

OJBS: The Online Journal of Baha'i Studies

Editors' Introduction

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The Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies

Welcome to the inaugural issue of the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, a new resource of academic, essayist, and artistic perspectives on the Bahá'í Faith, its origins, ideas, and adaptations. The *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* is an international open-access peer-reviewed journal within the field of Bahá'í studies.

At the core of Bahá'í studies is the Bahá'í religion itself. As the youngest of the independent world religions, the Bahá'í Faith is attracting greater scholarly as well as popular interest. It is this interest that has given birth to the emergent field of Bahá'í studies. Bahá'í studies is a field of interdisciplinary studies, rather than a discipline with discipline-specific methodologies. As such, the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* will, over the course of its progress and development, benefit from a greater resource pool of reviewers, whose respective areas of expertise will span a broad range of disciplines and arts. As the quality of scholarship and art progresses — not to mention the prestige that these will attract to the Journal itself — the Editors have every confidence that the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* will enrich Bahá'í studies and Bahá'í-inspired art.

The *Journal* aims to broaden the culture and community of discourse of Bahá'í studies, maintaining the best of the established voices but making known new voices, transmitting the excellent work going on in the more developed areas of Bahá'í scholarship (history and scripture), while representing the emergent work that is being done in equally important but less consolidated areas, such as sociology, the sciences, international relations, social and economic development, psychology, business, etc. The *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* represents its editors' practical response to the call of the Universal House of Justice to evolve a new paradigm of Bahá'í scholarship, understood in a non-methodologically prescriptive way, with a distinctively dialogic interaction between what Moojan Momen calls the “interior (i.e. scholarship that develops within the Bahá'í community and is based on faith) and exterior (i.e. academic scholarship based on the rationalistic, materialistic methodology of academia).”¹ The fact that Shoghi

¹ Moojan Momen, ‘[Methodology in Bahá'í Studies](#)’, *Bahá'í Studies Review*, 2001/2002, 10, 75-84.

Effendi described the Bahá'í Faith as “scientific in its method” naturally applies to field of Bahá'í Studies,² yet there is no single methodology that comprehends, much less defines, Bahá'í Studies.

The *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* is also multi-vocal, combining the best of academic writing with the best of non-academic literary reflection. Work grounded in academic methods, as well as well-constructed work generated from within a faith perspective, will both be welcome, so long as such work is distinguished by excellence and collegiality. The primary criterion for publication in the *Journal* will, first and foremost, be the quality of original research or insight into the emergent field of Bahá'í Studies.

Therefore the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* will publish original peer-reviewed articles, essays, provisional translations, research notes, bibliographical surveys, book and art reviews, as well as poetry, photographs and other visual art. The *Journal* will uphold canons of academic freedom, as refined by academic integrity and tempered by respect for communal values. Art published in the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* will honor artistic individualism as it expressively illumines aspects of the Bahá'í experience. We invite submissions for consideration within four genres for publication:

Research Articles: The Journal invites well-researched academic papers in Bahá'í studies, anchored firmly in secondary literature as well as in the primary sources themselves. On submission, each paper will be sent out for peer review. Peer reviewers will then recommend submissions for publication, conditional acceptance (revision required), or publication elsewhere.

Essays and Opinions: Preliminary, exploratory papers that open up a field of inquiry to Bahá'í studies or raise important questions that serve as a stimulus to further research have their own contribution to make and are therefore invited as well. Exploratory papers might be relatively underdeveloped in their engagement with the field of study with which they converse, such that a specialist might find minor weaknesses in a discipline-specific sense. Yet such an essay may represent the very first engagement of Bahá'í teachings within an arena of discussion, and thus stimulate further work and more rigorous treatments by scholars with greater expertise in the field and who were previously unfamiliar with such an application of Bahá'í principles.

² Shoghi Effendi, letter dated June 1933 to the High Commissioner for Palestine, Sir Arthur Wauchope, cited in *The Bahá'í Magazine*, 1935, 25(12), 354

Research Notes and Bibliographia: Reports of research-in-progress or literature reviews will provide a useful adjunct for the field of Bahá'í studies as well.

Art and Literary Pieces: Engaging or otherwise well-crafted essays that employ artistically expressive means to evoke insight are welcome. While these essays may primarily have a Bahá'í audience in mind, they should possess such literary merit as to have wider appeal. Visual art is also invited for publication.

Academics, independent scholars, literati, and translators are directed to submit their manuscripts for consideration to the Editor-in-Chief, Ismael Velasco. Starting with Vol. 2, the *Online Journal of Bahá'í Studies* will publish in the mode of “progressive publication,” where articles and art will appear in the sequence in which they are edited. This serial publication mode will allow for more quality control, and will further engage our international readership over the course of each publication cycle. There will also be the opportunity to discuss the papers online in a bulletin board forum.

The Editors

Active in Bahá'í scholarship for more than a decade, Ismael Velasco lives in the United Kingdom. A graduate of Edinburgh University in history with a professional background in social and economic development, Velasco has published scholarly articles and book chapters on Bahá'í scripture, history and community development. Ismael Velasco publishes an online blog, Bahá'í Epistolary, at <http://bahai-epistolary.blogspot.com>.

Dr. Christopher Buck (Ph.D., *Study of Religion*, University of Toronto, 1996; J.D., *Constitutional Law and Civil Rights*, Thomas M. Cooley Law School, 2006) is an attorney and independent scholar. Author of *Alain Locke: Faith and Philosophy* (2005), *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahá'í Faith* (1999), *Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i Íqán* (1995/2004), and contributor of a lead chapter to the *Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an* (2006), Dr. Buck practices law at the law firm of Pribanic & Pribanic (White Oak, PA). At Michigan State University (2000–2004), Quincy University (1999–2000), Millikin University (1997–1999), and Carleton University (1994–1996), Dr. Buck taught American studies, African American studies, Islamic studies, and religious studies. A number of Dr. Buck's academic publications may be accessed online at <http://christopherbuck.com>.

Guidelines for OJBS contributors are available on the journal's web site <http://www.ojbs.org>.