

Bahá'í Scholarship

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I am extremely happy today to participate in this excellent conference -- from the beginning when we heard the message of the Universal House of Justice and the words of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Japan, the brilliant opening address by the Counsellor, the outstanding papers that have been presented so far, the equally outstanding translations being done by the translators, the really warm and loving and capable chairing of the conference, and the organization of the conference -- everything has been most remarkable. It is an honor to be here.

I am going to share with you some thoughts about the whole issue of Bahá'í scholarship, the essence of which has already been conveyed to you by several of the speakers today. Bahá'u'lláh has called upon us to investigate the truth. This principle alone opens the doors to a new world. People are called upon to investigate the truth independently. You don't ask children to investigate. You don't ask people who are incapable to investigate. You ask mature, capable people to investigate the truth. Bahá'u'lláh's injunction therefore clearly means that God is telling us we have arrived at a new age. This is the era of the coming of age of humanity, and therefore the responsibility and privilege is ours to independently investigate the truth. The question then arises as to what kinds of truth we should investigate. Bahá'u'lláh states that there are basically two sciences. In the original Arabic He says, *Ilm 'ul Abadan, wa Ilm 'ul Adáyan* [The science of the material and the science of the spiritual]. The science of the material, of course, applies to the material world. Everything in this world is composed of material substances and their interrelationships, and science, as we know and practice it, in its essence is the science of the material world. Physics looks at the relationship between the different elements of matter; biology describes the phenomena of life in the material world; sociology describes relationships and conditions among people in society. These disciplines are all related to this material life. Therefore, the science of the matter (of the material) is one of the two sciences that Bahá'u'lláh said exists in reality.

The other science is the science of the spiritual. The science of spirituality refers to a large body of knowledge that is fundamentally misunderstood in our world today. The science of the spiritual is basically related to the phenomenon of consciousness in general and the human consciousness as psyche in particular. The word *psyche* means the soul, so when we talk about psychology, we are really talking about the science of the soul. But the materialistic world could not deal with a non-material reality and therefore replaced study of the psyche, consciousness, and soul with the science of the mind and of the brain. We, therefore, materialized the spiritual. There are other areas of spiritual science such as the study of moral values, of prayers, of the relationship of human beings with God, of the relationship of people with each other. These different sciences belong to spiritual realm of science. It is very interesting that Bahá'u'lláh uses the word *science* for both of these areas of study, and we will come back to these matters later.

Abdu'l-Bahá in two different places described science and religion in an identical manner. In the original language (Persian), he says that science is "*Ravabete-i-Monbaefteh az Haqqiyeq-i-As'hyaá,*" which means "*relationships derived from the realities of things*"; science is the relationships that are derived from the realities of things. It is important to realize that we do not understand the reality of things. For example, we cannot understand the reality of matter, of energy, of anything. What we understand is their qualities and their characteristics and

how they interact with other things. Here `Abdu'l-Bahá says that science is basically the study of these characteristics and these interrelationships. When we understand those characteristics, we discover laws of nature. We then use this new insight in building things and in technology.

`Abdu'l-Bahá defines religion in exactly the same words. He says religion is the process of discovering the relationships derived from realities of things. So for `Abdu'l-Bahá science and religion are the same. They both focus on realities of things, but from two different perspectives: the material and the spiritual. For example, concerning human beings, there are sciences that deal with the relationship of the heart, the lungs, the brain, different organs of the body. So we have biology, physiology, anatomy, medicine, and genetics. These are all sciences related to the human body. One can also study other dimensions of the human reality, the way that human beings communicate, the way that human beings choose, make decisions. These are the study of the soul. The soul of the human being, the psyche, has three capacities: the capacity to know, to love, and to choose (the will). When we talk about studying spirituality, basically we are talking about how human beings know, how human beings love, how they choose, make decisions, as well as how under healthy and unhealthy conditions human knowledge, human love, and human will would evolve. So human beings, therefore, are the subject of study from both the material perspective and the spiritual perspective.

Now there is a third element that is important. The Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, Shoghi Effendi, says that the Bahá'í Faith is scientific in method, that is, for everything we do, we have to use the scientific method. Scientific method has a special quality. Scientists, in their attempts to understand reality, have to meet certain prerequisites. First, they must free themselves from prejudice, put aside preconceived notions, and look at phenomena with open eyes, hearts, and minds. Second, scientists have to be humble. A true scientist would accept the truth wherever it comes from without any element or sign of arrogance. A true scientist is humble and free from pride. These qualities of the scientific method and true scientists are extremely important because they allow scientists to cooperate with other scientists fully, to relate well with each other, to exchange views, and together to search for the truth, which is the ultimate object of science. Furthermore, we know that we can never understand the truth in its final form. Therefore, the scientist is always prepared to learn new facts and to put aside old facts.

A mistake that religions of the past have made is that they did not evolve. They did not use the scientific method and consequently got stuck at a certain level of knowledge and failed to progress. They could not create harmony and unity among themselves because they were at odds with each other. A unique quality and aspect of the Bahá'í Faith is that it unequivocally requires application of the scientific method to both the material and spiritual phenomena. In a most remarkable way in the Tablet of the True Seeker, Bahá'u'lláh describes precisely the characteristics of the true scientist and the approaches that are according to the scientific method. Every student of the Faith and every student of science should read that Tablet because that is the most remarkable description about scientific method and the qualities of science. Here I will share a passage from that Tablet.

... O my brother, when a true seeker determines to take the step of search in the path leading to the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse and purify his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy. He must purge his breast, which is the sanctuary of the abiding love of the Beloved, of every defilement, and

sanctify his soul from all that pertaineth to water and clay, from all shadowy and ephemeral attachments, He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth.
(*Kitáb-i-Iqán* 192)

Now when we look at science and religion, spirituality, we could say that the two main objectives of Bahá'í scholarship are this: to spiritualize science and to apply scientific method to religion. The process of the spiritualization of science would allow science not only to evolve but also to be used for the betterment of the world of humanity. Put in a different way, it would prevent abuse of scientific knowledge. We know that one of the greatest disasters of the world today is the abuse of scientific knowledge. All wars are made enormously more destructive by the abuse of scientific knowledge. The bombs and the guns, the environmental pollution, disasters that involve humanity everywhere--when we look at these events, we see that they all are at one level consequences of the abuse of science. One of the aims of Bahá'í scholarship is to spiritualize science and thus bring an end to the abuse of science and technology. In a sense, spiritualization of science is use of science in the service of peace.

The other aim is to apply the scientific method to religion. In addition to the abuse of science, the other disaster that has befallen humanity is what religion has done to humankind. It is the religious doctrines, the blindness of religious leaders, and the superstitions of religious masses that have caused the wars between religious groups, the animosities, the inequalities, and the injustices. So, the two main objectives of Bahá'í scholarship are the spiritualization of science and the application of scientific method to religion, thus creating a true harmony between science and religion.

Bahá'í scholarship basically has two approaches. One is the applied approach, and the other is the pure, conceptual approach. The applied approach we have been using now for about a century or more. During this period of time the Bahá'ís have done a number of things, the consequences of which we should study. Bahá'í scholars should begin to examine them. For example, for about 100 years Bahá'ís have been engaged in building a community, a world community of people. We have to look at this community. How does it work? How has it created its unique qualities and unique characteristics, its diversity, its unity? What are those characteristics? What are the issues behind this community that allow us to relate to each other the way we do? This is not a normal gathering of people. These are people from different countries, different backgrounds, different strata of society, different languages, and different religious backgrounds. But somehow we love each other and are totally connected with one another. We act as if we have known each other forever, and the fact is that some of us have not even previously met. This conference is the first time that we are together, and most of us may not know each other's names. I am leaving here after a few days for Hong Kong to meet another group of people that I have never met before, and yet it will be as though I have known them always. I then go to China. I will meet people who have become Bahá'ís only in the last three months, and I can relate to them and communicate as though we have known each other forever. What are the reasons that this community has evolved? We have to study it; we have to understand what it means.

Another example of applied scholarship is that we Bahá'ís have been engaged in the act of pioneering. Namely, Bahá'ís leave their home country to live in another country, a different society. What are the ramifications of this movement of humanity around the world? What does it mean that wherever you go around the world you find some Persians who are Bahá'ís? What does it mean that you can go all over the world and see Americans who are Bahá'ís; they are suddenly together? What does it mean that these people scatter globally?

What are the implications of this moment for the unity of this world? I think it is a very accurate guess that in the future when the history of the unity of the world is written, Bahá'í pioneering activities are going to be considered as one of the most outstanding contributions to bringing about the unity of the world--unity in diversity.

This phenomenon should be studied by Bahá'ís. Because Bahá'ís have done something very courageous, namely, they have proclaimed the whole world for themselves. That's what the Bahá'ís have done. Bahá'ís have decided that the world belongs to them, and they belong to the world. Everywhere they go, it is their home, and anybody they meet is their brother or sister, and they are totally comfortable. That's a unique "normal" behavior. You can call it abnormal. No Bahá'í in this world is normal. This I say as a psychiatrist. They are all abnormal. But being abnormal doesn't make us unhealthy. As a matter of fact, in the world today those who are healthy are abnormal. Because the world is sick, and the minds and hearts are sick. So it is perfectly fine to be abnormal.

Another example that we should study is the process of establishing Spiritual Assemblies in the jungles, in the villages, in the mountains, among the tribal peoples, among the peoples who for centuries and thousands of years have lived according to the rule of hierarchy. Somebody orders them to do something, and they unquestioningly do it. So Bahá'ís go to these villages, and as though by a miracle when nine Bahá'ís are resident in a village or city, they form an Assembly. This is a remarkable process because as soon as the Assembly is formed we break a thousand or two thousand or five thousand years of tradition and create a new approach to the administration of human affairs. We put men and women together, and ordinary people and their leaders together, and say no one is greater than any one else. Together the group makes a decision. Now, this I suspect has a profound effect in taking people who are in the infancy period of their collective evolution and bringing them to the age of adulthood of humanity. Bahá'u'lláh says that we are approaching the age of adulthood right now. The Guardian says we are just before that age and in the final period of adolescence of humanity. But when you look around, you will see that not all humanity is at that level. There are people who still live according to the standards of thousands of years ago. But when you go to these parts of the world, when you create an Assembly, implement methods of consultation, and give a universal consciousness to people in a span of a short time, you bring these people from three or five thousand years of arrested development to a stage of maturity. This is an experimentation in raising of consciousness the like of which has never before occurred. This is an experiment that requires study.

Then there is the other dimension of Bahá'í scholarship, which is the pure theoretical. Again here Bahá'ís are engaged in very, very important endeavours. For example, we want to create a peaceful world. Now this is not something new. Humanity has always been wanting peace in the world. Peace has been the object of humanity's quest from the very beginning of history. If we go back in the history of humanity, we see that people have always been talking about, dreaming about, wanting peace. But humanity has not been able to establish peace. To this day, humanity has not been able to find a way to accomplish this cherished goal. Now the question is why? Why not? We, as Bahá'ís, have access to the writings of the Bahá'í Faith, and in them we discover secrets of peace. We have to develop a theoretical body of knowledge that would say why peace has not occurred and would describe the way that we could go about establishing peace.

Bahá'u'lláh says peace is not something that you pursue, rather, peace is the outcome of a certain condition--unity. He said that to establish peace you first have to achieve the prerequisite for peace, which is unity. Then comes the question of how to establish unity because most people, most theoreticians, especially political scientists, are very afraid of unity.

They say unity is dangerous. They say, Look who tried to establish unity: the Hitlers and Stalins of history are the ones who tried to establish unity. Unity is not good. Unity is not possible, and they are right. That kind of unity is not good. We want a different kind of unity.

The Bahá'í terminology, of course, is unity in diversity, but what is the prerequisite for unity? Could justice be a prerequisite of unity? Bahá'u'lláh says, "the purpose of justice is the appearance of unity." In other words, if you want to have a united world, it has to have justice. Bahá'u'lláh does not stop there; the whole structure of the Bahá'í administrative order is based on the creation of Houses of Justice. It is no accident that the whole administration of the Bahá'í Faith is based on justice. When they mature, the local Spiritual Assemblies will become local Houses of Justice. The same is true for National Spiritual Assemblies, which will become National Houses of Justice. Of course, there already exists the Universal House of Justice. Why justice? Because justice is necessary before we can establish unity. We Bahá'ís may not have paid enough attention to this matter. We want to create truly united communities, and we wonder why it does not happen. It probably does not happen because we do not fulfill one of the main prerequisites of unity, which is justice. How many of us have studied what it means to be a just person? How many of us have studied what it means to be a just Assembly? How many Assemblies consult on whether they are correctly administering justice? What is justice? It is both a theoretical and practical issue with which we must now deal. We should ask ourselves another question now that we are considering this prerequisite phenomenon. If the prerequisite for peace is unity, and the prerequisite for unity is justice, what will be the prerequisite for justice?

We are trying to establish a body of theory that we can then apply to see how it works. To establish justice, we need equality because without equality we cannot have justice. No wonder 'Abdu'l-Bahá says that the peace of this world would not occur unless and until the equality of women and men is established. Because the gravest inequality is the inequality between women and men. This is the gravest inequality. Not until women become equal with men in the administration of human affairs will there be justice; not until we have justice will we have unity; and not until we have unity, will we have peace. So we have to do something about equality. Now what are we going to do about equality? Is there a prerequisite for equality? How are we going to create equality because equality requires the capacity of the individual to put the other person ahead of himself or herself, which means that the person should be totally sure of his or her own identity. The reason that men have inequality with women is because men are frightened, because men are unsure of their own selves. To put it differently, because men are immature.

That is, because men are immature they have not evolved to the degree that women have, and there is a reason for this. Men insist on retaining the power that they possess because they are frightened; they fear that if they relinquish power, everything will be taken away from them. And as long as they hang onto power, they will not truly mature as individuals, and consequently equality will not occur.

We have to understand this phenomenon of power. Probably the most dramatic change is that is going to occur as a result of introduction of Bahá'í principles in the New World Order is that power will be taken away from the mainstream of human affairs. Historically, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá said, the world of humanity has been run through power, and power has certain characteristics. When a society is administered through power, certain behavior develops in the individuals in that society. First, the powerful person seeks even more power in order to feel secure. The problem with this is that the more power you have, the more insecure you feel and the more efforts needed to protect that power. Consequently, you constantly have to increase your power until it reaches the point of danger and then goes beyond the point of

danger to cause wars and deaths.

The second thing that power does is that it divides the world into groups. The power-oriented person sees everything in dichotomies--good and bad, women and men, this country and that country, science and religion. Everything is separated; the whole world is seen as an arena of conflict, as a place where people are constantly in competition and power-struggle. The world is a jungle, and the people of this jungle have to defend themselves and fight for their rights. The power-oriented person or the authoritarian person perceives the world in dichotomies. Another characteristic of the power-oriented individual is that this kind of person has a closed mind, a closed heart, and a closed home. By closed mind, I mean that they do not accept new ideas easily. They stick with the old ways of thinking. By closed heart, I mean that they have enormous difficulty accepting anybody who is different. That condition of unity among these individuals does not take place. And the closed home means that people are not welcome. In the world likewise there are now societies that have closed their minds, hearts, and/or homes to other people. Historically, the whole world has been and continues to run according to the power principle. One other characteristic of power is that a power-oriented person, family, or nation demands conformity from everyone. One has to conform to the laws and the practices of the family or society or else be castigated and rejected. Power-orientation has been the main mode of administration of human affairs throughout history and is still the predominant mode.

Bahá'u'lláh has said that the era of powerlessness has come. In the obligatory prayer every day we say, "*I bear witness O My God that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee. I testify at this moment to my powerlessness . . .*" This is a very remarkable statement. Why is the whole world preoccupied with power? Why is the whole world trying to prove who is more powerful than whom? Which nation is more powerful? Which block is more powerful? Which ideology is more powerful? Why is the whole world preoccupied with power, yet Bahá'u'lláh comes and says that the era of powerlessness has come? What does the era of powerlessness mean? What does it mean to be powerless? We should study this statement on powerlessness. As Bahá'í scholars we should reflect on this. What does it mean if the society becomes powerless? How would it be ruled? Can it be ruled in any other way than through power?

We human beings, individually and collectively, start our lives from a position of powerlessness. Children are powerless; nations in their early development are powerless; humanity in its early phase of evolution was powerless. We knew very little; we had a limited capacity to deal with the difficulties of life, the dangers, the diseases, the climate. These are the characteristics of the first phase of development. It is a primary powerlessness with which we are born. We evolve to maturity. And as we do that, we gradually go through the stages of childhood and adolescence. Through these stages we acquire more and more power. We acquire more physical power; we acquire more intellectual power; we acquire more power to organize ourselves and to lead our lives. Humanity now in its adolescence is more powerful than ever in the past. But power in this form is dangerous because power is combined with arrogance; power is combined with competition; power is combined with feelings of separateness. That is, the condition of the world is adolescence.

Now when we move to the next phase, we arrive at the phase in which we realize that we no longer can relate to others from a position of power, that actually, we cannot relate in this manner and still communicate with each other effectively. One of the characteristics of adulthood is that when we arrive at maturity, we fall in love. What does it mean to fall in love? It means that you make a fool of yourself as far as power is concerned. You become totally powerless in the sight of this other person. The other person can be a man or woman you have fallen in love with, or it could be your baby you have fallen in love with, but you

start acting as if you were totally powerless, meaning that you have put aside your power and replaced it with love. The opposite of power is to be filled with love. Even psychological studies done on the authoritarian personality have reached the same conclusion. After the Second World War there was a lot of soul searching because two nations of the West, the Germans and the Americans, committed acts of horrendous violence. What happened to the Jews in Germany and the Japanese in Hiroshima were unbelievable chapters in the history of humanity. They brought destruction of a previously unimaginable nature. So a number of scientists began to study the personality characteristics that would allow the commission of such acts. Their conclusion was that when people are reared according to the power principle, they are reared to believe that the most important thing in life is to have power. And if necessary you can drop a bomb and kill a great number of people. You do that because you have to maintain power at all costs, and that is related to the psychology of the power-oriented person. Then psychology asked the question, "What would be the opposite of power orientation?" They came up with love orientation as the opposite. We need a new generation of humanity that would be reared according to the principles of love in interpersonal relationships. That calls upon us as Bahá'ís to ask ourselves what system of education and what family child-rearing practices will result in children who are not going to be power-oriented, who are going to be love-oriented, who are going to deal with the crises of the world, not through the dynamics of power and authoritarianism but through a new dynamic.

These are some examples of the area of pure theoretical dimensions of Bahá'í scholarship. There are many other ideas, but what I am trying to do is give examples of the avenues of enquiry and research that we have to keep in mind. For example, in the message today, the House of Justice calls upon the Association for Bahá'í Studies members in Japan to begin to reflect on how they are going to contribute to the welfare of Japanese society. How are they going to help this distinctive and distinguished nation to contribute, at a much higher level and according to the principles of the Bahá'í Faith, to the welfare of humanity? This is a remarkable task that we have to accomplish, and one of the things that we have to do is to examine how we rear our children in this society. Are we rearing children who are power oriented, who learn to be competitive, who learn to think that the only thing that matters is to be successful, and who decide that success is to have more money and more power? If we are rearing our children along those lines, we should not be surprised that we create a power-oriented society with all its attendant problems.

However, if we want to rear children who are unifiers, who are agents of justice, who are capable of dealing with each other with equality, then we need a different form of education. What would be the characteristics of such a system? What would be the curriculum? These are the kinds of questions that we should begin to address and towards which we should direct our educational activities and our Bahá'í and professional knowledge.

Bahá'u'lláh admonished us to be anxiously concerned about the time in which we live, about the reflexes of the time. This moment in history is a very remarkable moment. We should reflect on this moment. What are the characteristics of this moment? The fundamental characteristic of this moment in history is the raising of a new consciousness. A new consciousness is coming to the world of humanity, and central to this new consciousness is that we have to rethink our view of human nature. This is a crucial issue. When in front of our eyes, Marxism crumbles, Communist countries begin to disintegrate, that's only the obvious phenomena of this moment in history. There is another crumbling taking place in Western civilization, and I think Japan along with the West faces this test. Something important is happening in these societies. The structure of society is being undermined from within. While in Marxist and Stalinist countries the structure was visibly crumbling from the

outside, here it is like a house that has been eaten by termites. You cannot see the damage. The house is standing, except that the termites are eating at the very vitals of this structure, and it's enough that one more stressor is added, and the whole structure will crumble. I see this phenomenon in my practice. I see, for example, how families are crumbling, marriages are breaking up, more and more marriages all over the world are breaking up. Increasingly, the relationships between men and women are being strained. More and more in different societies signs of injustice are obvious. There are homeless, powerless people that nobody wants to do anything with. These are signs of societies becoming more violent and less sensitive to the needs of people. The moral standards of society are crumbling; the leaders of society are no longer able to lead; people no longer believe their leaders; and leaders no longer trust their people. Relationships everywhere are crumbling. Concurrently, the environmental crisis is another sign of the disintegration in our world. What is interesting about the environmental crisis is that it is pushing us to accept that the world is one country. And the sexual problem, the AIDS crisis: The AIDS virus has this nasty quality that it attacks everybody globally and without discrimination.

It is remarkable that when the Manifestation of God, the harbinger of a new consciousness comes to the world and says the earth is one country and humankind its citizens, we have two choices. Either we accept the concept and begin to make the earth one country and humankind its citizens, or we suffer the consequences of disunity. The Bahá'í community is an example of putting this principle of global unity into practice. However, the rest of humanity is also being pushed to accept, however reluctantly, that the earth is one country. The environmental crisis, wars, refugees, migrations, diseases such as AIDS, are all reminders of our oneness. This is the way it works: if we do not accept the concept that "*the earth is one country and mankind its citizens*" voluntarily, we are then *pushed* to accept it. And that is true about every aspect of our lives. The issue of unity, the issue of equality, issue of maturity, issue of justice, every one of them, if we don't willingly take proactive steps, then we will be pushed to them. We will have to accept these conditions as world citizens. That's why the raising of consciousness becomes so important. In order to change society the first thing that we have to do is to raise consciousness.

For human beings to achieve anything, the first thing that they need is to have the idea of that thing. If we do not formulate the idea of making a radio, we never create it. If we do not formulate the idea of making the earth one country, we would not make the earth one country. So that is the reason we have to raise consciousness. The Manifestation of God is the universal consciousness of a new age. And then we become the agents of raising that consciousness. When we talk about teaching, we are talking about opening the minds and the hearts of other human beings to a higher level of consciousness and awareness. Because when you do so, that person is transformed. Thus, one of the activities that the Association for Bahá'í Studies can do, that Bahá'í scholars can do, is to raise their own consciousness and share that consciousness with everyone else through words, through research, through the example of their lives.

When I talk about Bahá'í scholars, I am talking about every individual Bahá'í because Bahá'ís, every Bahá'í, has become a Bahá'í by independent investigation of the truth, meaning every Bahá'í has learned to use the scientific method in investigating the truth. That is the most important step towards scholarship. There are others who have also learned the techniques, but the practice of search for truth is the most remarkable, the most important dimension of the scientific method. So under no circumstances should we underestimate what each and every one of us do; under no circumstances should that be underestimated.

Question & Answers

Question: You talked about power and powerlessness and changing the role of power, and for me an interesting thing in the Bahá'í community is the Auxiliary Board member, who in one sense has no power, so that is a very important institution, and I think it is connected with your comments about power.

Answer: Yes, thank you. That is a very important issue. The Bahá'í administration has separated power from authority. Ordinarily, in the world, leaders have both power and authority. Somebody assumes authority and with it comes power, or someone gains power and with it comes authority. These two combinations create a profound degree of vulnerability to corruption. When power and authority are combined, people become corrupt. In the Bahá'í Faith, the Guardian says, power is given to every individual. Every individual has power—the power to act, and to choose which way to act. Bahá'í institutions do not have power. The institutions have authority. Authority means, in the Bahá'í Faith, the process of leading, leadership, and the whole idea of leadership is to lead people to God. What the institutions of the Faith have to do is to lead people to God. But they cannot make people go to God; they do not have that power. That power belongs to the individual. The individual may decide to go or may decide not to go. Historically, those who have had both authority and power said, "If you don't come, we will push you and use force. We have police and soldiers to force you to do what we want you to do, and if you do not cooperate, we will put you in jail and will kill you." That abuse of power will never occur in the Bahá'í Faith because power and authority are separate. This is another area of research we have to conduct.

Question: You were going to tell us why women are further evolved.

Answer: Yes, you are right. But you know historically what happened was, as `Abdu'l-Bahá says, men, by virtue of their physical power and mental aggressiveness, assumed the role of leadership in human society, and they organized the world by force, through the use of force. They divided responsibilities into two groups: male responsibilities and female responsibilities. The male responsibilities were to go out, get the food, and protect the females and the children from dangerous animals and enemies. And in exchange the females had to obey the males, rear the children, keep the house, cook the food, take care of the sick and, of course, the men. They were told to be nice to men, not to cause trouble, and "be a good girl." That was basically the equation, and gradually the whole situation became institutionalized and the society was organized along these lines. Men became experts in the use of force, culminating in the dramatic use of force during the Second World War and the many wars since the Second World War. These are male accomplishments, and the books of history written about Alexander the Great, Napoleon the Great, and Hitler the Great, and all of those "Greats," are basically those who caused wars, killed people, and caused much destruction. Those are the "Greats" of history.

Women. What did they do? They became educators. They became caretakers. They became those who looked after the sick, after those who were downtrodden, after those who were in need, after those who were suffering. These activities and qualities are conducive to a spiritual development. Those qualities, combined with the suffering that women have endured throughout the years, have created conditions for women to develop spiritually. Women have grown further than men. As `Abdu'l-Bahá says, suffering is a greater force for development than are happiness and success. So what I think has happened is that although in the affairs of humanity there has been injustice, in the overall plan of God justice is being done. People have not acted with justice, but God has. Bahá'u'lláh has stated that in this dispensation women are going to take the leading role in the organization of human affairs and in creating

peace. Peace will be established largely through the contribution of women.

Men really have lost a lot through their preoccupation with power. Humanity has paid a very high price. Men, by acquiring power, thought they had gained something, but in the process men have lost a lot. As `Abdu'l-Bahá said, the time has come for the world to become more feminine. Until the qualities of the feminine and masculine are harmonized, the onus is on men to acquire some of the qualities of women. At the present time, it is in vogue for women to become like men. I am afraid that this strategy may backfire. It is far more urgent that men acquire the qualities of women. They must become more loving, more understanding, more caring, more humble, more communicative. Women, of course, need to be empowered, to participate actively and equally in the running of society. However, they need not imitate men in their handling of power and authority.

Question: Earlier Counsellor Schwerin mentioned that one of the things that we need to do is to encourage budding scholars. Since this is a rather new experience for us in this country and I think it is one the world is interested in, could you tell us about your own budding experience and maybe experiences that you have had along the way in encouraging scholars?

Answer: Well, you know encouragement is not an easy thing to do because the word *encouragement* means to give courage. So if you want to give encouragement, you have to have courage, but to have courage you need encouragement. So here is a creative circle: to encourage you need courage, to have courage you need encouragement, which means that for the Association for Bahá'í Studies to flourish it has to have courage. For it to have the courage, it has to receive encouragement from at least two sources. First, from the National Spiritual Assembly and the Counsellors which are superior institutions, and second, from you in the community who would help it, assist it by participating in its activities, its cause, its aims. So the Association gains courage. When the Association has courage, then it can encourage you and assist each and all to evolve. Central to the issue is the issue of trust. This is the world of distrust. This is a world in which people have ceased to trust each other. We want to re-establish that trust. We want to create conditions so that individual human beings trust themselves and their individual capacities and abilities. We want also to establish conditions of trust so that if reviewers told you it would be better if you write this way or that way, you will not receive it as criticism or a put-down, but rather, as helping to develop the process of raising the level of scholarship. Once that trust is established, then scholarship will flourish. In North America it took a while before that trust was established. We were beginners; we didn't know; we had never done it; we had made many mistakes; and therefore we weren't either encouraged or encouraging, but gradually through trial-and-error and perseverance, we have learned how to do it better. But, that's all right, trial-and-error is perfectly fine. Here I hope that the process won't be as painful or difficult as it has been in other places around the world, that you will do it much easier and much better. One thing is sure: in those countries where there was a very close relationship between the National Spiritual Assembly, the Counsellors, and the Association, the experiences of the Associations for Bahá'í Studies were far better than in those countries where these conditions did not exist.

Question: One of the biggest things we need to be concerned about is in writing or speaking to express Bahá'í principles and ideas and then to attach Bahá'u'lláh's name to it, and that is now a goal we are supposed to begin doing.

Answer: Well, that is very true. It is very frightening. That is the reason we have avoided it for so long, and we would have avoided it for much longer if the House of Justice had not said the time has come. Now why are we so afraid of this phenomenon? I think that at one level, I have already touched upon the fear of being abnormal, the fear of being different. This

fear works very much against the notion of presenting the concepts in the name of Bahá'u'lláh. So we have to overcome our fears, and here is a little psychology to help. Whenever we feel afraid, it means that we are threatened by something. In this case I think the greatest threat that exists is that either people would reject us or make fun of us. The only solution that I can think of is for us to be willing to be rejected for Bahá'u'lláh. After all, in one of his most important tablets, the Tablet of Ahmad, Bahá'u'lláh actually tells us that we are going to be rejected for his sake, and if we are, we should remember the statement by Bahá'u'lláh: "And if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path, or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby. Rely upon God, Thy God and the Lord of Thy Fathers. For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion. . . ." Now it is very interesting, in the Tablet of Ahmad that the statement should be made. It means that all of us should not only expect but also welcome that process of rejection, and we should not worry about that rejection. How do we welcome the possibility of rejection? We do so simply by proclaiming Bahá'u'lláh with wisdom, with moderation, with care, and with dignity. If then, someone still decided to reject us, we should not be worried about it. That rejection is acceptable. That spiritual act of sacrifice will have profound effects because immediately after that statement, Bahá'u'lláh talks about the conditions of the people of the world and says: "For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His melody with their own ears." We need not fear affliction or degradation. Affliction is like what happened to the Bahá'ís in Iran. Degradation is what would happen to us if we do what Bahá'u'lláh said in the Tablet of Ahmad. In the same Tablet, He also says, "Be thou as a flame of fire to My enemies and a river of life eternal to My loved ones and be not of those who doubt." The flame of fire means many things; fire heats and melts the coldness; fire purifies; fire also shows things; and fire burns; fire does many things. Most of the things that fire does are positive. Most important in this respect is that fire melts the coldness of the hearts of those who are not friends of God. So when hearts melt, they become accepting. Now when you give fire to an enemy, that enemy responds according to its nature. If it is frozen, it thaws and melts and comes to life. If it is dead, it burns. That is what happens, and then Bahá'u'lláh says do that and do not doubt the effects of this. Then He says that, in the process of proclaiming his Name, "if thou art overtaken by affliction in My path or degradation for My sake, be not thou troubled thereby." Next, Bahá'u'lláh describes the condition of the world. He says, "For the people are wandering in the paths of delusion, bereft of discernment to see God with their own eyes, or hear His Melody with their own ears." Then He describes furthermore: "Thus have their superstitions become veils between them and their own hearts and kept them from the path of God, the Exalted, the Great." So here is a description of what we have to do. The divine physician makes the diagnosis. The diagnosis is that people are wandering in the paths of delusion. What they believe is not reality, and they cannot see with their own eyes or hear with their own ears. Therefore, teaching the Faith is the process of helping people rid themselves of their delusions, to give them courage, and to show how they can see with their own eyes, can judge according to their own judgment, and have the power to understand reality themselves.

This is the process of giving courage to another human being. We can do all of this and should not be frightened. The things that most people believe *are* delusions, so they could be taken away. It is all right. This is an act of love; this is an act of encouragement that we do. And as we do that, we are taking away superstitions that have come between people and the truth. Through that process we open their eyes; we open their ears. We have allowed them to see realities. When we speak in the name of Bahá'u'lláh, no doubt we are going to be attacked. But the other side of this is that there are those who will hear. They will see, and

they will let their superstitions go, and different processes will take place.

Bahá'u'lláh goes on to make magnificent statements about what can happen. Bahá'u'lláh says, "Learn well this Tablet, O Ahmad! Chant it during thy days and withhold not thyself therefrom. For verily, God hath ordained for the one who chants it, the reward of a hundred martyrs and a service in both worlds." This is an important statement. Bahá'u'lláh says when this tablet is chanted, you have the reward of a hundred martyrs.

You recall at the beginning of this tablet Baha'u'llah says that the beloved of the hearts of humanity has appeared, and not only that, that He has fulfilled all the prophecies of the Báb, who in turn fulfills all of the prophecies of the past. So He tells humanity a lot about the Báb because every Manifestation talks about the previous Manifestation in the world, and Bahá'u'lláh talks about the *Bayán* as the Mother Book. In the *Bayán*, those who believe in God are called *Sháhzedá*, which means martyr, one who testifies to something. There are two ways that you can testify. First, you testify through your life; second, you testify through your death. You can be a living martyr, or you can be a dying martyr.

Bahá'u'lláh says that the one who understands Bahá'u'lláh by reading this tablet, chanting it constantly every day, and consequently acquiring a greater understanding of Bahá'u'lláh has the reward a hundred times that of those who testified to the truth of the Báb. This means that one become a living martyr to the reality of Bahá'u'lláh, which is the reward of hundred of those who testified to the reality of the Báb. Testifying to Bahá'u'lláh is difficult, and I think that one of the instruments that will help us to have the courage to testify is the Tablet of Ahmad itself. I suggest that if we want to proclaim the name of Bahá'u'lláh, we should read the Tablet of Ahmad. That would give the courage we require because in it Bahá'u'lláh tells us what to do, how to do it, prescribes what would happen, and reassures us that all will be all right—all things that a loving parent says. Yes, some may make fun of you because those people do not understand. Look, they cannot see, they cannot hear. It will be your privilege to open their eyes and ears to the light and melody of reality.

Thank you.