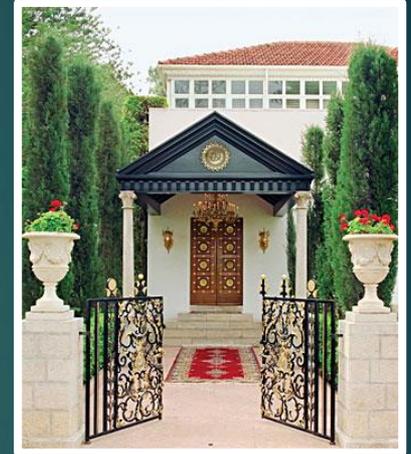


Approaching the Writings of Bahá'í'Iláh

STEVEN PHELPS

WILMETTE INSTITUTE WEBINAR, 9 FEBRUARY 2020



Last time:

- ▶ Background to this presentation:
 - ▶ August 18, 2019 WI Webinar: The Writings of the Báb
 - ▶ <http://wilmetteinstitute.org/overview-of-the-writings-of-the-bab/>

This time:

- ▶ The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh: The “Most Great Ocean”
- ▶ Complete the trilogy of Central Figures: The Writings of Abdu'l-Bahá
- ▶ Address challenges:
 - ▶ Access
 - ▶ What is out there?
 - ▶ “Chart the coastline”
 - ▶ Content
 - ▶ What does it say?
 - ▶ “Plumb the depths”

Challenges on the path of approach: The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh

▶ Access

- ▶ Both original texts and translations are scattered, uncoordinated (beyond the BWC)
- ▶ Majority of original texts (~55-60%) in Arabic
- ▶ Majority of texts (>90%) are untranslated
- ▶ For those wanting an exhaustive and systematic study: where do they begin and where do they end? And where can I find them?

▶ Content

- ▶ Size: ~6 million words (vs. ~5 million for the Báb)
~20,000 surviving works (vs. ~2,000 for the Báb)
- ▶ Uncharted vastness discourages the approach

The goal

Create two aids for advanced study

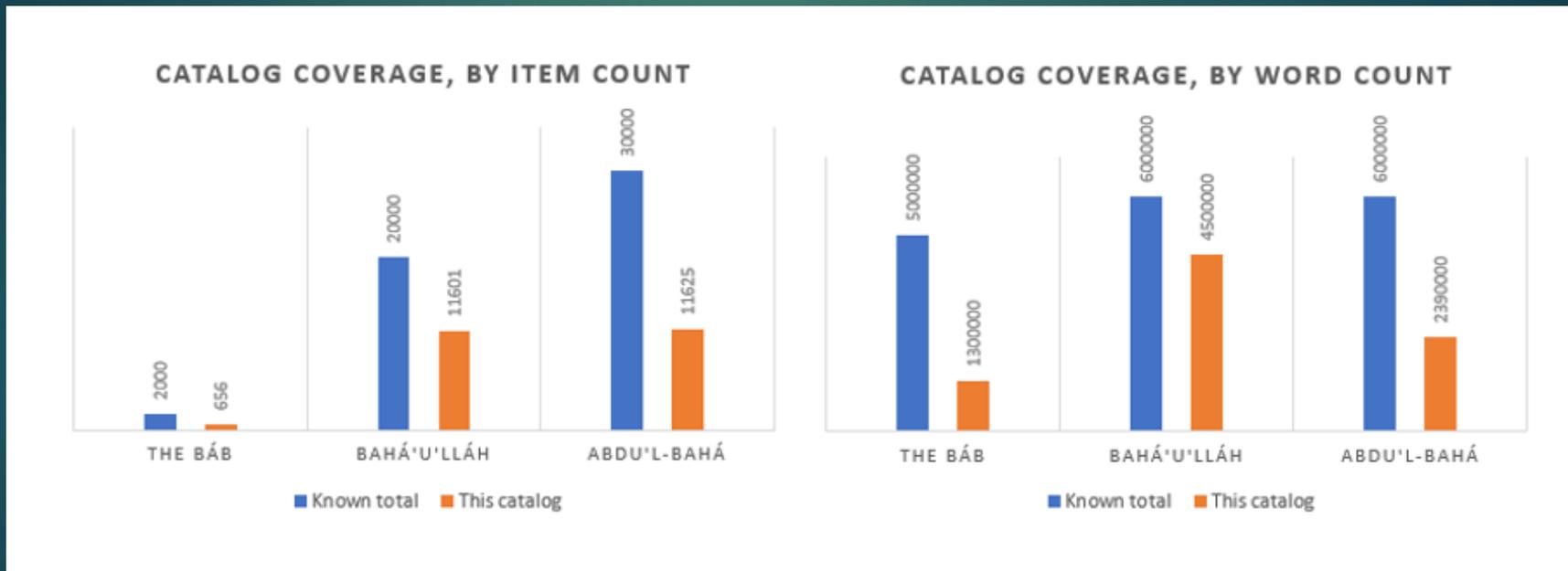
- ▶ 1. Facilitating access: catalog the accessible sources
 - ▶ Exhaustive list of what we presently have access to
 - ▶ Both original texts and translations: focus is on original texts
 - ▶ Spreadsheet method: see previous webinar
 - ▶ Include all three Central Figures
- ▶ 2. Exploring content: thematic reconstructions
 - ▶ Multiple approaches possible

Primary sources for the inventory

- ▶ Existing lists of Bahá'u'lláh's Writings, in English
 - ▶ Shoghi Effendi's "Best-Known Works" list from the old *Baha'i World* volumes. ~150 items
 - ▶ "Leiden List" ~500 items total: 2.5% of the total. Last update >10 years ago.
- ▶ Core resources
 - ▶ **Bahá'í Reference Library** (<https://www.bahai.org/library/>)
 - ▶ Iranian Bahá'í National Archives (INBA) (>100 volumes, <http://www.afnanlibrary.org/docs/persian-arabic-mss/inba/>)
 - ▶ British Library (>50 volumes)
 - ▶ Misc. publications, scanned and digitized in Arabic/Persian/English. www.bahailib.com etc.
 - ▶ Misc. publications still in paper form.
 - ▶ "internet-original content": Misc. web sites such as www.bahai-library.com, personal web sites

Results of the inventory

- ▶ Availability:
 - ▶ The Báb: ~25% in public domain in original languages
 - ▶ Bahá'u'lláh: ~75%
 - ▶ 'Abdu'l-Bahá: ~40%



- ▶ Reported utterances
 - ▶ A few thousand more (mostly 'Abdu'l-Bahá)

Accessing the inventory (~50MB pdf)

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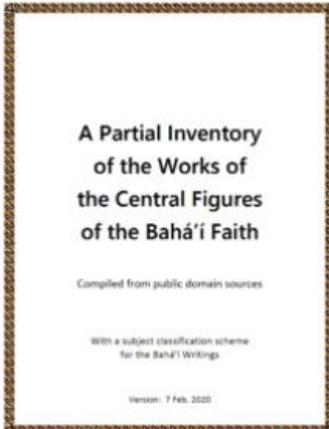
▶ <http://blog.loomofreality.org/>



Welcome

Here is the latest version of the “Inventory” – an unofficial, academic tool for the identification of Bahá’í texts in Arabic/Persian and in English translation:

[Download](#)



**A Partial Inventory
of the Works of
the Central Figures
of the Bahá’í Faith**

Compiled from public domain sources

With a subject classification scheme
for the Bahá’í Writings

Version: 7 Feb. 2020

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Parsing catalog entries

<http://blog.loomofreality.org/>

10

- ▶ ID
- ▶ Title
- ▶ Word Count
- ▶ Language
- ▶ First line (Ara/Per)
- ▶ Manuscripts (Ara/Per)
- ▶ Publications (Ara/Per)
- ▶ Translations (Eng only)
- ▶ First line in translation
- ▶ Notes
- ▶ Hyperlinks

BH00001. Kitab-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book). 10520 words, Ara. ان اول ما كتب الله على العباد عرفان مشرق وحيه و مطلع امره الذي كان مقام Mss: INBA43:069, BLIB.Or02820.001, BLIB.Or15691.001, BLIB.Or15729.002, BLIB.Or15737a.001, KB#833:006, CMB.F29, CMB.F30, CMB.F31, LEID.Or4969x, BN.6397. Pubs: AQDA, GWBP#037 p.062bx, GWBP#056 p.078x, GWBP#098 p.130bx, GWBP#105 p.137x, GWBP#155 p.213x, GWBP#159 p.216x, GWBP#166 p.222bx, ROB3.000x. Trans: AQDS, GWB#037x, GWB#056x, GWB#098x, GWB#105x, GWB#155x, GWB#159x, GWB#166x, BADM.016x, BADM.021ax, COF.018-019x, TDH#082x, TDH#158.3x, GPB.102x2x, GPB.112x, GPB.154x, GPB.170x2x, GPB.176x, GPB.195x, GPB.206x6x, GPB.207x3x, GPB.208x5x, GPB.209x5x, GPB.211x, GPB.214x7x, GPB.215x15x, GPB.215-216x, GPB.216x, GPB.225x, GPB.226x4x, GPB.230-231x, GPB.231x, GPB.242x, GPB.254x, GPB.325x, GPB.331-332x, GPB.376x, GPB.390x, GPB.395-396x, GPB.396x, MBW.166x, MBW.168x, PDC.040x, PDC.040-042x, PDC.042x, PDC.058-059x, PDC.059x, PDC.059-060x, PDC.064-065x, PDC.092x, PDC.092-093x, PDC.095x, PDC.100x, PDC.118-119x, PDC.121x, PDC.133-134x, PDC.134-135x, PDC.161x, PDC.187x, WOB.105x, WOB.109x, WOB.146x, WOB.132x, WOB.134x, WOB.162x, WOB.171-172x, WOB.172x, WOB.176x, SW v01#05 p.009x, SW v14#04 p.112 (et al)x, DWN v1#02 p.002-003x, DWN v2#09 p.069-070x, BLC.PT#045, BLC.PT#056, BSC.110 #043-044+046x, BSC.156 #138-139x, BSC.262 #547x. *The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him Who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws...* Notes: LAC.213-257, ROB3.275 et al, BKOG.351 et al, GPB.206 et al, EBTB.155, EBTB.189, MMAH.199, GSH.133, LL#027.

- ▶ Intended as a scholarly tool: assumes acquaintance with original languages, source criticism.

Some use cases

- ▶ Lookup from source reference (e.g., “GWB#050”)
 - ▶ Refer to bibliography for source code abbreviations
- ▶ Lookup from words/phrases in first line
- ▶ Systematic readthrough
 - ▶ Longest-to-shortest, shortest-to-longest
- ▶ Browse titles (from index)
- ▶ Browse questions (from index)
- ▶ Collation of original text from multiple manuscripts
 - ▶ May be useful when authorized text at Bahá’í Reference Library does not exist

Next step: Content

(appendix to the Inventory)

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Kant's Critique of Pure Reason

- ▶ What can we know?
- ▶ What should we do?
- ▶ What may we hope?

THE CANON OF PURE REASON 635

THE CANON OF PURE REASON

Section 2

THE IDEAL OF THE HIGHEST GOOD, AS A DETERMINING
GROUND OF THE ULTIMATE END OF PURE REASON

Reason, in its speculative employment, conducted us through the field of experience, and since it could not find complete satisfaction there, from thence to speculative ideas, which, however, in the end brought us back to experience. In so doing the ideas fulfilled their purpose, but in a manner which, though useful, is not in accordance with our expectation. One other line of enquiry still remains open to us: namely, whether pure reason may not also be met with in the practical sphere, and whether it may not there conduct us to ideas which reach to those highest ends of pure reason that we have just stated, and whether, therefore, reason may not be able to supply to us from the standpoint of its practical interest what it altogether refuses to supply in respect of its speculative interest.

All the interests of my reason, speculative as well as practical, combine in the three following questions:

1. What can I know?
2. What ought I to do?
3. What may I hope?

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B 833

The first question is merely speculative. We have, as I flatter myself, exhausted all the possible answers to it, and at last have found the answer with which reason must perforce content itself, and with which, so long as it takes no account of the practical, it has also good cause to be satisfied. But from the two great ends to which the whole endeavour of pure reason was really directed, we have remained just as far removed as if through love of ease we had declined this labour of enquiry at the very outset. So far, then, as knowledge is concerned, this much, at least, is certain and definitively established, that in respect of these two latter problems, knowledge is unattainable by us.

The second question is purely practical. As such it can

A classification scheme

- ▶ What can we know?
 - ▶ What are the ultimate things to know about?
 - ▶ How do we know them? How does language function as a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge?

- ▶ What should we do?
 - ▶ As individuals, in relation to ourselves, others, the Truth?
 - ▶ As groups of individuals that need to both cooperate and compete?

- ▶ What shall we hope?
 - ▶ Where did we come from, and what kind of a world are we creating?

| APPENDIX | | |
|--|--|--|
| A SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION SCHEME FOR THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS: | | |
| MAIN HEADINGS | | |
| <i>Questions of being</i> | I. Degrees and Conditions of Existence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. God and the Realm of the Divine Will B. Metaphysics and Natural Philosophy C. The Manifestations of God D. The Covenant and the Faith of God | METAPHYSICS, THEOLOGY, NATURAL PHILOSOPHY |
| <i>Questions of knowledge</i> | II. Knowledge, language and symbol <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Knowledge and the Investigation of Reality B. Language, Symbol and Interpretation C. Sacred Writings: Modes, Styles, Disposition of | EPISTEMOLOGY, PHILOSOPHY OF LANGUAGE, HERMENEUTICS |
| <i>Questions of conduct</i> | III. Individual Reality and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Individual Spiritual Reality: Soul, Mind, Spirit B. The Spiritual Purpose of Human Existence C. Spiritual Life and Practice <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Relation to God 2. In Relation to Self 3. In Relation to Others | PSYCHOLOGY, PERSONAL ETHICS, MYSTICISM |
| <i>Questions of governance</i> | IV. Collective Reality and Development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Laws and Ordinances B. Prohibitions and Admonitions C. Social Teachings D. The Administrative Order and the Bahá'í Community | JURISPRUDENCE, SOCIOLOGY, ECONOMICS, POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY |
| <i>Questions of historical contingency</i> | V. Past, Present, and Future <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Beliefs and Dispensations of the Past B. The Central Figures and Events of Their Ministries C. Present and Future Order; Crisis and Victory; Prophetic Statements | HISTORY, ESCHATOLOGY |

Classification: sub-categories

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- ▶ Links to thematic compilations of extracts
- ▶ Shoghi Effendi, Universal House of Justice heavily referenced here

A SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION SCHEME FOR THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS: SUB-HEADINGS

I.A. GOD AND THE REALM OF THE DIVINE WILL

God [Alláh; Khudá; Haqq; Ulúhíyyat]
God: transcendence/unknowability of
God: absolute freedom/independence of
God: no causal link to creation
God: every concept of is sheer imagination
God: beyond "being", "oneness", "existence"
God: love for own essence
God: self-description of
God: impersonality of
God: impossibility of true worship of
God: as immanent/personal
God: essential vs. actional attributes
God: proofs for existence
God: proofs for existence: cosmological proof
God: proofs for existence: teleological proof (from design)
God: proofs for existence: proof from "voluntary composition"
God: proofs for existence: proof from existence of opposites
God: proofs for existence: impossibility of logical proof
names and attributes of God [asmá' va shífát]
names and attributes of God: inadequacy of in describing the essence
names and attributes of God: within all things; every atom
names and attributes of God: require the existence of objects
names and attributes of God: God's knowledge of things
names and attributes of God: same as knowledge of God
names and attributes of God: eternal archetypes [a'yán-i-thábitah]
names and attributes of God: oneness [ahadíyyih and wáhidíyyih]
names and attributes of God: revealed in the Manifestations
Divine unity [tawhíd] and levels of unity
the Primal Will [maṣhíyyat]/First Mind ['aql-i-awwal]
the Primal Will: in relation to God
the Primal Will: self-generation of
the Primal Will: appearance in the Manifestation
the Primal Will: identified with the Logos/Word of God
the Primal Will: identified with the First Remembrance
the Primal Will: immediate/efficient cause of creation
the Primal Will: inner reality of all things

the Holy Spirit: as mediator
the Holy Spirit: source of knowledge/inspiration/influence
the Holy Spirit: cause of quickening of souls
the Holy Spirit: gift of; successive descent of
the Holy Spirit: love as breath of
the Holy Spirit: cause of physical/spiritual healing
the Holy Spirit: cause of unity
the Holy Spirit: cause of progress in the world/discoveries
the Holy Spirit: humanity's need for
the Holy Spirit: personified as dove/maiden/etc.
Primal Will identified with Word of God
Word of God identified with Holy Spirit

I.B. METAPHYSICS AND NATURAL PHILOSOPHY

divine philosophy contrasted with natural philosophy
the realms of being and overlapping hierarchies/frameworks
the realms of being: God, Will/Command, creation
the realms of being: three degrees of divine emanation
the realms of being: arcs of ascent and descent
the realms of being: material and spiritual existence; two books
the realms of being: Nasut/Malakut/Jabarut/Lahut/Hahut
the divine emanation
the divine emanation: three degrees of
the divine emanation: all things emanate from God
the divine emanation: the divine bounty pervades all things
the divine emanation: infinite power of
the divine emanation: necessary condition of existence
the divine emanation: ceaseless/eternal
the divine emanation: continual re-creation of the world
emanation [sudúr] vs. manifestation [zuhúr]
the four/five pathways of love [maḥabbat]
love: first pathway, of God for own essence
love: second pathway, of God for the creatures
love: third pathway, of the creatures for God
love: fourth pathway, of the creatures for each other
love: fifth pathway, of the self of God standing within
creation [khalq]