

"There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God. To promote knowledge is thus an inescapable duty imposed on every one of the friends of God..."

(SWAB: 126)

□ THURSDAY

10.00 *Introduction & welcome*

0. Preliminary remarks

"The Universal House of Justice.. regards scholarship as of great potential importance for the development and consolidation of the Bahá'í community as it emerges from obscurity.."
(Letter to Participants in the Bahá'í Studies Seminar held in Cambridge [UK] on 30 September and 1 October 1978)

- a) The duty, challenge, experience and importance of Bahá'í deepening-scholarship and academic research...
- b) Faith and scholarship
- c) Definitions of "scholarship" and "scholars"...
- d) 'Teaching', 'apologetic', 'deepening' and forms of academic scholarship -- definitions and differentiations

1. The historical evolution and current state of Bábí-Bahá'í scholarship in the East and the West.

- a) The history of Bábí-Bahá'í scholarship in the east and the west.
- b) During the Bábí period (1844->
- c) During the Lifetime of Bahá'u'lláh (-> 1892
- d) During the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá' (1921->
- e) During the period of the Guardianship (1921->
- f) The post-Guardianship era up till the 1980s.
- g) Current trends....

2. The "field" of academic bahá'í scholarship..

- a) What is the nature of the evolving "field" of Bahá'í scholarship...
Religion; Theology-Theophanology; Science; Philosophy; History; Anthropology;
Sociology; Psychology; Mysticism; Economics; Homiletics; Aesthetics; Genetics..

3. Academic methodologies appropriate to Bahá'í Scholarship..

The nature of methodologies within select academic disciplines --:

Approaches to religious studies, theology, middle eastern studies...
Phenomenology; philology; historiography; sociology; anthropology...

4. The Bábí & Bahá'í Faiths as "Religions of the Book"

0. Sacred scripture -- heard, read, experienced, studied and analyzed...
Literacy; bookishness;

1. The study and nature of the various scriptural languages

- a) Arabic [Semitic]
- b) Persian [Indo-European]

2. The question of translation and translations..

Philological study -- lexicography, grammar, syntax, etc.
Translations by the central figures
The use of translations in scholarly research.
The question of transliteration[s]

5. Primary and secondary source materials and access to them.

- a) The history, nature, scope and extent of Babi-Bahá'í scripture and literature.
- b) The history, nature, scope and extent of anti-Bahá'í literatures and polemical non-[ex-]Bahá'í writing in the East and West -- select current issues.
- c) The nature of covenant breaking and the use of covenant breaker materials in academic research.
- d) The use of 'non-Bahá'í' materials in academic research
- e) Extra-Bahá'í experience and dialogue...

6. Pure Bahá'í research in progress or needing to be done.

0. Work in progress ... Bahá'í Encyclopedia.. etc

1. The importance and legitimacy of pure Bahá'í researches and the inappropriateness of fundamentalism and anti-intellectualism inside and outside of the Bahá'í community.

2. Notes on select Research "areas"

- a) Philological-scriptural research
- b) Bahā'ī theology[ies] -- world theology.
- c) Bahā'ī philosophy and metaphysics...
- d) Bahā'ī historical researches ..
- e) Bahā'ī sociologies
- f) Bahā'ī socio-economic perspectives
- g) Bahā'ī gender studies
- h) Bahā'ī demography, statistics...
- i) Bahā'ī homiletics ("teaching" theology)
- j) Bahā'ī hermeneutics
- k) The Mashriq al-Adhkar, Bahā'ī service and Bahā'ī worship
- l) Towards a Bahā'ī international language and script
- m) Bahā'ī world order studies
- n) The history and performance of Bahā'ī art and drama
- o) The history and practise of Bahā'ī poetry and music
- p) Civilization and world history
- q) International order and world government
- r) Bahā'ī Peace Studies
- s) Ecology and the Environment
- t) Bahā'ī educational philosophies
- u) The history and current state of Bahā'ī regional and national communities.
- v) Bahā'ī legalism, ritual and law.
- w) Bahā'ī theophanology -- the Manifestations of God.
- x) Ethics and spirituality : Their nature and history. What is Bahā'ī spirituality?
- y) Bahā'ī Aesthetics
- z) Bābī- Bahā'ī poetry -- its history and contemporary manifestations

7) The Bahā'ī dialogue with established and alternative [new] religions.

1) The Abrahamic and related religions

- a) Judaisms - orthodox; liberal....
- b) Christendom -- Catholic; Protestant; Orthodox....
- c) Islam -- Sunnī Islam; Shī'ī Islam + other Islamicate groups e.g. Sufis; Ahmadiyya; quasi-Islamic groups...

2) The various non-Semitic ["Asian"] religions

- a) Varieties of Hinduism..
- b) Dimensions of Buddhism
- c) Remnants of the Zoroastrian community
- d) Sikhism
- e) Chinese religions -- Confucianism, Taoism and
- f) Japanese religions -- Shintoism (<-6th Cent. BCE); forms of Buddhism...
- g) Jainism (India; -> Mahavira c. 599-527 BCE?; 3 million+)
- h) African, North American and Pacific religions

3) Alternative religions, ideologies, human potential movements and esoteric and new age groups...

-- to name but a few such 'groups' at random in alphabetical order; Christadelphianism; Divine Light Mission; Druidism; Gurdjieff groups; Hasidism; International Society for Krishna Consciousness (Hare Krishnas); Meher Baba Groups; Nichiren Shoshu of America (Soka Gakkai); Rastafarianism; Rosicrucian Order; Scientology; Theosophy; Wicca; Zen Buddhism...

Jewish; Christian; Islamic rooted/ oriented movements -- Seventh Day Adventists; Mormons; Jehovah's Witnesses; Ahmadiyya; Bohras...

4) The Bahā'ī dialogue with non-religious and secular ideologies

- a) Atheism and Humanism
- b) Marxism; Communism; Socialism; Capitalism
- c) Modern philosophies and post-modernisms

5) Bahā'ī attitudes and responses to religious pluralisms, inclusivisms, exclusivisms and 'world theologies' past and present.

- a) Responses to religious pluralism
- b) The search for a 'world theology'
- c) The quest for a global ethic.
- d) The doctrine of the oneness of religion
- e) Religious Continuance: The history and nature of 'progressive revelation'.

8) **The Dialogue and interface between theology, philosophy, modern science and Bahā'ī thought.**

"Philosophy as you will study it and later teach it is certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splittings is meant not a sound branch of learning like philosophy... As to correlating philosophy with the Bahā'ī teachings; this is a tremendous work which scholars in the future can undertake. We must remember that not only are all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still come to light which are at present owned privately." (Shoghi Effendi Letter dated 15th February, 1947 cited UD:445)

"Philosophy is an important part of Religious Studies because it is concerned with questions of meaning and truth. The two main philosophical questions are, 'What does it mean?' and 'How do you know it is true?'... Religious studies is good for philosophy, since it keeps alive the questions of ultimate meaning and values which are its lifeblood. Philosophy is good for Religious Studies, since it keeps alive the questions of truth and justification which preserve religion from complacent dogmatism." (Keith Ward, in King, ed., 1990: 221, 230).

- a) The nature and origins of the universe[s] – time, space... cosmologies
- b) The evolution and nature of humankind
- c) Philosophical- metaphysical questions:
Questions of "T[t]ruth"; epistemology; metaphysics;... post-modernism
The question of Bahā'ī theology [ies].
- d) The role of the philosophy of science and the nature and importance of scientific discovery + the dangers of scientism...

9. **Education, Research & the Bahā'ī Faith**

a) Education as a subject:

Is education a subject - why no pedagogy in the UK?
How is education defined around the world?
Why is it defined the way it is, in each country?
How ought education be seen as a domain, from a Bahā'ī point of view?
Why are there so few educationalists given how great are the opportunities in the field?

b) Educational Studies v Being a teacher - who is researching whom?

'Why climb Everest?' v "In 7 minutes you are teaching 5b!"
- some of the dualities living for a subject v living off a subject
pure & applied,
quantitative v qualitative,
practice driven, politically driven etc

Presumably research method, from a Bahā'ī point of view should be a middle way and be holistic, comprehensive and be built around a) purposes & b) values e.g. of life, of religion, of the Bahā'ī Faith.

"If I was going to research that I wouldn't start from here?"
What should be our starting point/s?
What would be the criteria for Bahā'ī research method/s?

c). Guidance

A model indicated by the Research Department of the UHJ.
We might make a contribution to the evolutionary process of devising an educational system which "would be in full harmony with the spirit of the Bahā'ī Teachings".

Knowledge of educational theory, for example, could assist (us) in identifying some of the relevant "basic principles" and "teaching ideals" that are set out in the Bahā'ī Writings. Such principles could in turn, serve as a basis for highlighting positive aspects of contemporary educational theory and practice which could contribute to the implementation of Bahā'ī "teaching ideals".
Research Dept. Memorandum 21st May 1992

d).. Some negative characteristics in Education in the wider community.

Some negative characteristics in Education in the wider community. Overall the problem is a matter of fragmentariness as opposed to holism and the fact that education doesn't start with the question, "What is it to be fully and positively human?"

SEE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEETS: Contemporary education -- a critique;
Solutions Envisaged; The Prentice Solution & Views on Contemporary Literature

10. Doing Bahā'ī scholarship and the responsibilities of the Bahā'ī community

- a) The challenges and benefits of Bahā'ī scholarship for the individual.
- b) The challenges and benefits of Bahā'ī scholarship for the Bahā'ī community.
- c) The championing-defense of the Bahā'ī community and of Bahā'ī perspectives
- d) The dangers of "fundamentalism" and anti-intellectualism [= anti-scholarship].
- e) The concerns of the world of academe...
- f) Spiritual values and academic research; truth seeking; spirituality and the intellect; honesty and integrity; open-mindedness; respect ...
- g) The relationship between the Bahā'ī scholar[s] and the Bahā'ī administration.
- h) The role of the Bahā'ī administration in the furtherance of Bahā'ī scholarship.

11. Computing, cyberspace and Bahā'ī scholarship.

".. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and regularity..." (Shoghi Effendi, 'The Unfoldment of World Civilization' Haifa, Palestine; March 11, 1936 [WOB., 1974:203])

- a) Purchasing or building a computer-- Hardware (Monitor; Hard Disk; CD Rom; DVD; modems... etc) Software (Multilingual Word Processing & DTP...)
- b) Researching and publishing in cyberspace.
- c) Bahā'īs URLs, listserves