

Breakout Sessions
Dimensions of Bahá'í Scholarship – Some Questions

1. *What is the station of the “learned” in the Writings? What are the characteristics, standards and qualities of the “learned?”*
2. *How does one attain excellence in the pursuit of knowledge? What type of excellence should be our goal? What are the fruits of achieving distinction and excellence?*
3. *How do we acquire knowledge? What do the Writings say about the types of knowledge that we should seek? What are the methods, resources, values, and attitudes that we can draw on in this endeavor? How does the principle of unity and interconnectedness of the “reality of things” impact our efforts to gain knowledge? What does it mean to be “systematic” in one’s approach to acquiring knowledge?*
4. *Is any particular field of study or inquiry more important or more relevant to the needs of humanity or those of the Cause of God? Is it reasonable to try to define what the scope of Bahá'í scholarship is?*
5. *How does a deeper understanding of the Revelation clarify or refine scholarly activity? How does intellectual training provide us with tools to gain insights into the meaning and implications of Bahá'í teachings?*
6. *How do you understand the call of the Universal House of Justice to develop “a new model of scholarly activity,” “more integrative paradigms of scholarship,” and “new scholarly methodologies capable of coming to grips with spiritual, moral, cultural, and social phenomena not hitherto encountered”? How does the principle of the harmony of science and religion influence our intellectual undertakings?*
7. *What is the role of individual conscience in scholarly inquiry? What is conscience? Is it possible for one to have a truly objective view of reality?*
8. *What is the role of consultation in pursuing knowledge? Given humanity’s expanding rational and interpretative powers, how does consultation ground our perceptions of physical and social reality?*
9. *The House of Justice has stated that “the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the standard of truth against which all other views and conclusions are to be measured.” How does this perspective impact the process of knowledge generation and application? What is a “standard of truth?”*
10. *What role does the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh play in our approach to knowledge? How does the Covenant provide a mechanism for resolving differences of opinion and creating unity of understanding? How does the Covenant ensure that Bahá'í scholarship is carried out in a spirit of tolerance and openness?*

Extracts that pertain to these Questions

Question 1 – Station and Qualities of the Learned

“The Great Being saith: The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of these two greatest gifts.”

--Bahá'u'lláh, Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, p. 171.

“...there are those famed and accomplished men of learning, possessed of praiseworthy qualities and vast erudition, who lay hold on the strong handle of the fear of God and keep to the ways of salvation. In the mirror of their minds the forms of transcendent realities are reflected, and the lamp of their inner vision derives its light from the sun of universal knowledge. They are busy by night and by day with meticulous research into such sciences as are profitable to mankind, and they devote themselves to the training of students of capacity. It is certain that to their discerning taste, the proffered treasures of kings would not compare with a single drop of the waters of knowledge, and mountains of gold and silver could not outweigh the successful solution of a difficult problem...”

For every thing, however, God has created a sign and symbol, and established standards and tests by which it may be known. The spiritually learned must be characterized by both inward and outward perfections; they must possess a good character, an enlightened nature, a pure intent, as well as intellectual power, brilliance and discernment, intuition, discretion and foresight, temperance, reverence, and a heartfelt fear of God. For an unlit candle, however great in diameter and tall, is no better than a barren palm tree or a pile of dead wood...”

“Abdu'l-Bahá, The Secret of Divine Civilization, pp. 21-22; pp. 33-34

“...There is nothing that brings success in the Faith like service. Service is the magnet which draws the Divine Confirmations. Thus, when a person is active, they are blessed by the Holy Spirit. When they are inactive, the Holy Spirit cannot find a repository in their being, and thus they are deprived of its healing and quickening rays.”

(On behalf of the Guardian, Lights of Guidance, p. 118)

Question 2 – Attaining excellence

“Strain every nerve to acquire both inner and outer perfections, for the fruit of the human tree hath ever been and will ever be perfections both within and without. It is not desirable that a man be left without knowledge or skills, for he is then but a barren tree. Then, so much as capacity and capability allow, ye needs must deck the tree of being with fruits such as knowledge, wisdom, spiritual perception and eloquent speech.”

--Bahá'u'lláh, Comp. Excellence in All Things

“Therefore I say that man must travel in the way of God. Day by day he must endeavor to become better, his belief must increase and become firmer, his good qualities and his turning to God must be greater, the fire of his love must flame more brightly; then day by day he will make progress, for to stop advancing is the means of going back.”

-- 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Comp. Excellence in All Things

“The heart of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá longeth, in its love, to find that Bahá’í young people, each and all, are known throughout the world for their intellectual attainments. There is no question but that they will exert all their efforts, their energies, their sense of pride, to acquire the sciences and arts.” -- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Comp. Excellence in All Things

“Imbued with this excellence and a corresponding humility, with tenacity and a loving servitude, today's youth must move towards the front ranks of the professions, trades, arts and crafts which are necessary to the further progress of humankind -- this to ensure that the spirit of the Cause will cast its illumination on all these important areas of human endeavor. Moreover, while aiming at mastering the unifying concepts and swiftly advancing technologies of this era of communications, they can, indeed they must also guarantee the transmittal to the future of those skills which will preserve the marvelous, indispensable achievements of the past. The transformation which is to occur in the functioning of society will certainly depend to a great extent on the effectiveness of the preparations the youth make for the world they will inherit.”

--The Universal House of Justice, A Wider Horizon, Selected Letters 1983-1992, p. 38.

Question 3 – Acquisition of Knowledge

Arts, crafts and sciences uplift the world of being, and are conducive to its exaltation. Knowledge is as wings to man's life, and a ladder for his ascent. Its acquisition is incumbent upon everyone. The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words. Great indeed is the claim of scientists and craftsmen on the peoples of the world. Unto this beareth witness the Mother Book in this conspicuous station.

In truth, knowledge is a veritable treasure for man, and a source of glory, of bounty, of joy, of exaltation, of cheer and gladness unto him. Happy the man that cleaveth unto it, and woe betide the heedless.

Bahá'u'lláh, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, pg 26

There are certain pillars which have been established as the unshakeable supports of the Faith of God. The mightiest of these is learning and the use of the mind, the expansion of consciousness, and insight into the realities of the universe and the hidden mysteries of Almighty God...To promote knowledge is thus an inescapable duty imposed on every one of the friends of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pg 126

The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘‘Abdu’l-Bahá, pg 253

Study the sciences, acquire more and more knowledge. Assuredly one may learn to the end of one's life! Use your knowledge always for the benefit of others; so may war cease on the face of this beautiful earth, and a glorious edifice of peace and concord be raised. Strive that your high ideals may be realized in the Kingdom of God on earth, as they will be in Heaven.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks, pg 43

Reflect upon the inner realities of the universe, the secret wisdoms involved, the enigmas, the inter-relationships, the rules that govern all. For every part of the universe is connected with every other part by ties that are very powerful and admit of no imbalance, nor any slackening whatever.

(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, p. 157)

Question 4 – What is the scope of Bahá’í scholarship

Shoghi Effendi has for years urged the Bahá’ís (who asked his advice, and in general also) to study history, economics, sociology, etc., in order to be au courant with all the progressive movements and thoughts being put forth today, and so that they could correlate these to the Bahá’í teachings. What he wants the Bahá’ís to do is to study more, not to study less. The more general knowledge, scientific and otherwise, they possess, the better. Likewise he is constantly urging them to really study the Bahá’í teachings more deeply.

(Compilation, Scholarship, p. 17)

It is evident that the Bahá’í Writings illuminate all areas of human endeavour and all academic disciplines. Those who have been privileged to recognize the station of Bahá’u’lláh have the bounty of access to a Revelation which casts light upon all aspects of thought and inquiry, and are enjoined to use the understanding which they obtain from their immersion in the Holy Writings to advance the interests of the Faith.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

Since you have raised the question of whether physics is more than tangentially related to Bahá’í issues, you might consider the following comments of a well-known scientific thinker, who is not a Bahá’í, about the correlation between the Bahá’í Teachings and recent developments in the physical sciences:

In our times we can only survive, and our civilization can only flower, if we reorient the conventional wisdom and achieve the new insights which have been proclaimed by the Bahá’í Faith and which are now also supported by the latest discoveries of the empirical sciences. Bahá’ís proclaim that the most important condition that can bring about peace is unity -- the unity of families, of nations, and of the great currents of thought and inquiry that we denote science and religion. Maturity, in turn, is a prerequisite for such unity. This is evolutionary thinking, and its validity is shown by the new theories which emerge from nonequilibrium thermodynamics, dynamical systems theory, cybernetics, and the related sciences of complexity. They are supported by detailed empirical investigations in such fields as physical cosmology, paleobiological macroevolutionary theory, and new trends in historiography.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to the Study of Faith Compilation)

The House of Justice wishes to avoid use of the terms “Bahá’í scholarship” and “Bahá’í scholars” in an exclusive sense, which would effectively establish a demarcation between those admitted into this category and those denied entrance to it. It is clear that such terms are relative, and that what is a worthy scholarly endeavour by a Bahá’í, when compared to the activities of those with whom he is in contact, may well be regarded as of vastly lesser significance when measured against the accomplishments of the outstanding scholars which the Faith has produced. The House of Justice seeks the creation of a Bahá’í community in which the members encourage each other, where there is respect for accomplishment, and a

common realization that every one is, in his or her own way, seeking to acquire a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and to contribute to the advancement of the Faith.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues related to Study of Faith Compilation)

Question 5 – The Impact of Study

Those believers with the capacity and opportunity to do so have repeatedly been encouraged in their pursuit of academic studies by which they are not only equipped to render much needed services to the Faith, but are also provided with the means to acquire a profound insight into the meaning and the implications of the Bahá'í Teachings. They discover also that the perceptions gained from a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh clarify the subjects of their academic inquiry.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

“...one acquires knowledge in two ways: from acceptance of the revelation of the Manifestation of God and through study. Revelation does not constrain or contradict the search for truth, it provides the spiritual dynamic and illumination which informs the process and the fruits of our study. Without it we can go far astray, and our scholarship, instead of being a light to ourselves and others, can inflate our egos and breed disdain for those who are less learned...”

The Bahá'í teachings seem to say that knowledge must be pursued simultaneously in a number of ways: through immersion in the divine revelation, through the unfettered processes of the human mind, through the inspiration of the human heart, and through the application of the teachings in our lives and actions. It is the correlation of these avenues – and probably of yet others – that the Universal House of Justice intends Bahá'í scholars to work out. A valid methodology can in no way imply blind acceptance of unexamined statements, but there is a point in the search for truth at which the seeker has risen above doubts to certitude. This does not mean that his mind is no longer searching and enquiring, but that experience and study have caused him to attain that faith which “‘Abdu'l-Bahá defines as ‘conscious knowledge.’”

(Ian Semple, Knowledge and the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Studies Review, Vol. 9, 1999-2000)

Question 6 – The need for new scholarly methodologies

As a body of people who are being steadily freed by the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh from the "gravitational pull", so to speak, of the cultures in which their habits of mind have been formed, the community already has a unique approach to the exploration of reality. This approach needs to be sharply honed as an ever more effective instrument of social transformation. The devising of the new scholarly paradigm called for by this circumstance offers a priceless opportunity of service and achievement to those Bahá'ís who enjoy the dual gifts of spiritual faith and intellectual faculties trained in the best that contemporary society has to offer.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)

The Universal House of Justice does not see itself obliged to prescribe a new scientific methodology for Bahá'í academics who make study of the Faith, its teachings and history the

subject of their professional activities. Rather has it concentrated on drawing the attention of these friends to the inadequacy of certain approaches from a Bahá'í point of view, urging them to apply to their work the concept which they accept as Bahá'ís: that the Manifestation of God is of a higher realm and has a perception far above that of any human being. He has the task of raising humankind to a new level of knowledge and behaviour. In this, His understanding transcends the traditions and concepts of the society in which He appears. As Bahá'u'lláh Himself writes in the Hidden Words:

"O Son of Beauty! By My spirit and by My favor! By My mercy and by My beauty! All that I have revealed unto thee with the tongue of power, and have written for thee with the pen of might, hath been in accordance with thy capacity and understanding, not with My state and the melody of My voice." Although, in conveying His Revelation, the Manifestation uses the language and culture of the country into which He is born, He is not confined to using terminology with the same connotations as those given to it by His predecessors or contemporaries; He delivers His message in a form which His audience, both immediate and in centuries to come, is capable of grasping. It is for Bahá'í scholars to elaborate, over a period of time, methodologies which will enable them to perform their work with this understanding. This is a challenging task, but not one which should be beyond the scope of Bahá'ís who are learned in the Teachings as well as competent in their scientific disciplines.
(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)

"...Bahá'í academics are faced with repeated exhortations from the Universal House of Justice to reexamine the postulates of established methodologies and widen their vision so that there is no dichotomy between what they believe as Bahá'ís and what they write as scholars...

There are, of course, many methodologies in use in academia. They evolve, are subject to revision, and are applied with varying rigour in different places. The Bahá'í viewpoint is critical of only certain aspects of some of them, and mainly requires Bahá'ís who employ them in their work to widen their vision beyond the limits any particular method may prescribe. Some of those convinced by their training that current academic methods are scientific and are the most reliable route to ascertaining the truth misjudge the House of Justice's exhortations as arising from a desire to obscure unpalatable facts, or as a reversion to medieval practices of subordinating research to ecclesiastical dogma. There is a temptation, therefore, to divide science and religion into complementary but mutually exclusive realms, perpetuating the division that has long ruled western thought. Bahá'í scholars need to study the implications of the principle of the harmony of religion and science, and to develop methods faithful to it. It is not likely that this is a task the Universal House of Justice will perform for them."

(Ian Semple, Knowledge and the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Studies Review, Vol. 9, 1999-2000)

Question 7 – The Function of Individual Conscience

"the conscience of man is sacred and to be respected..."
(“Abdu'l-Bahá, A Traveller's Narrative, p. 91)

"The more the conscience of man develops, the more will his heart be free and his soul attain unto happiness.(“Abdu'l-Bahá, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)

As you well understand, not only the right but also the responsibility of each believer to explore truth for himself or herself are fundamental to the Bahá'í teachings. This principle is an integral feature of the coming of age of humankind, inseparable from the social transformation to which Bahá'u'lláh is calling the peoples of the world. It is as relevant to specifically scholarly activity as it is to the rest of spiritual and intellectual life. Every human being is ultimately responsible to God for the use which he or she makes of these possibilities; conscience is never to be coerced, whether by other individuals or institutions.

Conscience, however, is not an unchangeable absolute. One dictionary definition, although not covering all the usages of the term, presents the common understanding of the word "conscience" as "the sense of right and wrong as regards things for which one is responsible; the faculty or principle which pronounces upon the moral quality of one's actions or motives, approving the right and condemning the wrong".

The functioning of one's conscience, then, depends upon one's understanding of right and wrong; the conscience of one person may be established upon a disinterested striving after truth and justice, while that of another may rest on an unthinking predisposition to act in accordance with that pattern of standards, principles and prohibitions which is a product of his social environment. Conscience, therefore, can serve either as a bulwark of an upright character or can represent an accumulation of prejudices learned from one's forebears or absorbed from a limited social code.

A Bahá'í recognizes that one aspect of his spiritual and intellectual growth is to foster the development of his conscience in the light of divine Revelation -- a Revelation which, in addition to providing a wealth of spiritual and ethical principles, exhorts man "to free himself from idle fancy and imitation, discern with the eye of oneness His glorious handiwork, and look into all things with a searching eye". This process of development, therefore, involves a clear-sighted examination of the conditions of the world with both heart and mind. A Bahá'í will understand that an upright life is based upon observance of certain principles which stem from Divine Revelation and which he recognizes as essential for the well-being of both the individual and society. In order to uphold such principles, he knows that, in certain cases, the voluntary submission of the promptings of his own personal conscience to the decision of the majority is a conscientious requirement, as in wholeheartedly accepting the majority decision of an Assembly at the outcome of consultation...

The House of Justice agrees that the exercise of wisdom calls for a measure of love and the development of a sensitive conscience. These, in turn, involve not only devotion to a high standard of uprightness, but also consideration of the effects of one's words and actions.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)

Question 8 – The Role of Consultation in Scholarship

In all things it is necessary to consult. This matter should be forcibly stressed by thee, so that consultation may be observed by all. The intent of what hath been revealed from the Pen of the Most High is that consultation may be fully carried out among the friends, inasmuch as it is and will always be a cause of awareness and of awakening and a source of good and well-being.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Consultation: A Compilation)

Consultation bestoweth greater awareness and transmuteth conjecture into certitude. It is a shining light which, in a dark world, leadeth the way and guideth. For everything there is and will continue to be a station of perfection and maturity. The maturity of the gift of understanding is made manifest through consultation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Consultation: A Compilation)

Say: no man can attain his true station except through his justice. No power can exist except through unity. No welfare and no well-being can be attained except through consultation.

(Bahá'u'lláh, cited in Consultation: A Compilation)

It is apparent that the crisis of contemporary civilization is impelling thinkers in many lands to explore new scholarly methodologies capable of coming to grips with spiritual, moral, cultural, and social phenomena not hitherto encountered. No segment of humanity is so well equipped as the Bahá'í community to take a leading role in this effort... The Universal House of Justice can only invite Bahá'í scholars, as it invites all other believers, to respond to this historic challenge, in whatever way and to whatever extent each person considers possible. It is confident that, in Bahá'í scholarship as in all other areas of Bahá'í service, the essential resources will gradually be forthcoming and the required models of research and study will be refined through the process of consultation.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)

Question 9 -- Standards of Truth

In the simultaneous endeavour to pursue their studies and to delve deeply into the Bahá'í Teachings, believers are enjoined to maintain a keen awareness that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the standard of truth against which all other views and conclusions are to be measured. They are urged to be modest about their accomplishments, and to bear in mind always the statement of Bahá'u'lláh that:

The heart must needs therefore be cleansed from the idle sayings of men, and sanctified from every earthly affection, so that it may discover the hidden meaning of divine inspiration, and become the treasury of the mysteries of divine knowledge.

(Compilation, Scholarship, p. 18)

What the Bahá'í community is engaged in bringing into visible expression is a new creation. In this, the Cause has urgent need of the unfettered and wholehearted assistance of its scholars. The House of Justice has sought to point out that, as in every other field of Bahá'í endeavor, there are certain conditions under which this assistance may be rendered, conditions implicit in the nature of the process and made explicit in the Divine Text.

These requirements are of course not reflected in the standards currently prevailing in Western academic institutions. Rather, both Bahá'í institutions and Bahá'í scholars are called on to exert a very great effort, of heart, mind, and will, in order to forge the new models of scholarly activity and guidance that Bahá'u'lláh's work requires. The House of Justice believes that you will serve the interests of the Faith best if you will direct your thoughts to this end. Merely to reiterate the conventions and requirements of systems which, whether

academic, political, social, or economic, have been shown not to have adequate answers to the anarchy now engulfing human society, or any willingness to come to grips with the implications of their impotence, is of little practical help. We do a grave disservice to both ourselves and the Faith when we simply submit to the authority of academic practices that appeal for their claim of objectivity to theories which themselves are being increasingly called into question by major thinkers. While non-Bahá'í academics may slip carelessly into regarding the institutions founded by Bahá'u'lláh as simply another form of "religious establishment" and avoid serious examination of the truths of His Revelation in this fashion, it is clearly impossible for anyone who is a Bahá'í to follow them down this empty track.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

Question 10 – Scholarship and the Covenant

A Bahá'í's duty to pursue an unfettered search after truth should lead him to understand the Teachings as an organic, logically coherent whole, should cause him to examine his own ideas and motives, and should enable him to see that adherence to the Covenant, to which he is a party, is not blind imitation but conscious choice, freely made and freely followed.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

Problems will arise, rather, if an attempt is made to impose, on the Bahá'í community's own study of the Revelation, materialistic methodologies and attitudes antithetical to its very nature. The Faith is not the possession of any among us, but belongs to Bahá'u'lláh. Through the Covenant, which is a distinguishing feature of His Revelation, He has specified in unmistakable terms the means by which He wills to preserve the integrity of His message and to guide the implementation of His prescriptions for humankind. If one accepts the Bahá'í Teachings, one cannot, in good conscience, claim to be studying the Faith while ignoring the centrality of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant to all aspects of the religion He has established.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

It is not surprising that individual Bahá'ís hold and express different and sometimes defective understandings of the Teachings; this is but an evidence of the magnitude of the change that this Revelation is to effect in human consciousness. As believers with various insights into the Teachings converse -- with patience, tolerance and open and unbiased minds -- a deepening of comprehension should take place. The strident insistence on individual views, however, can lead to contention, which is detrimental not only to the spirit of Bahá'í association and collaboration but to the search for truth itself.

Beyond contention, moreover, is the condition in which a person is so immovably attached to one erroneous viewpoint that his insistence upon it amounts to an effort to change the essential character of the Faith. This kind of behaviour, if permitted to continue unchecked, could produce disruption in the Bahá'í community, giving birth to countless sects as it has done in previous Dispensations. The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh prevents this. The Faith defines elements of a code of conduct, and it is ultimately the responsibility of the Universal House of Justice, in watching over the security of the Cause and upholding the integrity of its Teachings, to require the friends to adhere to standards thus defined.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

You should be confident that the House of Justice will not permit a climate of intolerance to prosper in the Bahá'í community, no matter from what cause it arises. Further, the House of

Justice will continue to encourage use of the greatly expanded opportunities for the discussion of Bahá'í concepts and ideals...

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study Compilation)

As you recognize, the authority of the Universal House of Justice is unchallengeable. This is stated in numerous places in the Writings. In the same passage of the Will and Testament quoted above, "'Abdu'l-Bahá goes on to say of the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice: "Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth him not, neither obeyeth them, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against them hath rebelled against God; whoso opposeth him hath opposed God; whoso contendeth with them hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whoso disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself, and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God."

Furthermore, at the very end of the Will and Testament, in warning against the danger of Covenant-breaking, "'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote: "Beware lest anyone falsely interpret these words, and like unto them that have broken the Covenant after the Day of Ascension (of Bahá'u'lláh) advance a pretext, raise the standard of revolt, wax stubborn, and open wide the door of false interpretation." In this context, He continues: "To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular conviction. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Centre of the Cause and the House of Justice. And he that turneth unto whatsoever else is indeed in grievous error."

It is natural that the friends would discuss such matters among themselves, as you and your correspondent have been doing on your Internet discussion group; how otherwise are they to deepen their understanding of the Teachings? But they should recognize that the resolution of differences of opinion on such fundamental questions is not to be found by continued discussion, but in referring to the Universal House of Justice itself, as you have done. Prolonged, unresolved, public discussion of these fundamental questions can do nothing but breed confusion and dissension.

(The Universal House of Justice, Issues Related to Study of Faith Compilation)