

QUOTATIONS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF BAHÁ'Í ARCHIVES

Another necessary and highly commendable undertaking is the founding of a Bahá'í Archives in each of the Bahá'í provincial administrative centers. . . . Anyone who, spontaneously and of his own free will, donates material to the Archives of his National Spiritual Assembly—whether this be Tablets, books, pictures, objects or the like—and especially if his inheritors are not accounted of the people of Bahá, or are not considered by him as trustworthy or reliable, will have performed a highly meritorious act in the sight of God, and his name will be perpetuated in the records of the Spiritual Assemblies and his memory enshrined in the Archives forever.

An Archives has also recently been established in the Holy Land, and whatever Sacred Writings and previous relics the individual believers and the Spiritual Assemblies donate voluntarily to this Archives—in particular those items that are more suitably and profitably collected together in one place, and whose dispersal would be a source of loss and detriment—will remain guarded and preserved in their name in a place set aside for the purpose. With the passage of days, visitors to the Holy Land from all quarters of the globe will have the privilege of viewing these items, and, remembering those faithful servants of the Threshold of Grandeur, will commemorate their mention and offer up prayers on their behalf.

(July 1925 to the Bahá'ís of the East, translated from the Persian)

. . . has suggested to the Guardian that he should ask your N.S.A. to address an appeal to the . . . believers urging them to co-operate with the National and local Bahá'í Archives . . . in their efforts for the collection of Bahá'í sacred relics, and specially the Tablets, and their safe preservation.

As this is undoubtedly one of the most urgent tasks facing the believers at present, he strongly feels it advisable that your N.S.A. should once more impress upon the friends the necessity of their giving full and continued support to the truly valuable work which the National as well as the local Archives Committees are accomplishing for our beloved Faith.

Now that the Cause is rapidly passing through so many different phases of its evolution is the time for the friends to exert their utmost in order to preserve as much as they can of the sacred relics and various other precious objects that are associated with the lives of the Founders of the Faith, and particularly the Tablets They have revealed.

Every believer should realize that he has a definite responsibility to shoulder in this matter, and to help, to whatever extent he can, in rendering successful the valuable work which National and local Bahá'í Archives Committees are so devotedly accomplishing for the Faith in

(25 September 1936 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

The importance of the institution of Bahá'í Archives is not due only to the many teaching facilities it procures, but is essentially to be found in the vast amount of historical data and information it offers both to the present-day administrators of the Cause, and to the Bahá'í historians of the future. The institution of Bahá'í Archives is indeed a most valuable storehouse of information regarding all aspects of the Faith, historical, administrative as well as doctrinal. Future generations of believers will be surely in a better position than we are to truly and adequately appreciate the many advantages and facilities which the institution of the Archives offers to individual believers and also the community at large.

(September 1936 to a National Spiritual Assembly)

Complementary in its functions to those of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkár*—an edifice exclusively reserved for Bahá'í worship—this institution [*Hazíratu'l-Quds*, the seat of the Bahá'í National assembly and pivot of all Bahá'í administrative activity], whether local or national, will, as its component parts, such as the Secretariat, the Treasury, **the Archives**, the Library, the Publishing Office, the Assembly Hall, the Council Chamber, the Pilgrims' Hostel, are brought together and made jointly to operate in one spot, be increasingly regarded as the focus of all Bahá'í administrative activity, and symbolize, in a befitting manner, the ideal of service animating the Bahá'í community in its relation like to the Faith and to mankind in general.

(*God Passes By*, rev. ed., 1974, pp 339-340)

The opening of a new epoch of the Formative Age of the Bahá'í Faith, and the beginning of the Six Year Plan are milestones in the unfoldment of Bahá'u'lláh's World Order. As we look backward over goals accomplished, and forward to new challenges, our sense of history is stirred, and we recognize the momentousness of the age in which we live.

Beyond having the vital duty of preserving the Writings of the Central Figures of the Faith and of the Guardian, the Bahá'í Faith is unique among world religions in the degree to which its historical processes have been documented and recorded. Unfortunately, many Bahá'í communities experience difficulty in caring for their historically significant records. Important pieces of our documentary heritage are at risk, or may already have disappeared. Care of archival resources—including the records of Bahá'í individuals and families, corporate bodies and institutions—is an indication of the state of our historical awareness. We too often fail to perceive the significance of what we do, and for this reason give scant attention to preserving the documents of our own, or earlier times.

Bahá'ís have the opportunity—perhaps even the duty—to preserve for future generations an accurate and detailed record of how a major religion entered the world of man and became established in human society. More immediately, history offers all of us a sense of inspiration from the past, as well as a revealing glimpse at our historical roots.

From a letter to National Spiritual Assemblies from the Department of Library and Archival Services, Bahá'í World Centre, 11 June 1986