

Baha'i studies at the crossroads: key papers and developments in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 1990-2002

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The Baha'i Studies Review (BSR), an annual peer-reviewed publication, started in 1990 as one of a small number of English-language Baha'i studies periodicals.¹ It was the official publication of the Association for Baha'i Studies – English-speaking Europe (ABS-ESE),² which was overseen by the national Baha'i governing body in the UK, who appointed the editors and an advisory board. Its first decade overlapped with a period of significant changes in Baha'i studies and its cultures. I was founding editor of the BSR in 1990³ and co-editor from 1994 until 2002. This article aims to review the first 12 years of the BSR, and highlights some key papers and developments from my viewpoint as editor. First, I will present an overview of key papers from each issue, and then present download and citation metrics that provide one approach to evaluating the main impacts of the journal. I will also discuss some of the journal's novel contributions to Baha'i studies. Finally, I will use this overview of the first decade of the BSR as a lens with which to view changes in Baha'i studies over the 1990s and early 2000s, and about future directions it might take.

By way of background, the editors of the BSR received no remuneration and it was edited in our spare time. This was in contrast to the two other Baha'i periodicals, *World Order* and *Journal of Baha'i Studies*, which were intended to be quarterly publications unlike the BSR. In contrast, the BSR started off as an annual publication but became biennial for 2009/10 and 2011/12, partly due to lack of editorial capacity to maintain annual issues. In 2012, the national governing body of the Baha'is of the UK, the National Spiritual Assembly, which oversaw the journal and its advisory board, changed the editorship around two months after the 2011/12 issue had been published. A few months later, Dr

¹ *Journal of Baha'i Studies*, *World Order*, and *Baha'i Studies Bulletin* were other periodicals. The latter two have subsequently ceased publication.

² The Association for Baha'i Studies – English-speaking Europe (ABS-ESE) was initially based in Ireland, part of a strategy of basing ABS chapters in countries that were not the largest in population size for that particular language group. However, this approach seemingly did not work and ABS-ESE moved to the UK after a few years. The same process occurred from Austria to Germany for the German-speaking equivalent, although the French chapter remained in Geneva until it stopped publishing sometime in the 2000's.

³ When I was invited to found the BSR by the national governing body of the Baha'is of the UK, I was aged 20, a medical student in Edinburgh, and not published anything on Baha'i studies, and thus not an obvious candidate to edit a new Baha'i periodical. One possible reason for being approached was that I had attended a twice-yearly Baha'i studies seminar in Newcastle, ran by Stephen Lambden and Moojan Momen, for a couple of years and presented papers there. Wendi Momen, who was a member of the national governing body, also attended.

Moojan Momen, one of the best known and productive Baha'i scholars and a frequent contributor to the BSR, became editor.⁴ In our view, this was as a necessary next step to take the BSR to a more academic and sustained footing.⁵ Moojan Momen edited it for 5 years with new publishers, Intellect, and then Steve Cooney was appointed editor. The most recent BSR is the 2014 issue that came out in 2017/18 (volume 20) with high quality contributions on a wide variety of topics. It currently has an individual subscription (£36 per issue) that puts it out of the reach of many non-institutional subscribers, this may change as the current contract with Intellect ends shortly.

The first 10 BSRs

The first issue of the BSR (BSR 1.1.1990) was based on proceedings of the first ABS-ESE conference in the UK, which was held in Birmingham in 1989. Contributors were encouraged to write up their presentations, which were sent to me, and I selected 6 papers from the conference for the first issue, which was printed in mid-1990. A few of the papers that were not included were published in a newsletter, entitled *Associate*, of the ABS-ESE. In my opinion, the key paper was Stephen Lambden's on how to study Islam, which remains highly relevant for the Baha'i community (see below for details of the highlighted papers). This issue also published a piece on the need for Baha'i studies and some ideas for its development by John Parris, which highlighted the contribution of two publishers (Oneworld and Kalimat).⁶ The paper by Philip Smith presented a novel understanding of the Baha'i teaching on the unity of religions, and has been downloaded more than any other paper in this volume (>15,000 times according to bahai-library.com in September 2017).⁷ I received little feedback about this first issue, although Christine Zerbini, who was then editor of the *Journal of Baha'i Studies*, wrote an encouraging letter and correctly pointed out for the need for gender-neutral language (as one of the papers used the generic 'man' to refer to humanity).

The second issue (BSR 2.1.1991) added a new section, 'Special Supplement', which included a new compilation of Baha'i writings and also an apologetic piece responding to attacks on the Baha'is from a Sunni perspective and written by individuals affiliated to the most prominent religious university in Egypt (Al-Azhar University). This paper was later reprinted in the annual yearbook, *Baha'i World*.⁸ With the continued persecution of Egyptian Baha'is over the last decade, this publication provided a useful framework with which to respond to such attacks. In my opinion, the outstanding paper in the second issue was that by

⁴ Momen wrote a generous editorial about our editorship in BSR 13.

⁵ After 10 issues and 12 years, a change of editors was not unexpected. Although there was some speculation at the time as to the reason for this change, it was pointless in our view as it was the right decision for the journal and our own academic careers. No specific reason was given for this change by the National Assembly.

⁶ Both have subsequently discontinued publishing Baha'i studies.

⁷ <https://bahai-library.com/popular/>

⁸ and without attribution.

Moojan Momen on understanding fundamentalism and liberalism in religion, which was commissioned after it was presented at the Newcastle Baha'i studies seminar. The seminar was a regular source of material for the BSR, and highlights one feature of the journal that was not widely known – almost all the published papers were specifically commissioned at conferences, seminars, or by correspondence. Over the period 1990-2012, I can recall only one full paper that was not (that by Sen McGlinn on inheritance laws that was an extended response to a piece in an earlier issue). Momen's paper is also the most cited BSR paper.⁹ Another important paper was Udo Schaefer's on Baha'i studies, based on a talk that he gave at a conference on developing Baha'i university activities. Two of its main points continue to be relevant - the arrogance of anti-intellectuals in the Baha'i community, and the need to develop a systematic analysis of the Baha'i theology, philosophy and history before the important goal of correlating the writings with contemporary problems can be intelligently done.¹⁰

In the third volume (BSR 3.1.1991), a new section entitled 'Soundings' was added, which were essays exploring Baha'i-related themes. In my view, the outstanding paper in this volume was Stephen Lambden's on the background and meanings of word *Baha*, which was subsequently reprinted in the *Journal of Baha'i Studies*, and has attracted more than 40,000 downloads from the leading Baha'i studies website (bahai-library.org). Another notable piece was a book review by Sen McGlinn of Charles Lerche's edited volume, *Emergence: Dimensions of a New World Order*, which combined a thoughtful critique with recommendations about future directions of related work.¹¹ McGlinn pointed out that the problem with the volume was its essentially apologetic nature, whereas what was necessary to engage a wider audience was how these ideas related with contemporary thinking, an issue that has limited much of Baha'i studies since. In other words, correlating Baha'i thought is often mistakenly taken to mean presenting some Baha'i principles without contextualizing or engaging with current thinking outside the Baha'i community.

An additional BSR volume was brought out in 1993 (BSR 3.2.1992) on the theme of 'Challenges and prospects of Baha'i scholarship' with an important contribution by Stephen Lambden on the 'how to' of Baha'i studies. In a supplement, a list of possible Baha'i topics for research put together by Peter Khan, then a member of the Universal House of Justice, was included, which interestingly included the topic of Baha'i approaches to church and state.¹²

⁹ I remember the bestselling author on religion, Karen Armstrong, discussing it with me before she spoke at a Baha'i Society event at Exeter College, Oxford University, in the mid-1990s, and also referring to it during her talk on fundamentalism.

¹⁰ https://bahai-library.com/schaefer_challenges_bahai_studies.

¹¹ https://bahai-library.com/mcglinn_lerche_emergence

¹² Subsequent work on this topic has been limited. Sen McGlinn's book on the subject is part of Kalimat's 'Studies in Babi and Baha'i Studies' series, although it was self-published. McGlinn's work has led to an extended response in German by Tajan Tober: <https://www.amazon.co.uk/Ein-Neues-lus-Divinum-Staatskirchenrecht/dp/3631562357> and is discussed in a scholarly way by

With BSR 4, John Danesh was appointed as a co-editor. We included an invited paper from John Hick, one of the most eminent philosophers of religion, who was familiar with the Baha'is partly due to interfaith activities and also because of Oneworld Publications who were publishing one of his books. As it turned out, I had participated in one such interfaith event in Edinburgh in 1992 and he agreed to my invitation to publish the paper that he delivered there. Again, in this BSR, a new section was introduced, 'Review Article', that aimed to synthesize the secondary Baha'i literature on a topic and suggest possible new areas for research. The first of these was by Trevor Finch on gender studies, which covered a wide body of Baha'i scholarship and provided an excellent template for future such articles. With other papers by Lil Osborn (then Lil Abdo), Moojan Momen, and Lata Ta'eed, and an essay on inheritance laws, this volume had a focus on gender. At the time, I recall Momen's article generating considerable interest.¹³ Looking back on this issue, though, the Sounding on individual rights by Sen McGlinn particularly deserves re-reading.¹⁴

Volume 5 included an invited commentary by Juan Cole on some general principles of interpreting Baha'i texts. This piece was commissioned by Fariba Hedayati, who was then secretary of the ABS-ESE, for the *Associate* newsletter but, after receiving the submission, we thought that it was better suited to the BSR. Barney Leith's paper explored the topic of Baha'i institutional review, which has been controversial in Baha'i studies and a source of criticism for the Baha'i community. Leith's paper was the first detailed discussion of this in a Baha'i journal, and did so in a balanced and thoughtful way suggesting that review should not act 'as a form of control' and encouraged Baha'i scholars to use more consultative ways for future work.¹⁵ The paper has not received much attention, although a piece by Juan Cole discussing Baha'i approaches to human rights cited it.¹⁶ In addition, the Leith contribution drew two responses that were published in the subsequent issue of the BSR, which provided alternative views of the

others, cf. Susan Maneck's paper (https://bahai-library.com/maneck_mcglinn_theocratic_assumptions) and <http://www.towfigh.net/emanuel/english/publications/dissertation-english.html>.

¹³ https://bahai-library.com/momen_women_dont_count

¹⁴ https://bahai-library.com/mcglinn_praise_individualization

¹⁵ https://bahai-library.com/leith_bahai_review_repealed

¹⁶ Juan Cole refers to this article as indication that the Faith is discussing the implications of the principle of freedom of speech in the UN declaration of human rights: "[Baha'is] have begun speaking seriously about the need to abolish prepublication literature Review, which constrains all believers to have whatever they write about their religion vetted by their religious authorities, an abolition that would be key to bringing Baha'i administrative practices into closer conformity with the ideals of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights" (Juan R. I. Cole. "[The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Baha'i Scriptures](#)". *Occasional Papers in Shaykhi, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, vol. 3, no. 2 (April, 1999).; <http://www.h-net.org/~Baha'i/bhpapers/vol3/rights.htm>).

development of Baha'i review, and led to further comments from Leith.¹⁷ In the same issue, we received some feedback about book reviews, which we carefully considered and decided that going forward, non-academic books should only be reviewed in exceptional cases.

In BSR 6, a new section on obituaries was introduced, partly as those in the official Baha'i yearbook, *The Baha'i World*, had been cut to a paragraph or two. The first obituary was on Marzieh Gail, and subsequent issues included obituaries on Roger White, O.Z. Whitehead, Ali Murad Davudi, James Heggie, and Allesandro Bausani. A notable paper in BSR 6 was that by Christopher Buck in which he presented the evidence that native messengers of God from North America (and other parts of the world) are explicitly accepted in Baha'i theology although their names are not known. This paper was read at the Newcastle seminar by Wendi Momen, and had apparently been rejected by the *Journal of Baha'i Studies*, so we invited its submission to the BSR. Due to its novelty, presentation of relevant primary texts, and important implications, we decided to proceed with it after peer review.¹⁸ It is among the most downloaded and cited papers from the BSR and reprinted in a shortened version in the best of volume, *Reason and Revelation* (Kalimat Press). However, the key publication in my view was the extended book review by Frank Lewis on an academic monograph on the Book of Certitude (*Symbol and Secret* by Christopher Buck), which became our model book review because it was informative, thought-provoking and critical at the same time. We subsequently sent this review to individuals that we commissioned to write book reviews.

BSR 7 was a landmark issue with a number of highly regarded papers, included that by Geeta Gandhi Kingdon on the education of women, which is the most downloaded piece in BSR history.¹⁹ Four of the papers were reprinted in *Reason and Revelation*, including the Kingdon one. Another strong book review was that by Susan Maneck of a book of essays (*The Law of Love Enshrined* by John and William Hatcher), and Maneck's review touched on a recurrent BSR theme of the importance of an appreciation of the primary languages of Baha'i scripture.²⁰

In BSR 8, Frank Lewis contributed an extended review of an academic monograph on the Hidden Words (*Unveiling the Hidden Words* by Diana Malouf) that we decided to make the lead piece. It was another example of a review that we were striving for, which used the book as a platform to examine broader

¹⁷ I am not aware of subsequent articles on this topic, which unfortunately has become a touchstone for some Baha'is to lazily throw out what Arash Abizadeh has called the 'covenant card' (BSR 5). A few years ago, I presented a paper at the Newcastle seminar on the subject, partly as I was interested in feedback and criticism from the audience (that included some knowledgeable and experienced Baha'i scholars), and had not finalized my thoughts.

¹⁸ https://bahai-library.com/collins_buck_native_messengers

¹⁹ http://bahai-library.com/kingdon_education_women_development

²⁰ 'The Hatchers attempt to construct an epistemological framework on the basis of English translations of texts with reference to the original appears highly problematic' (https://bahai-library.com/maneck_hatcher_love_enshrined).

issues. BSR 8 also included a thoughtful and witty review of some recent Baha'i music, and, for the first time, a bibliographic guide of recent academic Baha'i studies publications.

BSR 9 was a double issue, which included an invited paper by Ian Semple, then a member of the Universal House of Justice, and strong pieces by Moojan Momen (on Jamal Effendi) and Maureen Seir (on Samoan Baha'i community life, that was commissioned about 8 years previously).²¹ There was also a piece by Amin Banani reviewing Juan Cole's academic monograph on 19th century Baha'i history (*Modernity and the Millennium*),²² an obituary on A-M Davudi, a leading Iranian philosopher who was executed in the early 1980s for being a Baha'i, and a compilation on the *Hidden Words*.²³ The paper by Udo Schaefer on the meaning of infallibility of the Universal House of Justice generated the most discussion.²⁴ This paper further developed a section in the book, *Making the Crooked Straight*, and Dr Schaefer approached the editor's with the idea for this extended examination. Previously, to our knowledge, this topic had only been discussed in a somewhat chaotic fashion on some internet lists, and it was our view that a sober, intelligent and forensic analysis of the question would be an important contribution for many reasons.²⁵

BSR 10 was another double issue and mostly included papers that were originally presented at a conference organised at Merton College, Oxford, in April 2000 entitled 'Foundational Issues in Baha'i Studies' where John Hick, Udo Schaefer, Moojan Momen, John Hatcher, Frank Lewis, Amin Banani, Todd Lawson, Will van den Hoonaard, Stephen Lambden, and others presented. One paper that was not presented at this conference but is possibly the outstanding paper of BSR 10 was by Christopher Buck on Alain Locke and his relationship with the Baha'i community and its influences on his philosophy. It was directly commissioned, and we were surprised how little had been written about the Baha'i influences on the first African-American Rhodes scholar to attend Oxford University and leading philosopher of the Harlem Renaissance.²⁶ Two other pieces in BSR 10 are notable. The article by Robert Weinberg on Abdu'l-Baha's championing of the one of the suffragettes has a remarkable description of an example of individual initiative from Lady Blomfield's daughter, Mary Blomfield. At King George's annual garden party, Mary Blomfield confronted the king and

²¹ https://bahai-library.com/sier_indigenous_rights_samoa

²² http://bahai-library.com/banani_reflections_modernity_millennium. This led to a response by Cole: https://bahai-library.com/cole_banani_modernity_millennium

²³ Moojan Momen shared this compilation with the editors.

²⁴ https://bahai-library.com/schaefer_infallible_institutions

²⁵ The paper generated some responses from well-known Baha'i scholars, including by William Hatcher in the *Journal of Baha'i Studies* (who did not cite it), and Peter Terry (http://bahai-library.com/terry_schaefer_dialogue_infallibility). When I spoke with William Hatcher about the paper at an ABS conference, he told me that he did not agree with its conclusions but very much appreciated the tone and manner in which Schaefer wrote about the topic.

²⁶ The only previous paper was in *World Order* by Ernest Mason in 1976.

asked him to intervene to stop the forceable feeding of the suffragettes in prison at the time. ‘Abdul-Baha’ is reported to have been highly impressed (“What matchless resolution! What a heroic deed!”).²⁷ The obituary on Allesandro Bausani by Heshmat Moayyad was also directly commissioned and provides an overview of this scholar of Persian literature and religion, and recounts a highly amusing and surreal incident in relation to one of Bausani’s book launches.²⁸ Finally, this volume has a book review that I co-wrote with Dominic Brookshaw that captures one of the overriding themes of the first 10 volumes of the BSR – that ‘scholarship needs an intellectual context to be meaningful’.²⁹

Some notable papers in the BSR 1990-2002	
BSR 1	Muhammad and the Quran, Stephen Lambden
BSR 2	Fundamentalism and liberalism, Moojan Momen
BSR 3.1	The word ‘Baha’, Stephen Lambden
BSR 3.2	Doing Baha’i studies in the 1990s, Stephen Lambden
BSR 4	In praise of individuation, Sen McGlinn
BSR 5	Baha’u’llah’s prophetology, Moojan Momen
BSR 6	Review of <i>Symbol and Secret</i> , Frank Lewis
BSR 7	Prayer as remembrance, Christopher White
BSR 8	Unveiling the Hidden Words: an extended review, Frank Lewis
BSR 9	Jamal Effendi, Moojan Momen
BSR 10	Alain Locke, Christopher Buck

Some of the later issues of the BSR included material that we had commissioned including Todd Lawson’s essay on styles of piety (BSR 11),³⁰ and a paper on Mark Tobey’s links with the Seattle Baha’i community (BSR 12).³¹

Individual paper metrics

Having given a personal overview of the first 10 volumes of the BSR, I will present two alternative measures of article impact. The first is the number of downloads from bahai-library.com, which is the most comprehensive online database of Baha’i studies materials. Absolute download numbers are not entirely accurate as the BSR had its own website for many years, and some papers are mirrored on other websites (such as those held on individual Baha’i scholars). In addition, download data is biased in favour of older articles and looking at annual download rates could be considered. However, absolute downloads provide one indication of relative impact (Table 1).

²⁷ https://bahai-library.com/weinberg_social_activism

²⁸ https://bahai-library.com/moayyad_obituary_bausani

²⁹ https://bahai-library.com/fazel_brookshaw_saiedi

³⁰ https://bahai-library.com/lawson_styles_piety

³¹ <https://www.intellectbooks.co.uk/journals/view-Article,id=7873/>

BSR publication (author, short title, year)	Downloads (000s) to Sept 2017
Kingdon, Education of women, 1997	146
Stockman, Jesus Christ in the Baha'i writings, 1992	57
Momen, Fundamentalism and Liberalism, 1992	27
Lambden, The word 'Baha', 1993	26
Von Kitzing, Sounding on Evolution, 1997	23
Buck, Native Messengers of God, 1996	23
Graham, Baha'i literature on economics, 1997	22
Abdo/Osborn, Holy Spirit, 1994	19
Buck, Alain Locke, 2001/2002	16
Lambden, Catastrophe, Armageddon, 1999/2000	16

Overall there is a wide range of topics in the top 10 downloaded articles. One explanation for some of the individual papers is that google searches for Baha'i approaches to gender issues, Christianity, evolution, and economics may have led to these papers. Seven of these articles are broadly theological. Another impression from these download statistics is their large number, which, despite its underestimate as it is based on only one website, suggests considerable interest in a scholarly approach to these topics.

Another possibly more meaningful measure of impact is the absolute number of citations, which will also favour older pieces (Table 2).

BSR publication (author, short title, year)	Google scholar citations until Sept 2017
Momen, Fundamentalism and Liberalism, 1992	18
Kingdon, Education of Women, 1997	16
Schaefer, Ethics for a Global Society, 1994	6
Buck, Baha'u'llah as Zoroastrian saviour, 1998	5
Momen, Baha'i perspectives on women, 1994	5
Schaefer, Infallibility, 1999/2000	5
Fazel/Danesh, Baha'i scholarship: examination of citation patterns, 1995	5
McGlinn, Inheritance Laws of the Aqdas, 1995	4
Buck, Native Messengers of God, 1996	4
Hassall, The Baha'i Faith in the Asia Pacific, 1996	4

These citations rates are not high and reflect a low level of interest in Baha'i studies. At the same time, these metrics are interesting as there is some correlation between the most downloaded and highest cited papers, namely the Kingdon, Momen ('Fundamentalism'), and Buck ('Native Messengers') papers. Other than that, the low level of citations limits further conclusions apart from one observation that the most cited pieces are on a wide variety of theological and historical themes. If one uses annual citation rates, the relative order would change, and the Kingdon paper would be top.

A final indication of interest is whether articles that have been translated into other languages or reprinted elsewhere. Examples include three papers by Udo Schaefer on the Aqdas, ethics, and infallibility (the first two into Dutch, and the last into Persian as an online publication), a paper that Graham Hassall and I co-authored on the Baha'i Faith in Europe has been translated into two languages

and published (Persian and German), and Lambden's paper on the word *Baha* was reprinted in the *Journal of Baha'i Studies*.

New sections

The BSR introduced a number of new sections. These included essays (called 'Soundings'), review articles, and obituaries of notable Baha'i scholars and writers, which filled gaps in Baha'i secondary literature. In addition, the BSR continued to publish new compilations and provisional translations that had been a valuable and original part of the *Baha'i Studies Bulletin*. In addition, the BSR was the first journal to become freely available online, and to be indexed in two bibliographic indexes (Religion Index, Index Islamicus). The journal commissioned a number of young Baha'is to write pieces and reviews, and for many of these individuals, it was their first publication. Further, the journal drew on existing networks of Baha'i scholars for new material, particularly those attending the Newcastle Baha'i studies seminar.

But it was not without its challenges. The number of submissions remained low and the quality of unsolicited papers was poor. Therefore, we relied on commissioning pieces by attending conferences or writing to individuals, which was time-consuming. The choice of topics was also partly driven by individual interests but we commissioned specific pieces in areas that we thought were neglected. A good example is the paper by Christopher Buck on Alain Locke, which subsequently led to an academic monograph published by Kalimat Press, and Buck has followed this up with other articles on Alain Locke published in *World Order* and elsewhere.³² Occasionally, book reviews in the BSR attracted wider interest, partly as they were critical. However, the wider context needs to be considered - over 90% of all the book reviews in the BSR were positive. During my involvement with the BSR, we worked collaboratively with institutional review to revise pieces accordingly. Only one book review did not pass institutional review following revisions³³ and we decided not to pursue it, although it was subsequently posted online (without the suggested editorial changes). The more descriptive book reviews that were submitted were sent to the UK *Baha'i Journal* and the *Associate*. But critical book reviews were not unique to the BSR - some had been published in *World Order* and *Journal of Baha'i Studies*.³⁴ Getting the balance right was nevertheless a challenge, and some pieces included phrases that could have been revised in retrospect, which was not unexpected considering the range and breadth of reviewers and topics, and the difficulties of keeping to the publication schedule. In relation to articles,

³² Notably, there was a Baha'i talk at Alain Locke's 2014 interment at the US Congressional Cemetery. See: <https://wilmetteinstitute.org/in-memoriam-alain-leroy-locke-the-interment-and-honoring-of-an-african-american-philosopher-race-unity-advocate-and-bahai/>

³³ Alison Marshall's review on two Baha'i World yearbook volumes.

³⁴ e.g. Firuz Khazemzadeh's reviews in *World Order*, or Christopher Buck's review of 'The Prophecies of Jesus' in *Journal of Baha'i Studies*.

one article on church and state did not pass institutional review,³⁵ which we decided for other reasons not to pursue for the BSR.

The crossroads

So what does this period of the BSR indicate about the development of Baha'i studies more generally, if at all? First, the download data indicates considerable interest in a wide range of topics, with many theological papers among the most downloaded. Second, it suggests Baha'i studies journals are not currently sustainable as they rely heavily on material directly commissioned and the willingness of individuals to write them in the absence of benefits for their academic careers (partly because in many academic disciplines, Baha'i-related articles will be considered niche and marginal). Further, junior academics will be expected to publish in non-Baha'i periodicals to progress their careers. Assuming more senior academics have not specialised on Baha'i-related topics, for them to afford the time to write on Baha'i subjects, particularly if there is a risk if they will have to compromise on process and quality (with delays to publication not being uncommon), is a considerable undertaking.

In the wider context of the Baha'i community and its current priorities, then it not surprising that many Baha'i periodicals have been discontinued – including the longest running, *World Order* (that started in 1966),³⁶ and ABS journals in France, Spain, Australia, and Singapore. One regular English-language periodical is the *Journal of Baha'i Studies* and its recent content includes transcripts of non-academic talks from its annual conference, more scholarly pieces, and poetry (but no longer book reviews). This has led to a situation where most of the serious and high quality Baha'i-related academic work is now published in non-Baha'i periodicals, particularly those in Middle Eastern and religious studies. There are a number of advantages to this including 'mainstreaming' Baha'i

³⁵ We decided not to pursue this paper for the BSR, partly as we were looking for a new paper for an edited volume of essays, *Reason and Revelation*. Series editor Antony Lee asked for a previously unpublished piece for the volume (as we had originally suggested only BSR reprints), and we considered this paper on church and state by Sen McGlenn, 'Theocratic assumptions in Baha'i literature'. After substantial revisions to the submitted paper including requesting Sen McGlenn to address previous peer reviews, we informed the NSA via the ABS-ESE liaison officer, Wendi Momen, that we intended to include this revised paper for a new volume to be published by Kalimat. The publisher clarified that it needed to be reviewed by the US NSA as the book was being published in the US. After a number of changes requested by the US institutional review committee, which was chaired by Robert Stockman, the paper was published in *Reason and Revelation*.

³⁶ At various times in the 1970s and 1980s, *World Order* was an intellectual tour de force, with a remarkable range of topics. See my paper on the post-1966 *World Order* at the Oxford Baha'i studies seminar 2017.

studies in academia³⁷ and, for the writers, the reliability, familiarity and relative transparency of process. For academics, it means that these contributions will more likely be read and cited by colleagues and specialists in the relevant academic discipline. A clear example is the collection of papers in 2012 for *Journal of Religious History*, edited by Todd Lawson, which included a highly thoughtful introductory piece by Lawson entitled 'Baha'i Religious History'.³⁸

However, there are other consequences, which are negative and may be unintended. Most importantly in my view, it means that Baha'is have very few venues to engage in informed and intelligent debate about the meaning of Baha'i texts and histories, community development, and how to engage with contemporary social problems. The 'wild west' of online discussion groups is not sufficient and often descends into poor quality debate. In addition, some more Baha'i-centric pieces, such as local Baha'i histories, sociological studies of Baha'i communities, and examination of Baha'i literatures, may have difficulty in finding a suitable publication venue as non-Baha'i journals may not find them sufficiently interesting to their readerships. Potentially more serious consequences are the thinning out of scholarly discourse inside the Baha'i community, which cannot be developed or sustained with the episodic publication of occasional papers on different subjects in a wide variety of venues, most of which will not be known to most Baha'is, and even if they are known, may not be available to them due to subscription fees. I have no particular solutions to this situation, which have been well-rehearsed in many articles. Perhaps the most important is a change of culture, one that more strongly encourages the life of the mind³⁹ and celebrates the contribution that Baha'i studies has made and can continue to do so.

³⁷ Cf. Will van den Hoonaard in his paper on developing Baha'i studies: https://bahai-library.com/hoonaard_inductive_research

³⁸ <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1467-9809.2012.01224.x/abstract>

³⁹ See Frank Lewis' paper on 'Discourses of knowledge': https://bahai-library.com/lewis_discourses_knowledge