be particularly useful. To start with, a database of questions and answers related to translation in general and to specific passages in particular that have already been dealt with by the Research Department at the World Centre could help to answer some of the problems most commonly faced by translators. This would help to make translations into third languages reflect the original texts more closely, even if those translations have been made from the English translations and without reference to the actual original texts themselves. Creating such a database is probably beyond the capacity of individual translators. It could be compiled by the World Centre's Research Department, of course, but it might also be a project that could be undertaken by a special interest group within the Association of Bahá'í Studies or other interested parties.

Conclusion

This paper has outlined some of the many challenges encountered in translating the Bahá'í writings into as many languages as possible, focusing in particular on problems encountered in translating a short passage from the *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* into two very different languages, Japanese and Tok Pisin, which are both Asia-Pacific languages from cultures that have not traditionally had a great deal of contact with the Middle East.

In cataloging specific challenges we encountered in translating the selected passage into these two languages, we found some problems that are common to both languages, including difficulties in dealing with certain terminology and cultural concepts specific to Persian and Arabic cultures, as well as some ambiguities in the English wording. Other challenges, particularly differences in the grammatical features of the source and target language and methods of reflecting the pragmatics of the original, arose with only one of the languages. Specifically, the need to express aspect in Tok Pisin verbs in a manner not required in English or the original Persian or Arabic was mentioned. In addition, it was noted that translating passages in which a range of honorifics and humble language is used in the original but not clearly reflected in the English translation poses special challenges when the target language is one that relies heavily on pragmatic wording to indicate the respective positions of the author and addressee, as is the case of Japanese and many other Asian languages.

We also presented a review of the literature outlining some general issues encountered in translating the writings, including issues of orthography and transliteration, as well as problems that can arise when translators rely solely on an English translation of the work without being able to refer to the original Persian or Arabic text.

In addition, we introduced a method of checking each other's draft translations by using back translations into English. We found this technique to be helpful in improving the accuracy of our translations and clarifying areas where ambiguity exists in the English version of the text. We personally found that this method offered many advantages over working alone and therefore present it as a technique that may be useful for those who are working on translating the writings on their own. As with many other Bahá'í activities, accompaniment allows partners to learn from and encourage each other.

Our translation efforts were made more difficult by the lack of human and written resources to which we could turn when it seemed there were ambiguities in the English text from which we were translating or when the semantic, stylistic, or grammatical requirements of our respective target languages forced us to make choices that did not necessarily reflect the English texts. The development of more scholarly works explaining the translations of Shoghi Effendi and sharing insights into the pragmatics of the

original Bahá'í writings would help future translators to make more informed decisions in their choice of wording. We have appreciated the translation-related advice we have received over the years from the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre and feel that the development of a central database of advice regarding translation, either in general or of individual works or even of specific words and phrases, possibly provided by this Department or developed by, say, a special interest group within the Association of Bahá'í Studies, would be a useful tool for translators in all countries.

There are 7,164 languages currently spoken on our planet (*Ethnologue*). Portions of the sacred Bahá'í writings have been translated into less than 1,000 of these living languages. As the Bahá'í writings become more widely known, the need for accurate translations into more languages will only become greater. For the foreseeable future, the vast majority of these will be made from existing English translations, often by translators working in isolation. We hope that our discussion will spur further conversations on issues confronting these translators and will encourage greater consultation and collaboration across languages.

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Appendix A: Shoghi Effendi's English Translation

1 This Wronged One hath, at all times, summoned the peoples of the world unto that which will exalt them, and draw them nigh unto God. From the Most Sublime Horizon there hath shone forth that which leaveth no room unto any one for vacillation, repudiation or denial. The wayward, however, have failed to profit therefrom; nay, it shall only increase their loss.

2 O Shaykh! It is incumbent upon the divines to unite with His Majesty, the Sháh—may God assist him—and to cleave day and night unto that which will exalt the station of both the government and the nation. This people are assiduously occupied in enlightening the souls of men and in rehabilitating their condition. Unto this testifieth that which hath been sent down by the Most Sublime Pen in this lucid Tablet. How often have things been simple and easy of accomplishment, and yet most men have been heedless, and busied themselves with that which wasteth their time!

3 One day, while in Constantinople, Kamál Páshá visited this Wronged One. Our conversation turned upon topics profitable unto man. He said that he had learned several languages. In reply We observed: "You have wasted your life. It beseemeth you and the other officials of the Government to convene a gathering and choose one of the divers languages, and likewise one of the existing scripts, or else to create a new language and a new script to be taught children in schools throughout the world. They would, in this way, be acquiring only two languages, one their own native tongue, the other the language in which all the peoples of the world would converse. Were men to take fast hold on that which hath been mentioned, the whole earth would come to be regarded as one country, and the people would be relieved and freed from the necessity of acquiring and teaching different languages." When in Our presence, he acquiesced, and even evinced great joy and complete satisfaction. We then told him to lay this matter before the officials and ministers of the Government, in order that it might be put into effect throughout the different countries. However, although he often returned to see Us after this, he never again referred to this subject, although that which had been suggested is conducive to the concord and the unity of the peoples of the world.

4 We fain would hope that the Persian Government will adopt it and carry it out. At present, a new language and a new script have been devised. If thou desirest, We will communicate them to thee. Our purpose is that all men may cleave unto that which will reduce unnecessary labor and exertion, so that their days may be befittingly spent and ended. God, verily, is the Helper, the Knower, the Ordainer, the Omniscient.

5 God willing, Persia may be adorned with, and attain unto, that whereof she hath thus far been deprived. Say: "O Sháh! Exert thyself so that all the peoples of the world may be illumined with the effulgent splendors of the sun of thy justice. The eyes of this Wronged One are turned towards naught save trustworthiness, truthfulness, purity, and all that profiteth men." Regard Him not as a traitor. Glorified art Thou, O my God, and my Master, and my Mainstay! Aid Thou His Majesty the Sháh to execute Thy laws and Thy commandments, and show forth Thy justice among Thy servants. Thou art, verily, the All-Bounteous, the Lord of grace abounding, the Almighty, the All-Powerful. The Cause of God hath come as a token of His grace. Happy are they who act; happy are they who understand; happy the man that hath clung unto the truth, detached from all that is in the heavens and all that is on earth.

6 O Shaykh! Seek thou the shore of the Most Great Ocean, and enter, then, the Crimson Ark which God hath ordained in the Qayyúm-i-Asmá for the people of Bahá. Verily, it passeth over land and sea. He that entereth therein is saved, and he that turneth aside perisheth. Shouldst thou enter therein and attain unto it, set thy face towards the

Kaaba of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting, and say: "O my God! I beseech Thee by Thy most glorious light, and all Thy lights are verily glorious." Thereupon, will the doors of the Kingdom be flung wide before thy face, and thou wilt behold what eyes have never beheld, and hear what ears have never heard. This Wronged One exhorteth thee as He hath exhorted thee before, and hath never had any wish for thee save that thou shouldst enter the ocean of the unity of God, the Lord of the worlds. This is the day whereon all created things cry out, and announce unto men this Revelation, through which hath appeared what was concealed and preserved in the knowledge of God, the Mighty, the All-Praised. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 137–140)

Appendix B
Translation into Japanese

1　この虐げられし者は、常に、世界の人々を、自分たちの心を高揚させ、神のおそば近くに引き付けるものへと召喚しました。最も崇高な地平線から、誰にとっても、ためらい、拒絶、または否認の余地を残さないものが輝き出ました。しかし、強情な人々は、その利益を受け損いました。それどころか、彼らの損失をさらに増大させるだけでしょう。**2**　おお、シェーク閣下！イスラムの学識者にとって、シャー陛下　（神の援助が彼にあらんことを。）と手を携え、政府と国家両方の状況を向上させるものを昼も夜もしっかりと守っていくことが義務なのです。この民*は、人々の精神を啓発し、彼らの状態を回復させるために根気強く献身的に従事しています。このことは、この明快な書簡において、もっとも崇高なペンによって下された言葉が証言しています。簡単で達成が容易なことがあるのに、ほとんどの人々はそれに気づかず、時間を無駄にする事柄で忙しくしたことが何度あったことでしょうか。**3**　コンスタンティノープル市に滞在していた間に、カマル・パシャ卿がこの虐げられし者を訪問してくださいました。我々の会話は人類にとって有益になる話題へと展開しました。パシャ卿はいくつかの言語を学んだとおっしゃいました。それに対して、小生は次のように述べました。「閣下は人生を無駄になさいましたね。閣下も政府の他の高官と集まりを招集し、さまざまな言語の中から一つを、また既存の文字体系から一つを選び、あるいは新しい言語と文字体系を創り、それを世界中の子どもたちに学校で教えられるようになさるのが良いでしょう。こうすることで、子どもたちは二つの言語のみ習得することになります。つまり、自分の母語と、世界のすべての人々が使って談話する言葉を習得するようになります。ここに言及した発想をしっかりと実行すれば、世界全体は一つの国のようになり、人々は異なった言語を習得したり勉強したりする必要性から解放され、楽になるでしょう。」小生に面会しておられた間、パシャ卿はこの

主張を素直に受け入れられただけでなく、大変な喜びと完全な満足さえ示されました。そして、小生は、さまざまな国で実行できるように、これを政府の官僚や大臣たちに提案して下さるようにと申し上げました。この提案は世界の人々の調和と和合一致に貢献すると思われました。しかし、パシャ卿はその後度々小生に会いに来られたにも関わらず、二度とこの話題には言及されませんでした。

4 ペルシャの政府がこの提案を導入し、実行することを小生は切に望みます。現在、すでに新しい言語と新しい文字体系が作り上げられています。もし、お望みなら、それらについて情報をお伝えします。小生の目的は、すべての人々が無駄な労力と尽力の削減を確実に実行することであり、そうなれば彼らは生涯を最後まで相応しく送ることができるでしょう。神こそは、援助者、知り給う御方、命令者、知らぬことなき御方におわします。

5 願わくば、ペルシャは今まで恵まれなかったことを得られ、それを飾りとするでしょう。言挙げよ。「おおペルシャの王よ！陛下の正義という太陽の光輝により、世界のすべての人々が啓蒙されるように努力なさってください。この虐げられし者の目は、信頼性、誠実性、純粋さと、人間の利益となるあらゆるもの以外には向けられておりません。」小生を反逆者と見なさないでください。おお、わが神、わが主君、わが大黒柱であるあなたに栄光あれ!国王陛下があなたの法と掟を執行でき、あなたの僕らの間に正義を現せるように助け給え。あなたは誠に、すべてを与え給い、豊なる御恵みの主、全能の御方、力に満ち給う御方におわします。神の大業は神の恩恵の象徴として与えられています。行動する者は幸いなり。理解する者は幸いなり。真理にすがり、天と地にあるすべてのものから離脱する者は幸いなり。

6 おおシェーク閣下！最大なる大海原の岸を求め、そして、神様がガエムール・アスマ書でバハの人々のために定め給うた箱舟にお乗りください。誠に、それは陸も海も通ります。それに乗る者は救われ、背ける者は滅びるでしょう。もし、閣下がそれにお乗りになり、その地位に達せられたら、危難の中の御救いにおわし、ご自力にて存在し給う御方におわす神の最も聖なる神殿にお顔をお向けになり、次のようにお述べ下さい：「おお、わが神よ！あなたの最も栄光ある光により嘆願いたします。誠にあなたの光はすべて栄光に満ちています。」そのようにされると、神の王国の扉は、閣下のお顔の前にさっと開け放たれます。そして、閣下はかつて目が見たことのないことをご覧になり、耳が聞いたことのないことをお聞きになるでしょう。この虐げられし者は、以前に閣下を忠告したと同じように忠告をいたします。なお、閣下が諸々の世の主である神の一体性の海に入ること以外に閣下に対して望みを抱いておりません。この日こそ、すべての創造物は声たからかに、人間にこの啓示を宣言し

ます。この啓示を通して、力強き、すべてに賞賛される御方である神の知識の中に隠され、保護されたことが現されました。

＊（バハイの信者たち）

Appendix C
Translation into Tok Pisin

1 Long olgeta taim Mi, dispela Man, ol lain i wokim rong long Em, Mi singautim ol lain manmeri bilong olgeta hap graun long ol kain pasin i bai litimapim nem bilong ol na pulim ol i kam kamap klostu long God. Long Gutpela Ples we heven i bungim graun i gat kain draipela lait we man i no nap long tubel o tanim baksait. Nogat. Ol lain i brukim bus tasol, ol i no win long en. Nogat. Ol i bai lus moa moa yet tasol.

2 O bikman Shaykh! Ol bikman bilong lotu i mas bung wantaim King Shah, inap God i halivim em. Na olgeta de na olgeta nait, ol i mas holimpas long ol wanem kain samting i bai mekim mobeta sindaun bilong gavman na kantri. Ol dispela lain i save wok olgeta taim long givim lait long ol tewel bilong ol man na long stretim sindaun bilong na pasin bilong ol. Ol tok Ingpen i Naispela Tumas i raitim long dispela Pas i klia tumas i tokaut olsem, ol tok skul Mi autim hia, em ol trupela tok. Planti taim samting i isi na i no hatwok long winim, tasol planti ol man ol i no harim tok na ol i bisi wantaim ol samting nating.

3 Wanpela de taim Mi stap long biktaun Konstantinopel, bikman bilong gavman Kamál Páshá i bin kam stori wantaim Mi, dispela Man ol i wokim rong long Em. Mitupela wok long stori long ol kain samting i save mekim mobeta sindaun bilong man. Em i tok olsem, em i lainim pinis sampela kainkain tok ples. Mi bekim em se, "Yu westim taim long laip bilong yu. Mobeta yu wantaim ol arapela wokman bilong Gavman i mas singautim wanpela bikpela bung na makim wanpela long ol planti tok ples na wankain wanpela bilong ol kain pasin bilong raitim ol tok ples. O yupela mas wokim wanpela nupela tok ples olgeta na nupela stail leta bilong ritrait, bai olgeta pikinini bilong ol skul long olgeta kantri i mas lainim. Long dispela rot ol i mas lainim tupela tok ples tasol— narapela em tok ples bilong ol yet na narapela em nameltok bilong olgeta lain manmeri bilong ol kainkain ples. Sapos ol lain i holimpas long ol dispela tok, bai olgeta hap graun i kamap wankain olsem wanpela kantri, na ol manmeri i no hatwok moa long ol i mas skul na lainim ol kainkain tok ples." Taim em i stap wantaim Mipela, em i wanbel long dispela tingting na i amamas na i kirap nogut tru long tingim. Orait, bihain Mipela tokim em long givim dispela tingting long ol wokman na ol minista bilong Gavman, bai em i kamap long ol kainkain kantri. Tasol maski em i save kambek planti taim long painim Mipela, em i no tok gen long dispela samting. Maski dispela tingting Mipela autim i bai strongim pasin belisi na pasin bilong ol lain manner bilong graun i bung wantaim, em i no tok gen long en.

4 Mipela bai amamas, bai Gavman

bilong Persia i tok orait long dispela tingting na bai wokim. Long dispela taim nau, i gat wanpela man i kamapim nupela tok ples na nupela leta bilong ritrait. Sapos yu laik, bai Mipela skulim yu long ol. As bilong tok bilong Mipela em long olgeta man bai holimpas long ol samting i daunim bikpela hatwok bilong ol na i westim taim bilong ol. Olsem na bai long olgeta de bilong ol, ol i save stap gut na laip bilong ol bai gat gutpela pinis. Tru tumas, God i gat save, i save helpim, i save makim, i gat save long olgeta samting.

5 Inap God i laik, bai kantri Persia i bilas wantaim ol samting inap long nau ol i no inap long kisim tasol bai inap long kisim nau. Tok se: "O King Sháh! Wok hat inap bai ol strongpela lait bilong san bilong stretpela pasin bilong yu i givim lait long olgeta manmeri long dispela graun. Tupela ai bilong Mi, dispela Man ol i wokim rong long Em i tan i go long tok i tru, long samting i klin olgeta na i tru olgeta, na long olgeta samting i save halivim sindaun bilong ol manmeri tasol." No ken tingim Mi wanpela Man i tanim baksait long lain bilong Em na i birua. Nogat. Litimapim nem bilong Yu, O God bilong mi, na Papa bilong mi, na sapot bilong mi! Halivim King Sháh long karimautim ol lo na ol oda bilong Yu na long soimautim stretpasin bilong Yu namel long ol wokmanmeri bilong Yu. Tru tumas, Yu save givim olgeta presen. Yu Papa bilong marimari tumas. Yu strong olgeta. Yu gat olgeta pawa. Bikpela Wok bilong God i kamap olsem mak bilong marimari bilong God. Husat ol i wokim ol samting, ol i ken amamas. Husat ol i harim tok, ol i ken amamas. Husat man i bin holimpas long trupela tok, em i ken amamas na i bruklus long olgeta samting i stap long heven na olgeta samting i stap long graun.

6 O bikman Shaykh! Painim nambis bilong Biksolwara, na go insait long en na bihain go insait long Retpela Sip i gat rup long en. Long Buk Qayyúm-i-Asmá o Buk bilong Stori bilong Josep, God i bin makim dispela Sip long ol lain Bahá. Tru tumas, Sip ya i save go antap long graun na solwara. Husat i go insait long en bai gat laip, na husat i tanim baksait long en bai dai pinis. Sapos yu go insait long en na kamap long en, orait, tanim pes bilong yu i go long Kaaba o Ples Tambu bilong God, God bilong halivim long taim bilong trabel, God i save inapim Em yet, na tok se: "O God bilong mi! Mi singautim Yu wantaim ol lait bilong Yu i gat olgeta glori. Na tru tumas, olgeta lait bilong Yu i gat olgeta glori." Olsem na bai ol dua bilong Kingdom i op i stap long ai bilong yu. Na bai yu lukim ol samting, ai bilong ol manmeri i no lukim bipo. Na bai yu harim ol samting, yau bilong ol manmeri i no harim bipo. Mi dispela Man, ol i wokim rong long Em, Mi singautim yu strong we Mi no singautim yu wankain olsem bipo. Na Mi no gat narapela laik long yu, wanpela laik tasol, bai yu kalap i godaun long biksolwara bilong pasin bilong bung wantaim God, Em Papa bilong olgeta hap graun. Dispela em i de we olgeta samting, God i mekim kamapim ol, ol i singaut na i toksave long ol pipel long dispela Tok bilong

God. Wantaim dispela Tok ol samting i stap hait long save bilong God i Strongpela i kamap ples klia. Yumi olgeta litimapim nem bilong En.

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Arashiyama Bamboo Grove, Kyoto Prefecture, Japan
Photo credit: Tom Delanoue

Turning a Somersault to Land at the Feet of the Báb: The Spiritual Journey of Ross Woodman

CHRIS LOWRY

Abstract
Ross G. Woodman (1922-2014), known to Bahá'ís as a scholar and teacher, had a vivid dream of an encounter with the Báb in 1942. He circled around the question of what the dream called him to do, and to become, for the rest of his life. Woodman's spiritual journey was troubled and complex. He was preoccupied with questions of poetic faith and religious faith, revelation and knowledge. This essay explores the arc of the flying somersault in his dream of the Báb, which served as a template for the trajectory of his life. Woodman's life story offers insights into the question of "aesthetic" versus "ethical" engagement with the Faith, as well as the specific challenge facing academics or others whose professional life may seem to demand that they compartmentalize their faith.

Résumé
Ross G. Woodman (1922-2014), que les bahá'ís connaissent en tant qu'érudit et enseignant, a fait en 1942 un rêve saisissant dans lequel il rencontrait le Báb. Il a longuement réfléchi à ce que ce rêve l'appelait à réaliser, et à devenir, tout le reste de sa vie. Le cheminement spirituel de Woodman a été tourmenté et complexe. Les questions de foi poétique et de foi religieuse, de révélation et de connaissances le préoccupaient. Cet essai explore l'arc que décrit le saut périlleux au vol dans son rêve au sujet du Báb, arc qui a servi de modèle à la trajectoire de vie de Woodman. L'histoire de sa vie éclaire la question de l'engagement « esthétique » comparé à l'engagement « éthique » envers la Foi, ainsi que le défi particulier auquel font face les universitaires ou d'autres personnes dont la vie professionnelle peut sembler exiger qu'ils compartimentent leur foi.

Resumen
Ross G. Woodman (1922-2014) conocido a los Bahá'ís como un erudito y maestro tuvo un vívido sueño de un encuentro con el Báb en 1942. El giró alrededor de la pregunta de lo que el sueño lo llamó a hacer, y hacerse, para el resto de su vida. El viaje espiritual de Woodman fue problemático y complejo. El fue preocupado con la cuestión de poética y religiosa fe, revelación y conocimiento. Este artículo explora el arco de voltereta en su sueño de El Báb lo cual sirvió como una plantilla para la trayectoria de su vida. La historia de la vida de Woodman ofrece percepciones sobre la cuestión de involucramiento estético versus ético con la Fe, así como el reto específico que enfrentan los académicos u otros cuya vida profesional podría dar apariencia de una dicotomía con su fe.

How might we reconcile the ambiguous affinity between the poetic and the religious, and the potential tension between an aesthetic and an ethical engagement with the Bahá'í Faith? Can we imagine new ways of addressing

the challenges of a community learning to accommodate a range of ways of thinking, speaking and acting, and the individual's concomitant struggle to find a place in a community that may not know how to accommodate him or her? How might we better understand the challenge facing academics, or others whose professional life may seem to demand that they compartmentalize their faith? Ross Woodman's life provides a lens to explore these immediate and perennial questions.

This essay traces the spiritual journey of a dynamic, radiant person who lived in a constant state of being on the brink of an epiphany, with doubt and mental anguish never far from the surface. It draws on several sources, including unpublished essays, letters and notes, to shed light on Woodman's complex thought and life experience. It is an attempt to follow the arc of the flying somersault in his dream of the Báb, described below, which served as a marvellous and problematic template for the trajectory of his life. As Woodman himself often said to students and friends, quoting John Keats, "a man's life of any worth is a continual allegory."[1]

Ross Woodman was an English professor who specialized in the poetry of Blake, Coleridge, Shelley and the English Romantics. His pure artistry as a lecturer made him unforgettable, life changing. He was an influential art critic, a passionately original interpreter of Carl Jung through the lens of world literature and religious texts, and a Bahá'í scholar. Woodman, who died in March 2014 at the age of ninety-one, taught at the University of Western Ontario in London, Ontario, for nearly fifty years. He studied and argued with Northrop Frye, Canada's most celebrated intellectual. He also lectured and wrote on contemporary art and artists, religion and imagination, and cinema. He was elected to the first National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Canada at the Canadian National Bahá'í Convention in 1948 in Montreal. Though only in his mid-twenties, he was featured as one of two speakers at a public meeting during that Convention, which attracted an audience of 500. According to scholar Jack McLean, Woodman did not become active as a Bahá'í educator until after his retirement from teaching English literature in 1989. He was particularly known for his symbolic interpretation of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, the Book of Certitude (McLean). In his later years he mentored younger Bahá'í scholars, developed curricula materials, and wrote the libretto for the magnificent *Oratorio to His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh*, which was performed at the Bahá'í World Congress in New York in 1992.

In all of his work Woodman demonstrates what Jungian analyst Thomas Elsner calls "a gift for allowing the

1 "A man's life of any worth is a continual allegory—and very few eyes can see the mystery of life—a life like the Scriptures, figurative" (John Keats, Letter to George and Georgina Keats [February 14-May 3, 1819], in John Keats, *Selected Letters*.

immediate power of the mythopoetic and aesthetic soul to live in close contact with the conceptually based exploration of meaning" (98). On the other hand, it can be argued that Woodman's brilliance is clouded by what psychotherapist and author Robert Aziz calls "Jungian romantic proclivities," a tendency to see reality in aesthetic or purely archetypal terms, rather than to face life's transformative or ethical challenges more directly. Although a close friend of Woodman for over four decades, Aziz was a fierce critic of the limitations of what he calls "archetypal reductionism" (Aziz, *Syndetic Paradigm*).

After decades of studying and teaching Romantic poetry, Woodman would make the extraordinary suggestion, consistent with Aziz's critique, that Romanticism is on the whole a record of a failed initiation, typified by Coleridge's Ancient Mariner as a failed shaman. He would argue that the shaman's purpose is to transform the elemental powers into a socially beneficent force. "It is precisely the Mariner's failure to transform them that constitutes the tragedy at the heart of Coleridge's rime as well as Coleridge's life" (Woodman, "Shaman, Poet, and Failed Initiate" 69).

I first met Ross Woodman in 1974, when he was one of my professors at Western University. My mother knew him through their mutual involvement with the art gallery in London, and she put the idea in my head to find him. We didn't know that he was a Bahá'í. He was a fascinating teacher whose specialty was the English Romantic poets. His intimate knowledge of the vast canon of English literature, a literature steeped in the Judeo-Christian traditions, flowed from his lively mind as from an inexhaustible spring. For Ross, and also for his wife Marion—a high school English literature teacher whose second calling led her to pursue a distinguished professional career as a Jungian analyst—poetry and art were vessels carrying spiritual insight, from which we could draw to nourish our soul making. His lectures, always delivered without notes, were a kind of performance art, mesmerizing and generative.

Woodman once said that he wished that he had worked from notes, because he lectured in an altered state, and afterwards had trouble remembering what he had said. Late in life, he described a lecture he gave on Shelley's *Mont Blanc*:

> Teaching the poem, I once inscribed an unbroken succession of letters around two walls on which stretched an enormous blackboard that served in part to encircle the lecture room.
>
> *theeverlastinguniverseofthingsflowsthroughthemind*
>
> I invited the students to imagine they were semi-contained within the opening line and a half of *Mont Blanc* as in a crucible as if they themselves were, like Shelley's narrator in *Alastor*, a

> "dark magician in his visioned cave" raking cinders "for life and power". . . . (Woodman, Letter to Yeo, 2001)

This invitation to imagine shows the kind of spell that Woodman could cast in his efforts to expand the horizons of the mind. He was demonstrating a way of being, asking his students to surrender to flow, to a stream of consciousness. Many students entrusted themselves to these moments with a willing suspension of disbelief. Woodman called it poetic faith—a way of knowing, a skill that could be learned.

To his students at the university, Woodman was a secular humanist who spoke of the divine only through the works of art that he taught, whose own religious beliefs were private and separate from his role as a professor. Those were the rules of the game, as he discovered to his bewilderment when, as a newly minted professor in the early 1950s, he started inviting groups of students to his home to talk to them about the Bahá'í revelation. In those years he was travelling in Canada and the United States and giving public talks about the Bahá'í Faith, and it seemed natural to him to do the same thing outside of class time. His colleagues took a dim view of what they saw as proselytizing. He almost lost his job over it, and vowed from then on to avoid speaking of the Bahá'í Faith with his students, both in and outside of class. He chose self-censorship as self-preservation, and the suspension of disbelief (Coleridge's idea of poetic faith) was a psychic defence against both professional ostracism and, most importantly, against what he understood to be the full implications of religious faith. It was a complex mental split that served him well professionally, but it came at a price.

Woodman discovered the Bahá'í religion unexpectedly in 1942 when, as a twenty-year-old student, he was courting a beautiful and aloof girl named Marian Metcalfe.[2] She accepted his invitation to go on a date on the condition that he attend a lecture with her, about something called Bahá'í. Although he wasn't interested in the meeting, he was very interested in the girl, and went with her to the Marlborough Hotel in Winnipeg. Roland Estall was the chair of this small meeting of about twelve Bahá'ís. The speaker was Helen Bishop, from Portland, Oregon. Woodman recounts, "She was speaking about someone called the Báb, and someone called Bahá'u'lláh, and how the founders of the world's major religions, Christ, Buddha, Muḥammad, were different lamps giving forth the same light" (Woodman, Personal interview). He was struck by the idea that all religions are one, and the Bahá'í message of world peace also resonated profoundly, as every day brought cruel news of the war.

2 Marian Metcalfe would become Woodman's first wife. His second wife was named Marion Boa.

> I listened rather intently, and when the lecture was finished Roland Estall asked if there were any questions. I immediately raised my hand and I think really, all I wanted to do was impress the lady I was with, by asking an intelligent question. I stood up to ask my question, and to my great amazement, and certainly to the amazement of all present, instead of asking a question, I said, "'Everything you have said is true." I was shocked. They were shocked. And since I was perhaps the only non-Bahá'í in the room, there was a great moment of celebration. This was the quickest conversion on record! The extraordinary thing about it was that I had not expected to say this, but as soon as it was said, I did in fact know it was true. It was instantaneous. What Blake describes as a pulsation of the artery. It went through my entire body, and I think, it went collectively through the body of the people in the room. (Woodman and Boyles "Interview")

Estall, who became a life-long friend, decided to give him a book to read—*The Dawn Breakers*. Woodman went home and began reading the book. He found it strange and fascinating. Reading about the Báb—martyred founder of the Bábí religion and forerunner of Bahá'u'lláh—and wondering what on earth he had gotten himself into, he fell asleep with the book open in his lap and had a most profound dream. He recounted it almost seventy years later in his book, *Revelation and Knowledge*:

> The Báb is in Winnipeg. He is staying on the fourth floor of the DuBarry Apartments where I once lived with my parents on the top third floor. [There were only three floors in the DuBarry apartments, but the Báb was on the fourth.] I am eager to see him. [I am enormously excited. I tell my father, the Báb is here!] My father offers to take me. [My brother Harold says he would like to come along. Harold sits in the back seat, I sit beside my father in the front seat. We drive to Wardlaw and Wellington Crescent, and I get out. My father says he will wait for me in the car, but I say, The Báb is here! My brother and I take a dumb waiter pulling on the ropes, with great effort.] When we arrive he too says he will wait. [But I say, the Báb is here!] I go alone to the apartment. I am let in. [There in front of me is the most gorgeous Persian carpet I have ever seen in my life. It is luminous. Not only is it luminous, it is in motion and it is singing. The pattern in the rug is conducting a dance, like the surface of a calm sea. There is a hum in the carpet, a murmuring like the sound of a breeze gently tossing waters.] I am told to remove my shoes. I see an empty chair at the other end of the room. I hesitate to step on the rug. When I do, the pattern

> divides, clearing a path, [parting like the Red Sea. I walk through to the other side, and there is a kitchen chair. I sit down and wait.] The Báb enters on my left. When he steps on the rug, it gathers and folds around him like an *aba*, or cloak. He turns and looks at me. [Our eyes meet, and instantly he is standing before me.] He takes a kitchen chair identical to the one I am on. He sits down facing me. Our knees are almost touching. I try to speak, but I cannot. The pressure is huge, I cannot get out a sound or a syllable. Struggling to make a sound, I rise in the air, turn a somersault, and land like a feather at his feet. Dissolving into air, I awake with a start: a streak of lightning, a distant thunder.[3] (3)

Woodman told these two stories—of the sudden conversion and the visionary dream—as encounters with the Bahá'í revelation via, respectively, the conscious intellect and the dreaming unconscious. He said that it made him a Bahá'í for life. That life, however, would be a journey largely outside of the community, for reasons that I will explore. He moved, in his mind and in his work, back and forth between the antipodes of, on the one hand, an imagination overflowing with the energies and presence of gods and demons, cherubim and seraphim—"all sorts of marvellous creatures," as he once told me—and on the other hand, the clear vision of Shelley when he writes that "the deep truth is imageless" (*Prometheus Unbound* 4.116). Through vast rivers of eloquent words he always returned to what Wordsworth called the Uncreated, that hidden place in the unconscious, "beyond and above consciousness" (Shelley, "Defence of Poetry" 489)

He saw the dream as a direct encounter with the divine, and he circled around the question of what the dream called him to do, and to become, for the rest of his life.

> My introduction in Winnipeg to the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh dealt with what He called "progressive revelation," which unveiled to me how religions are made. I instantly embraced it and had that night a powerful dream about it, which became the obscure focus of *Revelation and Knowledge.* Instead, that is, of focusing on the "religion-making process," I focused on the dream as a "soul-making process," which I found at work in Romanticism. I never quite succeeded in distinguishing between them in my future academic career so that when I was professionally as a livelihood lecturing on the Romantics, I was also, on another level, lecturing on the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, struggling better

3 This recounting of the dream is edited here to include details added when Woodman retold the dream in his interview with Ann Boyles, Association of Bahá'í Studies 31st Annual Conference, 2007. Segments from the interview are in square brackets.

> to understand the experience of revelation which my dream, like my reaction to the lecture in Winnipeg, enacted. I became, in truth, possessed by the experience as an experience of the "primary imagination," Coleridge's "living Power and prime Agent of all human Perception, and as a repetition in the finite mind of the eternal act of creation in the infinite I AM." (Woodman, "Whispering Silence")

Woodman distanced himself from the Bahá'í community in the 1950s, and while he did not participate in the community in southern Ontario where he lived, he continued to be intensely engaged with the Faith in his own way, and maintained contact with many Bahá'í friends such as Glen Eyford, Douglas Martin, Otto Rogers, Sandra Hutchison and Roland Estall.

On a long-delayed pilgrimage to Haifa in 1999, He reflected that the other pilgrims were wondering about him, puzzled that he had been a Bahá'í for fifty years yet this was his first pilgrimage. "Something just doesn't add up like why have we never heard of him before if he served on the first NSA,[4] if he knew Marjory Morten, Juliet Thompson, if he was a Bahá'í during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi" (Woodman, "Haifa Journal" n.p.).

It seems that in the 1950s some Bahá'ís in southern Ontario disapproved of his unconventional way of understanding and expressing Bahá'í teachings. As one Bahá'í who was close to Woodman explained, "he was fascinated by the Báb, naturally because of this dream—and this did not go over well with a couple of the Bahá'ís in [Woodman's] community. . . . He could not get along, he didn't fit in. Of course a whole bunch of us admired him very much, but he didn't fit in to whatever the . . . group were trying to do to present the Bahá'í Faith to the community. So he found his own faith, the Báb's faith, for all those years—in other words he aligned himself with the revolutionary vision of the Báb first and foremost" (Martin, Personal interview).

He lived with a sense of exile and failure for decades. In Haifa, thinking about his years outside the community, he wrote, "I felt all along—all these years—on the very edge of spiritual extinction—on the edge of an abyss. There were moments when I did fall into it" (Woodman, "Haifa Journal" n.p.). Losing his sense of identity as a Bahá'í, he doubted the ground he stood on, as he describes in a letter to his first wife Marian Yeo (née Metcalfe) in 1973:

> I have a terrible capacity to tell the truth, though it can very easily be interpreted as a pack of lies. But I never had the right to tell the truth the way I told it. The only way I know how to tell the truth is to make a fiction out of it. I accept

4 National Spiritual Assembly, the governing body of the Bahá'í community in a given nation.

> Bahá'í this way. It's God's way of telling the truth. It's his accommodating fiction. The deep truth is imageless and images of it are funny very fragile things which require exquisite care if they are to have any life at all. I experienced in those meetings of the Assembly and at the terrible Proclamation Committee such a smashing of images that there was only chaos at my feet and in my head. And there has been ever since (Woodman, Letter to Yeo, 1973).

This interesting use of the word "fiction" is clarified in his correspondence with Professor Glen Eyford. Commenting on *The Dawn Breakers*, Woodman suggests that Nabíl's narrative of the Bahá'í origin story is "in some sense fiction":

> By fiction I do not mean the opposite of truth. Rather I mean a certain kind of truth, which is the truth of an inner condition or psychic state arising from passionate commitment. By fiction I mean that the events presented or described are as much determined by inner factors as they are by outer factors. In the final analysis with fiction, the inner factors take precedence and largely determine the other events, or at least the meaning of those events. To put it simply, though it is a complex matter, the facts, the events, cease to be signs and become symbols.[5] (Woodman, Letter Eyford, June 1985)

After his retirement he continued to process his confusion about where he stood in terms of poetic faith and religious faith. Marian Yeo, who had brought him to the fateful meeting at the Marlborough Hotel in Winnipeg in 1942, challenged him in 2001 to admit that his dream of the Báb had led other Bahá'ís, including significant figures in the community in the 1950's such as Marjorie Morten and Juliet Thompson, to "deify" him (as Marian put it), which he had always seen as farcical, somewhat ridiculous. He spoke of them with great affection and amusement. Marian suggested to him that it was tragic, not merely comic, and this moved him to delve more deeply into it.

> Ever since you mentioned it I have been thinking about my "deification" by the Bahá'ís, which, as you read it, had rather catastrophic or tragic consequences not only for myself but for many others. . . .

5 Signs always have a clear meaning, often giving information or an instruction. Symbols also represent something, but you need some knowledge to understand what the symbol represents. Both refer to interpreting something that has been said indirectly. However, a sign is mainly an object, a thing, etc. that contains one meaning that is usually obligatory for the people of a community to abide by, whereas a symbol is usually cultural. A symbol can have several interpretations.

> The Bahá'ís thought that I was an angel and Marjory was sure I could levitate (if I really tried). . . . thank you for "transforming" what I have sometimes offered as comedy and even as farce (a tale good for a laugh) into tragedy (a tale that confronts the truth rather than deflects it). My entire Bahá'í life had not been Bahá'í at all. It only had the appearance (and appearance was special to me). I had been dealing with a personal conversion all along, which is not what Bahá'u'lláh was about. That had been a Christian thing, that some Bahá'ís like Juliet Thompson had clung to in adoring 'Abdu'l-Bahá as if he were Christ or his Second Coming (I got along fine with them). Bahá'u'lláh took "personal" salvation for granted as work already done some three dispensations ago. He Himself had moved on to redemption of the planet, the earth as one country. What happened to me that evening [in the Marlborough Hotel in 1942] reflected a vast collective, progressively evolving inheritance with a logic of its own that was called "progressive revelation". The completion of this dialectical process had now taken place in what Hegel called the realization of the Absolute Spirit and Helen Bishop called Bahá'u'lláh. Wow! And it took the Báb to open the Gate and usher us in. The completion of the human attempts to know itself was reflected in the shattered mirror of my own fanciful attempts. And informing those attempts—even my own broken ones—was the extra-human transcendence that is the infinite God. It was not all about me. . . .
>
> I had never gotten beyond the imaginal to the Notion, to the actual dialectic of the soul. I had never entered what Hegel called "spirit" or "thought" as the self-consciousness of "'spirit'." Of course, Romanticism was no help, that goes without saying. But what needs to be said was what you always knew: the university was my insane asylum in which I could act out my insanity in Blake, Shelley or Wordsworth, as if in my understanding of them I was sane. The university provided me with a container for my madness, some notion of divinity that I could only seemingly inhabit or it could seemingly inhabit me. It was all a delusion. Whatever sanity I had remaining to me lay in my recognition of the delusion I was in. (Woodman, Letter to Yeo, 2001)

In this ruthless self-criticism, Woodman seems to repudiate poetic faith, the ability to inhabit the archetypal world of mythos, story and image, through a willing suspension of disbelief, as "no help." Several years before, his friend Robert Aziz had suggested to him that the radical inner-world orientation of archetypal Romanticism might be merely a vehicle for aesthetic, rather than ethical, engagement

with unfolding reality. "The romantic path of transpersonal aesthetics," says Aziz, "is always far more pleasing than submitting oneself to the harsh realities of genuine personality differentiation. Yet, the seductive appeal of such a Romantic leap notwithstanding, it should be understood that escape into the archetypal aesthetic would further neither the analytical process nor the soul journey" (Aziz, *Syndetic Paradigm* 14–15). The suggestion that his immersion in the archetypal world could be blocking his capacity for transformation intrigued him. Aziz's insight was exciting, but at the same time deeply disturbing.

In the light of this criticism, the interpretation of his dream of the Báb that Douglas Martin offered him takes on a rosy tint. "Look," Martin told him, "this is the story of your life: You were a Bahá'í, in this very dramatic way, you recognized the Báb and responded to Him and so on, but from then on there was this huge somersault, and that was your academic life. And then you came crashing down to His feet, and all of a sudden you became very involved with the Bahá'í Faith itself." Woodman liked the sound of that and exclaimed, 'That's it! That's what happened'" (Martin, Personal interview). When Martin told Woodman how he interpreted his dream, as a narrative of his future in which he would fly for fifty years, a creature of air immersed in the archetypal world of mythos, to land at the feet of the Báb, he was offering a retrospective interpretation of the dream. Woodman agreed. (In my experience he tended to affirm statements in conversation that had a ring of imaginative truth to them, not as a final word but as a vivid constellation of meaning in the moment.)

Dreams, however, tend to depict the present condition of the dreamer against the backdrop of a potential developmental path. This dream has the hallmarks of such a transformational dream, meaning that it is a dream that announces a potential transformational shift of consciousness, the realization of which, it should be emphasized, will depend entirely on the work one does on oneself. A dream of the Báb, the Gate, Aziz suggests, could be opening such a transformational portal to Woodman. It could be an initiation dream (Aziz, Personal interview).

It could be argued that as Woodman continued to reflect on the meaning of the dream throughout his long life, he also found that he would not, or could not, transform himself in response to the Báb's silent invitation in the dream. He missed the initiatory invitation in 1942. In 1992 he would write a book that was an effort to make sense of the dream, and he would continue to revisit its unanswered questions until the very end.

Woodman believed, as he wrote of Coleridge, "that his life was a poem that God was struggling to write, the object of which was salvation," and that his writing, his entire *oeuvre*, was an ongoing endeavour to do what Coleridge said mystics must do: to separate delusions from intuitions ("Dying into Eternity" n.p.). If the dream was a

failed initiation, it was the highest form of failed initiation imaginable—relentlessly challenging, endlessly generative for him in his spiritual journey.

In the books that he wrote after he retired he explored this difficult and, in the secular humanist worldview of twentieth century academia, forbidden territory. Not only was religion off limits (Woodman's colleague Northrop Frye called himself an "underground agent" for the United Church of Canada) but the work of Carl Jung also remained, Woodman knew, on the lunatic fringe.

There was also something else hidden, "underground," within the creative process of Woodman's teaching. As he wrote to his friend, professor Glen Eyford:

> I was, at it were, giving my unconscious (Jung would call it the collective unconscious) into the keeping of whomever would or could receive it. You, for example. And listening to you lecture, I thought to myself "how splendidly Glen has carried my soul through the world!" Of course, you were carrying your own soul, but that is how I have lived**.** Those whom I taught became for me carriers of my soul. It is called projection or identification. I know my particular fate has put into my hands a rich storehouse of spiritual matter, of psychic phenomena. My cup is overflowing all the time. But I have had to overflow in a curiously underground way, as if my river does not flow above ground, as if it was an underground stream which, like Coleridge's sacred river Alph in *Kubla Khan*, is "flung up momently," and sinks again "in tumult to a lifeless ocean." I want to describe to you as graphically as I can what my underground teaching looks like. I will tell you how I teach the Romantics, specifically Blake, whom I spend half a year on each year, and lecture to an overflow class that is allowed to line the walls if there are no seats. For this is how in my underground passage (the classroom) I teach the Faith.

In Blake's epic, *Milton*, occurs one of the best descriptions I know of the 11th minute in which a new creation began. Here is the dawn of the new day in the soul of Mullá Husayn in the Báb's upper room:

> There is a Moment in each day that Satan cannot find
> Nor can his Watch Fiends find it, but the Industrious find
> This Moment & it multiply, & when it once is found
> It renovates every Moment of the Day if rightly placed.

Blake says this "Moment" is "less than the Pulsation of the Artery." He devotes an entire epic to that "Pulsation" in which all the events of history from Creation to the Last Judgement (6000 years, he calls it) are constellated in this single "Pulsation." Indeed, he

> argues, every "Pulsation", every beat of the human heart is that entire history brought to a single instant in which there is no past or present or future but only NOW (Woodman, Letter to Eyford, June 1985).

The letter then goes into great detail on the subject of what became, over the next twenty years, *Revelation and Knowledge*. He concludes, "You can see what my book on the apocalypse is all about and why it ends with Bahá'u'lláh. I'm going to finish it in retirement. The academic community will say 'I told you so. He was mad all the time!'" (Woodman, Letter to Eyford, June 1985).

Both of the books that he wrote late in life are bogged down by a writing style that is often impenetrable. Reading his work one sometimes feels, as Nabokov said of his father's writing (about the mysteries of butterfly evolution), that "every sentence is an opaquely glazed door with a sign to halt intruders. The author's goal, essentially, was to provide a minimum of words and a maximum of thought" (74). "Throughout my academic life," Woodman confessed at the age of eighty-eight, "I have depended upon students and scholars not knowing what, as a closeted Bahá'í, I was talking about by not, except inwardly to myself, talking about it. That time is now passed. I am out of the religious closet. The source of the presumed obscurity attributed to my writing style, comparable to a dance of seven veils, is now, as the eighth, partially unveiled" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.). He requires the reader to leap into the deep and feverish realm of his mind where all his eclectic erudition flows together. He lives in a world of what he calls "esoteric legacies," particularly the radical psychology of Carl Jung from the twentieth century and the revolutionary thinking of the English Romantics from the turn of the eighteenth. The reader is rewarded, however, with, startling insights about the book's daunting subjects—divine revelation, creative imagination, and knowledge—percolating up through Woodman's poetry-saturated internal dialogue.

Poet and educator Sandra Hutchison agrees that the books are difficult. "I think Ross's writing was a kind of rendering of a waking vision, and you would have to know the language of the dream in order to understand it, and there was almost a sort of process of initiation into the vocabulary and the language and the paradigms that you had to go through if you were to understand what was being said" (Hutchison, Personal interview). On the other hand, Douglas Martin told me that "those of us who have read this book [*Revelation and Knowledge*] are so grateful to Ross. It's a wonderful final gift . . . to the Bahá'í community . . . he wanted Bahá'ís to think more—if they didn't, he didn't get upset, he just laughed that terrific laugh" (Martin, Personal interview).

Woodman believed, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, that art is the gift of the holy

spirit, that when one is painting at a canvas, it is as if one is worshipping in a temple. He was fond of quoting the painter Henri Matisse who, when asked if he believed in God, said, "Yes, when I am working." Woodman identified his own praxis as "the reading of a living work of art." His teaching and writing was always an extended hand, the artist reaching out to elevate the reader/viewer to participate in the "mind in creation" rather than being a mere observer, an admirer of the evidence of that mind. "My whole soul is suspended into its own distinctive form of imaginative activity, the reading of a living work of art becoming another form of it as a sign of its continuing life until, as Shakespeare describes his sonnets, "the last syllable of recorded time" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.).

In an essay in *The Journal of Bahá'i Studies* (1991) he made a case for Bahá'u'lláh's influence on the New York School of abstract expressionist painting, based on the fact that the Bahá'í painter Mark Tobey was a close friend of Jackson Pollock and twenty-two years his senior, and as such was the unacknowledged founder of this important movement in modern art. Using the Romantic term "unapprehended inspiration," he suggests that Pollock, Lee Krasner, Mark Rothko, Barnett Newman, et. al., living in the "City of the Covenant"[6] where 'Abdu'l-Bahá first set foot in America in 1912, were influenced by a Bahá'í revelation they knew nothing about. His explanation of this convergence is grounded in depth psychology—"the great 20th c movement [which emerged from the work of Freud and Jung] to bring together the conscious and the unconscious is a secular version of Revelation. The meeting place is the dream" (Woodman, Letter to Eyford, May 1985).

In unpublished essays written after he completed *Revelation and Knowledg*e, Woodman takes on what he sees as a kind of last frontier, to work through a long-overdue distinction between soul and psyche. As he contemplates his approaching death he wants to clarify for himself, perhaps only for the present moment in a countless number of such epiphanies, "a dawning recognition of the difference between soul and psyche upon which knowledge as faith depends" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.). Reflecting on Coleridge's idea that poetry requires the reader's "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment," and amplifying his newfound discovery that psyche and soul are *not* synonymous, Woodman suggests that "the suspension that belongs to art is a willing suspension between psyche and soul that allows us to explore the difference."

> "My 'willing suspension of disbelief' which, with reference to the arts, I, like so many others for whom the arts became a religion, had amply developed, deprived

6 New York City was honored by 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the title "City of the Covenant" on 19 June 1912, during His stay in that city.

> me of the necessary religious faith. Instead of placing the psyche in service of the soul, I realized in the midst of death that I had developed it at the cost of soul.
> . . . As a Romanticist I, turning from soul to psyche, was prepared to argue that psyche, as what Keats called "Soul-making," is a "grander scheme of salvation" than revealed religion because it "does not affront [my] reason and humanity." Like Keats, I was prepared by my poetic education to reject revealed religion as a belief system. (Woodman, "Dying into Eternity" n.p.)

In a long, late-night meditation on a mandala drawing by Bahá'í artist Sky Glabush, entitled *Have you heard of Bahá'u'lláh?* Woodman wonders about Glabush's question "in my own chosen free-association manner that, as chaos, skirts the madness chaos fearfully unveils. Revelation, sanity and madness are issues that haunt my reflections." As he immerses himself in the mandala through a long sleepless night, he says "it is as if the entire history of Persian miniatures were awakening from an immemorial Western sleep . . . I have never seen a drawing like it. Blake's world in a grain of sand is repeated here in a pencil's targeted tip. Details for a Sufi poem, "Language of Birds," in the Metropolitan Museum of Art's renovated Islamic wing are painted with the hairs from the bellies of squirrels" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.).

In Woodman's view, "[a] mandala is, in its pictorial essence, a portrayal of the soul… Ideally conceived in a meditative state, the mandala embraces futurity in a timeless Now" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.]). Jung, who in a period of profound "creative illness" painted in his Red Book mandalas from his dreams, said that "it represents the result of the joint labours of consciousness and the unconscious, and attains the likeness of the God-image in the form of the mandala, which is probably the simplest model of a concept of wholeness and one which spontaneously arises in the mind as a representation of the struggle and reconciliation of opposites" (335). Reaching toward the mystery he sees in Glabush's mandala, Woodman quotes Keats' *Ode on a Grecian Urn*: "[T]herefore ye soft pipes play on; / Not to the sensual ear, but more endear'd, / Pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone" (lines 12–14). "As I hear it," says Woodman, "Glabush . . . is using his pencil to 'pipe to the spirit ditties of no tone'" (Woodman, "Revelation and Art" n.p.).

Sky Glabush explains what happened when Woodman first acquired the mandala drawing. "He put it right in his study. It was funny because he would bring people over and they would be like 'why did you put that awful thing in, you wrecked your whole collection with that piece. That piece totally alienates me. . . .' The piece is a good fulcrum from which to think about his relationship to the Faith. What he would say is that it is

not didactic. If you read what he wrote about it, it's the opposite of didactic. It's a question, a *sound*, it's faith posed as an unanswerable, ineffable question. I think he revelled in that" (Glabush, Personal interview).

As his body and mind began to fail him in his late eighties, and his cherished wife Marion settled deeper into dementia, he was preoccupied with the question of soul. "I had been shifting my attention from the *body terrestrial* to the *body celestial*, knowing that my *body terrestrial* was, like Marion's, moving steadily and irreversibly toward its death. . . . The *terrestrial* and the *celestial* had always been deeply entwined. But now they were pulling apart . . . *Revelation and Knowledge* did not finally resolve the matter of suspended disbelief . . . such were the pleasures gratifyingly provided by my enlightened commitment to the liberal arts that I did not wish to resolve my suspended state. . . . But I was not dying then. I am dying now. Death is a great leveller" (Woodman, "Dying into Eternity" n.p.).

Written in the year before Woodman died, "Whispering Silence" is a series of meditations on the mystery of the soul, accounts of the dead and the afterlife as he takes leave of his art collection and his home. It is his farewell text pointing clearly toward a door he expected to pass through, though he could never be sure, try as he might to think his way to certainty.

Woodman speaks of his tolerance for ambiguity and of his doubt, as a choice he had made, to stand with the poet. "I have tried to confront head on what finally differentiates the poet and the prophet, who appear in so many respects to be identical. . . . The difference between the prophet and the poet is the difference between . . . grace and nature, revelation and inspiration, miracle and magic. . . . The poet constructs a likeness of what the prophet reveals" (Woodman, "Whispering Silence" n.p.). "But this is the thing: divine revelation or what Plato called divine madness, the poet or the prophet. I really all these years opted for the poet because I couldn't deal with the kind of obedience and submission the prophet demands" (Woodman, Personal interview). Here we see Woodman in a confessional mode, admitting that he had not been willing to sacrifice his commitment to fiction, to enter into the transformation that was offered to him in his dream of the Báb.

In an interview with the artist Sky Glabush, I suggested that Woodman's doubt toward the end was like Kirkegaard's—that at the moment of deepest doubt, it is possible to have the most profound conversation with the divine. Glabush agreed:

> I think it's good now. I wish I could say that to him. Because a person who has that degree of questioning shows the kind of robust and healthy place that religion has. You are not taking anything away by asking questions, you are only enriching the conversation. No matter how much ambivalence, or questions, uncertainty about things

> he may have had, that record is important. It's more real than trying to write something emphatic when he didn't have an emphatic conviction. It's more real to write from the standpoint of doubt! That is actually more of an affirmative position. Because its real, and that's what I would say to him.

The "powers" that Woodman evokes in this next passage are the dead, the gods, and the living deity within him which he sought to amplify and to live, not just as a suspension of disbelief, but as *gnosis*. "The joy of the worm" is a reference to the end of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, and the worm is the poisonous asp that Cleopatra holds to her breast.

> After a rich spiritual and physical life filled with mental, though conflicting, stimulation, I can, I confess, take no more and I frankly fear for those who are now mentally setting out, as I set out, to find their way. Those creative minds that influenced me in ways I have attempted to describe were, like my mind, deeply disturbed by the gift of creativity, which can, as a warning, conduct to madness. If such a warning strikes, my hope is that you will heed it, though how you heed it can never be an easy choice. My desire is that you may in some small way profit from at least some of the choices I made and unmade to arrive at ninety with what is left, which in this book I bestow upon you. The beauty of [art] objects resides in the beauty of thought that, in the act of creation, informs them. "We are lived by powers we pretend to understand," declared W.H. Auden. Shamdasani used this quotation to sum up as best he could the life and work of Jung. To which I would add, understood or not, they, the powers, are there as what Wordsworth called the Uncreated. Should you become aware of their presence, beware of becoming possessed by them, or, if possessed, do your best to move beyond pretending. I wish you joy of the worm. (Woodman, "Whispering Silence" n.p.)

Woodman died on 19 March 2014, Naw-Rúz. He had told Sky Glabush that he wanted a Bahá'í burial, but it was not written down anywhere. Woodman's executor Joel Faflak agreed that this could be done, but not within twenty-four hours as is customary.[7] People were coming from overseas for the funeral, and the body needed to be embalmed. With the help of a Persian Bahá'í friend, Sky went ahead and prepared Ross's body—carefully bathing, wrapping him from head to foot in five pieces of silk, placing the burial ring on his hand. I attended Woodman's funeral, and when I saw his serene face encircled in pale silk, I, like

7 This is an Iranian custom that sometimes informs Bahá'í practice, although the Bahá'í Writings contain no provisions on the subject.

perhaps most of the mourners present, was initially taken aback, but of course could quickly accept its meaning in terms of the limited understanding I had of the Bahá'í Faith. The question of Woodman's faith hung in the air like the question mark in Glabush's mandala. I found myself thinking of a line from Yeats: "Like a long legged-fly upon the stream/His mind moves upon silence" (lines 9–10).

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Note: Ross Woodman's unpublished writings are quoted with permission of his literary executor, Joel Faflak. All personal interviews prior to 2022 were conducted for the feature documentary film *Rebel Angel*, which can be seen at rebelangel.ca.

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Mathnaví of the Blessed One

Revealed by BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

Provisional Translation
with Introduction and Notes by
John S. Hatcher, Amrollah
Hemmat, and Ehsanollah Hemmat

The "Mathnaví of the Blessed One" was written during Bahá'u'lláh's exile to Constantinople. Bahá'u'lláh remained in Constantinople only a brief time, 16 August through 1 December 1863, but this was a critical turning point in His ministry.

Importantly, this work of more than three hundred lines touches upon Bahá'u'lláh's imminent declaration to the world at large what He had revealed to His followers in April of the same year in a rented garden outside Bagdad: that He was Him Whom God shall make manifest, the Manifestation of God promised and prophesied by the Báb. Consequently, this poem is as complex and varied as would be the entirety of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation.

Among other themes, the Mathnaví foreshadows the forthcoming ordeals already presaged in the *Tablet of the Holy Mariner*, principally among them would be the rebellion of Mírzá Yaḥyá that would begin a year later in Adrianople. It also alludes to the need for Bahá'u'lláh to unveil His station and unleash the power of His command. Such unveiling refers both to the gradual revelation of His unique station, as well as the myriad works that would soon pour from His tireless pen.

Adib Taherzadeh's chapter devoted to the Mathnaví does an excellent job of demonstrating how the various themes of this poem foreshadow both future events and the future works of Bahá'u'lláh, works that would expand the ideas and axioms introduced in this multi-layered work of art with its complex collection of symbol and allegory:

> One of the most beautiful works which Bahá'u'lláh revealed in Constantinople is the Mathnaví. It is a masterpiece of Persian poetry, noted for the beauty and power of its composition, and acclaimed as one of the most soul-stirring among His poems. No pen can adequately describe the contents of this great work even in the original language. For every one of its three hundred lines is a book in itself with infinite depth and profound significances. Like a vast ocean which gushes out through a tiny outlet, Bahá'u'lláh reveals, with a potency that overwhelms the soul, a small measure of the glory and power of God and vouchsafes to mankind a glimmer of His divine Revelation. The knowledge He bestows upon the pure in heart, the mysteries He unravels for the sincere, the insight He confers upon the seeker, the wisdom He dispenses to the wise, and the counsels and exhortations He delivers to His loved ones, all

> these stand out in this divine poem as the ultimate to which man can hope to attain. (*Revelation* 29).

Throughout the work, as the reader will note, Bahá'u'lláh compares this Day of Revelation and Resurrection to all those revelations that preceded it and demonstrates, through a series of allusions, how this new Day is the culmination of what previous Manifestations prophesied and longed to behold.

Among the most heartening assurances is the theme repeatedly cited by Bahá'u'lláh that this is the "Day of God"—an endless spring that, unlike the revelations of the past, will not be followed by night, thereby assuring humankind that its Covenant with God is eternal, that we are still living in the day of *alast*.[1] At the conclusion, however, Bahá'u'lláh, no longer speaking as a mere dervish, laments that He must endure the same sort of suffering inflicted on the Manifestations of the past, like Moses in the midst of the Egyptians or like Joseph in the well after having been betrayed by His own brothers. As the Mathnaví demonstrates, Bahá'u'lláh foreknew the trials that awaited Him—including, most grievously, a betrayal by His own brother at least as perfidious as that which Joseph endured.

Finally, the reader needs to be aware that those words in parenthesis are added by us for clarity, even though they are not in the original text. Also, the words in italics are translated from the Arabic, whereas the rest of the text is translated from the Persian.

1 "Am I not . . .?" In the Qur'án (7:172) the Day of the Covenant or the Day of God is Yawm-i-Alast, the Day when God addressed Adam's posterity-to-be and asked them, "Am I not your Lord?" (*a-lastu bi Rabbikum*) and they replied: "Yea! We do bear witness!" This represents the binding Covenant between God and humankind.

He is the Most Glorious

1 O Life of the Throne on High! O Sun of love!
The world of existence hath never given birth to such light!

2 Were not everyone veiled from reunion,
I would disclose a few words from the mysteries of eternity

3 that all souls would be indebted to Thee
and all might become mad with love for Thee,

4 that Thou mayest behold everyone inebriated and crazy with love,
their souls in hand ready to sacrifice

5 at the instant of Thy command, O Honored One of the Age,
(souls which) they might readily cast at Thy feet.

6 Like the dawning sun, reveal Thy face from behind the mountain of the Holy Spirit
that Thou mayest become manifest in every corner of this world!

7 Manifest Thy moonlike face!
Through Thy benevolence, make this straw lush and green.

8 A drop seeketh abundance from Thy ocean.
Grant this request in abundance because Thou art a Bountiful King!

9 A speck of dust supplicates Thee for a beam of light.
Bestow this favor without question!

10 A seed hath opened its mouth heavenward
that Thy generous bounty might be bestowed upon it.

11 Pour forth upon it the drops of Thy bounteousness,
O King of the Celestial Throne and Ruler of the mortal realm!

12 Rend asunder this hundred-fold veil!
Make manifest that beguiling countenance!

13 As there is no doubt about Thy generosity,
provide us from Thy beneficence whatsoever we require.

14 For one and all, make now the West the dawning place!
Confer the delight of wine upon this drink!

15 With beams of light, enkindle the lamp of the heart
that all might behold in Thy face the light of *Túr*[2] itself!

16 Indeed, unsheathe Thy heavenly sword!
Slay outright the enemies of Thy Faith!

17 Set ablaze the fire of Thy Lordship!
Engulf in flames the heretic who wars against Thee!

18 O Sun of daylight, they are all like bats!
Arise and set all darkness aflame with light!

19 Purify these sorrow-laden dregs!
Enkindle this extinguished candle of the night.

20 Because Thou dost dwell in every soul, the whole world depends on Thee
so that Thy command "*Be and it is!*" may become manifest![3]

21 O Bahá of the Holy Spirit, through remembrance of Thy face,
I will disclose (some) mysteries about Thy nature

22 that through (such) wisdom I might elevate the souls
and discover those willing to pay the price for the pearl of Thy love.

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2 Quranic allusion to the mountain where Moses sees the light emanating from the burning bush, referred to in the Biblical account of Moses as Mount Horeb, also as Mt. Sinai, and as the Mountain of God. In the Bahá'í writings, it generally symbolizes the point—or source or intermediary—from which God speaks to the Manifestation. For Moses it was the fire, for Muhammad it was the Archangel Gabriel, for Bahá'u'lláh, the Veiled Maiden.

3 See numerous occasions in the Qur'án. For example, "To Him is due the primal origin of the heavens and the earth; when He decreeth a matter He saith to it: 'Be;' and it is" (2:117). "Shoghi Effendi, in letters written on his behalf, has explained the significance of the 'letters B and E'. They constitute the word 'Be', which, he states, 'means the creative Power of God Who through His command causes all things to come into being' and 'the power of the Manifestation of God, His great spiritual creative force'. The imperative 'Be' in the original Arabic is the word 'kun', consisting of the two letters 'kaf' and 'nun'. They have been translated by Shoghi Effendi in the above manner. This word has been used in the Qur'án as God's bidding calling creation into being" (in Bahá'u'lláh, Kitáb-i-Aqdas note 188).

23 Thus might I ignite in the universe such a fire
that it could consume the veils of the holy ones!

24 Thus would I disclose the *ḥ*úrí[4] of inner meaning from behind her veil
and cast aside the cloak of the concealed light!

25 Since Thou hast returned with the Holy Spirit, I will explain
an allusion from among the eternal mysteries.

26 O Bird of Fire,[5] make utterances so sweet
that no attribute of existence will remain in our midst.

27 Purify these hearts so full of jealousy!
Bestow worth to these counterfeit and useless coins,

28 O Generous One, so that those intoxicated by Thy Covenant
might be made conscious by this ancient goblet of Thy wine.

29 O Friend of ours, with holy melodies
remove from us both consciousness and unconsciousness!

30 O Isráfíl[6] of Bahá, O Monarch of the Holy Spirit,
proffer life to the lifeless ones!

31 The Primal Tree sprouted from a branch of the Heart!
Sever it now from air, water, and clay

32 that it may be rescued from both essence and attributes,
and that from its candle many suns may become enkindled.

33 Plant this Tree of Thine in the soil of the heart,
then guard its sanctity from both light and shadow.

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4 Also spelled "houri," they are the "white ones" or "pure ones" mentioned in the Qur'án as abiding in paradise. Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Íqán refers to them as the inner meaning of formerly concealed verses: "How many the huris of inner meaning that are as yet concealed within the chambers of divine wisdom!" (70). The word could thus allude to the "mystery" of inner or concealed meaning.

5 This could also be translated as "Bird of Intellect."

6 "Believed to be the angel appointed to sound the trumpet on the Day of Resurrection to raise the dead at the bidding of the Lord" (in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections* 8:3 note 1). "Isráfil" is the Judeo-Christian archangel "Raphael."

34 Shield It as well from winds of discord,
and liberate it from the vain imaginings of the infidel.

35 Make its roots become anchored in the soil of the Heart!
Make its branch rise beyond the heavens!

36 Make a new spring become manifest again
so that from Thy resurrection these lifeless ones will become revived.

37 The vitality of the Sea of Love deriveth from Thy vitality!
The wisdom of the birds of eternity deriveth from Thy wisdom!

38 Make the perfume of (Joseph's) coat waft from the Egypt of the Soul!
Make the (burning) bush of Moses become manifest here!

39 O Beauteous One, from Thy countenance the Spring hath arrived,
and from this Spring, countless verities have appeared.

40 Within each blossom resides a book about the beauty of the Friend.
Each stream is a Kawthar[7] of His benevolence!

41 Such a Spring is not followed by a fall.
All the flowers circumambulate this Spring.

42 Nor is this Spring a season the mind can grasp!
This is a Spring that resurrects lives!

43 That spring season inspires passion for entrancing ones,
but this Spring inspires the love of God.

44 That spring is succeeded by annihilation,
but the epithet for this Spring is "the Immortal."

45 That spring derives from the succession of seasons,
but this Spring derives from the light of the Heart-Ravisher's face.

46 That spring brings forth tulips;
this Spring brings forth lamentation.

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7 Arabic term meaning "abundance." We are using the original term here and elsewhere when, according to the Islamic tradition, the term refers to a river or body of water Muḥammad saw on his night journey to Paradise.

47 By the splendor of the King, this eternal Spring
hath established a tabernacle that doth extend to the throne of God.

48 Behold, O discerning one, all have entered this tabernacle,
if thou dost possess eyes to see.

49 When our King casteth aside the veil from His face,
this Spring will pitch its tent upon the universe.

50 When our Friend casteth aside the veil from His face,
the bright Spring will become emblazoned.

51 We are in the springtime because of His face!
We will not avert our gaze from His face to admire a rose garden.

52 Because we speak of Him, we need not speak of (earthly) treasures.
Because of His sun, we (too) shine forth in the world.

53 If a breeze wafteth from this sweet Spring,
Thou wilt behold many Josephs coming into view.

54 Should a breeze waft from this garden,
Thou wilt will behold many Josephs of the soul in the world.

55 Thou wilt see bodies transformed into spirits!
Every instant a hundred types of victories will reach the soul.

56 Every instant this unsullied Spring of the Beloved
Hath a hundred utterances to disclose, but where is a confidant?

57 This utterance is sanctified beyond language;
these base ones will be unable to detect its meaning.

58 This utterance is devoid of words, speech, or sound!
This utterance is life itself—death will never touch it.

59 In this spring thou canst behold lovers
who have brought their lives to cast away—a hundred thousand every moment.

60 This is the exalted Spring of the Spirit!
This is the Divine, Sanctified Spring.

61 If Sabá wafts a breeze to thee from this (Spring),
thy mortal soul will imbibe from the goblet of immortality.

62 If a breeze should reach thee from the quarter of the Friend,
sacrifice thy life for it, since life doth emanate from Him alone.

63 Behold the tulip of Oneness in this Spring!
Behold the hyacinth of Sanctity in the tresses of the Friend.

64 The blossoms of knowledge on the side of the brook
all eagerly search for Him.

65 Its cypress trees portend the stature of the Beloved.
Its grasses unfold volumes about the cheek of the Friend.

66 Its nightingales are drunk from the goblet of "*am I not?"*
Its turtle doves are drunk from the beauty of the Friend.

67 The philomels[8] in their longing for reunion with Him
are all intoxicated by the zephyr of His grace.

68 If the melody of this Philomel[9] is sounded,
Every soul will become cleansed of envy.

69 From this utterance did the sea of mystery begin to stir.
From this benevolence the ark of existence did embark..

70 With each anemone this Spring bringeth forth
a hundred verities bloom from the mysteries of the Friend.

71 Musk-laden fragrances waft from the tresses of the Friend.
Abundance is constantly bestowed on thee from His benevolent hands.

72 Behold, the curls of His locks are like the flaming Phoenix
encircling the fire from the face of the Friend.

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8 Nightingales.

9 The Friend, the Beloved, the Manifestation.

73 The Nightingale of Holiness laments at separation from the Friend
that scalds the skin and singes the heart!

74 If it doth sigh but once from the pain of its separation,
it will inflame the souls of the pure ones.

75 O Friend, out of mercy, remove not this generosity
that no one but the pure can partake of.

76 From Thy Holy Spirit, diffuse the divine musk
so that the base ones may catch the scent of Thy perfume.

77 This Springtime of the Holy Spirit is eternal,
not like a spring that is followed by autumn.

78 From this Holy Spring, the spirit issues forth,
and from its atmosphere the glory of Noah is manifest.

79 He will seat the people of the Ark onboard the ship,
then bestow to each a hundred kinds of grandeur.

80 O Countenance of God, emerge from behind the veil
so that the sun will dawn from the West.

81 Open the musk of divine knowledge!
Disclose the treasure of the hidden mysteries

82 That these lifeless ones may catch the scent of Thy musk,
That these unconscious ones may become giddy from Thy wine!

83 O Benevolent One, bestow upon this abject one in the land of loneliness
the robe of splendor through Thy beneficence.

84 Adorn this mortal one with the robe of immortality!
Permit this pure downtrodden soul to taste the honey of true riches

85 that he might emerge euphoric from behind the cover
and rend asunder the veil of existence from the world of being,

86 that he may emerge intoxicated, oblivious of self,
like a candle in the lamp of "*Unto God we shall return*!"[10]

87 Since this thorn sprouted in Thy rose garden,
make a hundred rose gardens spring from it!

88 Inscribe for each rose garden a new name,
and let each leaf reveal the mysteries of eternity

89 that the rays from Thy face might shine forth
and Thy light brighten both earth and heaven.

90 O Generous One, through Thy Beneficence, unloose a wind
to blow away the veils of ignorance from this afflicted one!

91 O Exalted King, provide refuge for these pure souls
beneath the shade of Thy Divine Tree![11]

92 Open Thou a Gate to the paradise of Divine realities!
For the sake of God, close not this portal

93 that I may appear in the world unveiled
and disclose a portion of the mystery about Thy loving kindness.

94 He said, "What?! Reveal not the mystery of God
to the ignorant, O Fair One!

95 "Oh, no! Rather unveil the truth by degrees and be patient with the people,
O Tongue of the Mystery of God,

96 "that perhaps Thy kindness may lend a helping hand
to make them fearless and free from everyone else.

97 "Spread the wings of Divine meaning! Take flight!
Hover in the atmosphere of His nearness!"

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10 "All men have proceeded from God and unto Him shall all return" (The Báb, *Selections* 157). Bahá'u'lláh has ordained that on the Bahá'í burial ring be inscribed "I came forth from God, and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (Kitáb-i-Aqdas ¶ 129).

11 *Sadrih*, a reference to *Sadratu'l-Muntahá*, an Arabic term designating literally the "tree beyond which there is no passing," and figuratively a symbol of the Manifestation. Also sometimes called the Divine or Sacred Lote Tree.

98 Nearness to Him can be attained only by the spirit, not with an earthly journey!
If thou seekest with thy heart, thou canst gain admittance to the eternal realm.

99 It would not be hard to traverse the spheres of existence in an instant
if thou couldst be among those who prostrate themselves.

100 To explain this, I will disclose to thee a subtle point
that thou mayest receive a portion from the water of life,

101 that thou mayest become aware of the paradise of eternity,
that thou mayest discern the path to the abode of the Divine Presence,

102 that thou mayest understand '*treading the earth*' of meaning,[12]
that like the Spirit,[13] thou wouldst also soar in His heavenly realm.

103 Since now thou art mired in the mud,
how canst thou detect any fragrance from the paradise of the heart?

104 Therefore, cast off the garments of whatever constrains thee,
then purify the soul from all limitations.

105 Illumine the heart's darkness with His light
that thou mayest become a Monarch in the kingdom of hearts.

106 When the darkness vanishes, His light becometh manifest.
The rays shine from His Sinai and illumine thy heart.

107 When thy nighttime hath passed, the morning will dawn,
and the exalted breeze of the spirit will blow.

108 And thou art this darkness and this insistent self.
The water of life is God's effulgence.

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12 This is similar to the idea of "treading" or "traversing the earth of meaning" which seems to be a symbol of acquiring understanding of Divine Mysteries. See Qur'án 67:14-15. "Should He not know—He that created? And He is the One that understands the finest mysteries (and) is well-acquainted (with them). It is He Who has made the earth manageable for you, so traverse ye through its tracts and enjoy of the Sustenance which He furnishes, but unto Him is the Resurrection"

13 Most often "the Spirit" is an allusion to Christ.

109 If thou canst overcome this darkness from thyself,
thou couldst effortlessly imbibe from the water of life.

110 Therefore, enter beneath the shadow of the Khiḍr of the Holy Spirit[14]
that thou mayest become freed from this dark abode.

111 That Khiḍr drank it and was saved from dying.
This Khiḍr bestows a myriad such fountains of life!

112 He bestowed the water of life to everyone
and cast away His life for the Incomparable King.

113 That Khiḍr searched and found the fountain of life.
From this Khiḍr a hundred fountains have appeared in an instant.

114 That Khiḍr pursued that fountain.
Countless fountains flow in pursuit of this Khiḍr!

115 O Bahá of the Holy Spirit, return from tracking prey
that Thou mayest capture a hundred thousand mysteries.

116 Let Gúr pursue the hunting of zebras![15]
Thou shouldst bring forth prey of mystic truths from the Sinai desert!

117 Upon the plains Thou hast hunted the lives of lovers
until every life passed beyond the realm of existence.

118 O King of Creation, there is not time enough for Thee to recount
the mysteries of the blossom to the nightingale.

119 O Beloved, make a royal falcon fly from Thine arm,
that it might retrieve divine mysteries from that Realm.

120 Hunt now the Phoenix of inner mysteries!
With the key of "*Kun!*" unlock a treasure!

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14 Khiḍr, also transcribed as Khezr, is the name of a legendary immortal saint, as well as a well-known figure in Islamic myth tradition. Though he is not mentioned by name in the Qur'án, this line seems to be an allusion to the story of Khiḍr finding the Water of Life and drinking from it as mentioned in Qur'án 18:62. The Qur'án 18:65–80 tells the story of Moses and Khiḍr.

15 Bahram V (421–438), one of the most well-known Persian kings, is recounted in many myths and is said to have been a great hunter, particularly of the zebra.

121 O Thou by Whose light the earth and heaven are illumined,
fulfill now all that Thou hast promised!

122 Make the world so verdant with Thy springtime
that Thy Garden will become the envy of Paradise itself.

123 Make the anemones of truth bloom in abundance
in the space of this lush garden of the Holy Spirit.

124 Then from each flower make manifest the mystery of the nightingale.
Recount confidentially to the rulers the story of the wine.

125 Since now strangers abide in this place,
no distinction exists between the stranger and the confidant.

126 O gentle breeze of the morning, from the locks of the Friend
bring forth the musk of the spirit.

127 O Cloud of spiritual munificence, let Thy rain pour down
so that every shell may yield a pearl.

128 The elucidation of the divine mysteries had been withheld!
The mention of "*traverse the land*" of meaning was abandoned!

129 Thus, thou who art drunk from the wine of pride,
transform the fire of self into light

130 that in an instant thou mayest traverse the universe itself
and become freed from the bondage of this cage.

131 Until thou dost abide beneath the shade of the Friend,
thou wilt be unaware of both the wheat and the chaff.

132 The feet of thine inner being are mired in the mud!
Thou art heedless of the rays shining from that beauteous Face.

133 When thou dost make thy abode the shelter of the Monarch of the Holy Spirit,
then canst thou detach thy heart from the universe itself.

134 Though in the beginning thou art enmeshed in the earth,
in an instant thou canst blaze out beyond the sun!

135 O wayfarer, know that in a flash thou wilt have traversed
the spiritual realm of the Beloved without taking a single step.

136 Suddenly a scent from the perfumed land of the Holy Spirit
drifted by rendering the whole world fragrant!

137 The musk of the Holy Spirit wafted again from that paradise of benevolence
and vanquished everything in existence.

138 No distinction remained between consciousness and unconsciousness.
Both drunkenness and sobriety vanished completely.

139 All conscious ones became annihilated, but neither did unconscious ones endure.
The drunken ones became sober, but neither did sobriety itself endure.

140 Whatever traces of the names and customs of this world that remained
vanished as soon as my King appeared.

141 If the (kingdom of) names ascended for centuries,
it could not detect the scent of His (lofty) station.

142 O courageous one, He is sanctified beyond all that —
whatever thine eyes have seen or thine ears have heard.

143 Then, O blind one, with such ears and eyes,
how couldst thou become aware of the mystery of the Beloved?

144 Open new eyes to view the new Friend!
Open new ears that thou mayest hear!

145 The eyes of the ignorant perceive no more than one step ahead.
The eyes of the mystic knower discern the mysteries of eternity!

146 The eyes of the mystic knower can foresee the path of a hundred thousand years.
The eyes of the ignorant are unable to detect the open road ahead!

147 A seeker once asked a mystic knower,
"O thou who hast discovered the divine mysteries

148 "and thou who art intoxicated with the wine of mercy,
perchance, dost thou recall the Day of *alast*?"

149 "Yes," he replied. "I recall that voice and those utterances
as if it were yesterday, but do not be surprised by this!

150 "Even now doth His melody echo in my ears,
that wondrous, invigorating voice!"

151 Another mystic knower, who had journeyed even farther
and who had pierced the pearls of God's mysteries

152 said, "That Day of God did not end!
We are still in that Day, for it hath not been shortened.

153 "His Day will continue, for no night will conclude it.
Yet do we abide in that Day, but be not surprised at this! [16]

154 "Were this age deprived of His animating powers,
the heavens and the earth would vanish!

155 "For it is through His power that the Eternal Day[17]
hath become everlasting as decreed by that Great Being!

156 "Therefore, O my beloved one, hearken to this enigma!
Be attentive to the guidance within the divine mysteries

157 "so that thy soul may be nourished by His wisdom
and thou mayest sacrifice thy life for His countenance,

158 "so that at every instant thou couldst hear His melodies,
that thou couldst imbibe a cup of His loving kindness,

159 "that thou couldst become aware of the mysteries of love,
that thou coudlst savor the wine of eternity from the streams of love."

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16 Bahá'u'lláh states in the Surah of the Temple, "For the Day of God is none other but His own Self, Who hath appeared with the power of truth. This is the Day that shall not be followed by night, nor shall it be bounded by any praise, would that ye might understand!" (*Summons* 1:63).

17 *Yawm-i-Alast*.

160 I will not turn my face away from the sword of these ignoble ones,
even should these faithless ones slay me a hundred times.

161 At the beginning of *alast*, my soul tasted Thy wine!
Even so shall I surrender my life for Thee at the end."

162 O Bahá, ignite once again a fire!
Consume the world of scrutiny and erudition!

163 Cleanse the heart from all earthly attributes!
Disclose an allusion from among the hidden mysteries!

164 Cast off a wave from the fathomless sea of spiritual verities
so that Thou mayest shatter to pieces the ark of words.

165 Grant me a cup that I might be released from mine own self!
Like Safdar,[18] I would rip apart all the veils.

166 Thou through Whose name the Tree of Existence hath borne its fruit,
and from Whose hand the power of God doth appear,[19]

167 Thou Whose palm holdeth the destiny of the world itself,
by Thy design is the world at first in motion, then is it still.

168 O Most Resplendent King, ignite this candle,
then shed its light in every corner (of the world),

169 this very same flame Thou hast ignited
and hast sheltered in the globe of Thy protection

170 and hast fueled with the oil of Thy bounty,
and hast set aglow with the wick of Thy command,

171 and hast safeguarded from the winds of oppression
so that from it the beams of Thy light might appear!

18 "Fighter," an allusion to Imám 'Alí who was fearless in battle and broke through the ranks of the enemy.

19 Allusion to Moses withdrawing His hand from His robe.

172 O Moon of command and Monarch of "*Indeed!*"[20]
restrain the hands of enemies from harming its flame!

173 Behold how Thy Candle is being afflicted
in the midst of a whirlwind of calamities!

174 Since it hath received its light from rays that shine from Thine elegant beauty,
let it not be dampened in the eyes of the world.

175 Since Thou didst enkindled it, forbear from extinguishing it!
Since Thou didst endow it with consciousness, refrain from rendering it senseless!

176 O Thou Whose beneficence canst transform an atom into a sun,
and Thou Whose anger canst transmute a lion into a sparrow,

177 O Thou Creator, from every corner the wind is blowing,
whilst this Thy Candle is left to stand in the midst alone.

178 If Thou dost desire it, water will become a wildfire,
and if Thou dost desire it, a conflagration will become a dying ember!

179 O Thou through Whose command a devil can become angelic,
and by Whose command light emanateth from flames,

180 If Thou dost wish it so, a contrary wind will become like oil
to invigorate the spirit and become a light!

181 "O Bahá'u'lláh, when Thy fire ignited,
it consumed the crops of the lovers' existence.

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20 "Indeed" (*innamá*), has been in Islamic texts an allusion to Muḥammad and to his son-in-law 'Alí since the two following verses of the Qur'án that include this phrase are, respectively, references to Muḥammad and 'Alí: "And the Unbelievers say! 'Why is not a Sign sent down to Him from His Lord? But Thou art truly a warner and to every people a guide (13:7); "Your (real) friends are (no less than) Allah, His Messenger, and the (fellowship of) believers, those who establish regular prayers and regular charity, and they bow down humbly (in worship)." (5:55) This verse was reveled in relation to 'Alí when, while he was bowing down in his prayer, he bestowed his ring on a poor beggar (Bahá'u'lláh, *Athár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá* 243).

182 "Thou didst cast a spark of fire into the hearts
and thereby inflamed a hundred thousand trees in Sinai.

183 "Thus, from every heart did appear a myriad trees.
O Moses, Thou must come here at once

184 "so that all may behold within thy hearts the fire of God's mystery
and all become released from the Caphtorites.[21]

185 "O Thou Who wast chosen to be slain for the love of God,
turn not away from the field of sacrifice for love, but give Thy life in that path!

186 "Come to the quarter of the Friend, having offered up Thy head, Thy life itself,
that Thou mayest prove worthy of those who dwell in this realm.

187 "O Spirit of God, Come! This is the valley of love!
Whether by Thy Path or a byway, come with a cross!

188 "Ascend beyond the heavens and beyond the ascension of the body,
O Thou Sovereign of the soul and source of the body's felicity!

189 "Thou art the Nightingale of the spirit in the garden of spirit!
Thou art returning again as Host of the Spirit![22]

190 "O Royal Falcon of the Holy Spirit, Thy perch is the arm of the King.
Come! Here is Thy true abode!

191 "Then, O Noah, Thou too shouldst shatter the ark of the body
and cast Thyself into the Ocean of Light.

192 "Have no thought of safeguarding Thyself! Rather drown the self
that Thou mayest then lift Thy head from the bosom of the Beloved.

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21 The people of one part of Egypt where the Hebrews were captives. The contemporary word *Copt* derives from this term, though today Copts most usually refers to the Coptic Christians of Egypt.

22 "Host" here calls to mind Christ's symbolism at the last supper regarding the bread representing His body, even as Bahá'u'lláh's *Surah of the Temple* symbolically constructs the mortal frame through which the Holy Spirit will become available to humankind.

193 “Beseech protection from the Sovereign and not from the ark
that Thou mayest abide within the protection of the Sovereign.

194 “O Moses, Thou too must come to the Sinai of the soul!
Forget about sandals and clothes! Come naked

195 “that Thou canst understand the secrets of fire
since these flames radiate from the tresses of the Friend!

196 “His locks are fires that singe the very heart and soul of love,
(that) consume faith and faithlessness and the tranquility of love!

197 “His flowing locks are the fire that pranceth atop Parán!
Indeed, the neck of the age will be bent by a single strand of that hair!

198 “O Dove, cease warbling about the mysteries of fire!
Display not pearls of the Holy Spirit before these blind ones!

199 “This Rod is a sword with which the hand of God
severeth the armies of existence as easily as tearing a page.

200 “That rod grew from a tree in the garden,
but this Rod appeareth by the command of God.

201 “That rod appeared from water and clay,
But this Rod appeareth now from the fire of the heart.

202 “This Rod is a fire whose flames
consume the veils of malice and hate.

203 “This Rod is a wind which, among the tribe of Húd,
distinguisheth between believers and infidels.

204 “This Rod became an ark in the Day of Noah.
This Rod also became a spirit in the Day of Jesus.

205 “O Moses, Thy fire flamed out from the Holy Spirit
so that all might approach the *Túr* of the Holy Spirit.

206 "Sandals? Leave behind Thy life and faith![23]
Like a breeze, fly above the realm of the living!

207 "O Bird of the Holy Spirit, soar beyond the mortal realm
into the eternal festival of those blossoming faces.

208 "From His Bush, the fire of Moses was made manifest!
The spirit of a hundred Christs wafted from His breath.

209 "The fire of that Moses appeared from *Túr*,
whilst the flames of the fire of this Moses emanate from the Holy Spirit.

210 "There are as many differences between the mountain and the Holy Spirit
as there are distinctions between the leaves and the fruit.

211 "Sinai is His breast! Its fire is the light of the Friend!
The luminous palm is His palm! The *Túr* is His heart![24]

212 "This luminescence is not that which hath appeared from Command;
this is that luminescence that causeth Command itself to appear."

213 At this time, the Parán of Love appeared
because our Friend tore the veil from His face.

214 Suddenly my nostrils detected the scent of the Holy Spirit!
I know not from whence it wafted so ceaselessly.

215 Only this much I know—that blowing from the flowing locks of the Friend
a fragrance urgeth one to offer up his life.

216 The divine musk sac became unsealed!
Our souls became intimate with remembrance of Him!

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23 This is an allusion to the command by the voice of the Holy Spirit emanating from the burning bush that Moses remove His sandals. See Exodus 3:5 and Qur'án 20:12. Also see Bahá'u'lláh's note for line 8 of "Ode of the Dove" for an interpretation of the symbolic meaning of these verses in "Qaṣídiy-i-Izz-i-Varqá'íyyih (Ode of the Dove)," *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* vol. 29, no. 3, pp. 59–61.

24 This is a "sign" God ordains Moses to perform to demonstrate His power to Pharaoh. See Exodus 4:6-7 and most clearly in Qur'án 7:106-8: "(Pharaoh) said, 'If indeed thou hast come with a sign, show it forth, if thou tellest the truth.'

217 O wind of the supernal morn, blow!
Blow from the Sabá of divine holiness

218 so that from thy fragrant ambergris, the intoxicated souls
will take flight from earthly existence to the realm of *alast*!

219 When the immortal Phoenix flew from the Mountain of the Holy Spirit
to the firmament of the realm of the placeless,

220 it traversed the four corners of the world in one flight
through the grace of that Sovereign Soul.

221 From the throne of the Friend it hath now returned!
Its melodies are beyond counting.

222 From the flower of His face, winter became like spring,
and from His ruby lips the night became like midday.

223 The affairs of lovers became as entangled as His ringlets!
Because of such separation, every loved one supplicated Him.

224 The lariat of His locks lassoed the necks of the heroes!
Even the Warrior of God[25] was afflicted from being struck by His arrow.

225 Because of His lips, the lips of lovers grew pale and lifeless,
and the lives of monarchs longed for reunion with Him.

226 If thou dost look carefully, thou wilt will discern how His face
hath caused the eyes of the spirit to brighten.

227 If His eyes did not appear in the world,
how could the springs of light begin to flow?

228 From His blossom countless gardens appeared,
and from His countenance have sprung bouquets of inner meaning.

229 The fire of Moses seeketh light from His quarter!
The soul of Jesus seeketh spirit from His face!

25 An allusion to ʻAlí, the cousin and son-in-law of Muḥammad.

230 If one night He should appear from behind the veil,
He would make a hundred worlds as bright as the sun.

231 The night is naught but the tresses of that Beloved.
Morning appeareth solely from the light of the face of the Friend.

232 All the monarchs in the city of Love
are offering up their lives as a sacrifice for Love.

233 In His face, the face of God is seen,
and from His lips the heart imbibed the wine of the spirit.

234 The whole world is entangled in His hair,
and hearts are broken for Him.

235 When the Zuleykhá of Beauty beheld that face,
she cut her heart instead of her hand.[26]

236 When He exhaled a single breath from His spirit,
a hundred thousand spirits of Jesus came into being.

237 O thou who possesseth attributes, this is no description of Him,
but merely a description of the Light from which thine own life
doth emanate.

238 If thou couldst comprehend how to portray His beauty,
thou wouldst surpass thousands of oceans of allusion.

239 O pious one, if it is such a task to describe a single ray of (His) light,
how much more would be required to describe His Essence?

240 When the eyes of the lover beheld the beauty of His face,
the lover became detached from both this world and the next.

241 The vibrations of the oceans of love doth derive from His wave.
The soaring of the phoenixes of love doth derive from His flight.

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26 Zuleykhá was the wife of Joseph's master (Potiphar in Genesis and "the Vizier" in the Qur'án) in Egypt. She tried to seduce the young prophet. See Qur'án for the complete story of how she arranged a banquet in which women cut their hands with knives out of their lust for Joseph (12:4-102).

242 Since thine eyes have found their light in His eyes,
how unseemly it would be to glance at any other but Him!

243 Since the eyes of the soul received their light from Him,
it would be pitiful for them to behold another.

244 Thine eyes emanated from the eyes of God
so that thou wouldst behold in the world nothing except His face.

245 O friend, I have unfolded this counsel in veiled terms.
Secretly did I pierce this pearl, O kind companion,

246 so that malicious eyes might not gaze upon His countenance,
so that the stranger might not find the path to His quarter.

247 In like manner, know this about all thy limbs and members
so that thou mayest be released from the captivity of such dark ones:

248 When thine ear caught the melody of His mystery,
it hearkened to the cherished mysteries of His instrument.

249 Because the new Divine Creation hath now appeared,
regard not the people of this world, but only Him.

250 If thou couldst behold the world through His eyes,
thou wouldst discover thousands of kingdoms of understanding.

251 His eyes behold naught but His (own) face!
His bird flieth nowhere except to His (own) quarter.

252 The hearts of the lovers were consumed with fire from reunion with Him,
and the fire of hearts was ignited by separation from Him.

253 Thus, my son, doth the lover burn who hath lost both head and heart,
whether from separation or from reunion with Him.

254 Wherefore shouldst thou consider God's love as thy companion
that thou mayest take flight from the bondage of this world.

255 Love compelleth thee to annihilate thy life,
to toss thy life and heart into the realm of the eternal.

256 Hearken, therefore, to the mystery of this verity, if thou canst but comprehend it,
so that thou mayest soar to the Divine Summit,

257 so that the yield of thy date palm may be spiritual,
so that its fruit may be holy and effulgent.

258 O breeze, bring forth the fragrance from His flowing locks!
O cloud, shower but a drop of His bounteousness

259 so that the meadows of the souls of His lovers
may blossom with resplendent tulips of love.

260 This lover's heart is the throne of God
once it becometh sanctified from the limits of "*other than Him.*"[27]

261 When His house became inhabited by His love,
He entered in and the house became insignificant.[28]

262 Know this, that His house is not of stone or clay.
O youth, His house is nothing other than the heart.[29]

263 Once thy heart is cleansed by His light,
it becometh His mansion, because it becometh His *Túr*.

264 When the lover's *House of God* becomes perfected,
it showeth forth perpetually the splendor of the Beloved.

265 Love arrived once more. It did set aflame the veil of logic,
and the harvest of mystic understanding, knowledge, and erudition were burned.[30]

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27 A phrase used in the Qur'án in a number of verses to caution the believer not to rely on any god, protector, or refuge other than God. See Qur'án 7:3; 12:70; 13:16; 18: 14, 15, 26, and 27.

28 Possibly an allusion to the appearance of the Manifestation in the form of a human temple, as portrayed, for example, in Bahá'u'lláh's Surah of the Temple. His power comes from His essential reality, not from the physical apparatus or human temple in which He appears among humankind.

29 Compare Persian Hidden Word 27: "All that is in heaven and earth I have ordained for thee, except the human heart, which I have made the habitation of My beauty and glory."

30 Compare "In this city the heaven of ecstasy is upraised and the world-illuming

266 O son, since none save Him abideth in the house,
consider everything from corner to corner as His to command.

267 Once thou dost regard thine own eyes and ears and hands as His,
it is He Who seeth and He Who graspeth.

268 The mystic's heart is His Most Remote Mosque.[31]
It is the treasure-house of the mysteries of His "*or even closer.*"[32]

269 A new resolution should now be devised
to which thou shouldst hearken with heart and soul:

270 Pass beyond separation and reunion, both of them,
so that thou wilt arrive at the loftiest heights of Truth, O son.

271 So long as thou art separated, thou art surely burning!
If thou dost become reunited, thou wilt also become feverish and ill!

272 Step into the hallowed realm of eternity,
that expanse where all else but Him is annihilated.

273 If thou hast read the ḥadíth of *There was God . . .*[33]
and if thou hast seen the allusion "*There is none except Him,*"[34]

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sun of yearning shineth, and the fire of love is ablaze; and when the fire of love is ablaze, it burneth to ashes the harvest of reason" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Call of the Divine Beloved* 2:7).

31 Literally, the Al Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem that is constructed on the site from which, according to Moslem belief, Muhammad ascended to Paradise on His "Night Journey" or *Al Isrá.* Figuratively, the Qur'án portrays this as a spiritual condition: "Glory to (Allah) Who did take His Servant for Journey by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Farthest Mosque, whose precincts We did Bless—in order that We might show Him some of Our Signs: for He is the One Who heareth and seeth (all things)" (17:1).

32 A reference to Muḥammad's night journey from the Most Remote Mosque to the highest summits of the heavens, as close as he was permitted to get to God: "He was taught by one mighty in Power, endued with Wisdom, for he [Gabriel] appeared (in stately form) while he was in the highest part of the horizon. Then He approached and came closer, and was at a distance of but two bow-lengths or (even) closer. Thus did (Allah) convey inspiration to His Servant" (53:5–10).

33 According to a tradition, when Muḥammad was asked where God was before creation, He is said to have responded that "God was there. He is now just as He has always been." See Qur'án 57:3: "He is the First and the Last, the Evident and the Immanent, and He has full knowledge of all things."

34 "Say: He is Allah, the One and Only; Allah, the Eternal, Absolute. He begetteth

274 then set thy feet of earnestness on this path
that thou mayest be relieved of "reunion with" and "separation from" the Friend.

275 When thou knowest for certain the secrets of the heart—
that there is nothing in existence save God—

276 then with the water of the spirit, cleanse thy soul from impurities
that thou mayest behold the splendor of that Pure One,

277 that thou mayest be able to discern reunion in the absolute reunion,
that thou mayest behold the light of beauty within thine (own) heart.

278 This is a reunion for which there is no comparison!
Nay, it will endure no separation afterward!

279 Son, thine understanding of reunion and separation is but idolatry.
If only thou hadst ears to hear a father's advice.

280 Like the phoenix, take flight from these two hills and ascend
to the heavens of the oneness of the power of God.

281 But I fear lest thy feet should slip
and idle fancies impair thy judgment.

282 Thus is it needful that I elucidate this theme
to pull out by the roots any hesitation of thy heart

283 so that thou wilt not fall prey to pride because of this utterance
and wilt be released from all selfishness, swagger, mischief, and rebellion.

284 Regard His reunion as the splendor of His Glory
which hath become manifest in thee without questions or quibbling.

285 His light is His trust in thee!
Strive that it might become manifest!

286 Wherefore, my beloved, search within thyself for union with Him
that from this point forth thou wilt endure no separation from the Friend.

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not, nor is He begotten, and there is none like unto Him" Qur'án (112:1–4).

287 Indeed, thou thyself art the storehouse of divine treasures,
but being oblivious, thou hast pursued these (earthly riches).

288 So long as His attributes are not manifest in thee,
consider thyself as separated and lost.

289 O prudent one, through His benevolence, He deprived thee not
of His names and attributes and signs.

290 Out of His munificence He opened wide the portals for thee.
Close not these doors as did the Pharisees.

291 Since from love thou hast heard the lamentation of the flute,
then through love must thou now recognize Him.

292 Since thou hast heard the sound of the flute, then observe the Flutist
that thou mayest in no wise be heedless of the Sovereign Lord.

293 Because the Flutist observed strangers in the world,
He chose the flute to conceal Himself.

294 Thus shouldst thou quickly rend this veil of thine
that in this world thou mayest behold none other than the Player of the Flute.

295 Like the Valiant One,[35] tear asunder all the veils
that thou mayest behold the resplendence of the All-Bounteous One.

296 Like a reed flute, sing out in separation
so that the Player of the Flute might come nigh.

297 When the Flutist of the soul beginneth to cry out,
the breasts of the lovers become agitated.

298 Indeed, with this flute, ignite a fire
that will burn away any mention of "self" in this world.

299 When in this world the mention of self is consumed by fire,
naught but the Flute itself remaineth in our midst.

35 An adjective used as an allusion to 'Alí's prowess as a warrior.

300 O learned one, when by His light thine eyes are discerning,
then wilt thou behold naught but the Player of the Flute.

301 Therefore, listen to the secrets disclosed by the Flutist
so that thou canst detect the fragrance of these rose-gardens.

302 A single spark from the fire of His love became ignited.
It consumed the crops of an entire kingdom.

303 When His countenance caused the curtains to be withdrawn from His face,
the curtains of the glory of kings were torn asunder.

304 When an arrow from the lashes of the Beloved struck,
it tore to pieces the heart of the king.

305 Instantly, it made the crown of the king tumble from his head!
He became a thrall, then bound and fettered!

306 Like prey, he fell into the hands of a hunter,
or like straw he was swept away by the force of a wind.

307 If a messenger were travelling towards Iraq,
he would describe the pain of separation and remoteness,

308 how the souls of the yearning ones burned because of remoteness from Thee,
how the arrows of separation from Thee sewed together the breasts of the kings.

309 O city of the heart, between thee and us
there exist hundreds of thousands of lofty mountains.

310 There is no messenger except for sighs filled with sparks,
nor is there a wind from *Sabá* to convey the news.

311 The (arm) is too short for the hand to reach the fruit of His tree.
From His separation, the soul caused oceans to flow from the eyes.

312 O Sabá, from the presence of the Beloved,
hasten joyfully to the quarter of the people of Zawr',[36]

36 Baghdad, though Bahá'u'lláh says the following about the tradition of Zawrá': "In the 'Rawḍiy-i-Kafi' it is related of Mu'avíyih, son of Vahháb, that Abu-'Abdi'lláh hath

313 and ask, "O City of God,[37]
how wert thou able to exist when thy friend departed from thy side?"

314 Thy friend is tormented, confined, and imprisoned,
like Husayn in the land of Karbilá.

315 There is only one Husayn, but hundreds of thousands of Yazíds,[38]
only one friend but hordes of detestable fiends.

316 Like Moses in the midst of the Egyptians,
or like the Spirit of God[39] in the midst of Jews,

317 Like Joseph, he hath fallen in the well,
but a bottomless well that hath no means of escape.

318 In the cage, thy nightingale hath become tormented,
and because of this cage, it can no longer breathe.

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spoken: 'Knowest thou Zawrá'?' I said: 'May my life be a sacrifice unto thee! They say it is Baghdád.' 'Nay,' he answered. And then added: 'Hast thou entered the city of Rayy?', to which I made reply: 'Yea, I have entered it.' Whereupon, He enquired: 'Didst thou visit the cattle-market?' 'Yea,' I answered. He said: 'Hast thou seen the black mountain on the right-hand side of the road? The same is Zawrá'. There shall eighty men, of the children of certain ones, be slain, all of whom are worthy to be called caliphs.' 'Who will slay them?' I asked. He made reply: 'The children of Persia!'(Kitáb-i-Íqán ¶ 276)

37 Bahá'u'lláh's epithet for Baghdad and Tehran. Here, it is most probably meant as a reference to Baghdad during the time of Bahá'u'lláh's self-imposed exile from the Bahá'í community.

38 Yazíd was the Umayyad Caliph who, in the year 680, sent his soldiers to slaughter descendants of Muḥammad who refused to recognize Yazíd as calif. On the plains of Karbilá, Husayn and all his supporters were killed, a seminal event and sacred place for Shí'ih Islam.

39 Jesus.

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Comments on Historical Consciousness, Power and Authority, and Modes of Communication: Foreword to the 2nd Edition of *Planning Progress*

TODD SMITH

It has been a quarter of a century since this book was first published. When I read it some twenty-five years ago, I remember being immediately struck by its many insights, and so took it upon myself to study it assiduously, knowing that the lessons it contained applied directly to the work of the institutions I was serving on at the time. I had already developed an abiding appreciation and love for the writings of Shoghi Effendi, but this book further deepened and broadened my understanding of the scale of his achievements and his unparalleled capacity to systematically articulate a vision of growth, encourage unity of purpose, appeal to both heart and mind, and thereby strengthen the resolve and canalize the efforts of an ever-growing worldwide community of consecrated souls eager to serve their beloved Faith and promote the betterment of humankind.

Now, twenty-five years later, it seems especially timely to revisit the lessons articulated in this book for at least two reasons. The first is that they underscore the significance of, and shed further light on, what the Bahá'í community has achieved over the last few decades, particularly with respect to the way it operates in seeking to transform the material and spiritual dimensions of life at both the individual and social levels. In this regard, the Universal House of Justice affirms that the community is today "distinguished by a mode of operation characterized by study, consultation, action, and reflection," (28 November 2023) which has profound implications for the vibrant culture it is developing; the latent potential it is releasing among individuals, communities, and institutions—"the three protagonists of a new way of life"; and the impact it is having on the society-building process overall. As the House of Justice observes, the Bahá'í community

> is steadily increasing its capacity to apply the Teachings in a variety of social spaces and to collaborate with those in the wider society who share a yearning to revitalize the material and spiritual foundations of the social order. In the transformative alembic of these spaces, to the extent possible, individuals and communities become protagonists of their own

> development, an embrace of the oneness of humanity banishes prejudice and otherness, the spiritual dimension of human life is fostered through adherence to principle and strengthening of the community's devotional character, and the capacity for learning is developed and directed towards personal and social transformation. The effort to understand the implications of what Bahá'u'lláh has revealed and to apply His healing remedy has now become more explicit, more deliberate, and an indelible part of Bahá'í culture. (28 November 2023)

The House of Justice, moreover, emphasizes the magnitude of this development and its implications for the future, stating that "[t]he conscious grasp of the process of learning and its extension worldwide, from the grassroots to the international arena, are among the finest fruits of the first century of the Formative Age," and that "[t]his process will increasingly inform the work of every institution, community, and individual in the years ahead, as the Bahá'í world takes on ever-greater challenges and releases in ever-greater measures the Faith's society-building power" (28 November 2023). It also stresses the singular role that Shoghi Effendi played in setting the community on its path of learning, recounting that while he consolidated the understanding of the believers regarding their mission, he "also guided the believers, step by step, to learn how to effectively establish the structural basis of the Administrative Order and systematically share Bahá'u'lláh's teachings with others," and that he did so in the following interactive manner:

> The Guardian patiently directed their efforts by gradually clarifying the nature, principles, and procedures which characterize that Order, while raising their capacity for teaching the Faith, individually and collectively. On each vital matter, he would provide direction and the believers would consult and strive to apply his guidance, sharing their experiences with him and raising questions when they faced perplexing problems and difficulties. Then, taking into consideration the accumulating experience, the Guardian would offer additional guidance and elaborate the concepts and principles that would enable the friends to adjust their action as needed, until their efforts proved effective and could be applied more broadly. (28 November 2023)

In this book, Professor June Manning Thomas provides the reader with an in-depth study of how Shoghi Effendi shepherded this process of capacity building as the endeavors of the community gained in strength and complexity during his ministry. By examining his approach to planning, monitoring, and guiding the efforts of the believers, Thomas clearly illustrates Shoghi Effendi's mastery at cultivating their

capacity to act systematically and apply their learning ever more widely. For this reason alone, her book is worth a close reading.

A second reason it is timely to revisit the lessons in this book is that they help us to better understand, by contrast, the degraded state into which leadership and citizenship have fallen today. This matter is especially urgent considering the "plethora of destructive forces and events" now facing humanity, which, as the House of Justice explains, include "environmental degradation, climate change, pandemics, the decline of religion and morals, the loss of meaning and identity, the erosion of the concepts of truth and reason, unbridled technology, the exacerbation of prejudices and ideological contention, pervasive corruption, political and economic upheaval, war and genocide"—all of which "have left their traces in blood and anguish on the pages of history and the lives of billions" (28 November 2023).

Owing to such forces of disintegration, many across the globe find themselves dismayed by the state of the world and beleaguered by the estrangement they feel towards one another: "But with every passing day, we see too the condition of the world grow more desperate, its divisions more severe. The escalating tensions within societies and between nations affect peoples and places in a myriad ways" (Riḍván 2024). People are, for example, distressed because there is a seeming dearth of the collective will and capacity needed to address the growing threats to humanity; because their ways of life are being eroded by rampant turmoil, conflict, and intemperate technological developments; and because rank disparities and persistent discrimination impede many from flourishing as individuals, citizens, and members of communities. There is also the escalating fear that democracy itself is collapsing as the forces of illiberalism swell in country after country.[1]

It is important to remember that, alongside the destructive forces, "hopeful constructive trends can also be discerned which are contributing to that 'universal fermentation' which Shoghi Effendi said is 'purging and reshaping humanity in anticipation of the

1 For example, many would agree with Calhoun et al. that "[p]olitical parties are broken, functioning as little more than ideologically polarized fundraising machines" (216), and that society, more generally, is now characterized by "declining citizen efficacy, weakening local communities, fraying intergenerational bonds, evaporating small-scale economic opportunity, and eroding social ties that had once knit citizens together across lines of difference and fostered solidarity" (209). Craig Calhoun, Dilip Parameshwar Gaonkar, and Charles Taylor, *Degenerations of Democracy*. See also the following references for similar analyses of democratic decline: Anne Applebaum, *Twilight of Democracy: The Seductive Lure of Authoritarianism*; Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt *How Democracies Die*; Todd Smith and Benjamin W. Kelly, "Public Discourse and Wilful Incommensurability: A Case for Attentive Free Speech," *Frontiers of Sociology* 9.

Day when the wholeness of the human race will have been recognized and its unity established'." These trends include "[t]he diffusion of the spirit of world solidarity, a greater consciousness of global interdependence, the embrace of collaborative action among individuals and institutions, and a heightened longing for justice and peace," all of which "are profoundly transforming human relationships" (28 November 2023). Yet, humanity continues to be "gripped by a crisis of identity," (18 January 2019) a state of being that is aggravated by prejudice at the individual, cultural, and structural levels, as well as by other exacerbators of polarization, such as hyper-partisanship, radicalization, and various kinds of fundamentalism.[2] The result is the normalization of division and discord in pursuit of the preeminent goal of factional vindication. In this respect, the House of Justice observes:

> Without a vision of shared identity and common purpose, [peoples and groups] fall into competing ideologies and power struggles. Seemingly countless permutations of "us" and "them" define group identities ever more narrowly and in contrast to one another. Over time, this splintering into divergent interest groups has weakened the cohesion of society itself. Rival conceptions about the primacy of a particular people are peddled to the exclusion of the truth that humanity is on a common journey in which all are protagonists. (18 January 2019)

From a Bahá'í perspective, these deleterious conceptions and struggles are all symptoms of humanity's disregard for its inherent oneness. As the House of Justice continues:

> Consider how radically different such a fragmented conception of human identity is from the one that follows from a recognition of the oneness of humanity. In this perspective, the diversity that characterizes the human family, far from contradicting its oneness, endows it with richness. Unity, in its Bahá'í expression, contains the essential concept of diversity, distinguishing it from uniformity. It is through love for all people, and by subordinating lesser loyalties to the best interests of humankind, that the unity of the world can be realized and the infinite expressions of human diversity find their highest fulfilment. (18 January 2019)

2 It might be added that perpetuating these trends is the increasing entrenchment of deleterious proclivities, such as the penchants to fragment reality, quash alternative perspectives, and dismiss seemingly inconvenient information while fabricating and purveying disinformation in its place. These inclinations are, in turn, incessantly fortified by traditional allegiances, much of mainstream and social media, and the unreflective embrace of consumerism and other forms of escapism.

In view of such observations as well as the mode of learning evolving within the Bahá'í community, I have found Thomas' book to be especially helpful in understanding the following three overlapping themes—among many others—as they pertain to the present condition of society: vision and historical consciousness; power and authority; and modes of communication. Taking into account recent guidance of the Universal House of Justice, these themes are discussed below with the aim of foregrounding the enduring relevance of Thomas' examination of Shoghi Effendi's approach to planning, administration, and communication. Likewise, much can be gleaned from the Guardian's leadership style that bears on the question of how those serving in positions of authority can suitably play their essential part in addressing the challenges of immediate global concern.

Vision and historical consciousness.[3] There is presently a lot of emphasis on the importance of thinking and being in the moment, of training oneself not to become wrapped up in the past or overly concerned about the future. Many would agree that there is merit to this perspective, which is a central feature of Stoicism, Buddhism, and other philosophical and religious traditions. For example, it is doubtlessly important to make the best of every moment—to live every moment to the fullest—which implies not being weighed down by circumstances over which one has no control. In addition, when conversing with someone on spiritual themes, it is most befitting to be entirely present, treating the exchange as a "conversation between two souls—a conversation distinguished by the depth of understanding achieved and the nature of the relationship established" (28 December 2010). The same is certainly true when meditating on the Sacred Word and when communing with God. Prayer, the House of Justice explains, "is the essential spiritual conversation of the soul with its Maker, direct and without intermediation. It is the spiritual food that sustains the life of the spirit. Like the morning's dew, it brings freshness to the heart and cleanses it, purifying it from attachments of the insistent self. It is a fire that burns away the veils and a light that leads to the ocean of reunion with the Almighty" (18 December 2014).

Today, however, living in the moment has become conflated with what Kierkegaard identifies as an aesthetic mode of living, that is, a way of being that is tangled up with the pursuit of diversion in an effort to avoid boredom, to escape the discomfort of tribulation, or to fend off feelings of despair that accompany the state of anomie and mediocrity pervading more and more of society. This hollow mode of being is reinforced and propagated by our consumer culture, in which many of

3 This section is informed by my paper "Crisis and the Power of an Inclusive Historical Consciousness: Progressing from Delusional Habits to Dynamic Freedom," in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies*.

us are captivated by the idea of (if not consciously committed to) amassing transitory indulgences that are relentlessly promoted by advertising, influencers and politicians, and social media algorithms and posts. As a result of this consumerism—this "opium to the human soul" (2 March 2013)—and the associated inundation of frivolous images and (often) reductionist opinions from all directions, many of us lose sight of our purpose as citizens and so end up living empty lives, incessantly looking for that next moment that will proffer some modicum of pleasure if not some semblance of meaning.

Again, this is not to deny the importance of living every moment to the fullest. But in order to do so well, we learn from Shoghi Effendi's writings that it is vital to develop a historical consciousness, which provides context—and thus significance—to everything we do. This perspective of history, moreover, must be global in scope and consider all human beings as protagonists on a collective journey toward the inevitable realization of the oneness of humankind—a journey that is concurrently propelled by the forces of disintegration and integration, both of which "serve to carry humanity, each in its own way, along the path leading towards its full maturity." "Such is the view of history," the House of Justice states, "that underlies every endeavour pursued by the Bahá'í community" (2 March 2013). It, moreover, "endows every instance of social action with a particular purpose: to foster true prosperity, with its spiritual and material dimensions, among the diverse inhabitants of the planet" (Office of Social and Economic Development, 26 November 2012). In short, the meaning of any moment is immensely enriched when infused with this embracing conception of social evolution.

This is a key theme in Thomas' book. For example, Thomas effectively demonstrates how Shoghi Effendi continuously drew the believers' attention to this vision of the unfolding of history and employed it to effectively contextualize and guide their efforts. She highlights the extensive statements of this vision in his writings, which he framed in relation to world events as well as to the epochs and ages of Bahá'u'lláh's Dispensation. She also explains that the Guardian regularly referred to the vision in shorter messages and cables to the believers, linking it to their special missions and their specific plans of action. He thus methodically situated their smaller visions, or their shorter-term plans, within this "bigger vision." Put another way, he fostered an evolving unity in diversity of narrative consciousness around a common core of beliefs concerning the inherent nobility, oneness, and purpose of humankind.

Building on Thomas' analysis, and in view of subsequent guidance of the Universal House of Justice, it might be added that in taking this approach, Shoghi Effendi helped the community to think coherently and to transcend certain habits of mind, such as those of compartmentalizing areas of action, "of reducing an entire theme into one

or two appealing phrases," and of perceiving "dichotomies, where, in fact, there are none" (28 December 2010). This is not to say that there are, for example, no such things as dichotomies. Indeed, not every either/or is a fallacy: sometimes reality *really is* either this way or that (a certain event did happen, or it didn't; a certain person told the truth, or didn't; this fact is the case, or it isn't, etc.). Similarly, the capacity to focus is vital: it is important to be able to concentrate on a specific issue, element, or endeavor in order to effectively address, understand, and/or carry it forward. But without moderation, the tendencies to distinguish and focus can become overly reductive, leading to dogmatic, superficial thinking that shirks the intricacies of certain realities and so neglects their underlying interrelations. These tendencies can, for example, lead to unduly favoring some facts over others, the selective interpretation of those facts, and even the conjuring up of facts in support of conspiracy theories. Currently people are assailed by such reductionisms in the form of simplistic social media posts, obsessive partisan bickering, and other forms of speech focused on reducing individuals and groups to labels and on otherwise stigmatizing, "othering," denigrating, or even demonizing them. As such, this fragmented mindset feeds various pernicious bigotries, including racism, sexism, national jingoism, and other instantiations of gratuitous intransigence that rationalize disparities, conflict, persecution, and war.[4]

Conversely, thinking coherently involves being able to focus on different endeavors (or elements) in their own right while also considering how they relate to other endeavors and, further, how a given constellation of endeavors is, or can be, mutually reinforcing and animating. Thomas provides an expansive window into how Shoghi Effendi regularly attended to these dynamics in his own guidance to the believers. We are assisted to conceptualize what is involved in thinking in terms of complexity and interconnectedness and in placing different lines of action into an evolving, narrative context that frames how they are working together.[5] Her analysis of Shoghi Effendi's approach in this regard seems directly applicable to what the Bahá'í community is learning about today. In its 30 December 2021 message, the House of Justice underlines the significance of this growing capacity in the following terms:

4 These themes are addressed in more detail in Smith and Kelly, "Public Discourse and wilful incommensurability."

5 In its letter of 19 April 2007 to a National Spiritual Assembly, the House of Justice states: "In every cluster the institutions and agencies guiding the process—the Auxiliary Board members and the institute, together with the Area Teaching Committee—need to examine the dynamics of growth on a regular basis and analyze the way in which these elements are working together, in order to identify gaps and determine what adjustments should be made."

> Over the last series of Plans, the community's capacity to maintain focus on the Faith's most pressing needs emerged as one of its most important strengths. However, this sense of focus has to accommodate many lines of action, all of which must advance without being in competition. This calls for an expanded vision, a nuanced understanding of coexisting imperatives, added flexibility, and heightened institutional collaboration. (30 December 2021)

Power and authority. Another major issue facing society concerns how power is conceived of and abused. Power is commonly viewed as control over others or equated with the capacity to secure what one wants in the face of resistance. It has certainly been used to oppress people, to keep them in their place, and—through propaganda, fear, backbiting, manipulation, the construction and propagation of disinformation, as well as various physical means—to deceive, condition, and force groups and individuals into submission or acquiescence in accordance with the wishes and ideologies of those in authority. Of equal concern are the micro workings of power, including those identified by thinkers such as Foucault, who explains how biopower and disciplinary practices normalize populations; and those highlighted by feminist thinkers, who analyze the many ways in which women have been, and still are, oppressed by men. Yet, it can also be argued that such conceptions are actually distortions of the true nature of power that blind us to its arguably more genuine expressions, particularly those that are mutualistic, participatory, and inclusive, and that consequently encourage both individual and collective flourishing.[6] On this theme, the House of Justice states:

> Clearly the concept of power as a means of domination, with the accompanying notions of contest, contention, division and superiority, must be left behind. This is not to deny the operation of power; after all, even in cases where institutions of society have received their mandates through the consent of the people, power is involved in the exercise of authority. But political processes, like other processes of life, should not remain unaffected by the powers of the human spirit that the Bahá'í Faith—for that matter, every great religious tradition that has appeared throughout the ages—hopes to tap: the power of unity, of love, of humble service, of pure deeds. Associated with power in this sense are words such as "release", "encourage", "channel", "guide" and "enable". Power is not a finite entity which

6 For fuller discussions of this theme, see pages 55–61 of Michael Karlberg's book *Constructing Social Reality: An Inquiry into the Normative Foundations of Social Change* and Chapter 6 of Paul Lample's book *Revelation and Social Reality: Learning How to Translate What Is Written into Reality*.

> is to be "seized" and "jealously guarded"; it constitutes a limitless capacity to transform that resides in the human race as a body. (2 March 2013)

When power is conceived of in this way, those in positions of authority seek to elicit latent potential, to foster collective volition, and to cultivate an evolving unity in diversity of vision-building and exploration. In so doing, they actively help to deflate the "power over" dynamic that has driven the historical struggle for dominance and recognition.

Thomas enables us to appreciate how Shoghi Effendi encouraged this elevated understanding of the dynamics of power and authority. In addition to invoking the power of vision and stressing the importance of looking to the end of any endeavor, the Guardian showed that effective leadership involves combining exhortations to action with affirmations of love and encouragement. It also requires the daily cultivation of spiritual attributes. These attributes, or virtues, according to Thomas, include "devotion, courtesy, purity of motive, and radiance of spirit" (32) all of which must be fostered in an effort to govern in accordance with the standards of equity and justice. In this connection, Thomas quotes the following admonition of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: "The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God" (*Secret* 23–24).

Thomas goes on to explain that "[i]n this view, the leader is a person of influence in the community, of learning and high character, spiritually mature, and in control of his or her own baser temptations and inclinations" (127). Such leaders, including those elected to membership on institutions, strive to approach their task with modesty, humility, and with a heartfelt yearning to consult with, to learn from, and to release the potential of those they are called upon to serve. Their foremost conviction, in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, is that "[m]an's greatness lieth in humility, and his abiding glory is found in lowliness, self-effacement, and servitude to the servants of the Lord. This, verily, is the greatest attainment in this resplendent Day" (*Light* section 76). They, moreover, understand, according to the House of Justice, that "[w]ithin the environment thus created, institutions invested with authority see themselves as instruments for nurturing human potential, ensuring its unfoldment along avenues productive and meritorious" (28 December 2010). As Thomas summarizes the lesson from Shoghi Effendi, effective institutions offer love, support, and encouragement, imbuing the efforts associated with plans of action with a sense of nobility and purpose so that each person feels inspired to contribute as much as he or she is able.

In this same spirit, those in positions

of leadership also see themselves as active participants among the three protagonists—the individual, the community, and the institutions—working for the betterment of the world, (28 November 2023) each of which "has capacities and qualities that must be developed" but which "is incapable of manifesting its full potential on its own" (30 December 2021). That is, these leaders take to heart that it is only when the three protagonists strengthen

> their dynamic relationships with one another that their powers are combined and multiplied. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that the more the qualities of cooperation and mutual assistance are manifested by a people, "the more will human society advance in progress and prosperity"; in the Faith, this principle distinguishes and shapes the interactions of individuals, institutions, and communities, and it endows the body of the Cause with moral vigour and spiritual health. (30 December 2021)

In short, it could be concluded that the three protagonists only truly progress when each is nourishing the other two and all three are congruently oriented toward serving the common weal. They all benefit to the extent possible when they are in dynamic interplay with one another. With this concept in mind, it is decidedly beneficial to read Thomas' book for key insights into how Shoghi Effendi attended to the development of the individual, the community, and the institutions, and how he consequently laid the groundwork for their evolving dynamic relationship.[7]

Modes of communication. The subject of communication, alluded to earlier, warrants further attention given the prevalent manner in which people and their leaders express themselves. We have, generally speaking, learned in society to embrace competition as a

7 It is worth noting that this mindset similarly differs from current conceptions of freedom, specifically those informed by the philosophy of individualism. There are some merits to this philosophy. It has, for example, been a fundamental impetus behind the widespread acceptance and codification of universal rights and freedoms, emphasized freedom of conscience and the independent investigation of truth, led to many beneficial innovations, and helped to spur on the rise of democratic government. But, carried too far, it leads to a me-centrism, or cult of individualism, that often entails a posture of entitlement. Such atomistic freedom results in a dissipation of standards, fuels identity politics, and so undermines the integrity of the collective. In so doing—if we accept the premise that we are all essentially interconnected—it ironically undermines the individual him- or herself. This theme is explored in more depth in Smith, "Crisis." Among other related themes, in this paper it is explained that individualism today essentially values three freedoms: 1) the freedom to do what I want when I want; 2) the freedom to access the necessary resources to carry out the first freedom; and 3) the freedom to take the first two freedoms for granted, which, again, amounts to a sense of entitlement.

natural mode of relating to one another, based on commonly held assumptions that correspond more closely to Hobbes' conception of human nature than to Rousseau's, who assumes humans to be naturally compassionate.[8] We are in many ways conditioned to believe that we can only prosper at the expense of others.[9] This belief, moreover, is often tied to the additional belief that we are naturally adversarial and self-interested creatures, driven to satiate our material desires and rationalize our yearnings for status. Taken together, this "distortion of the human spirit" (Riḍván 2012) infects various realms, including politics, which tends to become ever more partisan given that opposition, debate, and confrontation are considered basic to the way things operate; the legal realm, which is obviously adversarial; business, where getting ahead often means defeating the competition; the media, which is growingly complicit in the fragmentation and polarization that contaminates much of society; and academia, which tends to function through the contest of ideas to the point where many scholars (some certainly more than others) derive purpose from demolishing the ideas of their peers.

While the competitive mindset has arguably produced beneficial results, it is proving insufficient for solving the crises that now confront the peoples of the world and for counteracting the rising despair at the apparent inability to solve them. In studying Thomas' book as well as guidance of the House of Justice, it seems clear that what is urgently required at this stage in the development of humanity is the capacity to think and act collaboratively, which in turn requires the internalization of a revised set of assumptions about human nature and purpose. These include the conviction that we are fundamentally good and noble, but that, without proper education, we are prone to succumbing to materialistic impulses. With this conviction and the vision outlined by Shoghi Effendi as part of our worldview, the aim becomes one of mutual upliftment and of creating environments in which souls "advance their understanding together, humbly sharing the insights each possesses at a given moment and eagerly seeking to learn from fellow wayfarers on the path of service" (29 December 2015). Indeed, the watchword becomes one of humble service conjoined with a mode of learning focused on capacity building, fostering universal participation, and developing a consultative will aimed at effectively tackling problems of pressing social concern.

Such an approach to expression differs greatly from the way speech is currently practiced, which stifles progress in a number of ways. In its present combative mode, freedom of speech leads to entrenchment, factionalism, radicalization, and conspiracy theories

8 For an in-depth investigation into the merits of each position, and particularly that of Rousseau's, see Rutger Bregman's book *Humankind: A Hopeful History*.

9 Ironically, we also seek recognition for our advancements in the eyes of others.

that are perpetuated by the spread of propaganda, disinformation, filter bubbles, and ideological echo chambers. The culture of contest[10] permeates how we interact with one another such that discourse often consists of reductionist, dogmatic, and antagonistic speech that betrays flimsy (or deliberately distorted) links to reality. It thus creates an environment in which constructive dialogue becomes all but impossible to pursue while the voice of demagoguery—and the fantastical realities, delusions of grandeur, and cult of personality that both emerge from and feed it—becomes increasingly brazen. In the name of "telling it like it is," such speech "employs a style of expression which robs language of its decorum." Moreover, "in a time when stridency is commonly presumed to be a quality of leadership, candor is crass, and authority speaks in a loud and vulgar voice" (19 May 1994). As the House of Justice more recently summarizes the present situation:

> One conspicuous symptom of society's deepening malaise is the steady descent of public discourse into greater rancour and enmity, reflecting entrenched partisan points of view. A prevalent feature of such contemporary discourse is how political disagreements rapidly degenerate into invective and ridicule. However, what particularly differentiates the present age from those that preceded it is how so much of this discourse occurs in full view of the world. Social media and related communication tools tend to give the greatest exposure to all that is controversial…. (1 December 2019)

There are, of course, elements of the current pattern that should be retained in some form. These include being candid and attending to facts. As Thomas makes clear, Shoghi Effendi's approach to communication explicitly highlights the importance of both. Yet, she also makes clear that to facilitate mutual development, speech must also convey genuine praise and spiritual intimacy. It needs to appeal concurrently to both mind and heart. In this regard, Thomas explains that Shoghi Effendi exemplified the value of understanding the population he was addressing and with whom he was working—of being attuned to their circumstances, values, and motivations; of establishing clear, yet inspiring objectives in accordance with the capacity of the population, suitable strategies to achieve these objectives, and built-in measures to readily assess progress; of ensuring that all objectives and strategies reflect noble values and praiseworthy principles, and are additionally consistent with the inclusive view of history that should contextualize every noble endeavor; and of regularly reminding the population of its accomplishments, evolving capacities, and the ever-expanding horizons of possibility opening up before it in view of its evolving vision of the more distant future.

10 Michael Karlberg, *Beyond the Culture of Contest*.

Finally, we are reminded by the guidance that the most productive speech entails speaking with a kindly tongue; with moderation; with a commitment to finding points of unity, harmonizing perspectives, and building a common framework of understanding; and with divine love. Speech infused with such characteristics is essential for opening up minds, breaking down seemingly intransigent barriers, and facilitating the search for truth. Indeed, such characteristics give speech its true power and so conduce to both individual and social transformation. In the words of the House of Justice:

> Ultimately, the power to transform the world is effected by love, love originating from the relationship with the divine, love ablaze among members of a community, love extended without restriction to every human being. This divine love, ignited by the Word of God, is disseminated by enkindled souls through intimate conversations that create new susceptibilities in human hearts, open minds to moral persuasion, and loosen the hold of biased norms and social systems so that they can gradually take on a new form in keeping with the requirements of humanity's age of maturity. (22 July 2020)

When reading Thomas's book, it becomes evident that Shoghi Effendi continuously demonstrated to the Bahá'í community the vital importance of radiating this divine love.

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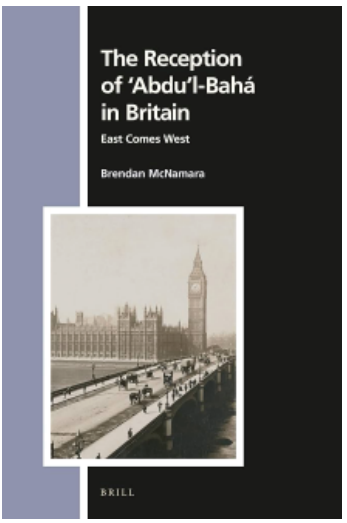
Book Review



The Reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Britain: East Comes West, by Brendan McNamara. 224 pages. Brill, 2020.

ROBERT H. STOCKMAN

Brendan McNamara's *The Reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Britain* (Brill, 2021) is an extraordinary, ground-breaking work, both for Bahá'í Studies and for the study of religion in Britain. This sets it apart from most works of Bahá'í history, which usually focus on internal Bahá'í concerns, rather than the meaning of Bahá'í events to the greater religious and cultural context in which they occur. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to Britain lends itself well to a study that takes this broader perspective. Unlike His trip the United States and Canada, His sojourn in Britain was relatively short (4 September to 3 October 1911, and 13 December 1912 to 21 January 1913) and was focused on greater London, with short trips to Bristol, Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Oxford. The nature of the Bahá'í community was different than in North America as well: membership was poorly defined, with no clear distinction between members and active sympathizers. For this reason, Bahá'í historian Lil Osborn prefers to refer to the "Bahá'í Movement" in Britain before 1930 (Osborn 16). Momen estimates a community membership in London of up to twenty-four people in 1912 (Thorne 155). As we will see, among those sympathetic to the Bahá'í Faith were some extremely important figures in Britain's religious and scholarly communities. The book centers on their support for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit and the motivations behind this support.

The book begins by exploring the religious and cultural context of the times (chapters 1 and 2). The two decades before the onset of World War I provided a unique set of conditions for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit. The British Empire was at its peak, and this was understood to be a consequence both of the superiority of the white "race" and of the civilizing powers of Christianity—though on the latter point there was a split between liberals, who saw the superiority of Christianity in its emphasis on love and service, and evangelicals, who stressed the importance of personal conversion and faith. Stereotypes about the nature of the "east"—often summarized by the term *orientalism*—shaped the reception of the Bahá'í Faith, and—given 'Abdu'l-Bahá's care always to adapt

His speech to the capacity of the listener—sometimes even informed how 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke to His audiences. 'Abdu'l-Bahá was the last of a series of Asian religious figures whose visits, while better remembered by scholarship, were actually far less impactful on the British public (Thorne 231).

Iran was particularly in the public eye at that time because of the immense popularity of Fitzgerald's translation of Omar Khayyam's *Rubayiat*; the hedonism and religious doubt expressed in the highly selective translation reflected the era's crisis of faith (McNamara 48). Edward G. Browne's effort to influence public and governmental opinion about Iran's Constitutional crisis (1908-13) further drew the British public's attention to the country.

Another key part of the context was the rise of the field of "comparative religion," which defined filters that influenced what parts of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message were heard and created an interpretive grid into which it was placed (chapter 3). Both the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago (1893) and the Third International Congress for the History of Religions in Oxford (1908) were dominated by the notion that a pure Christianity was the highest and most civilized form of religion. The liberal Protestantism of the day was the closest expression of this ideal type; Christianity in general was lower, Buddhism was a sort of inspiring runner-up, and Islam was at the bottom of the list. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message of the oneness of humanity, universal brotherhood, and world peace thus resonated with and reinforced the ideals of this pure Christianity. His emphasis on the equality of men and women, the harmony of science and religion, and the importance of rationality in religion— themes alluded to or mentioned by Bahá'u'lláh but heretofore of lesser importance in Bahá'í discourse—echoed other themes in liberal Protestant circles.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's championing of these themes was thus seen as a championing of the ideals of a pure Christianity, and that made 'Abdu'l-Bahá a "Christian" in an ideal sense. The Bahá'í Faith was seen as a reform movement operating within the various religions rather than as an independent faith, even though a few British Bahá'ís themselves mentioned the future creation of Bahá'í organization in the form of Houses of Justice (what 'Abdu'l-Bahá then called Spiritual Assemblies) and some American Bahá'ís (though not British Bahá'ís) were saying their obligatory prayers, fasting, abstaining from alcohol, and observing Bahá'í holy days. It is noteworthy that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in His public talks, did not discuss these distinctive aspects of the Faith and thus reinforced the understanding that the boundaries of the "Bahá'í movement" were open (as they would remain until Shoghi Effendi defined the Bahá'í Administrative Order in the 1920s). The relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Islam was also underplayed, so as to avoid the stigma attached to the latter.

Thomas Kelly Cheyne's decision to call himself a Bahá'í is a good

example of the way many understood the Bahá'í Faith (chapter 3). Retired Oriel Professor of the Interpretation of Holy Scripture at Oxford University, Cheyne was one of the leading exponents of Higher Biblical Criticism in the English-speaking world. He was also an ordained priest in the Anglican Church and a member of the editorial board of *The Christian Commonwealth*, the leading liberal Protestant newspaper, which covered every aspect of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's public schedule in Britain (McNamara 67). "I am one of the Bahais who remain in their mother church," he explained in a letter. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings "are the central truths" of "Judaism and Christianity—the love of God and the love of man" (McNamara 70). Thus Cheyne started with the Christian truths, but saw them reinforced in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings and reflected in the ultimate Christian ideals he still clung to as a clergyman. He noted that "Abdul Baha is not a Mohammedan and it is a mistake to describe Bahaism as a Mohammadan sect" (McNamara 70–71).

We see a parallel understanding of the Bahá'í Faith in the ideals of Wellesley Tudor Pole, "a self-professed medium with inclinations towards Theosophy and psychical research" (McNamara 84; chapter 4). In 1906, after repeated pilgrimages to Glastonbury, England, Tudor Pole found, immersed in a spring, a sapphire glass bowl that he thought might be the Holy Grail (the cup Jesus used in the Last Supper). He saw the cup as "an important symbol for all religions, a sacred totem" that could bring all religions together, and a "center" that could promote "universal brotherhood" (McNamara 86). Tudor Pole was fascinated by Celtic pre-Christian culture and understood Glastonbury to be one of three important centers of that culture, along with the Scottish isle of Iona and an isle somewhere in Ireland (which he later claimed to have found). He aspired to make Glastonbury as "the centre for a Christian renewal" and an "antidote to his era's crisis of doubt" (McNamara 87). Thus, in his own way, he reflected belief in the higher Christian ideas of Cheyne and other religious scholars.

Tudor Pole was associated with various organizations that promoted Theosophy, socialism, Celticism, Hermeticism, and women's suffrage, and knew many of the leading promoters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit to England. He became fascinated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá upon meeting Him in Egypt in 1910. During World War I, Tudor Pole was able to convince the British army to protect 'Abdu'l-Bahá when they invaded Palestine. He was the one who summoned a young Shoghi Effendi from Oxford to London in 1921 to inform him of the passing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. But Tudor Pole's engagement in the Bahá'í Movement did not survive the transition to the establishment of the Administrative Order; he drifted away from the community to pursue his eclectic interests.

One of the most important supporters of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit was R. J. Campbell, minister at City Temple,

London's largest "non-conforming" (non-Anglican) Congregational church (chapter 5). Campbell's Sunday services were invariably packed with 2,000 to 3,000 attendees, his sermons were often carried in newspapers, and they were particularly featured in *The Christian Commonwealth*. His book *The New Theology* was a controversial best seller. It advocated "divine immanence, the vital importance of the Holy Spirit within and the relevance of philosophical Idealism" (McNamara 104). He saw many traditional doctrines, such as the Fall, the scriptural basis of revelation, heaven and hell, and sin and salvation, as "not only misleading, but unethical" (McNamara 104). In short, Campbell addressed the crisis of doubt with an idealized, ethical "super-Christianity." He was very sympathetic to other religions, particularly Buddhism and Theosophy; he even hosted a sermon by Annie Besant, the President of the Theosophical Society, at one of his Thursday services. He was Chairman of the Editorial Board of *The Christian Commonwealth*, which covered Theosophy, the New Theology, the Bahá'í Faith, women's suffrage, and various political issues.

'Abdu'l-Bahá gave His very first public talk at City Temple on 10 September 1911 to an audience of well over 2,000 (McNamara, chapter 6). In his introduction to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Campbell said that the purpose of the Bahá'í Faith was "identical with the spiritual purpose of Christianity" (McNamara 135). 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk focused on the oneness of God, of humanity, and of the foundations of religion, and was viewed by Campbell as an affirmation of the liberal Protestant worldview as expressed by his New Theology.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's other major public address was a week later at St. John's Anglican church in Westminster. Archdeacon Basil Wilberforce, the clergyman there, was a close friend of Campbell. Wilberforce had also known Swami Vivekananda, was very interested in Eastern philosophy and psychic phenomena, and had hosted a large gathering in 1908 where Tudor Pole presented the Glastonbury Cup and laid out his reasons for considering it the Holy Grail (chapter 6). A supporter of the New Theology, Wilberforce had once described himself as "an honorary member of all religions" (McNamara 137). After introducing 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Wilberforce walked with Him hand in hand to the front of the church and invited Him to sit in the bishop's chair. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk, reproduced in full in *The Christian Commonwealth*, was seen by many as supportive of an idealized Christianity.

The book does not go into detail about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's itinerary or the private talks He gave; one can explore those particulars in *The Bahá'í Community of the British Isles, 1844-1963* (Thorne, chapter 3, 156-266).

McNamara's last chapter (chapter 7) considers why 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visit was so quickly forgotten. World War I, which followed closely on the heels of His travels, was a major reason. The spectacle of Christian nation

laying waste to Christian nation was devastating to the liberal, optimistic ideal of Christian love and the civilizing powers of the gospel. The notion of original sin, rejected as misleading and unethical by the New Theology, now appeared to be a profound insight into the human condition. Wilberforce and Campbell went from advocates of peace to spokesmen for the righteousness of British involvement in the war. Campbell went so far as to repudiate his interest in New Theology, Theosophy, and world religions, resign from the pulpit of City Temple, and seek ordination as an Anglican priest. Tudor Pole joined the British army.

After the war, liberal Christianity had to rebuild itself on completely different foundations. In the United States, the Neo-Orthodox movement shifted the emphasis from the gospels of Jesus to Paul's Book of Romans and its emphasis on sin and salvation. The reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's message was not relevant to the post-war Protestant ethos, and the Bahá'í Faith shifted its own focus as well, to building the Administrative Order and consolidating a membership with definite boundaries (Osborn, chapter 5).

Brendan McNamara's book is very well written, extensively footnoted (some pages have more notes than text) and sober in tone. Its significance lies in exploring the contextual work that Bahá'í historians must engage in to understand the history of their community fully. It reminds us that the reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in North America requires considerably more exploration. The North American story is much more complicated than Britain's; it covers eight months of travel rather than two, fourteen major urban areas spread across a continent rather than one conurbation, contact with numerous largely separate elites rather than a single group of overlapping social networks, the involvement of over a thousand individual Bahá'ís in dozens of communities rather than two dozen Bahá'ís and their sympathizers, and outreach to Jews and African Americans as well as to white Protestants. It is also a story of forgetting, for the white Protestant clergy and intellectuals in the United States shared the British belief in the superiority of Christianity and Christian civilization, often saw 'Abdu'l-Bahá as an honorary Christian and His teachings as a form of idealized Christianity, and watched their edifice of Christian idealism crumble before the horrors of the Great War.

It is important, however, to recognize the one group that did not forget 'Abdu'l-Bahá: African American thinkers. They were inspired and encouraged by 'Abdu'l-Bahá's ideals, continued their interest in the Bahá'í Faith, and in some prominent cases—such as Louis Gregory, Alain Locke, and Robert Abbott—accepted the Faith and became full members. The story of the reception of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's teachings among African Americans is just beginning to be explored, and it deserves a treatment as thorough and profound as McNamara's volume about Britain. And just as his book

illuminates an important and heretofore ignored aspect of British religious history, a similar work has the potential to make an important contribution to African American history. Such efforts are essential if Bahá'í history is to become "mainstreamed" as an important subfield of history.

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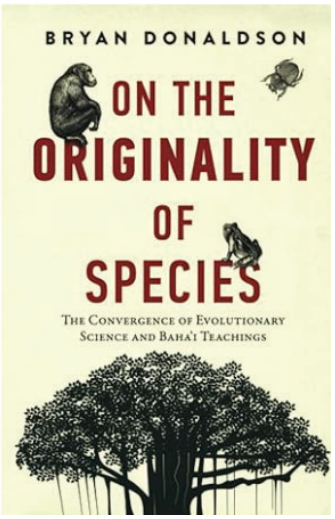

On the Originality of Species: The Convergence of Evolutionary Science and Baha'i Teachings by Bryan Donaldson. x + 291 pages, including appendices, glossary, and endnotes (no index). Akka Publishing House, 2023.[1]

DOUGLAS PERRY

In *On the Originality of Species: The Convergence of Evolutionary Science and Baha'i*[2] *Teachings*, Bryan Donaldson proposes a reinterpretation of evolutionary findings to arrive at a challenging conclusion: humans evolved separately from animals via a form of "parallel" evolution. I will say at the outset that, after carefully reading

1 This book is also available in a Kindle edition with slight variations in the endnotes.

2 This book does not follow the Bahá'í system of transliteration. For details on this system, see Moojan Momen, "The Bahá'í System of Transliteration."

and re-reading Donaldson's book, and investigating the scientific literature he cites (I am a cell biologist), I do not arrive at the same conclusion as he does. However, his book has merit, and I hope to do it justice.

Taken conjunctively, "science and religion" is a specialty of philosophy that examines the intersection of science and religion in all its aspects. Scholars in this field—generally theologians, scientists, historians, and philosophers—seek to refute or reconcile metaphysical beliefs held by scientists or religionists, deny or accept scientistic or religious propositions, and build either walls or bridges between the two domains. It is fertile ground for debate, and often for contention.

Given that the harmony of science and religion is one of the main principles of the Bahá'í Faith, it is unsurprising that many Bahá'ís are actively engaged in this discourse. Supporting and fostering the harmony of science and religion is important, and not merely in order to establish good will and understanding; it is essential in order to ultimately create a peaceful global civilization. Science and religion *need* each other (Mehanian and Friberg).

The central Expounder of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, spoke at length about the creative will of God, the nature of the universe, and the station of humankind. These authoritative statements inform Bahá'í perspectives on science (Hatcher). For the holders of any metaphysical belief structure (including atheistic belief structures such as scientism), there is always a dynamic tension between presumption and perception—between what we hold to be true based on our metaphysical model, and what we perceive as we interact with the world. For Bahá'ís, this tension can be experienced with respect to some of the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that have occasionally challenged assumptions related to science from His day up to the present. These statements need not generate crises of faith; they are simply instances of a reasonable tension between the sacred text and our understanding of it.

Although the dialectic of science and religion covers all manner of subjects, it is reasonable to view the topic of human evolution as its main nexus. There is probably not a single book or course on science and religion that does not include this topic. The statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on evolution, contained in works such as *Some Answered Questions*, *Paris Talks*, and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, have served as a source of reflection for generations of Bahá'í scholars (Brown and von Kitzing). There is no space in this review to recapitulate these statements; Donaldson does an excellent job of this in his book (11–22). However, I will turn to one statement that seems particularly problematic considering current evolutionary theory, and which is the focus of the book under review:

> The lost link of Darwinian theory is itself a proof that *man*[3] *is not*

3 In this and other passages by

> *an animal*. How is it possible to have all the links present and that important link absent? Its absence is an indication that *man has never been an animal*. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 359, emphasis added)

Now, how shall we take this statement? On the face of it, a biologist, seeing it as clearly contrary to our knowledge of humanity's biological descent, might feel compelled to reject it out of hand. To those who, like Bahá'ís, believe that science and religion are and must be in harmony, there are several possible responses to the tension that can be elicited by a statement such as this one. Often, the apparent conflict or puzzle is resolved as we gain deeper experience, knowledge, and wisdom, or when different facts come to light. If not, we can accept ambiguity, trusting that in an absolute sense science and religion are ultimately in harmony, even if we cannot discern it in our immediate circumstance. And then there is another alternative: to try to remove the perceived dichotomy by purposefully selecting and/or willfully re-interpreting scientific findings in order to make science "conform" to our own personal understanding of what it should imply or support. This is the path, it seems to me, taken in the book under review.

Donaldson opens his book with some general introductions: brief sections on science and religion, evolution, Darwin, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's approach to evolution. It is a lot of ground to cover, but he keeps it brief. While he also includes a succinct description of the Bahá'í Faith, Donaldson states in the preface that his book is intended for those who are already familiar with the Faith. Indeed, I would say *very familiar*, because further on he presents quotes and correspondence that will probably only be fully appreciated in a larger Bahá'í context that is beyond the scope of his book to explain. While the author is justified in focusing on a relatively narrow target audience, for reasons explained below, this approach probably weakens the impact of this book with a wider, non-Bahá'í audience already disinclined to accept his challenging thesis.

Donaldson then presents relevant Bahá'í texts bearing on science and evolution, and discusses the authentication of textual sources, variations in translation, and prior scholarship and interpretations. This is one of the real strengths of this book. Included are most if not all the pertinent statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, as well as those of Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice that speak to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements. Where translations have varied over the years, he provides a comparative table of juxtaposed quotations. He also reviews the prior contributions of Bahá'í writers to the ongoing conversation. There is much valuable information here, carefully curated and clearly presented, that will

'Abdu'l-Bahá, "man" is the translation of *insán* or *bashar*, both of which have the general meaning of "human," "humans," "human race," or "humankind" (Thomas).

be useful for future scholarly work on the subject, and Donaldson is to be praised for this.

Before going into the science-related chapters, I will address an important point for any Bahá'í-related book, including independently published books such as Donaldson's. Individual Bahá'ís are, of course, free to express their own understanding on subjects, and free to publicly share their understanding, but should do so in a way that allows readers to recognize that the author's opinions are their own and not part of what I'll call the Bahá'í canon: the sacred scriptures of Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, the scriptural interpretations of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, and the explicative writings of the Universal House of Justice. That is, the opinions of Bahá'í authors should not be mistaken as formally authorized expositions of Bahá'í beliefs. This is all the more vital when dealing with positions on controversial subjects that invite judgment, warranted or not, from the wider community.

To his credit, Donaldson is very open about the controversy of his position. When preparing his book, he directly contacted the Universal House of Justice, asking for its guidance about publishing his manuscript. Donaldson provides the House of Justice's reply, a letter written to him in 2019, in Appendix I In that letter, the House of Justice writes:

> Provided that individuals do not, in their written works, misrepresent the Bahá'í teachings, they have a right to express their opinions even if those opinions prove to be mistaken. Thus the friends are free to express their own personal views about the teachings in relation to a particular scientific theory or body of thought, but what they cannot assert is that these constitute the Bahá'í view on the matter.

In this same letter, the House of Justice makes clear that the author must not ascribe to 'Abdu'l-Bahá the author's own understanding of the matter and cautions that both the author and publisher must be prepared to be scrutinized by science-literate reviewers and to be judged by them according to the scientific accuracy of the book.
With all this in mind, Donaldson states the following in his preface:

> I present the results [of his study of this subject] without any authority in the fields of science or religion. Of course, any interpretation of the Bahá'í Writings reflects my personal understanding and not the Bahá'í position. (page vii)

Fair enough—but while I commend Donaldson for his transparency in this regard, the statement may easily be overlooked by readers, or even forgotten as they get caught up in the narrative. Additionally, I do wish that the book's subtitle were more circumspect: *The Convergence of Evolutionary Science and Baha'i Teachings* gives the impression (whether intentionally or not) that this book presents an

authoritative finding that is in some way connected with the Bahá'í Faith.

What view, then, does the book advance? Donaldson's proposition is that humankind literally (i.e., biologically) never had common descent from animals because humankind emerged through a parallel evolutionary process that was separate and independent from the evolution of animals. Humans thus originated as a separate species from the beginning, although Donaldson does not specify exactly when this beginning occurred. The book's main content is devoted to developing and defending this thesis.

It may come as a surprise to many readers that there actually *is* a variant of evolution called "parallel evolution." In fact, there has been substantial research on parallel evolution in recent years, with 3,849 scientific articles published on the topic in the past five years alone, according to PubMed (PubMed). Donaldson refers to this development, giving the impression that it represents a shift in evolutionary thinking towards his own thesis.

However, he seems to be unaware that what he calls "human parallel evolution" is substantially different from what the scientific community is investigating under the name "parallel evolution."

Simply put, parallel evolution is the evolution of closely related but separate species along similar pathways (Futuyma and Kirkpatrick 52). Experimental researchers in this specialty examine genetic change and adaptation generally within populations or closely related species, commonly at the level of microevolution (minor changes over limited generations) (Kawecki et al.). Donaldson, on the other hand, has taken this concept to an extreme not intended in these studies, using their findings to support his own speculation at the level of macroevolution (major life form changes, such as the emergence of entirely new species and genera over millions of years).

To understand why this amounts to confounding two very different things, we should define two other variants of evolution: divergent and convergent evolution (Bolnick et al.). *Divergent evolution* is evolution as most of us would understand it: the bifurcations of most recent common ancestors into new taxa[4] (the phenomenon of speciation), which give rise to phylogenetic (evolutionary) trees. *Convergent evolution* is the independent development of functionally similar features in disparate taxa, such as the separate evolution of similarly hydrodynamic body plans in reptilian ichthyosaurs and mammalian dolphins. Donaldson relies heavily on the concept of convergent evolution to support his speculation on parallel evolution. In fact, Donaldson mentions convergent evolution much more frequently than parallel evolution—by my count, 211 versus 50 instances, respectively. He often appears to be using these terms interchangeably—and to be fair, so do many researchers in the field. Ostensibly, parallel evolution

4 Biological classifications such as order, family, genus, and species.

refers to the independent development of similar traits in related species that have common ancestry, and convergent evolution refers to the independent development of similar traits in different species that are *not* closely related (i.e., having only distant ancestry) but experience similar natural selective pressures (Alejandrino et al.). However, in the literature this distinction is often blurred.[5] This blurring makes it tempting to call upon one process in place of another, as Donaldson often does, trying to prove that because different evolutionary lines can converge in some features (as in ichthyosaurs and dolphins), humans could converge with hominoid primates in numerous traits—so numerous that it would make humans *appear* to actually belong to the order Primates without having evolved within that order from a common ancestor. This is a huge leap of the imagination.

Donaldson's thesis is one that I cannot accept, on both scientific and philosophical grounds. I will start with the scientific aspect. Quite simply, the evidence for humans and apes sharing a most recent common ancestor is overwhelming (Almécija et al.; White et al.; Wildman et al.). This is not speculation; it is based on evidence obtained from phylogenetic (DNA sequencing, etc.) and phenetic (biological traits, etc.) studies (Lockwood et al.; Horai et al.), conducted by numerous researchers (Aarssen 15–23) using multiple, disparate methods pertaining to paleobiology (Grabowski et al.), molecular biology (Goodman et al.), computational modeling (Coleman), and statistical analysis (Baum et al.).

In scientific discourse in general, and in new theory formulation in particular, current scientific theory must be taken into consideration. This is true for Bahá'ís, be they scientists or not, who view current science from a Bahá'í perspective. Farzam Arbab addressed this point in his 2016 Balyuzi Memorial Lecture; his comments bear quoting at some length:

> We may say . . . that today's science is still in its infancy. We may be confident that it will advance a great deal, that new discoveries will revolutionize many fields of scientific inquiry, and that existing insights will be refined again and again. We can also readily accept that minds illumined by the light of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings—working within systems of research uncorrupted by competitiveness and desire for personal prestige and in the context of a culture that venerates knowledge rather than treating it like a commodity—will open new horizons toward which science can move, strengthening its contribution to

5 For examples of differing understandings of the distinction between divergent and convergent evolution and the issues raised by their imprecise definitions see, for example Jeff Arendt and David Reznick, "Convergence and Parallelism Reconsidered: What Have We Learned about the Genetics of Adaptation?" and Robert W. Scotland, "What Is Parallelism?"

> the advancement of spiritual and material civilization. But it is my conviction that this thing we call science will not be thrown away and replaced by something else called "Bahá'í science." Grand theories like Newtonian mechanics, quantum mechanics, relativity, and evolution are here to stay. They are valid within the parameters of the physical phenomena that they were constructed to explain. And it is this science that will advance and lead to extraordinary new discoveries and elegant theories to explain them.

In the case of human evolution, the theory of primate common ancestry has been repeatedly scientifically substantiated. It is not enough, to refute this theory, to merely say there is a "better idea," yet this is precisely what Donaldson does. In fact, he does not deal rigorously with the scientific evidence for common ancestry. He mostly sidesteps the subject, and instead conjectures using other, handpicked research that actually does *not* refute common ancestry. Indeed, the works cited generally are not directly concerned with common ancestry; they mostly deal with convergent evolution, which actually *presumes* common ancestry somewhere along the evolutionary line.

This approach leads to the problem of speculation, of taking the limited conclusions of scientific articles and bundling them into a preconceived narrative far afield from the contexts of those articles. Just how great is Donaldson's speculative leap? It is ultimately so ungrounded in actually relevant evidence that the model he constructs could just as easily be applied to any other life form—dogs, for example. The only thing that keeps his proposal human-related is 'Abdu'l-Bahá's original comments, which refers to humans. Put simply, there is no scientific basis for the thesis Donaldson proposes in the research that he cites. I turn now to a philosophical objection to the book's thesis. The are several points to be taken from the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: 1) God created humankind; 2) humans are distinct from the animals by reason of human spiritual capability; 3) in potentiality, humans have always been distinct from the animals since the former's inception; 4) the human potential existed even in earlier, developmental life forms, and in general, in the laws of nature.

By inference from these statements, 1) God created humankind in the same manner that He created all of nature and life; 2) this creation was in divine consciousness even when humankind had not yet been physically realized; that is, the essence of humankind existed before its physical creation; 3) at some point in the evolution of Earth as a life-supporting system and of life itself, humankind arose as a distinct life form with properties of consciousness and spirit.

This last inference is at the heart of the mystery. At some point in an unfolding, evolving creation, the human essence was instantiated in nature

when the potential human was actualized into the biological human imbued with spirit. But what or where is this point? Consider this statement by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá:

> [A]t the beginning of his formation in the matrix of the world, man was like an embryo. . . . From the beginning of his formation, the mind and the spirit existed, but they were hidden and appeared only later. (*Some Answered Question* 4:3)

When was “the beginning of his formation”? Was it during a gene transfer event in a primordial, cross-evolutionary matrix (a possibility Donaldson suggests), or did it occur even earlier as an isolated abiogenic occurrence? Or was it at an evolutionary node—a common ancestor of humans and primates, perhaps—at which a novel genome acquired the potential to develop language or recursive reasoning eons hence? For that matter, this instantiation may not have been a discrete point in time at all, but a continuous unfoldment. In any case, the fundamental mystery of instantiation of the human essence remains unexplained.

Thus, Donaldson’s proposition fails in its intended purpose, which is to explain ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s dictum that man has always been man. This statement cannot be explained by human parallel evolution because the problem of instantiation—when and how humans became humans—is not resolved by his proposal, which merely pushes the problem back to an earlier, unknown, and entirely speculative time in evolutionary history.

There is a subtler philosophical problem with Donaldson’s reasoning. He is, of course, aware that the nature of humankind is twofold, both physical and spiritual. Yet oddly, that dual nature is not addressed in his proposal, which, in fact, focuses exclusively on the physical aspect of humanity, leaving the spiritual aspect as an unspoken given. However, this physical nature is shared directly or indirectly with all life forms, including animals; but the spiritual nature is not. I am sure that Donaldson would agree that this is really the main point of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements. And yet, were Donaldson’s thesis to be true in all its aspects, it would not—could not—support this fundamental point made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, because his conjecture does not include instantiation of the human spirit, which constitutes the real reason that humans are not animals:

> *The human spirit, which distinguishes man from the animal, is the rational soul*, and these two terms—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one and the same thing. (*Some Answered Questions* 55:5, emphasis added)

> *The reality of man is his thought, not his material body*. The thought force and the animal force are partners. *Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all*

> *other created beings*. (*Paris Talks* 2:1, emphasis added)

Returning to the statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá quoted at the beginning of this review, that "man has never been an animal," this statement does not refute the findings of evolutionary biology when viewed in the context of what, from a Bahá'í perspective, it means to be "human." In the two passages above, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is very clear that the distinguishing characteristic of humans is the rational soul. That this distinction is not apparent in current evolutionary biology is due to the exclusively materialistic orientation of its practitioners. 'Abdu'l-Bahá assures us that this will change as science continues to mature. In this statement, 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to "philosophers," but it applies to scientists as well:

> We now come to the question of the transformation of species and the evolutionary development of organs, that is, whether man has come from the animal kingdom.
>
> This idea has entrenched itself in the minds of certain European philosophers, and it is very difficult now to make its falsity understood; but in the future it will become clear and evident, and the European philosophers will themselves recognize it. (*Some Answered Questions* 46:1–2)

Here, the "falsity" that 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to is the materialist idea that because humans physically evolved, they are *only* animals. This false conclusion is based on the denial of the spiritual component of humans. This component, the rational soul, is what distinguishes humans from animals—not the physical evolutionary pathway.

The motivation behind seeking a separate, parallel evolutionary history for the human seems to be to distinguish our species, and sanctify it from association with the animal. Yet no matter how far back we push the point of instantiation, we cannot avoid a physicality that is ultimately in common with animals, and for that matter, with plants and the earliest forms of life. Whether at the level of recent common ancestry, or simply shared material substance, we are physically of this creation—unless we are willing to posit that the atoms and molecules that make us up are themselves a separate category of atoms and molecules, that resemble but do not interchange with the base stuff of other matter. This is patently absurd, and no one argues it, but it would seem to be the logical endpoint of an intentional search for humanity's physical distinctiveness and separateness from nature. It follows, then, that it is only in the spiritual respect that the human's fundamental distinction from the animal can be found.

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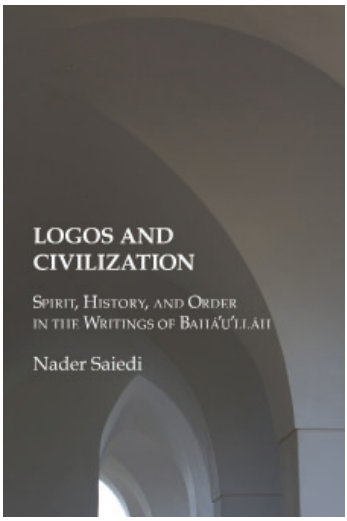

Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. By Nader Saiedi. 2nd edition. Paperback and e-book. Ottawa: Association for Bahá'í Studies, 2023. xxiv + 356 pages, including notes, references.

Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization* Revisited

CHRISTOPHER BUCK

Author Nader Saiedi was the inaugural holder of the Taslimi Lectureship in Bahá'í History and Religion in Iran in the department of Near Eastern Languages and Cultures at UCLA. The second edition of Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization*, which includes some minor revisions due to authoritative translations that became available in the intervening years, invites a reappraisal of its noteworthy and significant contributions. Published reviews of the first edition of *Logos and Civilization* were contributed by Seena Fazel and Dominic Parviz Brookshaw (2001), Denis MacEoin (2002), Stephen N. Lambden (2003), and Christopher Buck (2004). Retrospectively reviewing these previously published reviews, I have come to realize that academic reviewers tend to prioritize *critique* over *contribution*. That is to say, the great weight of a book's worth should be measured in terms of what original ideas and insights it brings to the current realm of discourse on a given topic. It is for this reason that I would like to prioritize contribution over critique, and offer readers a fresh perspective on the significant contributions that *Logos and Civilization* makes to current academic discourse on some of the most salient and celebrated sacred texts that form part and parcel of the legacy of Bahá'u'lláh's revelatory works.

Author's Objectives

In the "Preface," author Nader Saiedi orients his readers with this clear, overarching objective: "*Logos and Civilization* is an attempt to demonstrate the unity and creativity of the message of Bahá'u'lláh through the analysis of a few works selected from the vast ocean of His writings" (*Logos* ix). By "creativity," Saiedi primarily appears to mean Bahá'u'lláh's originality in setting forth a "new paradigm" that constitutes a global worldview, replete with principles aimed at bringing about world peace and prosperity. This is seen in several of Saiedi's claims, such as:

> it is the argument of this book that the writings of Bahá'u'lláh represent a conceptual break with those traditional assumptions. Bahá'u'lláh's vision, in other words, initiates a new paradigm, a new model, a new logic of discourse, a new episteme, and a new problematic—to use the terms used in various social theories and philosophies—in approaching reality. (*Logos* 26)

Beyond setting forth his argument for the originality and uniqueness of Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual and social principles in their own right, as *sui generis*, Saiedi goes on to claim: "Bahá'u'lláh uses the traditional language and categories of Eastern mystical and Islamic philosophical discourse to articulate a worldview that transcends the contemporary Eastern and Western modes of philosophy and social theory" (*Logos* 143).

While readers' opinions may differ on whether Saeidi succeeds in vindicating this sweeping claim at a general level, *Logos* is at its strongest when it uses analysis of a specific text or texts to support a more specific claim.

Provisional Translations

Interspersed throughout *Logos and Civilization*, Nader Saiedi offers over thirty of his own "provisional translations" of selected passages from Bahá'í sacred texts—translations which "were made possible through the indispensable assistance of the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Centre" (ix).[1] Many of these translations serve to anchor Saiedi's analytical insights. For example, Saeidi translates an excerpt from a passage in which Bahá'u'lláh explains that His Revelation was addressed to "*mystics, then divines, and then kings*" (*Logos* 210–11) to persuasively argue for a three-stage framework of Bahá'u'lláh's proclamation.[2] A fuller translation of this passage, from a later work by Saiedi, reads:

> Behold and observe! This is the finger of might by which the heaven of vain imaginings was indeed cleft asunder. Incline thine ear and hear! This is the voice of My pen which was raised among mystics, then divines, and then kings and rulers. (qtd. in Saiedi, "Replacing the Sword")

Perspectives on Bahá'u'lláh's Life and Prophetic Ministry

Saiedi provides some fascinating details on the life of Bahá'u'lláh, such as

1 In Bahá'í parlance, an "authorized" translation of a passage of Bahá'í scripture is one which the Bahá'í World Centre has approved for publication and for devotions. All other translations—such as Saiedi's own, though produced with the assistance of the Research Department—are considered "provisional."

2 For the original source, Saiedi cites the edition of Bahá'u'lláh's Ishráqát published in Tehran by Mu'assisiy-i-Millíy-i-Maṭbú'át-i-Amrí (*Logos* 340, note 319, and 348).

this autobiographical account written in a third-person narrative:

> When this Wronged One was a child, He read in a book attributed to Mullá Báqir Majlisí … about the incident of the Banú-Qurayẓah, whereupon He became so grieved and saddened that the Pen is unable to recount it, even though what occurred was the command of God and its sole purpose was to break the backs of the oppressors. . . .
>
> But upon beholding the ocean of forgiveness and boundless mercy, He used to beseech the One True God, exalted be His glory, in those days to bring about whatsoever would be the cause of love, fellowship, and unity among all the peoples of the earth—until, suddenly, before sunrise (*qabl az ṭulú'*) on the second day of the month of His birth [i.e. before sunrise on His birthday], His entire condition and manner of expression and thinking were transformed in a transformation which proclaimed the joyful tidings of heavenly reunion. This experience occurred repeatedly for twelve consecutive days, after which the waves of the sea of utterance became manifest and the effulgences of the orb of assurance shone forth until it culminated in the advent of His Revelation.
>
> Thus hast thou attained unto that which God hath made the source of joy to all mankind and the dawning-place of His tender mercy to all who are in heaven and on earth. From that point forward, We removed through the agency of the Pen of the Most High whatever had been the cause of suffering, affliction, and discord, and set down with a fixed and irrevocable decree that which is the cause of unity and fellowship. (*Logos* 267)[3]

Here, Saiedi has located and situated Bahá'u'lláh's resolve to "bring about whatsoever would be the cause of love, fellowship, and unity among all the peoples of the earth" at a young age, sometime during His childhood. He also highlights resonances between the different moments in Bahá'u'lláh's life—including this little-known episode from His childhood—that seem to have particular significance in the progressive unfolding of His revelatory mission. He notes, for instance, that "the night before Bahá'u'lláh's birthday in 1852 was most likely the beginning of the year nine" alluded to by the Báb for the appearance of Him Whom God shall make manifest, and that therefore the "date of the Síyáh-Chál experience coincides with the date of the childhood experience." Similarly, "the Riḍván declaration, like the childhood experience, also lasted for twelve days" (*Logos* 268). If true, then this is yet another noteworthy contribution that Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization* has made.

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3 Bahá'u'lláh, provisional translation by Nader Saiedi. See p. 343, notes 380 and 382 ("In Mázandarání, *Asráru'l-Áthár* 2:17–18.").

Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation as a "Revolutionizing" Approach

Saiedi provides an original analysis of several of Bahá'u'lláh's key works, such as: "The Four Valleys" (*Chahár Vádí*), "The Seven Valleys" (*Haft Vádí*), and "Gems of Divine Mysteries" (*Javáhiru'l-Asrár*) in Chapter 3; "The Book of Certitude" (*Kitáb-i-Íqán*) in Chapters 4 and 5; the "Wondrous New Book" (*Kitáb-i-Badí'*) in Chapter 6; and "The Most Holy Book" (*Kitáb-i-Aqdas*) in in Chapters 7 and 8. A key term—indeed, a dynamic concept—in Saiedi's approach is characterizing Bahá'u'lláh's thought and discourse as revolutionary: "A major thesis of this book is the creative, revolutionary, and unprecedented character of Bahá'u'lláh's spiritual and social vision" (*Logos* xvii). Here is one instance of Saiedi's analysis of one of Bahá'u'lláh's major works as a "conceptual revolution":

> Gems of Divine Mysteries, rather than being an inconsistent text, is the key for understanding Bahá'u'lláh's conceptual revolution in mystical discourse. The subject of the Seven Valleys is the spiritual journey and its stages. The subject of the Kitáb-i-Íqán is progressive revelation and historical consciousness. In Gems of Divine Mysteries these two subjects constitute an organic unity. As I have suggested, it is the interpenetration and the unity of both subjects—historical consciousness and spiritual journey—which distinguishes Bahá'u'lláh's mystical approach from traditional approaches. The traditional Sufi approach conceived of the spiritual journey as a flight from the realm of plurality, change, and history. It is precisely this problematic that Bahá'u'lláh has changed. Because the unknowable Essence of God in its invisibility and transcendence is absolutely inaccessible to human experience, the only way that human beings can approach and experience God is through the experience of the reflection and manifestation of God in the mirrors of the visible realm—the historically specific Manifestations of God. History, therefore, instead of being an obstacle to mystical experience, becomes the only way human beings can approach divine Reality. In this way history is spiritualized and spirit is historicized. (*Logos* 45–46)

In this sense, Saiedi has revolutionized our understanding of Bahá'u'lláh's approach to mysticism.

In a much similar approach, Chapter 4, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán: Context and Order," opens by positing that "Bahá'u'lláh expounds a revolutionary new perspective":

> The Kitáb-i-Íqan (The Book of Certitude) is one of the most significant works of Bahá'u'lláh's dispensation. In this text, Bahá'u'lláh expounds a revolutionary new

> perspective on theology, hermeneutics, spiritual journey, epistemology, eschatology, and the relation of society and religion. Its central issue, the doctrine of progressive revelation, is the basis of Bahá'í metaphysics and theology; but much more than that, it provides new approaches to various questions of epistemology, sociology, political theory, and ethics. (*Logos* 91)

As a continuation of Saeidi's theme of Bahá'u'lláh's "revolutionary new perspective," Chapter 5 is entitled, "The Kitáb-i-Íqán: Theology Revolutionized":

> In the first part of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh discusses the conditions of the possibility of spiritual knowledge. […]
>
> Bahá'u'lláh's concept of progressive revelation, discussed in the second part of the Kitáb-i-Íqán, not only applies the concept of historicity to the realm of human truth and cultural dynamics but also to the realm of religious truth and divine revelation. In doing so, Bahá'u'lláh goes beyond nineteenth-century notions of historicity and transcends the limitations of the major models of historical reason such as those of Hegel, Marx, and Dilthey. (*Logos* 113)

Here, perhaps an equally apt title for Chapter 5 would be "The Kitáb-i-Íqán: *Philosophy* Revolutionized" (emphasis added).

Chapter 6 ("The Kitáb-i-Badí': The Promise Fulfilled") is an informative discourse on "The Wondrous New Book" which is "one of Bahá'u'lláh's most important writings" and which "should be considered His main apologia" (*Logos* 149).[4] In Chapter 7 ("The Kitáb-i-Aqdas: Date and Constitutive Principles"), "four constitutive principles of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas" are set forth as a "a kind of mysterious code of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation" (212) serving as a heuristic key to organizing principles found throughout Bahá'u'lláh's major works. As summarized in Chapter 8 ("From the Order of the Book to the New Order"), these "four principles that give global thematic structure and coherence to the Kitáb-i-Aqdas" are: "(1) the removal of the sword, (2) the principle of covenant, (3) the universal revelation, and (4) the principle of heart" (227). On page 211, a chart is presented in which the "chronology of the stages of Bahá'u'lláh's writings" are correlated with "the three metaphysical principles of unity" (i.e. the "Unity of God," the "Unity of Manifestations" and the "Unity of humanity") which, in turn, are brought into further correspondence with the terms "New," "World," "Order," and "the thematic order of the Aqdas." This schematic represents—and is highly illustrative of—Nader Saiedi's quest for "Order

4 The Kitáb-i-Badí' is reputed to be Bahá'u'lláh's lengthiest work.

in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh" (as indicated in the last part of the book's subtitle). Thus, *Logos and Civilization* reads like a commentary on this key statement, which Saeidi quotes twice:

> The world's equilibrium hath been upset through the vibrating influence of this most great, this new World Order. Mankind's ordered life hath been revolutionized through the agency of this unique, this wondrous System—the like of which mortal eyes have never witnessed. (Bahá'u'lláh, qtd. in Saiedi, *Logos* 257, 264)

Both quotations of this passage of Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (¶ 181) occur in Chapter 8 ("From the Order of the Book to the New Order"), as if for emphasis.[5]

Chapters 9 and 10 ("Philosophical Premises of the New World Order" and "Spirit, History, and Order" respectively) follow, to end the book, and are, for the most part, critiques (primarily criticisms) of Juan R. I. Cole's *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahá'í Faith in the Nineteenth-century Middle East*. Space does not permit a commentary here.

In sum, Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization* is a highly original, well-organized and skillfully argued treatise on Bahá'u'lláh's writings—and, as outlined earlier, is a significant methodological, philological, and conceptual contribution to Bahá'í studies. Although at times somewhat jargonistic (with respect to academic (especially Kantian) wording that may be unfamiliar to nonspecialist readers, such as "Part II: The Critique of Spiritual and Historical Reason") and, in places, polemical (especially in Saeidi's extended critiques of Cole's works), and strangely oblivious, if not critically dismissive, of relevant prior scholarship (as previous reviewers have noted), *Logos and Civilization* is brilliantly conceived, organized, and executed in terms of its insightful exposition of selected exemplars of Bahá'u'lláh's major writings, which Bahá'ís regard and revere as sacred texts, revealed for this day and age. *Logos and Civilization* is highly recommended to prospective readers interested in a more in-depth, insightful analysis of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Recommended for university libraries as well, since Nader Saiedi's *Logos and Civilization* is a major contribution to Bahá'í studies.

5 Throughout Chapter 8, Saiedi references what are usually referred to as "Paragraphs" of the Aqdas as "Verses" (*passim*).

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Biographical Notes

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