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BOOK REVIEWS

Human Rights, the UN and the Bahā'īs in Iran. By Nazila Ghanea. Oxford: George Ronald (ISBN 0-85398-479-4), £24.95, and The Hague: Kluwer Law International, (ISBN 90-411-1953-1), $47.95, 2002. x, 628pp. including appendixes, bibliography and index.

One of the most fundamental and perplexing issues in international law is the effectiveness of the UN human rights enforcement system. Unlike other legal relations that are sustained by the reciprocal exchange of rights and obligations among states, the victims of human rights abuses are usually nationals of the same states that commit violations against them. In the absence of interests that would compel influential states to intercede on their behalf, vulnerable groups are left to their own devices in the national context, save what measure of protection they can gain from weak international institutions or the nebulous pressures exerted by world public opinion. The dearth of vigorous implementation mechanisms in the UN human rights system is a reflection of this disparity in power. Unlike the European and Inter-American human rights courts, there is nothing resembling a judicial body that can exercise compulsory jurisdiction and render binding decisions against states. Instead, there is a complex, multi-layered, and often overlapping admixture of institutions and ad hoc measures ranging from quasi-judicial periodic reporting procedures before expert committees to diplomatic opprobrium before political bodies such as the Human Rights Commission. Some of these bodies and procedures derive their authority directly from the UN Charter, whereas others are treaty-based and thus exercise oversight functions only with respect to signatories. Thus far, the practical ability of these mechanisms to constrain the conduct of delinquent states has remained largely a matter of theoretical speculation. Furthermore, recent attempts at empirical analysis have given rise to considerable debate and controversy.[1]

The book under review, *Human Rights, the UN and the Bahā'īs in Iran* by Nazila Ghanea, is a valuable contribution to the scholarly literature on the UN human rights system. This work stems from Dr Ghanea's doctoral research at the University of Keele, and is the fruit of many years' labour. It is essentially a case study, 'a comprehensive account of the interaction between the United Nations human rights system and a particular human rights situation – that of the Baha'is in Iran' (p. 2). The author observes that this situation 'provides a particularly good test case for international human rights law owing to its clarity. The Baha'is do not demand self-determination, they hold obedience to government as one of their religious tenets and they have not taken the law into their own hands by engaging in any use of force in their demand for rights' (p. 8). Thus, this represents a rather authentic

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[1] See, for example, Oona A. Hathaway, 'Do Human Rights Treaties Make a Difference?', *The Yale Law Journal* 111 (June 2002) 1935, asserting that a quantitative analysis of 166 nations over a forty-year period leads to the conclusion that 'although the practices of countries that have ratified human rights treaties are generally better than those of countries that have not, noncompliance with treaty obligations appears common. More paradoxically, controlling for other factors that affect practices, it appears that treaty ratification is not infrequently associated with worse practices than otherwise expected.' For a response and contrary perspective see, for example, Ryan Goodman and Derek Jinks, 'Measuring the Effects of Human Rights Treaties', *European Journal of International Law* 14 (2003) 171 , suggesting that while 'it is unsurprising that some states continue to commit substantial human rights abuses even after ratifying human rights treaties', it is 'startling to suggest that treaty membership – including the labelling, monitoring and reporting of abuses – actually increases violations.' The authors argue that there are serious deficiencies in Hathaway's 'empirical findings, theoretical model and policy prescriptions'.

human rights situation, unadulterated by many of the moral ambiguities that often accompany competing struggles for power.

The temporal frame of the study coincides with the initial emergence of this situation on the agenda of the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities in 1980, shortly after the Islamic revolution in 1979, until the narrow defeat of the Iran human rights resolution before the Human Rights Commission on 19 April 2002. As Dr Ghanea observes, the case of the Iranian Baha'is has posed a particular challenge to the UN human rights machinery, both because it concerns religious persecution and because it transpires within a radical political context. She observes that the freedom of religion or belief is an area 'to which numerous international mechanisms allude but which has not generated its own particular treaty and oversight mechanism, as in the case of racial discrimination and other fields' (p. 3). Thus, even such limited modes of implementation are considered desirable, and the assumption is that the establishment of mechanisms with a particular focus on religious persecution would enhance the prospects of enforcement. Dr Ghanea further notes: 'that this case relates to a group proclaiming a post-Islamic revelation, historically emerging from Iran…provides its own implications' (p. 3), in an apparent reference to the Shi'a eschatological tradition which considers the exercise of all authority provisional pending the appearance of the Twelfth Imam. The coincidence of the period under study with the emergence of a radical revolutionary theocracy 'goes yet further to bring into focus attempts by the international community, within the UN setting, to bring human rights standards to bear within a particularly precarious and defiant political context' (pp. 3-4).

The book is multidisciplinary in orientation and examines this situation from theoretical, legal, institutional and political dimensions. Dr Ghanea, although empirical in approach, is cautious and modest about the scope of her study, which she describes as 'an attempt at assessing the contribution of the UN human rights system in preventing the *worsening of*, and possibly even *ameliorating*, the human rights situation of the Baha'is in Iran' (p. 4, italics in original). Thus, there is no pretension of a formal quantitative analysis measuring the precise impact of particular interventions, but more a 'soft empiricism' or broad gauge as to the possible influence of international mechanisms in a complex and multifaceted context.

Dr Ghanea's work itself is 232 pages, while the remaining 396 out of 628 pages consist of appendixes, a bibliography and an index. There are 5 useful appendixes containing: UN legal texts on freedom of religion or belief; excerpts from the Constitution of the Islamic Republic of Iran; details of interventions relating to the Baha'i case at the UN Charter and Treaty-based bodies between 1980 and 2001; UN Charter-based bodies and the pattern of key decisions regarding Iran, UN resolutions adopted on Iran, and visits of Special Rapporteurs and Special Representatives to Iran; and charts of the treaty body report due from Iran. There is also a thorough 44-page bibliography containing very useful reference sources.

The 232 pages of analysis are divided into 8 chapters within 4 sections. Section I is an introduction and sets forth the case study, with a particular focus on the implications of the Baha'i claim of a 'post-Islamic revelation in the aftermath of an Islamic revolution'. This, she suggests, 'gives the case a particularly acute human rights focus, with the theological implications and rapidly changing political context greatly aggravating the already inhospitable context' (p. 10). Section II discusses the theoretical underpinnings of the study. In light of the theological controversies surrounding this case, chapter 2, entitled 'Faith in Human Rights, Human Rights in Faith', examines the linkage between religion and human rights as the theoretical framework, and considers whether and how religious and secular law can be reconciled. This, she explains, 'contextualizes the subject matter of this project as

one example of an encounter between a religious world view and modern human rights law' (p. 11). Her examination invokes strands of post-modern philosophy and leads her to conclude that the challenge is to allow human rights to transcend subjectivities and particularism while mediating universal standards through the prism of cultural diversity, calling for 'a global joint venture and not an attempt to universalize a particular cultural or religious model' (p. 53, footnote omitted). By the same token, she asserts that the transformation of human rights from mere legal compulsion to internalized belief, or the creation of a universal culture within which such norms can be sustained, implies an important role for religion. Chapter 3 considers the doctrinal treatment of freedom of religion or belief under international human rights law. Dr Ghanea concludes that although the principle of non-discrimination is the unimpeachable core of human rights law, the collective rights of religious minorities or other belief communities, and the right to change religion or belief, remain problematic. She also points out that although 'the time is unfortunately not yet ripe for elaborating the [non-binding] Declaration into a [legally binding] Convention…the alarming range of encroachments on freedom of religion or belief make the need for the international community to respond to existing tensions relating to religion or belief not only unavoidable but increasingly urgent' (p. 95).

Section III is a thorough analysis of the Iranian Baha'i case in the UN human rights system. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 focus on the treatment of this issue before UN Charter-based bodies such as the Human Rights Commission and the Sub-Commission on Minorities, including the Special Rapporteurs appointed by the Commission as independent experts to conduct in-depth studies of particular themes or country situations. As previously mentioned, these are bodies the mandate of which derives from mere UN membership of a state, as distinct from ratification of a particular treaty providing for monitoring powers. Chapter 7 in turn considers treaty-bodies such as the Human Rights Committee, established under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). States party to the ICCPR are under an obligation to submit periodic reports to the Committee on compliance with human rights standards, and the Committee may issue appropriate 'recommendations' in response. The focus is very much on the Charter-based bodies, which appear to have greater political impact compared to the more secluded proceedings of treaty-based committees, which work best with states already committed to human rights protection. Chapters 4 to 6 correspond to the three phases of the Islamic revolution; namely, the period under Ayatu'llah Khomeini from 1979 to 1988, the period under President Rafsanjani from 1989 to 1997, and the period under President Khatami from 1998 to 2002. Each period coincides with a relative liberalization of the Islamic Republic.

In her overall assessment, Dr Ghanea's conclusion is that despite the relatively favourable treatment of the Baha'i case in the UN system, the protections provided are inadequate to effectively redress the scale and gravity of the violations:

> The unfortunate pressure for causes and cases vying for attention at UN Charter bodies makes the fact that Iran was brought to account for its treatment of the Baha'is as early as 1980 at the Sub-Commission and 1982 at the Commission very encouraging. However, having made it to the agenda until 2002, to be the subject of merely 'annual consideration' . . . seems hardly sufficient (p. 152).

She notes with concern Iran's success in removing itself from the agenda of the Human Rights Commission in April 2002, suggesting that despite some improvements, 'the record of Iran's persecution of Baha'is gives no guarantee that the present level of abuse against them could not be stepped up once again to the level of "gross" violations. It is for this

reason that the international community needs to be vigilant' (pp. 153-154). Despite these evident shortcomings, however, in terms of measuring the effect of oversight and condemnation, she notes approvingly,

> …the lengths Iran consistently went to in order to defend its human rights record in the Commission on Human Rights between 1982 and 2002. All this, despite the early years of revolutionary fervour and in spite of almost a decade of fervent rejection of the international community's right to interfere, and notwithstanding its persistent resistance towards all the Special Representatives of the Commission appointed to examine its human rights situation.

This she concludes 'is ultimately a signifier of the power the Commission still yields, in spite of all obstacles and appearances to the contrary' (p. 154).

Finally, Section IV of the book contains the overall conclusions, contained in a single chapter. The effectiveness of the UN-Iran interaction is briefly analysed, together with an assessment of whether any changes can be detected in the situation of Iranian Baha'is as a result. Dr Ghanea suggests that current reformist developments in Iran may indicate the beginnings of a process leading to the resolution of the Baha'i issue, though continued vigilance and the pivotal role of the UN are still necessary. She makes specific recommendations, ranging from changes in the Iranian legal system to broader policies aimed at integration of the Baha'i community into Iranian public life.

Dr Ghanea's book is thoughtful, sophisticated, well written and comprehensively researched. Although primarily a work of international human rights law, it steers clear of jargon and formalism and is thus accessible to a wide audience, and it will prove to be useful for the general reader as well as the expert. It provides a much-needed collection and synthesis of the origins and evolution of the 'Baha'i Question' within the UN human rights system. It is an ambitious undertaking, demonstrating intellectual creativity and courage, and it provides a solid foundation for further study and scholarship in the various areas that are touched upon. Some reflections on these are briefly discussed below.

Dr Ghanea correctly observes that because of a claim to post-Islamic revelation, the persecution of Baha'is is linked to theological questions, and that contrary to the restrictive interpretations of Shari'a relied upon by Iran's clerics, Islam allows for alternative more tolerant views which respect the freedom of religion or belief. It should be considered, however, that the theological question, while clearly relevant, is not necessarily the dominant factor in understanding the underlying causes of persecution. As with racism, ultra-nationalism, and other forms of political hate-mongering, the collective stigmatization of Baha'is may be more a reflection of elementary power dynamics that are merely clothed in religious garb for the sake of expedience. As noted by the renowned scholar Leo Kuper at the height of persecutions in 1985, the 'threatened genocide against the Baha'i minority in Iran' is an archetypical example of a mass atrocity 'perpetrated against vulnerable minorities who serve as hostages to the fortunes of the dominant groups in the state … as scapegoats for the woes of the present regime'.[2] Another astute scholar, Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, points to the historical roots of contemporary anti-Baha'i sentiments, observing that

> the scapegoating of Babis was actively promoted by the Qajar state at a time when it faced a serious crisis of legitimacy. To win over the Shiite

[2] Leo Kuper, *The Prevention of Genocide* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985) 152

> seminarians and ulama, the Qajar statesmen initiated a well-orchestrated public anti-Babi campaign. By concurrently 'othering' Babis and stressing some national religious traditions … the Qajar state actively promoted Shiism as the core of modern Iranian identity'.[3]

Perhaps the central issue is not theological divergence between Shi'a Islam and the Baha'i Faith as is commonly assumed. Rather, it is the expression of authoritarian power and cynical self-preservation in a political system with an influential religious establishment. In other words, theological differences need not necessarily result in violent persecution. As Tavakoli-Targhi points out, 'instead of encountering the Babis in a seminarian style of dialogue and debate, and thus fostering the formation of a national democratic public sphere, the Shi'a hierarchy opted for a violently repressive mode of encounter with Babis and Baha'is'. Accusations of Babism, he observes, were utilized 'as an effective instrument for silencing the voices of dissent in the formative phase of modern Iranian polity'. Thus, the political construction and consequent campaign to eliminate this 'heresy' allowed for a 'joint state-clergy project' in which Shi'a clerics and the monarchy became 'co-architects of a repressive and authoritarian political structure'.[4] The depiction of Baha'is as the perfidious and alien 'other' – immoral agents variously of Russian, Ottoman, British, American, and Israeli designs against Islam and the unity of Iranian people – is primarily an ideological reflection, a sort of theocratic superstructure, of underlying authoritarian power structures and cultural patterns threatened by the onslaught of modernity and liberalism. Recognition of this dimension is important not least for situating the emancipation of Baha'is in the broader context of democratization in contemporary Iran.

Despite her sober appreciation of the limited impact of the UN human rights system, Dr Ghanea seems to place considerable importance on monitoring machinery specifically focussed on discrimination based on religion or belief (see, for example, p. 218). While further elucidation of the freedom of religion or belief, and in particular the rights of minorities to profess their faith in a collective context, would be a valuable contribution, the proliferation of yet more implementation mechanisms in an already overburdened system with several bodies of overlapping competencies may be of questionable merit. The consolidation of existing mechanisms into a more centralized system may be the most effective means of strengthening human rights enforcement. Consider, for instance, the final report on enhancing the long-term effectiveness of the United Nations human rights treaty system, prepared by independent expert Philip Alston at the request of the UN Human Rights Commission.[5] The report observes that 'non-reporting has reached chronic proportions' before human rights treaty bodies,[6] and concludes that 'the existing reporting system is unsustainable'. He recommends among various options, 'adoption of some far-reaching reforms' including the preparation of 'consolidated reports' and 'a consolidation (reduction) of the number of treaty bodies'.[7] Dr Ghanea does recognize, however, that a 'focusing' or 'unifying' mechanism needs to be adopted so that there is a less narrow and compartmentalized progression of escalating responses corresponding to the degree of

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3 Mohammad Tavakoli-Targhi, 'Anti-Baha'ism and Islamism in Iran, 1941-1955', *Iran Nameh,* 19/1-2 (Winter/Spring 2001) Persian text 151-64, this quotation from English abstract p. 6.

4 *ibid.*

5 UN Doc E/CN.4/1997/74 (27 March 1997).

6 *ibid* para. 112.

7 *ibid* para. 120.

violations and the amount of time a delinquent state has had in order to remedy a situation (pp. 218-219).

Another aspect of any study of the intersection between the UN human rights system and the case of Iranian Baha'is is the central role of the Baha'i International Community. In certain respects, a study of the unique role of this highly organized body and its interaction with the disproportionately influential world community of Baha'is may be as significant as a study of the UN human rights system. According to learned commentators such as Leo Kuper, the most important factor behind the effective mobilization of the UN human rights system 'was the role of the Baha'i International Community in conducting a skilful campaign, in the nature of an international alert, sharply focused on the United Nations'. He notes that

> … there are Baha'i communities in many parts of the world whose members are native born, highly dedicated in their commitment to the unity of mankind, and willing to sacrifice their lives for their religious beliefs. Their dedication and idealism evoked a sympathetic response from the ruling groups they petitioned in their own societies and enabled the Baha'i International Community to gain the support of European states, both within the European community and in the United Nations.[8]

While Dr Ghanea does make ample references to the interventions of the Baha'i International Community within the UN system, it is difficult to appreciate the unusual influence of this non-governmental organization in shaping world opinion. Its institutional response to the unprecedented challenge posed by the persecutions in Iran also shaped the community itself. The enhanced functioning of the community's global administrative order, its emergence from obscurity and its unprecedented prominence on the world stage, including its now highly developed external affairs capacities, are in many respects a direct outgrowth of the response to the persecutions in Iran. The capacity of the numerically small Baha'i community to expeditiously mobilize world opinion on such a scale, together with the resulting transformation of the community in the process, is itself worthy of a serious and comprehensive study in a future scholarly work.

Finally, Dr Ghanea lists several recommendations for resolution of the situation of Baha'is in Iran. These measures of a legal and policy nature are intended to bring Iranian laws and practices into compliance with international human rights standards. It would have been appropriate to also consider the emerging accountability paradigm which links future respect for human rights with remedies for past violations ranging from victim compensation and truth commissions to lustration and criminal prosecutions, whether before national courts or international tribunals. Beyond human rights violations, the widespread and systematic persecutions of minority groups on religious grounds amount to crimes against humanity, as recognized in several international instruments, from the 1945 Charter of the International Military Tribunal at Nürnberg to the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Under contemporary international law, state responsibility for violations of such scale and gravity extends to the genuine investigation and prosecution of responsible persons, irrespective of their official capacity. Shifting the human rights discourse from state responsibility to individual criminal responsibility may have far-reaching consequences on the impact and role of international norms and institutions. The post-conflict transformation of countries as different as Argentina, Cambodia, Chile, East

[8] Leo Kuper, *The Prevention of Genocide* 163.

Timor, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and the former Yugoslavia have amply demonstrated the fundamental incompatibility of impunity for serious human rights abuses with an effective democratization process. There is no reason to believe that Iranians, whether Baha'i, Muslim or of any other persuasion or background, deserve anything less.

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Reason and Revelation: New Directions in Bahā'ī Thought. Seena Fazel and John Danesh (eds.). Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Faith, vol. 13. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2002. 243 pp. ISBN 1-890688-20-7 (pbk) $29.95

Anthony Lee and Kalimat Press have earned a great deal of appreciation from the Baha'i community for publishing 13 volumes in the series *Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, including this recent addition under the title *Reason and Revelation: New Directions in Bahā'ī Thought.* While the studies in this volume do not represent new directions in the thinking of some Baha'i scholars, they do offer the reader the opportunity to reflect afresh on topics and issues that have interested and challenged many of those interested in Baha'i studies. All but one of the papers presented here were previously published in *Baha'i Studies Review*.

The volume opens with Udo Schaefer's cogently argued consideration of questions regarding infallibility conferred upon the central institutions of the Baha'i Faith. He examines the functional meaning of infallibility in the Baha'i administrative order under the title 'Infallible Institutions'. He asks what the limits are to the infallibility of the central authorities and their successor institutions, and how such claims can be successfully argued. This is the first persuasive, rational, and dispassionate foray into this matter that I have encountered. It is remarkably brief, candid and challenging. He contrasts and defines the infallibility conferred upon the Universal House of Justice with that inherent in the messengers of God and that conferred upon their appointed interpreters. He argues that the infallibility conferred on the institution of the House of Justice is a functional infallibility restricted to legislation and the resolution of difficult problems. The sacred scriptures of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha confer a restrictive infallibility that provides needed flexibility to its decision-making process and allows changes over time. Schaefer's purpose is to provide and promote a rational discussion of these issues 'in order to attain a better understanding of the provisions of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha and a rationally satisfying answer to a crucial question. My only purpose . . . [is] to make the Faith and the authority of the House invulnerable against the attacks and the cynical criticism of those contemptuous of religion, and against the ridicule of critics, by offering an interpretation that is unassailable and can be accepted as reasonable by people of good will.' Schaefer's analysis contributes substantially toward such a goal.

Senn McGlinn follows with a lengthy article entitled 'Theocratic Assumptions in Baha'i Literature'. McGlinn maintains a straightforward, careful argument in an attempt to disabuse readers of secondary Baha'i literature of the impression that Baha'u'llah and Shoghi Effendi advocated the establishment of a Baha'i theocracy in some distant and utopian era. His article makes the case that a theocracy is contrary to the spirit and letter of Baha'u'llah's writings and Shoghi Effendi's interpretations. He examines several powerful passages from Baha'u'llah's tablets to advance this claim, most notably the following statement from *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh*, pages 220-221: 'Kings are the manifestations of the power . . . of God. Pray ye on their behalf. He hath invested them with the rulership of the earth and hath singled out the hearts of men as His Own domain. Conflict and contention are categorically forbidden in His Book. This is the decree of God . . .' McGlinn suggests that some writers have exercised selective misunderstanding of Shoghi Effend's writings on world order under the influence of a mythology rooted in American and European Christianity. He challenges the Baha'i community to reconsider the wild statements some have made either to each other or in print. This alone makes it useful reading. McGlinn's effort to address the issues from a textual basis is quite helpful. However, he fails to adequately consider the multiple valences

of the texts under consideration. With the recent publication of *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, new material is available in English translation. It affords the opportunity for further examination of the subject. McGlinn's study clarifies important questions that need to be asked and challenges certain beliefs and assumptions many have held. An open, unbiased and thorough inquiry into Baha'i ideas about the role of religion in governance and institutional relations is greatly needed. Though McGlinn does not meet this need, his work contributes a valuable perspective.

Franklin Lewis accomplishes what several have attempted before him: at once he argues the significance of the cultural and literary context of Baha'u'llah's remarkably beautiful Arabic and Persian writings, and proves the importance of understanding this dimension so that we may better read and comprehend these texts beyond their surface signification. He begins with a few couplets of Italian verse by Petrarch that closely parallel a passage that thousands of Baha'is could recite from memory without hesitation. This little revelation is a rejoinder to anyone who might think that literary studies are merely a handmaid to good historical study and theological analysis of Baha'i texts or, worse yet, unimportant to the 'average Baha'i', a creature I have yet to meet.

Moojan Momen's article on 'Fundamentalism and Liberalism' provides timely reading. In these dark days of religious warfare and armed ideologues, he undertakes gentle and sober consideration of this polarization of religious expressions. He briefly describes the categories, both their similarities and differences, and summarizes some of the literature on fundamentalism. He shows how differences shift over time. He then suggests that liberalism and fundamentalism have a psychological basis, that they represent diverse modes of thought and perception. 'In psychological terms, we may characterize fundamentalism and liberalism as two different ways of thinking, two cognitive styles.' 'The fundamentalist mentality is characteristically one that sees things in terms of black and white, in terms of clear-cut boundaries which determine what is and what is not acceptable belief, who is and who is not in the community.' 'Another way of describing this would be to say that one of the underlying differences between fundamentalists and liberals is that the former are driven by a desire for certainty.' Momen proceeds to examine implications for the Baha'i community.

This article offers a fresh approach to these issues of religious outlook and practice. Momen examines them in great depth and range in his book *The Phenomenon of Religion* (Oneworld, 1999). He demonstrates the difficulty in defining the categories of fundamentalism and liberalism in doctrinal terms. A desirable next step would be to integrate his psychological approach with an analysis of the social and political forces that make use of them. It could take account of the will to power in contemporary religious movements, and of abuses by the leadership of these movements that play on these modes of thought and the particular needs he identifies.

Sholeh Quinn finally puts in print her delightfully precise and illuminating understanding of historical methodology and shows how well such a method serves the Baha'i community. She concludes with this poignant note: 'Given the broad call by the Universal House of Justice to all Baha'is to develop Baha'i scholarship and to welcome all who wish to be involved in it, that welcome should include professional academic historians, who along with other academics, form just one small subgroup of all people engaged in Baha'i scholarship.'

Christopher Buck discusses the possibilities for including native legends and spiritual traditions in Baha'i accounts of revealed religions and for recognizing the sanctity of native prophets and messengers. His discussion addresses the problem for Baha'is of including their names in lists of divinely appointed messengers and prophets of God. Buck examines the tension between what he calls 'Baha'i universalism' and the limits of specificity in

Baha'i scripture. He implicitly exposes the false dichotomies of native and non-native, written and oral, Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic. It is unfortunate that he fails to address these dichotomies directly. Following his method of historical criticism, he arrives at this conclusion:

> At issue here is not the question of the *existence* of other messengers of God not attested to and listed in the Baha'i writings, but the problem of designating them by name. In principle, a Baha'i can certainly affirm that messengers of God have been sent to all peoples, according to Baha'i belief, but that there is simply no authoritative way to attest the historicity of legendary culture heroes individually. Thus, Baha'i authorities may consider adding the *category* of (rather than *names* of) messengers of God to First Nations, or messengers of God to indigenous peoples.

It is not at issue, because Buck has effectively demonstrated this point, but he has avoided the extra-textual issues of attitudes and prejudices that need to be overcome. Even so, he has provided us with valuable references with which to confront such difficulties. He directs our attention to the rich possibilities in the sacred traditions of native peoples. His article demonstrates the value of further research and analysis of Baha'i scripture – that it can enhance our respect and appreciation of the divine sources of First Nation cultures. Even in the Islamic scripture we find the statement that 'to every people there is a messenger'.

Christopher White presents an excellent article on prayer as the mental, spiritual and physical enactment of remembering God in the divine-human relationship. He examines how prayer functions in Baha'i devotional practice. Bryan Graham suggests exciting possibilities for economic studies of Baha'i teachings. Geeta Gandhi Kingdon's article on 'Women, Education, and Development' rounds out the collection of articles. She gives a compelling overview of the current social and economic status of women and the dramatic impact of education on not only the conditions of women, but also the economic advancement of their communities.

Each article in *Reason and Revelation* is well worth reading, regardless of any shortcomings. The book is an excellent resource for discussion and references on important topics that arise in conversations among Baha'is and others. This volume serves to place before its readers a few fair fruits of Baha'i scholarship, each of which rewards us with the satisfaction of serious endeavour. Perhaps the subtitle of this volume is a wish that will be realized in many a locality, that we can encourage new directions in Baha'i thought. We look forward to further volumes in the series.

Brian Miller

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Bahā'īs in the West. Peter Smith (ed.). Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, vol. 14. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press. xii, 307pp. ISBN 1-890688-11-8 (pbk) $32.50

The current volume in *Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions* continues the series' contribution to Baha'i scholarship and, specifically, to the history of Baha'i communities in the West. This volume consists of several parts, containing an overall sociological survey of the growth and spread of Baha'i communities, episodes in the history of the Baha'i Faith, and a section on the histories of two national Baha'i communities and one local community. The editor is fortunate to have had the contributions of scholars, all of them versed in the systematic study of the Baha'i community.

Peter Smith offers an excellent foreword about Baha'i studies. Typically in his analysis, he divides the Baha'i world into three zones of development, namely the Iranian Shi'i world of the origins of the Baha'i Faith, the Western World, and the 'Third World'. There are, especially in the first two 'Worlds', shared cultural characteristics that spill out into shared Baha'i patterns of activity, participation and development. Hence the logical basis of this particular volume is to include only episodes and histories of the West. Smith's analysis of the academic study of the Baha'i community is familiar to all those who engage in such study; despite its growth, academic work remains to be done on the history and culture of the Baha'i Faith in America. Only a few countries have been studied (i.e. Australia, Britain, Canada, Denmark, New Zealand and the United States). We only have a few scholarly biographies of Western Baha'is. A large and diverse collection of regional, national and local histories remains unpublished or can be found only on the Web; some of them are scholarly, many are not.

The reading of the eight chapters leaves one affirming what Smith avers in his foreword: there is little research, if any, done on the relationship between the Baha'is and their surrounding culture; there is little comparing the growth and formation of the Baha'i community with those of other religions; and little examining the particular role of the Western Baha'i communities in the Baha'i diffusion to other parts of the world, and so on.

One would think that every effort to close the gap in Baha'i scholarship would be greeted with an instant desire to publish and disseminate these works. As Smith points out, most of the essays in this volume were prepared in 1988, but the volume was published 16 years later, in 2004. There is an uncanny resemblance between publishing Baha'i scholarly works and establishing Baha'i local governing councils ('local spiritual assemblies') in the Arctic: they each take about as long and are marked by both setbacks and sudden flushes of growth.

Peter Smith's chapter, 'The Baha'i Faith in the West' (2-60), represents a valuable overview of the growth and changes in western Baha'i communities, offering not only descriptive and analytical insights, but also statistical and demographic information up to 1988. Readers who are not Baha'is (and even Baha'is who are not accustomed to thinking in cross-Western terms) will welcome this chapter.

Moojan Momen's chapter (62-106) on John Esslemont's efforts to write a piece on the 'Progress of the Baha'i Movement' is unique in that it gives an analysis of how a prominent early believer saw the development of the worldwide Baha'i community at that time (1919-1920), and of what sources of information were typically available. While Esslemont did not publish his findings, we still become privy (thanks to Momen) to Esslemont's historiography. The chapter offers brief explanatory comments, but it consists mainly of the full text of Esslemont's materials, arranged by regions of the world. One of the strengths of this chapter lies in Momen's endnotes that amplify or explain the events and persons described by Esslemont.

György Lederer's account (108-126) of Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Budapest is interesting in that it delves into the influence of Abdu'l-Baha on the press, something that previous accounts of his visit to Budapest have ignored. In several respects, Lederer's findings parallel my own account of Abdu'l-Baha in Montreal (in *The Origins of the Bahā'ī Community of Canada,* 1996) when I discovered that later Baha'i accounts ignored the stories of Abdu'l-Baha in the French-language press and the 'initial optimism about the number of Baha'is' in the visited city 'is not supported by any facts' (121). Ismael Velasco, in a later chapter in this volume, describes a similar finding in relation to Edinburgh. The lesson that Lederer proffers is this: do not rely on the customary Baha'i accounts of Abdu'l-Baha's visits to cities, but amplify them by sorting through local contemporary press accounts.

The late R. Jackson Armstrong-Ingram's contribution to this volume (128-153) rests on the premise that the official account of the 1910 Baha'i Temple Unity Convention in the United States does not entirely reflect what happened at that Convention, in particular the 'extraneous matter' that the Convention report refers to in passing. There is nothing unique about this assertion; postmodern scholars are not surprised that accounts privilege one voice over the other. In reconstructing those events, Armstrong-Ingram believes that one can broaden the picture of the Baha'i community of the time. Henry Clayton Thompson was the centre of an altercation that involved his declaring that he was founding a religious organization built on a new idea of faith, in effect proclaiming himself as a new prophet. The sources upon which Armstrong-Ingram has reconstructed the events consist of reports in the press. Aside from Armstrong-Ingram's own explanations about the Baha'i community, namely that Thompson 'exemplified several strands of development and ideology in the American Baha'i community of the time' (such as the acceptance of psychic communication and the tendency to take at face value a literal translation of Eastern linguistic hyperbole (143-144)), the reader is left more with the fact that Thompson was misguided than with what the Baha'i community was like. Nonetheless, this chapter portrays a singular instance of the influence of the Baha'i Faith on an individual and his dismissal from the records of the 1910 Baha'i Convention.

Loni Bramson's piece, 'The Plans of Unified Action' (154-197), represents her continuing interest in early administrative practice in the American Baha'i community. The conception of expanding and developing the Baha'i community by using strategic plans (1925-1934) seems to have originated in the mind of Horacy Holley, one of the most prominent Baha'is of the day. Bramson nicely locates these plans in the context of Baha'i administrative development. Of the 14 items in the bibliography (i.e. excluding works by the central figures of the Baha'i Faith and Baha'i institutions) at least 5 postdate 1988. The gaps in dated bibliographic sources do not, however, indicate that Bramson was inattentive to more recent developments in the field – she is well acquainted with the new scholarship. Rather, it demonstrates the basic problem in Baha'i publishing, namely the long delays in getting work published.

Graham Hassall's chapter on the Baha'i Faith in Australia, 1920-1947 (200-226), is an outgrowth of Hassall's voluminous scholarly works on the Baha'i Faith in Australasia. (He is currently working on the Baha'i history of Switzerland, which would have been a welcome addition to this volume.) The chapter details periods of 'complete obscurity and episodes of internal stress' (221). It is an instructive piece, not only about how to go about Baha'i scholarship, but also for the Baha'i community as a whole, which will derive fresh insights from its own past.

Margit Warburg's chapter, 'From Circle to Community: The Baha'i Religion in Denmark, 1925-2002,' (228-263) is vintage Warburg. She correlates the development of the Danish community with the overall developments of the Baha'i Faith after World War II,

and suggests that Denmark 'in many respects typifies the historical development of several European Baha'i communities' (229). More than any other piece in this volume, this chapter also connects the Baha'i developments in particular to sociological theory, namely Joachim Wach's description of the development of the founded religions. She soft-pedals the theoretical portion of her argument; it is not an unwieldy harnass. While no doubt parts of the Baha'i community are averse to this sort of reductionist reasoning about the developments of their religion, her marshalling of descriptive facts and observations make for an in-depth analysis of the evolution of a small and struggling Baha'i community. What is more, her analysis does not betray her sympathetic feelings for this community. That the chapter is based on a previously published work is apparent from the confusing running head, 'The Circle, the Brotherhood, and the Ecclesiastical Body', which does not match the title of the chapter.

The final chapter, by Ismael Velasco (his name appears as 'Valesco' on the back cover of the book) concerns the beginnings of the Baha'i community in Edinburgh, 1946-1950 (264-307). He makes extensive use of unpublished, archival sources. In addition, he contextualizes the history of the Baha'i community in Edinburgh in terms of attempts to diffuse the new faith in the United Kingdom at a broader level. Velasco probes behind the official records to ascertain the engagement of those first Scottish converts with the struggling Baha'i community, a formidable task given the paucity of personal records and the preponderance of official records. Despite these disadvantages, Velasco's care has resulted in a fine account. The appendix gives a summary (up to 1997) of the Scottish Baha'i community (such as demographic information, conversion rates – the Scottish rate is above the national UK rate – geographical distribution, and pattern of activity).

Where to now? Something urgent remains to be done about the publishing of Baha'i scholarship. The present situation with interminable its delays results in dated academic accounts and what I would call 'sandwich' scholarship; it is quite common now to find chapters or articles that have elements of work published elsewhere but with additional data. Thus, the study of a particular Baha'i phenomenon, community or episode is stretched out across several venues, but it is unusual for authors to explicitly state how the particular piece is different from earlier ones. A previously written work might well appear in print well after a later-written piece. Thus, it is almost unavoidable that the same work might be repeated in two different venues. Five of the eight chapters in this volume have appeared earlier, in more or less revised form. The current state of Baha'i publishing makes it impossible for authors to carefully and systematically develop themes in their research; they can never sure when or where a piece will find its way onto the printed page. While chapters are waiting on the shelf to be published, other related works appear. For example, Peter Smith's survey in this volume omits mention of the piece by Seena Fazel and Graham Hassall surveying 100 years of the Baha'i Faith in Europe (*Baha'i Studies Review,* vol. 8, 1998). I would make clear that my comments are not criticisms of either the authors or of Kalimat Press. On the contrary, I much appreciate their perseverance in stepping into a realm where publishing outcomes are extremely uncertain.

Whatever the shortcomings of our state of publishing, Baha'i scholars and academics have good reason to be satisfied that the current crop of about 60-80 writers worldwide is making a steady contribution so early in the history of the Baha'i Faith. However, we desperately need contributions from scholars in the non-Western world (I do not suggest that the non-Western world can be treated as uniform: developments in South America are quite different from those in Africa, and within Africa there are dissimilarities). We also need substantial scholarly work on the Baha'i community's relations with the wider world (as Peter Smith emphasizes). Some good examples are Leonda Kenison's work on Baha'i cross-racial friendships, Chelsea Horton's research on Baha'i-style activism on aboriginal reserves

in Canada, the work of N.T. Feather *et al* on Baha'is and non-Baha'is in Australia, and Bozorgmehr's study of 'internal ethnicity' in Los Angeles.

Many of the volumes in the series *Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions* highlight the relevance of probing beyond the official Baha'i record of events and, as such, have prepared Baha'is for recognizing that there are multiple voices in Baha'i accounts, whether formal or informal. The best scholarship seems to come from those who recognize this multiplicity of voices, who frankly acknowledge that tensions might sometimes accrue in trying to use these different voices, and who admit that the scholar's is just another voice, albeit one that is fair and conscious of its own limitations, contributing to a vigorous discourse among scholars and among Baha'is generally.

While one could complain that there is no index and no description of the contributing authors, as well as some unfortunate typos (e.g. 'the 'ading Room', as opposed to 'the Reading Room' (p.14)), I commend the volume for its readability, for its inclusion of 36 illustrations, mostly photos, that enhance the text, and for drawing our attention to a number of new pieces of research. Although Baha'i scholars may already be familiar with a number of the contributions, readers, both Baha'is and others, should welcome Kalimat's latest effort to make Baha'i research more available to them. It looks like the saga about the social dynamics of the beginnings and growth of a new religion will continue for a long time into the future.

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