

# **BAHĀ'Ī STUDIES BULLETIN**

VOLUME 3 No. 3 September 1985.

**Stephen Lambden,**

- **Some Thoughts on the Establishment of a Permanent Bahā'ī Studies Centre and Research Institute, pp. 41-87.**



SOME THOUGHTS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A PERMANENT BAHÁ'Í STUDIES CENTRE AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE.

It is the purpose of these notes to initiate discussion on the question of the present state and future possibilities of Bahá'í Studies; in particular the urgent need to set up one or more permanent Bahá'í Studies Centre and Research Institutes offering a full or part time 2 or 3 year scholarly course on western academic lines.

Since the late 1960's a new generation of academically oriented Bahá'í scholars has emerged in various parts of the world, most notably Europe and the United States and Canada. As certain of these scholars are well qualified graduates of departments of Oriental/Religious/Theological Studies in Western Universities and have acquired an expert knowledge in Bábí-Bahá'í Studies it would seem to be a good time to initiate discussion. It is also the case that a not inconsiderable number of Bahá'ís ardently desire to be trained in the scholarly approach to the study of their Faith and that the emergence of the Bahá'í Faith from obscurity necessitates the training of Bahá'í scholars capable of dialogue with the academic and intellectual world.

It seems to me that the setting up of a Bahá'í Studies Centre and Research Institute (= BSCRI) could quite easily be accomplished in the West. It might have a small (2--4) full-time teaching and research staff dedicated to furthering an academic Bahá'í scholarship. Ideally a BSCRI should have its own library and premises and be funded by the Bahá'í International Community; but might initially be linked with an accredited Western University. Apart from conducting scholarly researches a full or part time 2-3 year scholarly course could be offered to suitable students.

should be given

Serious attention to the question of scholarly Bahá'í Studies by the Bahá'í International Community for a multitude of reasons-- that will not all be fully discussed or mentioned here.

Firstly, it should be borne in mind that at present no full-time funding or research facilities exist for individuals who wish to serve their Faith in a scholarly capacity and that no institutions exist that adequately consolidate and coordinate the emergent academic Bahá'í Scholarship.

The now internationally organised Association For Bahá'í Studies (centered in Canada since 1981 and originally the Canadian Association For Studies on the Bahá'í Faith [established in 1974 ] ) undoubtedly serves a useful and important function. It achieves important objectives ( see Appendix below ) but differs in its orientation and terms of reference from the kind of BSCRI that would suitably consolidate and further an academically informed Bahá'í scholarship. An academic Bahá'í scholarship would be best furthered by academics trained in scholarly disciplines fundamental to the field of Bábí-Bahá'í Studies: i.e. Oriental Studies or Religious Studies. There is often a great difference in scholarly terms between an academically informed Bahá'í scholarship and the scholarly writings of Bahá'ís trained in (for example) the sciences. This is to some extent illustrated by the interesting though academically inadequate response of two Bahá'ís to Denis MacEoin's The Babi Concept of Holy War ( see Religion [1982]12 pp.93-129 and [1985] 15,pp.29-51 ).<sup>1</sup> If Baha'is wish to dialogue with academics who challenge apparently "orthodox" Baha'i perspectives it will be necessary for them to foster an academic Baha'i scholarship. The field of Bábí-Bahá'í studies on an academic level is a specialist and self-contained discipline. Oriental Bahá'ís learned in the "traditional sense" generally operate intellectually within a different 'universe of discourse' from western trained academics learned in Oriental/Islamic/ Religious Studies. Occidental Bahá'ís who have 'read books' sometimes imagine themselves experts in matters religious despite their ignorance of modern academic researches and methodologies and of the Persian and Arabic languages. My intention here is not to criticize "traditional" Baha'i learning, picture Bahá'ís ( God forbid ) as being uninformed or unduly exalt a western type academicism but to highlight the difference between a professional academic Bahá'í scholarship and general Bahá'í intellectual standards. As time goes on the Bahá'í world will be increasingly in need of academically trained experts in Bábí-Bahá'í studies. This for both internal and external reasons. The setting up of a BSCRI would go some way towards initiating and perpetuating a tradition of academic Bahá'í scholarship.

A response by Denis MacEoin to Muhammad Afnan and William Hatcher's article is forthcoming in Religion. Though I by no means agree with all the points made by MacEoin his forthcoming article does highlight the need for a much more adequate Bahá'í scholarship.

In the field of religious scholarship Bahá'í intellectuals generally have much to learn and important tasks to undertake. Though, for example, a learned Bahá'í "theology" of the problem of the plurality of religions has yet to be adequately articulated, Christian scholars such as Wilfred Cantwell Smith have made important contributions (see Cantwell Smith's Towards a World Theology [Philadelphia 1981]). Internally speaking, Bábí-Bahá'í Studies is in its infancy and is likely to remain so unless steps now be taken to support and consolidate the emergent academically informed Bahá'í scholarship. Many aspects of Bábí doctrine and history have not been studied. Many important writings of Bahá'u'lláh remain unpublished, unstudied, undated and untranslated. Is it not a sad fact that Azalis have published critical editions and facsimilis of Bábí texts while Bahá'í scholars generally remain unaware of even the existence of these writings? Is it not the case that Denis MacEoin is widely regarded as the leading expert in Shaykhí and Bábí Studies and is raising issues that Bahá'ís have yet to consider? Much work remains to be done if the Bahá'í community is to aspire to that intellectual integrity so beloved of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

A learned and academically informed Bahá'í scholarship cannot befittingly evolve outside of the establishment of permanent institutions that will provide full-time teaching and research facilities. The field of Bahá'í Studies needs to be organized and funded in a new, permanent and concrete manner. If steps are taken in this direction --:

- [1] *Informed* Bahá'í dialogue with the modern intellectual and academic world would be possible.
- [2] The present generally low standard of Bahá'í Studies would be improved.
- [3] An intellectually mature Bahá'í "theology" based on the findings of academic scholarship would begin to emerge.
- [4] The international recognition of the field of "Bábí-Bahá'í Studies" and of the status of the Bahá'í International Community by the academic and thinking world-- now more or less non-existent--would be initiated.
- [5] Real and concrete links could be forged between "Bahá'í scholars" and external University and other institutions of learning.
- [6] Tensions between academically trained Bahá'í scholars and certain segments of the Bahá'í International Community could be lessened.
- [7] Bahá'í intellectuals could be made to feel less alienated in that they would feel that they have a role to play within the Bahá'í community.

It will, I think, prove very difficult for these objectives to be achieved outside of the setting up of the kind of BSCRI envisaged--run on academic as opposed to "deepening" and quasi-propagandist lines. Relatively few Bahá'ís seek to be deeply informed about their Faith. The number who are conscious of academic Bábí-Bahá'í studies is pitifully small. It is not seen to be fashionable today for individuals to indulge in the academic study of religion at the expense of a more 'pragmatic' and lucrative career. Influenced by modern secular attitudes many Bahá'ís tend to think similarly. Some have been seduced by a misplaced anti-intellectualism. Outside of very considerable Bahá'í community support it is likely to remain the case that few Bahá'ís will be ready to devote themselves to full-time Bábí-Bahá'í studies and that Shoghi Effendi's long-cherished hope that a profound and coordinated Bahá'í scholarship emerge will remain unrealised. The emergence of an academic Bahá'í scholarship is not peripheral to Bahá'í concerns but absolutely essential. Unless something is done there will be a proportion of "deepened" Bahá'ís but almost none capable of Bahá'í dialogue with academically trained intellectuals.

Currently existing "deepening", "summer school" and other provisions for Bahá'í study have generally failed to produce experts in matters religious or persons aware of modern intellectual perspectives. Bahá'ís who (in Western Universities) trained in oriental studies in the previous generation (largely Iranians) and went on to specialise in this area -- few though they were/ are-- have generally avoided the challenge of academic Bábí-Bahá'í studies. Within the Bahá'í world today however, a new generation of Bahá'í scholars have taken up this challenge and are grappling with important issues. They need encouragement and support. How sad it would be if such individuals were moved to complain-- in the words of a 16th century Muslim poet:

" I said to poverty: "Where dost thou hide?"  
In a scholar's inkwell, "Poverty replied."

The established world religions, many "secular" governments and no few numerically insignificant new religious movements provide facilities for scholarly and academic researches. Religions old and new encourage, fund, support and give great importance to internal scholarship. It is surprising in view of the numerical strength (3-4 millions), international diffusion (about 112,000 localities) and rich legacy of Bahá'í scripture and tradition that steps have not yet been taken by the Bahá'í International Community to support internal academic scholarship and research.

In order to give some substance to these notes I have drafted some concrete proposals for an academically informed course in Bábí-Bahá'í Studies from the "Religious Studies" perspective (see below). There exists sufficient literature to make such a course a definite possibility-- though "gaps" do exist. Largely for want of time I have chosen not to include detailed course and seminar reading lists. The proposed possible seminar, essay and/or examination questions will give some idea of the level of academic orientation envisaged.

Appendix I gives some idea of the orientation of the Association for Baha'í Studies (cf. above).

Appendix II is a select compilation of Baha'í materials on the importance of Baha'í Studies.

Appendix III is my somewhat 'theological' response to possible objections to the evolution of an academic Baha'í scholarship.

Stephen Lambden

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx

xxxxxxx

BABI-BAHA'I STUDIES:  
A PROVISIONAL COURSE  
OUTLINE.

Proposals for an academically  
informed 2-3 year full time  
course in Babi-Baha'i Studies  
from the "Religious Studies"  
perspective.

### Preliminary Note

The proposals set out below are intended to outline an academically informed 2-3 year course in Bábí-Bahá'í studies from the modern "Religious Studies" perspective. The proposed course could be taught in such a way as to be meaningful to students who have had no previous academic training and be made relevant to both Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í students.

Each year could consist of three terms of 10 weeks each. Terms one and two would be for teaching and the third term for revision and examinations. Units 1-3 in years 1-2 would consist of 10 (1st term) + 10 (2nd term) lectures supported by 5 (1st term) + 5 (2nd term) seminars on pre-arranged topics relating to the subjects lectured upon.

In years 1-2 the basics of Arabic and/or Persian grammar could be taught with special attention to reading and translating Bábí-Bahá'í sources. Alternatively, for those not wanting to study languages -- or already familiar with the basics-- extra supervised reading and essays could be set.

Throughout the course essay writing could be compulsory: perhaps two essays for each course unit each term (= 12 each year) selected from a list drawn up by the lecturer(s). Each course might be examined during the third term of each year. A multiple choice three hour examination for each course unit would serve this purpose.

For the third year-- if such a year be feasible--the student could select 3 specialist (taught) units and continue the study of select Arabic and/or Persian texts or write an approved dissertation not exceeding 20,000 words. The 3rd year taught course units might reflect the specialist knowledge of teaching staff in the field of Bábí-Bahá'í studies and consist of 10+ 10 lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.





YEAR I. COURSE UNIT I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS

10+10 one hour lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.

Term 1

1. Approaching Religious Studies.
2. The Modern History of Religious Studies and the search for a scientific methodology.
3. Empathy, Objectivity and the Phenomenological Method.
4. Methodology and the Study of the History of Religions.
5. The Philosophy of Religion and Philosophical Hermeneutics.
6. Approaching Religious Texts: The History of Methods of Scriptural Interpretation and modern methods applied to the study of religious writings.
7. Sociological Approaches to Religious Studies and the academic study of new religious movements.
8. Fundamentalism and the academic orientation.
9. Science, Religion and Secular Ideologies.
10. Religious Studies Today: Attitudes and Perspectives.

Term II

1. The Origins and Definition of "Religion".
2. Concordant Discord: Modern Perspectives on the Plurality of Religions.
3. Biblical Studies and Modern Theology.
4. The Hindu, Buddhist and Zoroastrian Traditions.
5. Islamic Studies Today.
6. Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and Mysticism.
7. Approaching Bábí-Bahá'í History.
8. Approaching Bábí-Bahá'í Doctrine.
9. Bábí-Bahá'í Studies, the Bahá'í Institutions and the Bahá'í Community.
10. The challenge of Bábí-Bahá'í Studies: "faith", "reason" and the academic orientation.

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY OF RELIGIONS (I.I.)

Possible Seminar,  
Essay and/or Exam-  
-ination Questions.

---

- Of what importance is the academic study of religion ?
- Are religions meant to be studied?
- Is a scientific methodology of Religious Studies possible?
- Is presuppositionless objectivity possible?
- What is the Philosophy of Religion? To what extent is it a "constructive" discipline?
- Examine the various methods of scriptural exegesis?
- What are phenomenological methodologies?
- Discuss the various definitions of the term "hermeneutics".
- What factors are involved in the scholarly understanding of a religious text?
- Compare and contrast the "fundamentalist" and academic orientations.
- Outline the methods and concerns of the sociologist of religion.
- What sociological insights have been gained by the study of "new religious movements"?
- What are the central issues in the modern debate about "Science and Religion" ?
- How would you define the terms "sect" and "religion" ?
- What problems surround modern scholarly attempts to speak about a "unity of religions" ?
- How successful have modern Christian thinkers been in attempting to come to terms with religious pluralism?
- Discuss the various definitions of Christian "theology".
- Attempt to give brief answers to the following questions: " Does Hinduism have a Founder?", "Is Buddhism theistic? " What are the main sources for the study of Zoroastrianism?"
- Are the "Semitic" and "Aryan" world views compatible?
- Why do many contemporary Muslims feel threatened by western scholars of Islam? Has western "orientalism" failed to appreciate the phenomenon of Islam ?
- Does "mysticism" 'begin in 'mists' and end in schism'?
- What are the key issues in the modern study of religious mysticism?
- What methods do you think most appropriate to the study of Bahá'í history?
- Has Bahá'í doctrine evolved?
- Can "revelation" and source-critical theories be reconciled?
- Compare and contrast "Bahá'í deepening" and academic Bahá'í scholarship.
- Is there a relationship between Bahá'í scholarship and the Bahá'í community life?

YEAR I. COURSE UNIT II.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ISLAMIC AND MIDDLE EASTERN BACKGROUND.

10+10 one hour lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.

TERM. 1.

1. Islamic Origins: Muhammad and the Qur'ān.
2. The Rise and Development of Islām.
3. The Origins and Growth of Shi'ī Islam.
4. The Transformation of Shi'ī Islam: Safavid Iran.
5. Qajar Iran and the wider Middle Eastern milieu.
6. Shi'ī Islām & Qajar Iran I.
7. Shi'ī Islām & Qajar Iran II.
8. The Impact of the West in 19th century Iran.
9. Islamic Messianism: Origins and Political Manifestations in 19th century Iran and the Middle East.
10. Reform Movements in Iran and the Middle East.

TERM II.

11. Islamic Doctrine and Practise: An Historical Survey.
12. Shi'ī Doctrine and Practise: Its Historical Evolution.
13. An Introduction to Shi'ī Tafsīr and Shi'ī Fiqh.
14. An Introduction to Shi'ī Prophetology and Imamology.
15. An Introduction to Shi'ī Eschatology and Messianism.
16. Sufī Mysticism and Shi'ī Theosophy.
17. Orthodoxy and Heterodoxy in 19th century Shi'ī Islām.
18. The Shaykhī Movement: Origins and Sources.
19. Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsā'ī and Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī.
20. Shaykhism and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Movements.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE ISLAMIC AND MIDDLE EASTERN BACKGROUND (I.II )

Possible Seminar, Essay and/or examination questions-:

- What were the main features of the prophetic Mission of Muhammad?  
Compare and contrast the traditional Muslim and modern scholarly views of the Qur'an.
- Why did Islam become a major world religion?  
What are the main features of Islamic orthodoxy?  
Compare and contrast the traditional Shi'ci and modern scholarly views on the origins of Shi'ci Islam.
- What are the principal differences between Sunni and Shi'ci Islam?  
Why and how did Shi'cism become the state religion of Safavid Iran?  
Suggest ways in which Shi'ci Islam expressed and consolidated itself in Safavid Iran.
- Outline developments in Shi'ci Islam during the Qajar period.  
What was the relationship between religious and temporal authorities in Qajar Iran?  
What was the role of the ulamá and tujjar (merchants) in Qajar Iran?  
What impact did the West have on Iran during Qajar times?  
What factors precipitated the emergence of messianic movements in the middle east in the 19th century?  
Survey and account for the existence of the chief reform movements in 19th century Iran and the wider Middle East.
- Write brief definitions of the terms "Khariji", "Mu'tazili", "Sunni", "Shi'ci", "Isma'ili", "Ishraqi", "Sufi", "Akhbari" and "Uṣuli".  
To what extent and why do the beliefs of Sunni and Shi'ci Muslims differ.  
What are the distinctive features of Shi'ci tafsir?  
What were the qualifications and function of the mujtahid in Qajar Iran?  
Outline the distinctive features of Shi'ci fiqh.  
What are the characteristically Shi'ci views of history and prophetology?  
What are the principal features of Shi'ci Imamology?  
Outline the key eschatological expectations of Shi'ci Muslims?  
Write brief notes on the terms-: qa'im, dajjal, raja<sup>c</sup> and mahdi.
- Outline the Shi'ci doctrines surrounding the occultation and return of the 12th Imam.  
Are Sufism and Shi'cism compatible?  
Who were the principal members of the so-called "School of Isfahan" and what were their main intellectual concerns?  
Who were the most influential Shi'ci theosophical writers?  
How might "orthodoxy", "heterodoxy" and "heresy" have been defined by a 19th century Shi'ci mujtahid?  
Compare and contrast "orthodox" and "popular" Shi'cism as it existed in Qajar Iran.

Why did the Shaykhí movement gain the respect and admiration of a not inconsiderable number of Shí'í Muslims?

What are the principal features of the lives of Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kázim?

What are the chief sources for the study of the Shaykhí Movement?

To what extent was eschatology and messianic expectation a central concern of pre-Kirmaní Shaykhis?

Outline the Bábí-Bahá'í view of Shaykhism.

---

YEAR I. COURSE UNIT III.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BABI-BAHA'I STUDIES

10+ 10 one hour lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.

TERM I.

1. An Outline of the **History** of Baha'i scholarship in the East.
2. An Outline of the History of Baha'i scholarship in the West.
3. The Field and Present State of Babi-Baha'i Studies.
4. An Introduction to the Writings of the Bab
5. Sources for the study of Babi History and Doctrine.
6. An Introduction to the Writings of Baha'u'llah.
7. Sources for the study of Baha'i History and Doctrine.
8. The Ministry and Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha: An Introduction.
9. Baha'i History, 1892-1963: An Introductory Review.
10. Attitudes Towards the Babi-Baha'i Movements.

TERM II.

11. The Babi-Baha'i World View: God, the Universe and Man.
12. The Babi-Baha'i Doctrine of the Manifestation of God.
13. Babi-Baha'i Historical Perspectives: The succession of Religions.
14. ~~One Religion--Many Religions:~~ The Baha'i Theology of Unity.
15. An Introduction to Babi-Baha'i Law, Ethics and Spirituality.
16. Baha'i Perspectives on Science & Religion and the Search for Truth.
17. The Origins and Growth of the Baha'i Administrative Order.
18. The Growth of the Baha'i Community in the East.
19. The Growth of the Baha'i Community in the West.
20. The Baha'i Faith Today and the Baha'i Vision of the Future.

AN INTRODUCTION TO BABI-BAHA'I STUDIES (I.III).

Possible Seminar, Essay and/or examination questions-:

- Who were the most important oriental Bahá'í scholars?
- Why has Mirzá Abú'l-Fadl Gulpaygání come to be seen as the leading Baha'i Apologist?
- Who were the most important occidental Bahá'í scholars?
- What importance do the researches of E.G.Browne have today?
- Indicate areas in which further research needs to be done in the field of Bábí-Bahá'í studies.
- How would you define the field of Babi-Baha'i studies?
- Why was Bábí-Bahá'í studies neglected after the passing of E.G.Browne?
- Are the writings of the Báb meaningful today?
- Which writings of the Báb do you consider most central to the understanding of his teachings?
- What are the principal sources for the study of--: a) Bábí history and b) Bábí doctrine ?
- How might the writings of Bahá'u'lláh be classified?
- Which writings of Bahá'u'lláh do you consider most central to the understanding of his teachings?
- What are the principal sources for the study of --: a) Bahá'í history and b) Bahá'í doctrine?
- To what extent have non-Bahá'í scholars contributed to the Bahá'í self-understanding?
- What were the principal features of the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá?
- What is the Bahá'í understanding of the person of 'Abdu'l-Bahá?
- What do you consider to be the most important writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá?
- Outline the growth and spread of the Bahá'í Faith between 1892 and 1963.
- How do Iranians view the Bábí-Bahá'í movement?
- Why have certain Christian missionaries written anti-Bahá'í tracts?
- How have modern western intellectuals viewed the Bábí-Bahá'í movement?
- What is the Bábí-Bahá'í view of God?
- How do Bahá'ís view the origins and nature of man?
- What is the Bahá'í view of the purpose of life?
- What, for Bahá'ís, is a "Manifestation of God"?
- How do Bahá'ís view history? What do they mean by "progressive revelation"?
- What is the Bahá'í view of the purpose and function of religion.
- What do Bahá'ís mean when they speak about the "oneness of religion"?



How do Bahá'ís conceive the relationship between their own Faith and the major world religions?

What is the Bahá'í view of past sacred writings?

To what extent are the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths legalistic?

What does a Bahá'í mean when he or she speaks about "spirituality"?

What are characteristic Bahá'í expressions of religiosity?

What is the Bahá'í view of modern science?

How might a Bahá'í define "Truth" and how appropriate it ?

What is the Bahá'í administrative order?

When is a Bahá'í not a Bahá'í? Why and for what reasons might a Bahá'í lose his or her voting rights or be declared a "covenant breaker" ?

How and why did the Bahá'í community grow in the East?

Why have westerners become Bahá'ís?

How does the Bahá'í Faith today differ from the Bahá'í Faith at the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá?

What is the Bahá'í view of the future of mankind?

---

YEAR II. COURSE UNIT I

THE BAB & THE BABI MOVEMENT.

10+10 one hour lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.

Term 1

1. The Present state of Bábí Studies.
2. Siyyid <sup>c</sup>Alí Muḥammad the Báb I : The Early Years.
3. Siyyid <sup>c</sup>Alí Muḥammad the Báb II (1844-50 ).
4. Islám and the emergence of the Bábí movement.
5. Shaykhism and the emergence of the Bábí movement.
6. The Bábí hierarchy and its Social basis.
7. Qajar Politics and the Bábí Upheavals.
8. Islámic eschatology and Bábí Messianism.
9. Mirzá Yahyá and Azalí Babism.
10. The Bábí phenomenon: Modern appraisals.

Term 2

1. The Early Writings of the Báb.
2. The Later Writings of the Báb.
3. The Writings of Leading Bábís.
4. The theology, cosmology and prophetology of the Báb.
5. The Claims of the Báb and leading Bábís.
6. Islám, Shaykhism and Bábí Doctrine.
7. Bábí tafsír: the qabbalistic and spiritual hermeneutics of the Báb .
8. Bábí law and ritual.
9. From the Bábí movement to the Baha'í Faith.
10. The Baha'í view of the Báb and the Bábí movement.

## THE BAB & THE BABI MOVEMENT (II.I)

Possible seminar, essay and or examination questions--:

What major areas within the field of Bábí studies remain unresearched?

In what kind of religious and social environment did the Báb spend his early years?

Summarise what is currently known about the early years of the Báb and suggest new avenues of investigation.

What prompted the Báb to intimate his claims in May 1844?

Outline the six year ministry of the Báb (1844-1850) and attempt to account for the rapid spread of the Bábí movement.

Write brief answers to the following questions--: Why did the Báb go on pilgrimage to Mecca and Medina? What was the purpose and outcome of the conference of Badasht? Why was the Báb executed in July 1850?

Why did the Qajar rulers and Shí'í 'ulamā attempt to suppress the Bábí movement?

What was the Báb's attitude towards the Qajar state and the Shí'í 'ulamā?

Why did the Bábí movement attract a fairly large number of Shí'í Muslims?

Why did the Shí'í 'ulamā charge the Báb with apostasy?

To what extent could the Bábí movement be said to be neo-Shaykhí?

Why did Karím Khān Kirmání attack the Báb?

What are the main characteristics of the Bábí hierarchy?

Examine the role of Tahira within early Babism.

Did those Bábís who took part in the major upheavals believe that they were waging holy war (jihād)?

In what ways did the Báb claim to have fulfilled Shí'í eschatological expectations?

Examine and account for the Báb's teachings about man yuzhiruhu'llāh.

To what extent was the Bábí community a "unity in diversity"?

How did the Bábí community react to the martyrdom of the Báb?

Outline the career and claims of Mirzá Yahya Nuri?

In what sense is it true to say that Mirzá Yahya was the Báb's successor?

What are the chief characteristics of Azalí Babism?

Why is Azalí Babism virtually extinct while the Bahá'í Faith is establishing itself as a new religion?

What can be learned from the study of Babism about the genesis of new religions?

Assess the major modern western theories about the rise of the Bábí movement.

What can be learned about the early teachings of the Báb from the Qayyum al-Asmā'?

What are the key features of the Báb's earliest teachings?

"Judging from the Bayan.. Mirza Ali Muhammad [the Báb] was primarily interested in the triumph of his faith, and not so much in any project of social and political reform." [Mangol Bayat] Do you agree?

Explain and comment on the five categories into which the Báb divided his writings.

What proofs are presented in the Báb's [Persian] Dalā'il-i Saba<sup>c</sup>?

Of what nature are the extant writings of leading Bábís?

What are the problems surrounding the authorship and dating of the Kitāb-i Nuqtat al-Kāf? Is this work an Azalí forgery?

Outline the key teachings of the Báb about God and the Prophets.

What were the main claims of the Báb? Did they evolve?

Why did a number of leading Bábís make theophanic claims?

What are the chief characteristics of the Báb's interpretation of Islamic sources?

Why did the Báb utilise a qabbalistic and allegorical hermeneutic?

What is the relationship between Shaykhí and Bábí doctrine?

What are the main features of Bábí law and ritual?

To what extent were the Bábís able to practise their faith?

Did the Báb provide a workable socio-economic system?

How did the Bábís react to the leadership role of Mirzá Yahyá and the claims of Bahá'u'lláh?

How do Bahá'ís view Mirzá Yahyá?

Compare and contrast Azalí Babism and the Bahá'í Faith.

What were the main arguments used by Bahá'ís to convert Bábís?

Why did Mirza Yahyá reject the claims of Bahá'u'lláh?

What is the Bahá'í view of the Bábí movement?

---

YEAR II. COURSE UNIT II.

10+10 one hour lectures and 5+5 supporting seminars.

BAHA'U'LLAH AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE BAHAI FAITH

Term 1

1. Bahá'u'lláh :The Early Years. (1817--1852 ).
2. Bahá'u'lláh at Baghdad (1853--1863).
3. The writings of the Baghdad Period.
4. From Constantinople to Adrianople ( 1863--1868).
5. The writings of the Constantinople--Adrianople Period.
6. The <sup>c</sup>Akka Period (1868--1892 ).
7. The Writings of the <sup>c</sup>Akka period I.
8. The Writings of the <sup>c</sup>Akka period II.
9. The Claims of Bahá'u'lláh. and the Bahá'í view of his station.
10. The passing of Bahá'u'lláh and the Covenant crisis.

Term 2

1. The Theology and Prophetology of Bahá'u'lláh.
2. The Ethical and Mystical Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.
3. The Kitáb-i Aqdas and the Laws of Bahá'u'lláh.
4. The Kitáb-i Iqán and Bahá'u'lláh's interpretation of past scriptures.
5. The Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh to the kings and rulers and his social teachings.
6. Leading disciples of Bahá'u'lláh and the emergence and social basis of the oriental Bahá'í community.
7. Early oriental Bahá'í Apologetics: the debate with Muslims, Shaykhis and Azalis.
8. The early oriental Bahá'í mission to Jews, Christians, Zoroastrians & other religious minorities.
9. Early oriental Bahá'í historiography.
10. Bahá'í and other estimates of the mission and writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

BAHA'U'LLAH AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE BAHAI FAITH (II.II )

Possible seminar, essay and/or examination questions-:

In what kind of social and religious milieu did Bahá'u'lláh spend his early years?

What happened to Bahá'u'lláh during the period 1844--1852?

What precipitated Bahá'u'lláh's "exile" to Iraq?

What were the key features of the Baghdad period of Bahá'u'lláh's life?

Why did Bahá'u'lláh withdraw to Kurdistan and why did he return from that region to Baghdad?

What was the nature of the relationship between Bahá'u'lláh and Mirzá Yahya during the Baghdad period (1853-1863)?

What led Bahá'u'lláh to "declare his mission" in May 1863 and what was the nature of that "declaration" ?

When did the Bahá'í Faith originate?

What are the chief subjects mentioned in Bahá'u'lláh's writings of the Baghdad period?

Explain Bahá'u'lláh's transition from Baghdad to Constantinople to Adrianople.

Outline the key events of the Adrianople period.

How did the Adrianople and Baghdad settings of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry differ?

What precipitated the "Most-Great separation" ?

What are the chief subjects mentioned in Bahá'u'lláh's writings of the Adrianople period?

What was the nature of the Bábí-Bahá'í community during the Adrianople period (1863--1868)?

Why was Bahá'u'lláh exiled to 'Akka and Yahya to Famagusta ?

What were the chief events of the 'Akka period (1868--1892) of Bahá'u'lláh's ministry?

What was the nature of the West Galilean social and religious milieu into which Bahá'u'lláh was exiled?

What are the chief subjects mentioned in Bahá'u'lláh's writings of the 'Akka period?

Comment on the major claims of Bahá'u'lláh? Did they evolve?

How do Bahá'ís view and relate to the person of Bahá'u'lláh?

What happened when Bahá'u'lláh passed away in 1892?

Outline Bahá'u'lláh's teachings about God and his Messengers.

Comment on the key ethical directives of Bahá'u'lláh? Is there a Bahá'í doctrine of salvation?

What is the significance of Bahá'u'lláh's Seven Valleys ?

To what extent does the Bahá'í revelation incorporate mystical elements?

Why does the Kitáb-i Aqdas contain what it does?

What kind of society would the implementation of the laws of the Kitáb-i Aqdas lead to ?

What are the key features of Bahá'u'lláh's tablets to the Kings and Rulers?

What was Bahá'u'lláh's attitude towards the West?

Suggest why those 19 counted "Apostles of Bahá'u'lláh" were accorded this status.

How and why did the oriental Bahá'í communities grow during the period 1863—1892?

Make suggestions as to the social basis of the early oriental Bahá'í communities.

Comment on the nature and content of the early oriental Bahá'í dialogue with either a) Muslims, b) Shaykhis or c) Azalis.

What led Bahá'í teachers to attempt to convert oriental religious minorities?

Why was the Bahá'í mission to oriental Jewry successful and that to oriental Christendom unsuccessful?

What attracted Zoroastrians to the Bahá'í community?

What were the chief tendencies of early oriental Bahá'í historiography?

Why has the Tarikh-i Nabil ("The Dawnbreakers") come to be regarded as the most important work of Bahá'í history writing?

How have modern western scholars viewed the mission and writings of Bahá'u'lláh?

Comment on current Bahá'í views of the person and writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

---

YEAR II. COURSE UNIT III.

THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH (1892-1921).

1. The Life of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá: 1844—1910
2. The Life of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá: 1910—1921
3. The Writings of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá.
4. ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's exposition of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.
5. ʿAbdu'l-Bahá and the Oriental Bahá'í communities.
6. Oriental Bahá'í Literature and attitudes towards the Bahá'ís in the East. (1892—1921).
7. The Spread of the Bahá'í Faith to the West I : > 1910.
8. The Spread of the Bahá'í Faith to the West II: 1910—1921.
9. Western Bahá'í Literature and attitudes towards the Bahá'ís in the West (> 1921 ).
10. Emergent Bahá'í "orthodoxy", the Covenant and the Will and Testament of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá.

Term 2.

1. The Life and Ministry of Shoghi Effendi : 1897—1944.
2. The Life and Ministry of Shoghi Effendi : 1944—1957.
3. The Writings of Shoghi Effendi.
4. Aspects of the Growth and Spread of the Bahá'í Community:1921-1944.
5. Aspects of the Growth and Spread of the Bahá'í Community:1944-1963.
6. The Emergence of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.
7. The Universal House of Justice and the Bahá'í Administrative Institutions.
8. Oriental Bahá'í Literature (1921→ ) and oriental perceptions of the Bahá'í Faith.
9. Western Bahá'í Literature and occidental perceptions of the Bahá'í Faith (1921 → ).
10. Recent Developments with the Bahá'í Community and External Perceptions of it.



THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH (1892-1963) ( II.III )

Possible seminar, essay and/or examination questions

- Why did Bahá'u'lláh choose ʿAbdu'l-Bahá to succeed him ?
- What were ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's key objectives as head of the Bahá'í community?
- How do Bahá'ís view the person of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá ?
- Why did ʿAbdu'l-Bahá visit the West?
- How might the writings of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá be classified?
- What was ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's attitude towards the West?
- Did ʿAbdu'l-Bahá develop the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh?
- What do you consider to be the most important contributions of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá to the evolution of the Bahá'í Community?
- What was the significance of the "Tablets of the Divine Plan"?
- What developments took place among the oriental Bahá'í communities during the ministry of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá?
- What was ʿAbdu'l-Bahá's attitude towards politics?
- What contribution did ʿAbdu'l-Bahá make towards the evolution of the Bahá'í administrative order?
- Did oriental attitudes towards the Bahá'í community change during the ministry of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá?
- Who were the major oriental Bahá'í apologists and historians during the period 1892--1963? What were their chief concerns?
- How did the Bahá'í Faith spread to the western world?
- Who was Ibrahim George Kheiralla?
- How did early Western Bahá'ís manifest their devotion to ʿAbdu'l-Bahá?
- How did early Western Bahá'ís present their faith to prospective converts?
- What did early Western Bahá'ís understand by the "Covenant"?
- How was the Will and Testament of ʿAbdu'l-Bahá received by the Bahá'ís of the West?
- Why did ʿAbdu'l-Bahá appoint Shoghi Effendi the Guardian of the Bahá'í Community?
- How do Bahá'ís view the person of Shoghi Effendi?
- What ~~was~~ Shoghi Effendi's chief objectives?
- What was Shoghi Effendi's attitude towards Western civilization?
- Outline and account for opposition to Shoghi Effendi within the Bahá'í community.
- How did the Bahá'í community react to the passing of Shoghi Effendi?
- What were the chief developments within the Bahá'í world between 1957 and 1963?

Outline and account for the growth and spread of the Western Bahá'í communities during either 1921-1944 or 1944-1963.

What developments took place within the Iranian Bahá'í community during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi?

What are the chief institutions of the Bahá'í administrative order?

What are the functions and purposes of Local Bahá'í Assemblies?

What are the chief features of the Bahá'í theory of the Guardianship?

Why was the Universal House of Justice first elected in 1963?

Outline and comment on the functions of the Universal House of Justice?

Outline what you consider to be the key steps in the evolution of the Bahá'í administrative order.

How do Bahá'ís envisage the "Bahá'í Commonwealth" of the future?

"This new-born Administrative Order incorporates within its structure certain elements which are to be found in each of the three recognised forms of secular government, without being in any sense a mere replica of any of them.." ( Shoghi Effendi). Discuss.

What are the chief categories and contents of oriental Bahá'í literature written during the ministry of Shoghi Effendi?

Why have Bahá'ís in the orient suffered martyrdom?

What western Bahá'í literatures composed during Shoghi Effendi's ministry do you consider to be most important?

How, if at all, have Western perceptions of the Bahá'í community changed among western observers?

What recent developments have taken place with the Bahá'í community?

How do contemporary Bahá'ís express their religiosity?

---

### APPENDIX III

A Brief Response to possible Bahá'í objections to the support of Academic Bahá'í Scholarship and the Establishment of a Permanent Bahá'í Studies Centre and Research Institute.

Objection : The time now is for the Bahá'í World to concern itself with teaching; to proffer its 'good news' to mankind and develop its administrative institutions. Academic scholarship is something for the future.

Reply : This kind of Bahá'í voiced sentiment is both understandable and widespread. It is not a false perspective though it is often voiced by Bahá'ís who have little or no knowledge of what the aims, intentions and purposes of academic scholarship are; by individuals who have a limited perception of what Bahá'í scholarship might contribute to the Bahá'í world. To say that Bahá'í scholarship is 'for the future' is to say that detailed research into Bahá'í scripture, history and doctrine, etc.. is currently irrelevant. It is to say that Bahá'ís who wish to study their Faith in detail are wasting their time-- they should be 'out teaching'.

In the light of the plethora of Bahá'í texts that underline the importance of the intellect and Bahá'í intellectual life it can hardly be said that Bahá'í scholarship is a waste of time. A variety of authoritative Bahá'í texts explicitly state that Bahá'í administrative institutions should strive to promote and enrich the intellectual life of the Bahá'í community. The Bahá'í philosophy of 'teaching' obviously includes the intellectual articulation of Bahá'í perspectives. Academics and intellectuals also need to be 'taught' or informed about Bahá'í teaching. The concrete support of Bahá'í scholarship would have important consequences for internal Bahá'í 'deepening' and external Bahá'í 'teaching'. It would serve to enable certain individuals to be more adequately informed about their own Faith and enable them to befittingly communicate it to others. It would also equip individuals to 'defend their Faith' against distorted and hostile misrepresentations -- which are increasingly of a detailed nature or such that the 'non-expert' in Bábí-Bahá'í history and doctrine cannot hope to discuss or 'refute'. Experts and academically trained Bahá'í scholars are needed to discuss and communicate research findings that clarify 'obscure questions' and to throw light on doctrinal and other issues that 'trouble individuals or Bahá'í communities'.

Quite apart from the concrete benefits that the support of academic Bahá'í scholarship can now offer there is also the point that studying religion is ontologically valuable and important--it is important, in other words, in its own right and for its own sake as an expression of the creative human spirit. It should not be necessary to justify the academic study of the Bahá'í Faith.

Bahá'í scholarship should be viewed as an integral part of Bahá'í community life. As human beings Bahá'ís have intellects and should use and develop them to the full. It is obvious that the scholarly study of religion is important inasmuch as the lives of countless individuals are determined by their religious beliefs and practices. It can be extremely intellectually, emotionally and spiritually stimulating and demands a high level of empathy, insight, imagination, detachment and honesty. The contemporary decline of interest in religion has perhaps influenced Bahá'ís more than many would care to admit in terms of obscuring the importance of religious studies in general and Bábí-Bahá'í studies in particular. So-called 'concrete careers' or 'business success' become all important to the detriment of the alleged 'ephemerality' of the study of religion-- even the Bahá'í Faith itself.

Another reason why it is imperative that Bahá'í institutions begin to support Bahá'í Studies in a concrete manner-- the sooner the better in this connection-- is that it is becoming increasingly important that Bahá'ís understand the history, nature and teachings of the great world religions. As time passes the Bahá'í dialogue with, for example, Hindus, Buddhists, Jews, Christians and Muslims will take on new dimensions and become more and more informed. Academically trained experts on the history and teachings of these religious traditions will be needed; Bahá'ís who are capable of informed dialogue with leading intellectuals. The standard of the Bahá'í approach to the 'great world religions' is, at present, intellectually very poor. Secondary Bahá'í literature designed to 'convert' Hindus, Buddhists, Jews and Christians, etc., has much to be desired; the errors of 'fact' are many and the apologetic stance dated. Intellectuals who read this literature are frequently horrified by the low standard of Bahá'í scholarship. The writers of such tracts are often devoted and well-meaning Bahá'ís who have not had the benefit of informed tuition. In no oriental or occidental language does there exist an informed Bahá'í approach to contemporary Jews, Muslims or Christians. The Bahá'í literature is, for the most part, dated and inadequate. Outside of the promotion of Bahá'í scholarship this situation is unlikely to improve. The establishment of Bahá'í Studies institutions would go some way towards educating Bahá'ís such that informed dialogue with other religionists becomes possible.

The support of Bahá'í Studies cannot be left for the 'future' as if the internal and external articulation of Bahá'í perspectives is divorced from scholarly research.

Objection: The establishment of an 'Institute for Bahá'í Studies' would lead to a Bahá'í intellectual elite.

This, I think, and I have heard it voiced on several occasions, is a quite absurd objection. No scholarly or academic institution for 'higher study' can exist without applying the principle of selectivity. Some individuals are better suited to specific academic pursuits than others. Everyone cannot be a 'nuclear physicist' or a philosopher. Not all Bahá'ís desire or would be particularly good at religious studies--even those who take religious studies degrees can differ markedly in ability; otherwise they would all get 'first class degrees'. Not all Bahá'ís

desire to be 'Bahá'í scholars' or engage in the disciplined approach to Bahá'í Studies. Not all Bahá'ís would be willing or able to face the challenge of studying their own Faith; to achieve the necessary balance of empathy and objectivity.

Though then, selectivity is inevitable this has nothing to do with elitism. Bahá'í scholars are simply Bahá'ís—no better and no worse—who study their faith in a systematic and disciplined manner. Those who might graduate from a course in Bahá'í Studies do not become anything; they are not then entitled to say 'I am a Bahá'í scholar', 'I am special' (God forbid) or anything else. They are nothing other than Bahá'ís who have attempted to study and understand their Faith in a disciplined manner. On a spiritual level they may emerge 'no better than anybody else' since the scholarly study of the Bahá'í Faith is not necessarily the same as 'deepening'. In actual fact the scholarly study of one's own Faith can be an extremely humbling experience. One has to admit—often frequently—that one did not know about or understand Bahá'í teaching or history as well as one might have imagined. One makes mistakes and has them exposed. Far from giving the student any sense of belonging to an elite it should be that he or she becomes more aware and tolerant of other religionists and of human limitations.

Bahá'í scholars are not 'priests' or anything comparable. They have no authority as individuals at all. Their detailed studies do not qualify them to guide others spiritually. They are simply fallible members of the Bahá'í community who, for one reason or another, have decided to study their Faith in detail. They do not constitute an elite.

Objection: The Academic approach to Bábí-Bahá'í Studies is an inappropriate one.

This possible objection is based on a misunderstanding of the 'academic approach'. The academic approach is neither directly designed to promote nor destroy faith. There may be academics—both Bahá'í and not—who seem to challenge faith positions but it is often the case that what are challenged are uninformed and premature crystallizations of a supposed "Bahá'í orthodoxy". Scholars sometimes, by virtue of their detailed researches, come up with Bahá'í perspectives that are new and it is not infrequently that case that textual support for their theories is discovered—scriptural texts are found, not generally known or published, that confirm their detailed researches.

Conscious of the fact that the academic approach is not incompatible with apologetics and theology (= "faith articulating itself") each of the great world religions sponsor institutions that take an internally academic approach. Bahá'ís have nothing to fear about taking an internally academic approach. If Bahá'ís wish to establish institutions of higher learning that are respected for their academic integrity it is imperative that they understand and adopt an academic stance. It remains for the future for Bahá'í scholars and theologians to work out the kind of academic approach that is best suited to Bábí-Bahá'í Studies. It seems to me to be certain however, that an inhibiting 'fundamentalist' position will not equip Bahá'í scholars to enter into adequate dialogue with the thinking world or befittingly articulate their Faith.

Objection: Are there not already learned Bahá'ís and Bahá'í scholars who are capable of fulfilling Bahá'í intellectual needs? Why bother with an Institute?

While there are learned Bahá'ís and Bahá'í scholars there is no institution designed to promote and coordinate academically informed Bahá'í scholarship and no full-time course which caters for the needs of younger Bahá'ís who desire to undertake detailed study. A definite gap exists. Furthermore, many of the learned Bahá'ís and Bahá'í scholars have no real training--if any at all-- in the academic study of religion. The academic study of religion is a specialised discipline. Knowing a lot about the Bahá'í Faith seldom equips a given individual to enter into academically informed religious debate. The proposed Centre or Institute would promote this kind of scholarship; students would be trained in Bábí-Bahá'í studies according to the best contemporary methodologies surrounding the study of religion. This would lead to new intellectual developments within the field of Bábí-Bahá'í Studies. If Bahá'ís are to keep up with modern developments in the study of religion it is not enough to fall back on the generality of 'learned Bahá'ís'. If Bahá'ís are to enter into dialogue with modern intellectuals they must be academically informed.

A learned Bahá'í may know a great deal, for example, about the Bahá'í notion of 'progressive revelation' but this does not mean that he or she could contribute in an academic manner to the contemporary debate about the possibility of an emergent 'world theology'. A Bahá'í scholar may be learned in the Bahá'í interpretation of the Bible but may be completely unable to understand or evaluate the methods and findings of modern Biblical scholarship. Such examples could be multiplied. The setting up of a Centre or Institute on academic lines would produce scholars who might make important contributions to key contemporary concerns.

The number of learned Bahá'ís who have been trained in the study of religion remains very few. The proposed Institute would go some way to increasing their number and raising Bahá'í intellectual standards. No matter how well-qualified a Bahá'í might be in such fields as medicine, chemistry, physics, engineering, psychology or economics this does not mean that his studies make him or her a good student of religious subjects. Many Bahá'ís regarded as learned are learned in areas other than Bábí-Bahá'í studies. Bábí-Bahá'í studies is a self-contained and specialist field. As such it needs to be fostered and developed. Learning in an area peripheral to Bábí-Bahá'í studies does not mean that academic integrity in Bábí-Bahá'í studies is automatic. In brief, because contemporary Bahá'í deepening and study does not lead to

academically informed and expert knowledge in Bábí-Bahá'í studies there is a need to establish academically oriented research and teaching Institutes. Oriental Bahá'í scholarship tends to polymathism rather than systematic analysis and is generally uninformed by modern scholarly methodologies. Occidental Bahá'í "deepening" is usually 'teaching-oriented' and unaware of a plethora of texts and MSS in Arabic, Persian and other languages central to the more scholarly approach. I am not suggesting that "deepening" should be scholarly research but trying to highlight the differences between them. Though there is some contact, Bahá'í "deepening" is generally as different from academic research as the Christian "Bible study group" is from a University Biblical Studies course. Many questions seldom if ever raised in Bahá'í "deepening" are fundamental to scholarly research. Texts and documents, Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í, crucial for academic research are relatively unimportant in the "deepening" context.

Objection: There already exist local, national and international Baha'i Institutes designed to promote Baha'i deepening and scholarship, why suggest something else?

This objection has already been responded to in the previous pages. The proposal that an academically oriented Baha'i Studies Centre and Research Institute be set up does not devalue the importance of already existing institutions designed to promote deepening and scholarship. From what has been said it should be obvious that something both necessary and essentially new is needed. There is a difference between institutions that cater for the "deepening--teaching" situation and those envisaged that will promote an academically informed Baha'i scholarship.

Objection: It would be too costly to establish an Institute for academic research and teaching. The Baha'i Fund would be better channelled elsewhere.

As, has been argued, the promotion of academic Baha'i scholarship is not peripheral to central Baha'i concerns it is hardly the case that it should not be funded. In the light of the resources of the Baha'i International Community it is not at all inappropriate that one or more academically oriented Institutes be set up.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

The above notes may seem to be <sup>s</sup>abstract or even irrelevant. Perhaps they are? When however, academic institutions for Babi-Baha'i Studies come into being-- as I feel sure they will-- these kinds of issues will inevitably take on much greater importance.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXX