Abstracts and provisional programme.

FRIDAY 7.00 Welcome & Refreshments

■ Roger Prentice (Burnlaw) (8.00 pm.)
  Spiritualised Learning; Aspects of the 'interior dimension' of scholarship

This presentation and the discussion that will follow will explore the question, "Does the Bahá'í Religion require that a new, spiritualised, form of scholarship be developed (in due course)? If yes, what might be some of the characteristics of that new form of scholarship? Will those characteristics be the same as now, but more highly developed, or will the characteristics be new and different? Might there be a new, feminised, holistic form of scholarship? What might the implications be for reason, logic and knowledge creation and for the communities of scholars? What relationships ought there be between scholarship and education?

OPEN FORUM

SATURDAY

■ Ismael Velasco (Edinburgh). 10.00-11.00
  Where the ink leaves but a blot: hermeneutical musings on the language of unsaying.

This paper will concentrate on the implications for Bahá'í hermeneutics and scholarship of what may be termed Bahá'í apophasic mysticism. It will seek to relate the sometimes (seemingly) anti-intellectualist strain in the Writings concerning scriptural understanding to an epistemology that postulates a realm of understanding beyond language, for which language can act as a bridge. Evidence will be sought in the Bahá'í writings for this epistemological realm beyond language and a preliminary exploration of the Bahá'í concept of "mysteries" will be pursued, with particular reference to the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Suggestive links will be made between this concept of "mysteries" and the concept of "mysteries" found in the writings of the great Christian theologian Origen. Implications for Bahá'í hermeneuts and scholars will be suggested.

■ Lil Abdo (London), (11.30)
  Networking in the women's Suffrage and Bahá'í Movements - another look at the early British Bahá'í Community.

This paper is made up of some preliminary notes intended for a much larger piece of research, concerning the networks and ideology of the British Bahá'í community during the Heroic Age. Much previously published material has concentrated only on the activities of individuals within the Bahá'í Movement, my objective has been to attempt to place them within a context.

In doing so I have discovered that for many Bahá'ísm was only part of a larger pattern of activities encompassing such diverse beliefs and practices as the Labour Party and the psychic healing of dogs. This paper deals with the activities of people involved with both the movement for women's suffrage and the Bahá'í Movement.

LUNCH 12.30 -> 2.00

2. 00 - 3.00

■ Dominic Brookshaw (London)
  ABSTRACT TO FOLLOW

3. 30 OPEN SESSION

SUNDAY 10.00 am

■  Moojan Momen. (Sandy, UK).
  A Survey of Islamic Doctrinal Attacks on the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith and its predecessor the Bábí movement have been attacked from the earliest days of their history by Muslim scholars. This paper is a survey of those Muslim attacks on Bábí and Bahá'í interpretations of the Qur'án and Islamic doctrine especially in relation to passages that have been used by Muslims to refute the Bahá'í Faith. Such passages include the doctrine of the Seal of the Prophets, the perfection and completion of Islam as God's religion, the inimitability of the Qur'án, and the interpretation of "Resurrection", "Return" and the Signs of the Advent of the Máhñ'. The Muslim attacks on Bahá'í literature in relation to these questions is summarized and the Bahá'í response is also described.
Messianic personification of the majma al-bahrāyn ("Confluence of the Two Seas").

In this paper translations from Qayyūm al-asma', LXVII and from Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet commenting upon the Surah of the Cave will be introduced and presented as will supplementary interpretations of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Comments upon the Abrahamic exegesis, the biblical-qur'anic interpretive background and significance of select narratives and motifs will also be registered.

LUNCH 12.30 -> 2.00

2.00 - 3.00

Roger Prentice
A liberal perspective of Bahá'í Teachings

In the matter of values is the Bahá'í Faith, and its Teachings Liberal? With special reference to liberal traditions and education As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an inquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and extended and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves. Of course there is argument and inquiry and information, but (and?) wherever these are profitable they are to be recognized as passages in this conversation, and perhaps they are not the most captivating of the passages.... Conversation is not an enterprise designed to yield an extrinsic profit, a contest where a winner gets a prize, nor is it an activity of exegesis (exposition, esp. of scripture); it is an unrehearsed intellectual adventure....

...Education, properly speaking, is an initiation into the skill and partnership of this conversation which, in the end, gives place and character to every human activity and utterance.

Professor Michael Oakeshott, Rationalism in Politics and Other Essays (London: Methuen, 1962), 198-9

This presentation asks: How, and in what ways, is the Bahá'í Community, and its Teachings, liberal? What do the Teachings, including the concept of moderation, the 'middle way', lead us to include or exclude? The presentation is concerned with aspects of individual and community functioning, including ramifications for education.

What responsibilities does the Bahá'í Community have to the past? What efforts ought be made here and now to
further perpetuate certain views, perspectives and knowledge that have come down to us under the term "liberal"? If there is responsibility, it is not simply for the selfish exercise of freedoms. It is, so the presentation argues, because of the 'gems of civilization', hard won by past generations, which ought be included in the Bahá'í model for the sake of future generations?