

Article

A New Wave of Bahā'ī Intellectual Thought: The Impact and Contributions of *World Order* Magazine

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Abstract: This paper explores the scholarship and intellectual contribution of the second series of *World Order* magazine, which published from 1966 until 2008 over 38 volumes. In so doing, I provide a narrative overview of the main themes and papers in *World Order*, and by extension some of the topics being discussed in the worldwide Bahā'ī community. This is complemented by interviews with past *World Order* editors, who provided information on papers, topics and issues that generated the most interest and print runs, a listing of the number of pieces and articles by topic, and a questionnaire survey of those attending an academic Bahā'ī conference. I compare themes identified in the overview with contemporary discourses over a similar period drawing on surveys of textbook and journal contents in similar areas. In addition, I summarise available information on the most cited (from Google Scholar) and downloaded (from Bahā'ī Library online) *World Order* papers, and hence those contributions with the most impact using these quantitative approaches. I show that Abizadeh's paper on 'Ethnicity, Race, and a Possible Humanity', which discusses how the concept of the oneness of humanity can potentially address racial problems, is the most cited paper, and Stokes's paper on 'The Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions', a piece on comparative religion, is the most downloaded. Overall, the most cited and downloaded papers are indicative of the breadth of topics covered in *World Order*, with pieces on political philosophy, law, education, history, theology, and psychology. The number of articles and editorials on social issues, such as racial justice, women's rights, and environmentalism, is one indication that the Bahā'ī community was at the forefront of thinking about social action.



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1. Introduction

Very little has been written on the development of intellectual thought in North American and European Bahā'ī communities. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, books and articles were written by orientalists and diplomats interested in the origins of the Bahā'ī religion, but it was only from the 1950s that a more scholarly approach developed in the English language. Within the Bahā'ī community, some of this new thinking about the religion and its implications was published in a Bahā'ī-sponsored periodical, *World Order* magazine. In this paper, I will examine the scholarship and intellectual contribution of the second series of *World Order* magazine, which started in 1966 and continued until 2008 after publishing 38 volumes. In so doing, I aim to provide an overview of the main themes and papers over this period, and summarise available information on citations and downloads in order to capture one measure of its impact.

Bahā'ī News was the first English-language periodical and launched in 1910. It was renamed *Star of the West* (reflecting the terminology of the time) in 1911.¹ In 1922, Shoghi Effendi, the head of the Bahā'ī community from 1921 to 1957, wrote that he wished for the magazine to become 'more and more universal so as to interest all those who are working for universal brotherhood, religion and peace' (NSA 2011). *Star of the West* then became *The Bahā'ī Magazine*. *World Order* was formed from combining *The Bahā'ī Magazine* with another periodical, *World Unity*. The latter was a monthly magazine that started in October

1927 with Horace Holley as managing editor,² and there were 15 volumes published until its last issue in March 1935. Thus, the first series of *World Order* started in April 1935.³ It was under the editorship of Horace Holley and Stanwood Cobb, prominent Bahā'īs of their time, and published by the Bahā'ī Publishing Committee in New York. However, this series ceased publication in 1949 due to a shortage of funds, initially for two years 'in an effort to ensure funds were available to complete the Bahā'ī House of Worship in Wilmette' at the request of Shoghi Effendi. The acute financial burden continued up to the House of Worship's completion in 1953 (NSA 2011), but even after this, *World Order* did not restart until 1966.

The idea behind reviving *World Order* was first proposed by Firuz Kazemzadeh in 1965, who was a Yale historian and prominent Bahā'ī, to the US National Spiritual Assembly, the elected nine-person administrative council of the Bahā'īs of the United States, of which Kazemzadeh was a member (Interchange 1998–1999). David Ruhe, who was also on the National Assembly at the time and a medical academic at the University of Kansas, was instrumental in suggesting it, securing funding and recommending what it should do (Fisher 2017). The first editorial board included Kazemzadeh and Howard Garey (also a Yale academic).⁴ In 1967, Glenford Mitchell, who was teaching English and journalism at Howard University, became managing editor and remained until 1982. In 1968, Robert Hayden and Betty Fisher joined the editorial board; Betty Fisher becoming managing editor after Glenford Mitchell until *World Order* ceased publication in 2008. The first issue of the new series of *World Order* stated that its mission was to 'represent a dialogue among those, whether Bahā'ī or not, whose efforts to understand and do something about the human condition have brought them to a point at which exchange of ideas and insights will be of common benefit', and 'providing an opportunity for the discussion of a vast number of problems which must be solved if the goal of a unified and peaceful humanity is ever to be achieved' (Editors 1966). This mission statement was revised in 1998, with the aim of 'nurturing, exploring and eloquently expressing the intellectual, spiritual and creative lives of Bahā'īs'. The US National Assembly and its office of External Affairs reportedly sent 300 copies of each issue of *World Order* to various national-level contacts, and the Bahā'ī Office at the United Nations (also known as the Bahā'ī International Community) in New York and official Bahā'ī public information representatives shared copies (NSA 2011).

The design from 1966 onwards was innovative in many ways.⁵ This series followed the design and colour scheme of the last few issues of the first series of *World Order*.⁶ The typeface lettering of 'World Order' is clearly influenced by Bauhaus fonts (see Figure 1), and remained consistent throughout its publication history with a band under the title that extends to the back cover. There was abstract art on the back cover from Spring 1967, and photography from the Fall 1967 issue (usually taken by Glenford Mitchell). Two colours were used on the front cover, 'to create moods that change with the seasons'.⁷ Colour combinations were occasionally bold (Figure 2). Photographs and paintings also appeared inside the magazine from 1967.⁸ From the Fall 1977 issue, some further changes were made (to the spacing of the table of contents on the cover)⁹ and also a photograph 'wrapped' itself from the front and back. Further occasional changes were made. Recognising this, *World Order* won a design award out of a field of 450 journals in 2004, with the judges commending the 'full-bleed photos that open each article' and the periodical's 'crispness'. On receiving the award, Betty Fisher, managing editor, stated, 'We wanted the design to reflect a publication that is thought-provoking but exciting, serious but engaging, innovative but accessible' (Bahā'ī News 2005). Looking at the design history, it is notable that Frank Lloyd Wright, America's best known architect, designed a cover of *World Unity*, its precursor (Interchange 1998–1999)¹⁰, and this will very likely have influenced subsequent designs that maintained some key aspects of his original design, including the font and integration of the front and back.



Figure 1. Typeface for 1966 *World Order* magazine.



Figure 2. Early *World Order* covers incorporating the two-colour design.

In 2008, after 42 years, which was volume 38 number 3, *World Order* ceased publication due to funding difficulties following a national economic crisis and the desire of the US National Assembly to concentrate any funding on Bahā'ī studies toward the *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies*, which was the quarterly publication of the Association of Bahā'ī Studies–North America.¹¹ An online version of *World Order* was considered but did not materialise. In 2008, the National Assembly requested *World Order* to cease publishing as a subscription print magazine and ‘to effect a transition to a new, free online magazine’ and to make it operational by November 2009 (NSA 2008). The editorial board was thus dissolved in March 2009, and a new task force was appointed to take this forward including ‘recommending goals for the first year of the online magazine’s functioning’. When the board was dissolved, a number of manuscripts were under consideration, and this task force ‘consulted at length’ about what to do with them, studied ‘dozens of magazines and journal sites’, started working with web designers, and placed adverts on a bimonthly basis in *The American Bahā'ī* (NSA 2010), a national newsletter that was distributed to all US Bahā'īs. However, in early 2011, the National Assembly decided to bring to a close the work of the task force ‘as there was no prospect of the journal moving forward online for some time’¹² and asked the magazine’s managing editor, Betty Fisher, to archive the magazine’s files and summarise its history.¹³ The task force expressed its hope that the magazine would be revived for a third time (NSA 2011).

2. Major Themes

I will examine major themes and contributions by decade as one way of examining the intellectual interests and trends of *World Order*, and by extension the US and Western Bahā'ī community. From 1966–1970, *World Order* was published quarterly, and most pieces were written in an essay style, many of which were on racism and environmentalism. At the same time, contributions were diverse with pieces on Frankenstein, the cellist Pablo Casals as he turned 91 years old, TV journalism, the world’s oceans, California’s Coast Redwoods by the environmentalist, Richard St Barbe Baker (*St Barbe Baker 1967*), and a bio-bibliographical sketch of the early Bahā'ī poet, Naim, by Roy Mottahedeh (*Mottahedeh 1967*). There was a contribution by the Canadian Prime Minister of the time, Lester Pearson (*Pearson 1967*). Two contributions stand out—Glenford Mitchell’s review of Malcolm X’s autobiography (G. Mitchell 1966),¹⁴ and Robert Hayden’s poem, ‘And All the Atoms Cry Aloud’ (*Hayden 1967*).

In the 1970s, there were many pieces on the equality of the sexes, economics, and particularly education, which were increasingly scholarly in nature. Important contribu-

tions included Ervin Johnson's paper on 'The Challenge of the Bahā'ī Faith' (Johnson 1976), which was an early academic attempt to examine Bahā'ī thought by someone who was not a Bahā'ī, and an article considering, from a Bahā'ī perspective, the failure of the Persian prophetic figure, Mani (Conner 1977). New material on Khalil Gibran's encounter with 'Abdu'l-Baha (Gail 1978) and Alain Locke's links with the early American Bahā'ī community were published (Mason 1979).¹⁵ The editors wrote that three articles had become 'immortalised'.¹⁶ Over this period, the wide variety of topics was a consistent feature—with papers not directly on Bahā'ī topics but nevertheless addressing broader questions of multiculturalism and unity, including on Canadian Arctic communities, Maroon identity in Jamaica, modern Islam in India and Pakistan, and a book review on Erich Fromm's *Anatomy of Human Destructiveness* (Kazemzadeh 1974). It also included the text of a lecture by Pierre Trudeau, then Prime Minister of Canada (Trudeau 1975). A paper on the ANISA educational model, proposed by Dan Jordan and colleagues at the University of Massachusetts (Jordan and Streets 1972), was reprinted in 2001. The Fall 1971 issue was themed around 'Abdu'l-Baha, the head of the Bahā'ī community from 1892 to 1921, on the 50th anniversary of his passing (World Order 1971), and 50,000 copies were published (Fisher 2017),¹⁷ with a notable paper by Amin Banani on the writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Banani 1971). Eyewitness accounts of the Bab's public execution, translated into English for the first time, were published in the Fall 1973 issue (World Order 1973).

The late 1970s produced some of the highest quality and most interesting work in *World Order*, with one letter noting that nowhere 'else can we find such a banquet' in the Bahā'ī world (Cole 1978–1979). Other scholarly outlets included the Canadian Association of Bahā'ī Studies, which started publishing monographs in 1976 (including reprinting a *World Order* paper by John Hatcher in the same year, and shortly after reprinting *World Order* pieces by Douglas Martin and William Hatcher), and the associated *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* from 1988. In addition, the academically-oriented *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* started privately publishing from 1982 and *Bahā'ī Studies Review* from 1990. Over this period, two pieces in *World Order* are noteworthy: 'A Forum: Concerning Saint Paul' (World Order 1979)¹⁸ included a series of letters on St Paul from a Bahā'ī perspective, and is an early model of an informed scholarly dialogue within the Bahā'ī community. Juan Cole's paper on 'Problems of Chronology in Baha'u'llah's Tablet of Wisdom' (Cole 1979) was a ground-breaking study of Bahā'ī texts, which elicited responses from Todd Lawson, Jack McLean and William Hatcher, and it was the latter who called it a 'significant contribution' but with a 'seriously defective conclusion'.¹⁹ These two contributions, on St. Paul and the Tablet of Wisdom, in their openness to discuss important theological topics in a balanced way, was an indication of increasing quality. Another printed edition highlighted by a former editor, Glenford Mitchell (B. Mitchell 2022), was one which focused on the US's bicentenary as a nation with an editorial, papers, a poem and a series of interviews with a diverse group of Americans (including Robert Hayden, who was a Bahā'ī, shortly before his appointment as the first African-American Consultant in Poetry to the US Library of Congress, which later became known as poet laureate) (World Order 1975–1976). A special issue remembering Mark Tobey is notable with pieces by Marzieh Gail, Bernard Leach, and Firuz Kazemzadeh (World Order 1977). A further sign of the periodical's improvement was the quality of book reviews, which had become increasingly critical rather than descriptive. Firuz Kazemzadeh's reviews are masterful in this regard, in particular his critique of the hagiographic tendency in some Bahā'ī literature (Kazemzadeh 1978–1979)²⁰ and highlighting the need for historical and theological context to meaningfully read Bahā'ī texts (Kazemzadeh 1978).²¹

The 1980s led to a number of pieces on the persecution of Bahā'īs in Iran (Editorial 1982)²² (which had increased substantially after the 1979 Islamic Revolution) and also on the life and work of Robert Hayden. In addition, *World Order* published important historical pieces, e.g., Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida's links to early Bahā'īs (Cole 1981), and how Indian Bahā'īs created culturally sensitive devotional music (Garlington 1982), the latter being key in demonstrating how the Bahā'ī Faith transcended its socio-cultural

background in becoming a world religion.²³ One article on the intestate inheritance laws of the Baha'u'llah's Kitab-i-Aqdas by Linda Walbridge and John Walbridge in 1984 generated considerable discussion (Walbridge and Walbridge 1984–1985),²⁴ including a series of letters in *Dialogue* magazine, and commentaries and papers in the *Bahā'ī Studies Review* more than a decade later.²⁵ The 20th anniversary issue (*World Order* 1986–1987) included reprints of papers by Douglas Martin on Bahā'ī teachings, William Hatcher on science and religion, Constance Conrader on gender equality, and Patti Raman on education, reflecting some of the key *World Order* themes in its first two decades.²⁶ Nader Saeidi wrote a paper on 'Faith, Reason and Society' (Saeidi 1987) that Juan Cole considered the best that *World Order* had published.²⁷ Overall, in the 1980s, the material in the periodical became more directly connected to Bahā'ī teachings and history.

One other feature of *World Order* in the 1980s was a few letters being published that reflected a tension among the readership towards more academically informed pieces. For example, some wrote to *World Order* editors complaining that papers used 'obscure philosophical jargon' (Liggitt 1984), should be 'thrown away',²⁸ and in response there were pleas for more tolerance and open-mindedness (Cole 1982).²⁹ Another questioned whether the links between drugs and spirituality, which had been the subject of a letter, was a 'valid topic' for discussion (Lample 1982).³⁰ An editorial commentary in defence of its intellectual content anticipated this (Interchange 1973), and was a sober and thorough response examining the beneficial role of a rational and scientific approach to Bahā'ī texts and teachings, which merits re-reading.³¹ Interestingly, these themes played out in Bahā'ī studies more widely in the 1990s and 2000s, a period that coincided with a thinning out of a scholarly discourse within the Bahā'ī community (Fazel 2003).

In the late 1980s, *World Order* started to publish behind schedule, and also double up issues, and it skipped publication years (from 1990 to 1993) in order to make up the difference. In the 1990s, thematic issues started based on papers at specially commissioned conferences, such as on inter-religious dialogue, the persecution of Iran's Bahā'īs, the American Bahā'ī community, and Shoghi Effendi. There are few notable articles. One example was a paper on Robert Abbott, who was an early black Bahā'ī who founded the *Chicago Defender* newspaper and the Bud Billiken Parade and Picnic, currently the second largest public parade in the US (Perry 1995). There were pieces on some contemporary social challenges, such as moral development, violence, and public health, with superficial links to Bahā'ī teachings.

In the 2000s, with a new editorial board, there was a change in direction towards covering more culture, and there were reviews of contemporary music, fiction, film, and an exhibition. Thematic issues continued with an examination of a seminal scholarly work on Bahā'ī history and thought, *Making the Crooked Straight* (*World Order* 2004),³² and there were special issues on race, peace, family, education, inter-religious dialogue, as well as two on film. Issues continued to be delayed, although they were produced quarterly. A special issue focused on Alain Locke and his work in 2005, which included a previously unpublished poem, 'The Mood Maiden', on interracial marriage (Locke 2005).³³ There was a comprehensive and important paper on Bahā'ī elections (Abizadeh 2005).³⁴ The last issue, published in 2008 (volume 38, number 3), included newly translated materials on Bahā'ī persecutions in the 1950s in Yazd, and an informative book review that tried to make sense of Alain Locke's Bahā'ī affiliation (Smith 2007). Beyond more articles on culture, I did not identify any clear shift in topics in the 2000s.

Complementary to this more qualitative approach, I have listed the number of articles in a table by specific topics in all the issues based on a thematic index of contents prepared by Betty Fisher, the longest serving managing editor (Table 1).³⁵ Most articles were on: general religion (116), current affairs (94), the arts (80), historical topics (77), persecution of the Bahā'īs (73) and 'racial unity' (69).

Table 1. Number of articles in *World Order* by topic/theme.

Broad Topic	Number of Articles/Editorials
Religion general	116
Current events	94
The arts	80
History of religions/Bahā'ī religion	77
Persecution of the Bahā'īs	73
Racial unity	69
Bahā'ī central figures	56
Education	43
Equality of women and men	43
Politics	33
Human rights and justice	31
Marriage and family life	25
Socio-economic development	24
Environmentalism	18
Urban planning	16
Peace	14
Spirituality	12
Health and healing	12
Science and religion	10

This is a wide range of topics, and overlaps to some extent with contemporary issues. However, there is little on music (an editorial (Editorial 1981) and a piece on Pablo Casals) and nothing on the cultural implications of sport. In relation to current events, *World Order* responded to certain key issues. In the late 1960s, there were editorials on violence in America, human rights, nationalism, and peace (and one article on the Vietnam war). In the 1970s, editorials covered ecology, war, world hunger, racism, and the arms race. The 1980s had editorials on drug abuse, peace, freedom of religion and AIDS; the 1990s on animal welfare, the UN and women's rights. In the 2000s, editorials addressed racism, the role of religion, the International Criminal Court, and genocide. Compared to overviews of the social, political and cultural life of each decade, there was a relative lack of attention in *World Order* to the counterculture of the 1960s, the sexual revolution and its implications from the 1960s and beyond. Terrorism, science and technology, communications (and the internet) and globalization are also not covered to the extent of their importance in wider society. One gauge of these wider trends is outlined in *The Oxford History of the Twentieth Century*, which in a section covering science, technology, and medicine, highlights advances in space travel and discovery, genetic engineering, computer science, the internet, and therapeutic advances in medicine since the 1960s (Wood 1998).

3. Themes in the Social Landscape

Did the major themes covered in *World Order* reflect wider societal concerns? As the journal primarily served as one way that a religious community interfaced with others with similar aims and interests, comparisons are not straightforward. Periodicals such as the *New Yorker*, *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* are not comparable as they drew on a vastly larger pool of contributors, sold hundreds of thousands of copies, and were commercially oriented. Religious magazines from other traditions were often aimed at converting non-believers or entirely internally oriented. Thus, *World Order* sat in a relatively unique space drawing on writers inside and outside the Bahā'ī community, whether they were academics,

students or others, to contribute. Despite this, one approach to identify themes and their relative prominence during this period is to look at educational materials. From this, it is clear that there was an appreciation of the role that social movements were developing (Torney-Purta et al. 2001) and the importance of human equality in a more global context (Schissler and Nuhoglu 2005). Another study examining textbooks over this period suggests increasing awareness of citizenship and human rights issues (Skinner and Bromley 2019). These emerging themes—social movements, human equality and citizenship—align with prominent themes in *World Order* and suggest that the periodical, at one level, reflected the thinking current at its time.

Another approach is to compare *World Order* with journals dealing with similar areas. Two such thematic analyses were identified. The first study follows on from the above as it was based on a religious education journal. The study reported a focus in the 1990s and early 2000s on six main areas: educational theory; models and methods of religious education, including how they can be implemented; morals, values and character education; policy issues or organizational curriculum documents; spiritual, cultural or social issues, including how religious education can tackle contemporary problems such as pluralism and violence; and theological or historical topics (English et al. 2003). Compared with *World Order*, there is some alignment with a focus on some social problems but *World Order* is more focused on history, particularly of the American Bahā'ī community. Furthermore, there was more emphasis on educational models in the 1970s *World Order*, which waned in the 1990s and 2000s, suggesting less new thinking on these questions in the Bahā'ī community. A second relevant study is an investigation of 'spirituality research' from 1944 to 2003, which allowed for the examination of temporal trends (Ribaudo and Takahashi 2008). This found that there was a recurring pattern whereby a period of more conceptual pieces (attempting to explore the construct of spirituality) was followed by applied ones (using spirituality to change lives), with a similar number of articles on these two areas overall. Methodologically, there was an increasing number of studies on measurement, interventions and education. The more empirical trend towards measurement and interventions is not as clear in *World Order*, but a consistent number of more conceptual articles remained.

4. Relative Measures of Impact

How can we evaluate the impact of *World Order* articles? Approaches in academia to assess impact include whether specific papers have generated further scholarship, how many times they have been read or downloaded, qualitative assessments by experts and the extent of citations from others. However, these approaches are more accepted in the social and natural sciences. The whole notion of impact is more difficult in the arts and humanities, where such quantitative measures may not correlate with academic or social influence (and where impact may be mediated in other ways, e.g., a textbook citing a work). Nevertheless, taking these quantitative measures in turn in relation to downloads, this is a limited measure, as few *World Order* articles have been made available online in ways that allow for such metrics to be collected. One reliable source of information is bahai-library.org, the largest repository of online secondary materials on the Bahā'ī religion, which has more than 50 *World Order* articles online (Winters 2021). Based on this, the most downloaded pieces include some historical items (Table 2), including of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in the West', indicating one enduring value of the magazine in publishing such documents for the first time. The most downloaded paper is on comparative religion (Stokes 1997).

Table 2. Number of downloads for selected *World Order* articles.

<i>World Order</i> Publication (Short Title, Author, Year)	Downloads (000s) to 31 December 2021
Story of Joseph in Five Religious Traditions (Stokes 1997)	50
Story of Joseph in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Faiths (Stokes 1997–1998)	35
Juliet [Thompson] Remembers Gibran (Gail 1978)	20
Baha'u'llah's Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (Gail 1946) [from the first series of <i>World Order</i>]	16
'Abdu'l-Baha's Meeting with Two Prominent Iranians (Qazvini 1998)	16
Becoming Your True Self (Jordan 1968)	14
'Abdu'l-Baha: Portrayals (Khan et al. 1971)	14
The Mountain of God (Stevens 1970)	14
Radiant Acquiescence (Rexford 1937) [from the first series]	13
The Bab's Bayan (Afnan 2000)	12

Citations is another a key measure of impact, although more relevant in the sciences than in the arts and humanities, where citations can lag many years behind publication date, and patterns of citation vary substantially between disciplines. Using search strategies in Google Scholar, there have been citations to 61 papers from the second series of *World Order* (equating to around 10% of all the papers). As of 31 December 2021, citations are reported in Table 3.

Table 3. Total number of citations to *World Order* articles.

<i>World Order</i> Publication (Short Title, Author, Year)	Google Scholar Citations from Publication until 31 December 2021
Ethnicity, race, and a possible humanity (Abizadeh 2001)	81
Preventing future genocides (Pace and Deller 2005)	42
Problems of chronology (Cole 1979)	16
The ANISA model (Jordan and Streets 1972)	12
Democratic elections (Abizadeh 2005)	12
Muhammad Abduh and Rashid Rida (Cole 1981)	10
Economics and moral values (Hatcher 1974)	8
Challenge of the Bahā'ī Faith (Johnson 1976)	7
Religion and personality (Keene 1967)	7
Expressive style (Bausani 1978–1979)	6

These most cited papers are indicative of the breadth of topics covered in *World Order*, with pieces on political philosophy, law, education, history, theology and psychology.³⁶ Abizadeh's paper on 'Ethnicity, Race, and a Possible Humanity', discusses how the concept of the oneness of humanity can potentially address racial problems (Abizadeh 2001). The challenge of racism and fostering unity between nations has been an occasional theme in *World Order* over its four decades.

Another way to consider the impact of articles is through qualitative surveys. One such survey in 2000 asked speakers and participants at a Bahā'ī studies conference about the most influential articles on Bahā'ī thought and history (Associate 2000). Two respondents mentioned the Cole paper on chronology (Cole 1979).³⁷ Separately, editor Betty Fisher (Fisher 2017) noted that the editorial board received positive feedback on the Forum on St. Paul, and Amin Banani's paper on 'Abdu'l-Baha's writings (Banani 1971). She added that the 200th anniversary issue on the founding of the USA (*World Order* 1975–1976) was very widely used, and the 1972 paper on the ANISA model was 'very popular' (Jordan and Streets 1972). Robert Stockman (Stockman 2017) also noted the Cole chronology paper (Cole 1979), the Walbridges' essay on the intestate inheritance laws (Walbridge and Walbridge 1984–1985) and historical pieces on the dating of Baha'u'llah's Book of Certitude (from a

paper on the conversion of one of the Bab's great uncles) (Rabbani 1999), accounts of the execution of the Bab (*World Order* 1973), and the translation of an 1867 petition of a Persian Bahā'ī community to the US congress (*World Order* 2006).

5. Conclusions

Overall, *World Order* comes across as a remarkable achievement of the Bahā'ī community of the United States. This achievement was as a periodical that focused on cultural and intellectual life, not an academic one. The breadth of subjects and authors, its outward-looking and intellectually curious perspective, and the sustained regular output over nearly four decades is impressive. The period in the late 70s and early 80s is particularly noteworthy, with many original and thoughtful articles which continue to be discussed within Bahā'ī circles. Contributing to its success was a 'sense of humor and openness to criticism' (Hatcher 1973) and a willingness toward 'tackling tough issues' (*Interchange* 1998–1999). The readership was large in the 1970s and 1980s with around 2000 subscribers (Stockman 2017),³⁸ and it had an important public relations role in raising the issue of the persecution of the Bahā'īs of Iran with the wider American public and government. This was particularly noteworthy in the 1970s and 1980s as there were very few Bahā'ī periodicals. *World Order's* considerable number of articles and editorials on social issues, such as racial justice, women's rights and environmentalism, was one indication that the Bahā'ī community was at the forefront of thinking about social action.

The cessation of *World Order* in 2008 has meant that the Bahā'ī community has lost another periodical,³⁹ which cannot be compensated by the various news magazines (which focus on recent events and showcasing Bahā'ī activities) or publications such as the *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* that are primarily focused towards the Bahā'ī community. Although the loss of *World Order* reflects a broader thinning out of scholarly discourse in the Bahā'ī community (with scholarly journals in France, Spain, Germany, Australia and Singapore also stopping),⁴⁰ it nevertheless demonstrates what is possible—a quarterly cultural and intellectual periodical with a strong sense of design, which was published for around 40 years produced by a single national Bahā'ī community. In publishing editorials tackling contemporary social issues, original articles on a wide range of topics, and documents and translations of important episodes in Bahā'ī history, it created a venue for 'nurturing, exploring and eloquently expressing the intellectual, spiritual, and creative lives of Bahā'īs' (*Interchange* 1998–1999).

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Data Availability Statement: Data on citations is available from Google Scholar, and on downloads can be requested directly from Bahā'ī Library online.

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Conflicts of Interest: I published two book reviews in *World Order*.

Notes

¹ A similar periodical from Ishqabad (Ashqabad), *Khurshid-i Khavar* ('Sun of the East'), began in 1917.

² With the aim to record and interpret 'those significant changes in present-day thought which mark the trend towards universal understanding'.

³ See https://bahai.works/Baha%27i_News/Issue_73/Text#pg5 (accessed on 25 March 2023).

⁴ Also included were Monroe Michels (who ran the production and business management of the magazine, and died in 1968) and a business manager, Muriel Michels (who passed away in 1969).

5 The logotype was chosen by Monroe Michels, one of the first editors (see [Interchange 1979](#)).

6 Personal communication, Glenford Mitchell in an email to author from Bahia Mitchell, 30 May 2022 (B. [Mitchell 2022](#)).

7 In Summer 1967, there is an art director attributed, who was Henry Marguiles. There were other art directors in the late 1960s.

8 Very occasionally, there were paintings on the back cover instead of photographs, including an aboriginal bark painting by Gowarrin in Spring 1968.

9 John Solarz was the cover designer.

10 'World Order has received a call that piqued the editors' interest. A retired architect in New York City is looking for issue of World Unity magazine because 6 covers in volume 5 (October 1929 through March 1930) were designed by Frank Lloyd Wright.' No further correspondence on this was published. This will be subject of a forthcoming paper.

11 Both Betty Fisher and Robert Stockman, who were *World Order* editors at the time, explained this when I interviewed them in 2017 ([Fisher 2017](#); [Stockman 2017](#)). Robert Stockman added that the 2008 recession also led to the closure of the NSA's Research Office, and contributed to halting of the Bahā'ī Encyclopedia project ([Stockman 2017](#)).

12 The transition to an online journal was further complicated by the lack of relevant experience of the editor ([Stockman 2017](#)).

13 A complete topical index prepared by Betty Fisher exists at: https://bahai-library.com/pdf/w/world_order_topical_index.pdf (accessed on 25 March 2023), and all the issues were recently put online at https://bahai.works/World_Order (accessed on 25 March 2023).

14 This contributed to the decision to invite him to the editorial board ([Fisher 2017](#)).

15 This was the only piece that examined the considerable links between Locke and the Bahā'ī community before Christopher Buck's seminal paper 24 years later ([Buck 2001–2002](#)).

16 See ([Interchange 1976](#)). However, these papers (B. Mitchell on alcohol; Conrader on gender equality; and Raman on Hinduism) have been rarely cited.

17 Glenford Mitchell, managing editor at the time, stated that he was 'very much attached to' this issue, which was 'challenging' to put together (B. [Mitchell 2022](#)).

18 Summer 1979. This issue was a response to William Hatcher's review of Udo Schaefer's *Light Shineth in the Darkness* ([Hatcher 1978](#)).

19 See also letters in response Fall 1979, Winter 1979–1980. Frank Lewis discussed this issue in 'Discourses of Knowledge' ([Lewis 2001–2002](#)), and came to a broadly similar conclusion as Cole: that their underlying meaning is considerably more important than whether they are factual accurate.

20 Kazemzadeh was critical of the compilation of Bahā'ī biographies by O.Z. Whitehead and described one as 'flattening, de-individualising and distorting the subjects . . . As one reads one, they begin to resemble one another and lose their distinctive characteristics' ([Kazemzadeh 1978–1979](#)). This tendency towards bland hagiography was discussed in the thoughtful review 'All the Saints Come Marching' ([Morrison 1986](#)).

21 See reviews of Taherzadeh's *Revelation of Baha'u'llah* in which Kazemzadeh points out that the criteria by which the texts selected for inclusion in the books are not discussed, and their relative importance and the temporal circumstances of their revelation are not dealt with. Of volume 1, he notes it was 'not easy to evaluate' ([Kazemzadeh 1976](#)), and of volume 2, he states that others might consider it 'uncritical and excessively worshipful' ([Kazemzadeh 1978](#)). See also the informative and scholarly book reviews by Frank Lewis (e.g., [Lewis 1996](#)), which build on an academic tradition of long-form book reviews.

22 See the strongly worded editorial in Spring 1982.

23 Rather than ethnic religion, which would have imposed its own sociocultural traditions based on its origins in any new setting (discussed in [Fazel 1994](#)).

24 Robert Stockman congratulated the authors (Spring/Summer 1985), and there were further positive letters in Fall 1985.

25 See, e.g., ([McGlenn 1995](#)).

26 These papers have been rarely cited.

27 Letter in Fall 1987/Winter 1987–1988.

28 Winter 1982.

29 Cole notes: 'Totalitarian governments often rewrite history and delete as non-persons those they do not like; I should hope that Bahā'ī historians will be more honest . . . I must end with pleas for more tolerance and open-mindedness among the friends who are not historians, in regard to the writing history. This is one area where the independent and unfettered investigation of reality is a paramount duty'.

30 Fall 1982.

31 Spring 1973.

32 Also see letter by J. McLean in 35.4 (Summer 2004).

33 Buck's introduction to this poem posits that it is 'a love poem, with a white woman as its object of affection . . . envisioning the prospect of interracial marriage, which is the ultimate expression of interracial unity' ([Interchange 2005](#)).

- 34 See also letter *World Order* 37.2.
- 35 https://bahai-library.com/pdf/w/world_order_topical_index.pdf (accessed on 25 March 2023).
- 36 Looking at reference books, the scholarly impact has been limited, partly by lack of accessibility. Two *World Order* papers are cited in Peter Smith's 2000 *Concise Encyclopedia of the Bahá'í Faith* (Oneworld), and four in Robert Stockman's 2013 introductory book on the Bahá'í Faith (*The Bahá'í Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed* [Bloomsbury]). This compares with 6 citations to *Bahá'í Studies Review* (BSR) and 12 to *Bahá'í Studies Bulletin* (BSB) in the *Encyclopedia*, and 7 to JBS and 4 to BSR in the Stockman book (with these journals having considerably fewer citeable articles).
- 37 This survey also highlighted John Hatcher's paper on the metaphorical purpose of physical reality, published by the Canadian Association for Baha'í Studies in the same year (1977) as *World Order* did.
- 38 Stockman estimates that it reduced to around 300–400 when *World Order* ceased.
- 39 The first volume of *Bahá'í World* from 1925–1926 documented 11 magazines, including one published in Burma, one in Esperanto, and four in German. One of the first general letters of Shoghi Effendi to the Bahá'ís of the West explained that all Bahá'í assemblies 'must encourage and stimulate by every means at their command, through subscription, reports and articles, the development of the various Bahá'í magazines' (letter dated 12 March 1923), and added, 'articles on broad humanitarian lines, well-conceived, adequately treated, and powerfully presented, should have their proper place in every issue together with such accounts of the history and the teachings of the Cause as will portray to the Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í alike the unique beauty as well as the compelling power of the Bahá'í spirit' (letter dated 27 November 1924). To the Bahá'ís in New Zealand, Shoghi Effendi stated that a 'good periodical' would be the 'greatest help' for the religion 'establishing' itself there: "He was very glad to learn of the encouraging prospects you have for your 'Herald of the South'. He hopes that it will daily progress and add to its importance in drawing the attention of the people there. A good periodical fully representative of the spirit and teachings of the Cause is the greatest help the Movement can have in establishing itself in a country. So though difficulties may be faced at the outset we should bear them patiently & await that the future should give us our reward" (letter written on his behalf dated 18 September 1926).
- 40 Briefly discussed in 'Bahá'í studies at the crossroads' (Fazel 2018).

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