

Knowledge has a divine source, its ultimate purpose is the recognition of God, its influence on man is one of upliftment and empowerment. To enable man to recognize Him, God has also conferred on him "the gift of understanding", which "giveth man the power to discern the truth in all things, leadeth him to that which is right, and helpeth him to discover the secrets of creation".(2)

'Abdu'l-Bahá has extolled man's intellectual powers as "the supreme gift of God", "the effulgence of God", and "a crown He has placed upon our heads".(3) Through this faculty, man is enabled to acquire knowledge:

"All the sciences and arts we now enjoy and utilize were once mysteries, and according to the mandates of nature should have remained hidden and latent, but the human intellect has broken through the laws surrounding them and discovered the underlying realities."(4)

With our thoughts turned towards the divinity of knowledge and intellect, we can then deduce that the purposes for which knowledge should be used are spiritual ones, such as the processes of justice, the promotion of unity, and the advancement of civilization -- all of them principles of Bahá'u'lláh.

Use of knowledge implies accessibility, the issue towards which we are directed by The Prosperity of Humankind. One of the keys to accessibility lies in communication, and here again the principles of Bahá'u'lláh show the way, for He has chosen to use words as the vehicle for communicating His Revelation -- while acknowledging the limitations of language in His statement, "How great the multitude of truths which the garment of words can never contain!" (5) Words are communicated by writing and by speech, and Bahá'u'lláh has emphasised the importance of both literacy and language, through His Laws. Instruction in the arts of reading and writing is a parental obligation,(6) and the adoption of a universal language and script has been designated by Him as one of the "two signs for the coming of age of the human race":

"God, verily, maketh plain for you that which shall profit you and enable you to be independent of others... This will be the cause of unity, could ye but comprehend it, and the greatest instrument for promoting harmony and civilization, would that ye might understand!"(7)

On the subject of the international auxiliary language 'Abdu'l-Bahá has stated:

"...then mutual interchange of thought will be possible for all... The world of matter will become the expression of the world of mind. Then discoveries will be revealed, inventions will multiply, the sciences advance by leaps and bounds, the scientific culture of the earth will develop along broader lines. Then the nations will be enabled

to utilize the latest and best thought, because expressed in the International Language..."(8)

An essential prerequisite to accessibility of knowledge is its organization, an activity in which we are involved directly through our professions. Through the discovery of new technologies, the window to new means of accessing and organizing information has begun to open. It would be well to bear in mind the source of these technologies. In the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

"Now consider, in this great century which is the cycle of Bahá'u'lláh, what progress science and knowledge have made, how many secrets of existence have been discovered, how many great inventions have been brought to light and are day by day multiplying in number. Before long, material science and learning, as well as the knowledge of God, will make such progress and will show forth such wonders that the beholders will be amazed. Then the mystery of this verse in Isaiah, "For the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord," will be completely evident."(9)

Lest these words leave us in any doubt as to the divine source of technology, we can turn to this passage in the Writings of the Báb: "I yield praise unto Thee, O Lord our God, for the bounty of having called into being the realm of creation and invention..."(10)

In light of the Bahá'í teachings we can envisage that the call for "an enormous expansion in access to knowledge" goes beyond anything that we, as librarians, archivists and others working in the information field, have experienced or dreamed of. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has written that the new principles revealed by Bahá'u'lláh require that: "The people... 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."(11) We must continually be willing to take a fresh look at our work as information scientists, to review our philosophy and practices, to discover new methods and examine new ideas, and above all, as Bahá'ís, to lead the way. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá states, "change is a necessary quality and an essential attribute of this world, and of time and place".(12) The Association of Bahá'í Librarians and Information Professionals and its newsletter provide a forum for exploration and debate of such vital issues.

Notes:

(1) Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, page 47; The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, para. 102; Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pages 51-52. The Islamic tradition "Knowledge is twenty and seven letters..." quoted and authenticated by Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Iqan (page 243), both acknowledges the divine source of knowledge and indicates the vastness of the expansion in knowledge inaugurated by the new Dispensation.

- (2) Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, XCV
- (3) The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 350 and 351.
- (4) The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pages 351.
- (5) Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, LXXXIX.
- (6) The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, para. 48 and note 105.
- (7) The Kitáb-i-Aqdas, para. 189.
- (8) Bahá'í Scriptures, page 340.
- (9) Some Answered Questions, page 64.
- (10) Selections from the Writings of the Báb, page 195.
- (11) Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, pages 252-253.
- (12) Quoted in Wellspring of Guidance, page 84.

METADATA

Views6350 views since posted 2012-06-24; last edit 2018-11-02 20:23 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../oppenheimer_expansion_access_knowledge

Language

English

Permission

Creative Commons open access

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/2255

Citation: ris/2255

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

East-asia

Encyclopedia

Essays

Etc

[Excerpts](#)
[Fiction](#)
[Glossaries](#)
[Guardian](#)
[Histories](#)
[Introductory](#)
[Letters](#)
[Maps](#)
[Music](#)
[Newspapers](#)
[NSA-documents](#)
[NSA-letters](#)
[Personal](#)
[Pilgrims](#)
[Poetry](#)
[Presentations](#)
[Resources](#)
[Reviews](#)
[Scripts](#)
[Software](#)
[Statistics](#)
[Study](#)
[Talks](#)
[Theses](#)
[Transcripts](#)
[Translations](#)
[UHJ-documents](#)
[UHJ-letters](#)
[Video](#)
[Visual](#)
[Writings](#)

[home](#)

[sitemap](#)

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)
[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)
[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— An Enormous Expansion in Access to Knowledge (Used by permission of the curator)