

**Characterization in the Writings of Shoghi Effendi:
With Special Attention to Yahya**

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Abstract

The writings of Shoghi Effendi Rabbaní (1897-1957) contain "brief characterizations" and "bold and precise condensations" of the monarchs and ecclesiastics of Bahá'u'lláh's day and individuals more directly connected to the Bábí-Bahá'í Faith. These characters are historically based and belong consequently to the world of non-literary prose but are nonetheless imaginatively presented. Shoghi Effendi's manner of characterization is terse, of strong "authorial comment," and heavily moralistic. The Guardian does not "let the characters speak for themselves," following the convention of the novelist. With a vivid realism, he makes decisive value judgements that assess both motive, action or inaction vis-à-vis the character's role in aiding or hindering the spread of the early Bábí-Bahá'í Faith. The dramatic and tumultuous history Shoghi Effendi portrays is peopled with either heroes or villains. His assessment of the historical status of these figures is determined entirely by their rejection or acceptance of the missions of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. This tendency is most clearly evident in the depiction of Mírzá Yahyá (Subh-i-Azal, "morning of eternity") (c. 1832-1912), Bahá'u'lláh's younger half-brother and attempted assassin. This paper examines aspects of Shoghi Effendi's manner of characterization in a literary critical and theological perspective and correlates certain demonic features exhibited by Yahyá to the world of the bizarre religious personalities depicted by the great Russian novelist Fyodor Mikhailovitch Dostoyevsky (1821-1881).

Characterization as Character Assessment^[1]

Characterization has been "the main business of the writer"^[2] since the inception of the modern English-language novel in the mid 1700's. While Shoghi Effendi was no novelist and not primarily concerned with characterization, the character sketch merits nonetheless further consideration in any study of the

Guardian's writings. This literary device is employed in both *God Passes By* (1944) and *The Promised Day is Come* (1941), the two main works employing what may be more properly called the character stamp.

Shoghi Effendi's characters belong to the world of historical non-fiction and not, in essayist William Hazlitt's phrase in describing the novel, to "the airy medium of romance."^[3] Firuz Kazemzadeh in his 1967 preface to *The Promised Day Is Come* remarked upon Shoghi Effendi's "brief characterizations" and "bold and precise condensations" (ix) of the crowned heads of Europe and the Middle East, and the Muslim and Christian ecclesiastics who received and rejected Bahá'u'lláh's letters of proclamation. Kazemzadeh's comment holds true, not only for *The Promised Day is Come* and *God Passes By*, but also for the cablegrams that Shoghi Effendi composed describing the character of his enemies or when lauding the virtues and exemplary services of Bahá'ís who had just died.

What Otto Reinert has written of the poet and the novelist, in contradistinction to the playwright, applies to the Guardian's character stamps. "He can judge and analyze his characters in authorial comment, by godlike ubiquity and omniscience enter at will into their hearts and souls, and just as easily exit back into straight narrative of external events."^[4] The hyperbolic use of the words "godlike" and "omniscience" are meant to indicate the mastery an author of fiction may exercise over characters, since they are largely the author's own creation.^[5] While the Guardian's writings are historically based, his character portrayals are stamped nonetheless with this authorly omniscience.

As mentioned above, the Guardian's aim was to assess the role of a particular historical figure in light of his or her response to the Bahá'í Revelation. However, we should not overlook the fact that Shoghi Effendi was guided in his observations by the writings of European historians or observers, a consideration that deserves further investigation. His description of Pope Pius IX, whom Shoghi Effendi clearly viewed as an antagonist, indicates that he relied, at least in part, on such sources which typically he does not identify.^[6]

Authoritarian by nature, a poor statesman, disinclined to conciliation, determined to preserve all his authority, he, while he succeeded through his assumption of an ultramontane attitude in defining further his position and in reinforcing his spiritual authority, failed, in the end, to maintain that temporal rule which, for so many centuries, had been exercised by the heads of the Catholic Church.^[7]

Shoghi Effendi also sought those testimonies that would validate his argument. He remained unaffected by any contemporary and academic concerns for the "objective" and detached historiography of the university textbook. He was

both theological historian and historical theologian. For example, the Guardian naturally shared Lord Curzon of Kedleston's incisive observation that the massacres of the Bábís following the attempt on the life of Násiri'd-Dín Sháh (August 15, 1852), gave the Bahá'í Faith "a vitality which no other impulse could have secured."^[8]

Like the novelist, Shoghi Effendi also wrote by "invisualisation," or seeing into his characters, just as the private world of motives, dreams and prayers was laid bare before the vision of his Great-Grandfather as attested in his proclamation letters.^[9] We are quite far here from the novelist's tendency of letting the characters speak for themselves. In this case, the characters are spoken *for* or spoken *of*. These comments, for example, are reserved for William II, the second German Emperor and the successor to the recipient of Bahá'u'lláh's tablet:

William II, temperamentally dictatorial, politically inexperienced, militarily aggressive, religiously insincere, posed as the apostle of European peace, yet actually insisted on "the mailed fist" and "the shining armor." Irresponsible, indiscreet, inordinately ambitious, his first act was to dismiss that sagacious statesman [Bismarck], the true founder of his empire, to whose sagacity Bahá'u'lláh had paid tribute, and to the unwisdom of whose imperial and ungrateful master `Abdu'l-Bahá had testified (PDC 4).

While one can readily understand how Shoghi Effendi came to these views through his own reading of European history ("*politically inexperienced, military aggressive*"), the more subjective phrase "*religiously insincere*"^[10] suggests an assessment arrived at by subtler means.

Both *The Promised Day Is Come* and *God Passes By* report on the final destinies of the monarchs and clerics who ignored or scorned Bahá'u'lláh's message or persecuted him or his followers. While the former work may be roughly classified as a historical treatise, it is atypical in both form and content compared to academic or current treatments of history. It is more properly a contemporary rendering of an ancient view of providential history, written in an original voice and style, contextually modern but theologically conservative. Spoken with the authoritative voice of *Amtscharisma*^[11] ("charisma of office"), polymodal in exposition and synthetic in approach, it cites scripture in context with historical narrative and is heavy with authorial comment. In a "Judaic" prophetic voice of protest and judgement, it makes strong theological pronouncements of the world's travails as a result of "*This judgment of God*" which Shoghi Effendi views as a "*...retributory calamity and an act of holy and supreme discipline*" (PDC 4) for the world's tragic rejection of Bahá'u'lláh which the Guardian lays squarely at the feet

of the kings and ecclesiastics as "... a responsibility appalling and inescapable..." (PDC 18).

The Judaic element in *The Promised Day Is Come* is evident, not only in its central theme of divine retribution, but also in its pervasive use of iconoclastic language, specifically in the mention of the "*false idols*" (PDC 112) that hold sway over humanity, an iconoclasm that has its origins in the Hebrew Bible as the prohibition against idolatry (Deut. 5:8-9). Shoghi Effendi writes: "*The chief idols in the desecrated temple of mankind are none other than the triple gods of Nationalism, Racialism and Communism, at whose altars governments and peoples, whether democratic or totalitarian, at peace or at war, of the East or of the West, Christian or Islamic, are, in various forms and in different degrees, now worshiping*" (PDC 113). The Guardian implies by this statement that humanity is practising forms of *de facto* polytheism, deceptive and deadly substitute religions that detract from the worship of God and that alienate man from himself.

Erich Fromm, drawing on Paul Tillich, writes that the modern existential notion of estrangement, expressed philosophically by Hegel in *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837) as *Entfremdung*, "...found its first expression in Western thought in the Old Testament concept of idolatry."^[12] Through idolatry man is estranged, at one stroke, from both God and himself. However, to overemphasize the purely retributive aspect of this book as an exercise in the vengeance of God on nineteenth and twentieth century rulers and society for rejecting Bahá'u'lláh is to misunderstand both Shoghi Effendi's theology and his reading of providential history:

God, however, as has been pointed out in the very beginning of these pages, does not only punish the wrongdoings of His children. He chastises because He is just, and He chastens because He loves. Having chastened them, He cannot, in His great mercy, leave them to their fate. Indeed, by the very act of chastening them He prepares them for the mission for which He has created them. "My calamity is My providence," He, by the mouth of Bahá'u'lláh, has assured them, "outwardly it is fire and vengeance, but inwardly it is light and mercy" (PDC 115-16).

Here is Shoghi Effendi's determined vignette of Emperor Charles Louis Napoleon III (1808-1873), son of Louis and nephew of Napoleon Bonaparte I and recipient of two of Bahá'u'lláh's tablets. Shoghi Effendi's acerbic critique is no doubt motivated by the emperor's disdainful rejection of Bahá'u'lláh's first tablet — "If this man is God, I am two gods!" (PDC 51) — but also contains properly historical judgments of the emperor:

Possessed of a fixed and indestructible ambition, he aspired to emulate the example, and finish the interrupted work, of his imperial uncle. A dreamer, a conspirator, of a shifting nature, hypocritical and reckless, he, the heir to the Napoleonic throne, taking advantage of the policy which sought to foster the reviving interest in the career of his great prototype, had sought to overthrow the monarchy...Though able to initiate far-reaching movements, he possessed neither the sagacity nor the courage required to control them. (PDC 50).

The Guardian also calls Napoleon "...that superficial, tricky and pride-intoxicated monarch...this false and boastful monarch..." (PDC 51). Where Shoghi Effendi stands vis-à-vis these "...ill-fated scions.." who rejected Bahá'u'lláh, he makes indubitably clear, with few nuances. Except for the partly qualified cases of Queen Victoria^[13] and Czar Alexander II,^[14] his judgement is categorical: "All failed completely in their duty to arise and extend their assistance" [to Bahá'u'lláh] (PDC 48). *Hubris*, that mainstay of the Greek tragedy, is brought to life again in the Guardian's writings. The monarchs and ecclesiastics who ignored, disdained or opposed the Persian prisoner and exile, were shaken from their thrones by the "invisible Hand of God."^[15] (cf. Dan. 7:9: "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of Days did sit [upon it]."

Shoghi Effendi's judgemental characterizations were not something entirely of his own invention. They reflected the morally evaluative tendencies of nineteenth century historians such as Thomas Babington Macaulay (1800-1859), English parliamentarian, historian and essayist whose fame rests almost entirely on his five volume *History of England* (1848-1861). Shoghi Effendi's wife and personal secretary Rúhiyyih Rabbaní (née Mary Sutherland Maxwell), (1910-2000), describes Shoghi Effendi's writings, using Macaulay's words in describing another author, that "he wrote in language...precise and luminous."^[16] Of Macaulay, Lord Acton wrote: "Read him therefore to find out how it comes that the most unsympathetic of critics can think of him very nearly the greatest of English writers."^[17] It seems sure that the Guardian had read Macaulay.^[18] Here Macaulay portrays Sir George Jeffreys who lived during the reign of King James II (1633-1701). Jeffreys was a tyrannical Chief Justice of the Court of King's Bench and assisted in the administration of the Great Seal:

He was a man of quick and vigorous parts, but constitutionally prone to insolence and to the angry passions....The profusion of maledictions and vituperative epithets which composed his vocabulary could hardly have been rivalled in the fish-market or the bear-garden....Already might be remarked in him the most odious vice which is incident to human nature, a delight in misery merely as misery.^[19]

Character as Destiny

The old dictum of the Shakespearean theatre that `Character is destiny'^[20] applies, not only to Shoghi Effendi's *dramatis personae*, but also to the "unfolding destiny"^[21] of the Bahá'í Faith. The characters who either ignored, opposed or promoted the new revelation largely determined the immediate fortunes of the fledgling faith. The younger half-brother, Mírzá Yahyá's "rebellion" against Bahá'u'lláh in 1864, for example, "...left its mark on the fortunes of the Faith for no less than half a century."^[22]

William Hazlitt's appraisal of the moral function of the novel as an acquaintance with "the motives and characters of mankind," that "imbibe our notions of virtue and vice from practical examples..."^[23] is also relevant to Shoghi Effendi's mode of characterization. The qualifying adjectives or adjectival phrases so pointedly employed by the Guardian are indicators, not only of the stuff of history, but also imply one of the traditional preoccupations of moral theology. His character stamps and passing descriptions of positive and negative personal attributes indicate those virtues worth cultivating and those vices to avoid.

For example, in the depiction of the "vast company"^[24] of martyr-disciples of the Báb (1819-1850), we encounter a string of epithets which reads as an index of the more heroic, saintly and noble spiritual virtues. The Guardian describes the Bábí spirit as:

...a spirit exalted, unquenchable and awe-inspiring, a knowledge surprisingly profound, an eloquence sweeping in its force, a piety unexcelled in fervor, a courage leonine in its fierceness, a self-abnegation saintly in its purity, a resolve granite-like in its firmness, a vision stupendous in its range....a standard of faith and a code of conduct that challenged and revolutionized the lives of their countrymen" (GPB 5).

By contrast, "people, clergy, monarch and government," are depicted as portraying "...intrigue, ignorance, depravity, cruelty, superstition and cowardice" (GPB 5). In this hero-villain scenario, considered further below, we find opposing spiritual attributes juxtaposed in a starkly contrasting mirror-image. Novelist and essayist Aldous Huxley (1894-1963), who graduated from Balliol College, Oxford (1915) just five years before Shoghi Effendi arrived there as a "non-collegiate student"^[25] in 1920, and reacting to I.A. Richards' statement that only Shakespearean theatre "...can stand the test..." of true tragedy, writes: "Now, the shadow, the photographic negative of a thing, is in no sense irrelevant to it."^[26] Huxley explains:

The tragedies of Shakespeare are veined, it is true, with irony and an often terrifying cynicism; but the cynicism is always heroic idealism turned neatly inside out, the irony is a kind of photographic negative of heroic romance. Turn Troilus's white into black and all his blacks into white and you have Thersites. Reversed Othello and Desdemona become Iago. White Ophelia's negative is the irony of Hamlet, is the ingenuous bawdry of her own mad songs; just as the cynicism of King Lear is the black-shadow replica of Cordelia.^[27]

Both history and spirituality can take their clue from this observation. Abstracted, Shoghi Effendi's villains are, in an ideal sense, potential spiritual heroes, their dark qualities are positive ones awaiting transformation. Whereas every sinful deed, cruel or gross act, or quality has its potential counterpart, Shoghi Effendi presents the great deeds of Bábí-Bahá'í sacred history as the mirror of a spirituality directly inspired by the living presence of the Manifestations of God, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Moral purpose was intrinsic to the Guardian's vision of history, as he explicitly expressed in the Introduction to his translation of *Nabil's Narrative, The Dawn-Breakers* (1932): "*It has its thrilling passages, and the splendour of the central theme gives to the chronicle, not only great historical value but high moral power.*"^[28] As Shoghi Effendi's characters either assist or foil the spread of the Bahá'í Revelation, they become thereby either victors or victims in the creation of their own destiny.

In the writings of the Guardian, moreover, we uncover the Aristotelian notion of character. For Aristotle, "character" in its ethical sense, was fully revealed only in action.^[29] This maxim applies to *God Passes By, The Promised Day Is Come* and the Introduction and Epilogue of *Nabil's Narrative, The Dawn-Breakers*. Shoghi Effendi's characters are not asleep on the page. As is true for the theater and prominent historical figures, they reveal themselves fully only by deeds. Implicit in the Guardian's historical writings is the underlying presence of the reciprocal relationship between the actions of the individual and their outcome on the events of history, between the inner dynamics of the soul and their decisive influence on the larger collective. This dual interplay of inner spiritual predisposition and outer concrete happening characterizes Shoghi Effendi's method of analyzing and representing historical events.

The "*sin-covering eye*,"^[30] the spiritual prescription for interpersonal conduct, was held in abeyance by Shoghi Effendi in his *persona* as writer. The Guardian's acute critical sense *qua* defender of the faith and hence writer, functioning as one manifold, was quite unlike Shoghi Effendi's personal spirituality which was disinclined to dwell on human failings.^[31] But for the purpose of exposing the dire suffering that was inflicted upon the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh by the neglect and opposition of the kings and ecclesiastics, and to draw attention to the

world's plight occasioned by the rejection of the twin prophets, Shoghi Effendi consciously engaged in the exposure of reprehensible deeds and sins of both commission and omission. Those readers who may find these works too categorical and forbidding in their moral aspect, should bear in mind that the purpose, in part, was to draw attention to the unjustified cruelties inflicted upon the founders of the Bahá'í Faith. As a measure of divine justice, the Guardian laid the blame directly at the feet of those same leaders who so afflicted "...the true Monarchs of the world, those Gems of divine virtue!"^[32]

Character as the Internal Event of History

The above assertions have also been advanced, in a slightly different version, by Oxford metaphysician,^[33] archaeologist/historian and philosopher of history R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* (1946). Robin George Collingwood (1889-1943), respected as an archaeologist and historian for his work on Roman Britain, wrote that any historical event has two sides: the external event "which can be described in terms of bodies and their movements" (Caesar's assassination on the floor of the Roman Senate) and the internal event "which can only be described in terms of thought" (Caesar's defiance of republican law).^[34] But we should note here that "defiance" is as much a property of character or soul as it is idea. In the same context Collingwood wrote "...an historical process is a process of thoughts."^[35] The notion that the idea moves history reveals the influence of Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* (1837).

For Collingwood, the historian should take account of both internal and external aspects in the representation and interpretation of the historical act. Put differently, the historian cannot ignore the determinations of thought which demand, certainly in Shoghi Effendi's reading of history, character assessment, since thought is expressed through character. Although Collingwood was sensitive to the movements of thought as a dimension of history, he was less sympathetic to the purely psychological considerations in the epistemology of the historian that motivated Wilhelm Dilthey's theory of history and he criticised Dilthey on that account.^[36]

The historian's main task, according to Collingwood, is "to think himself into this action, to discern the thought of its agent."^[37] For Collingwood, it was sufficient to examine the "thought" that led to the act, but his notion of the internal event remained at the level of concept. Shoghi Effendi, however, ventured boldly into the subjective dynamics of psychology, into ulterior motives and "hidden agendas." His characterizations of historical figures, however far removed from current methods of historiography, address the determinations of character on history, thereby acknowledging character as a substantive issue in the unfolding of

the historical event. If, for Shakespeare, character is destiny, for Shoghi Effendi it is also history. This does not mean, however, that the Guardian has reduced history to the subjective dynamics of character, for then history would become subordinate to individual psychology and the broader sweep and more objective view would be lost.

Collingwood, like Dilthey and Macaulay envisioned a legitimate role for the imagination in the writing of history. Macaulay, who is closest to Shoghi Effendi in his treatment of historical "characters," wrote in his *Essay on History*: "a perfect historian must possess an imagination sufficiently powerful to make his narrative effective and picturesque."^[38] This remark indicates that Macaulay was strongly influenced by the early narrative roots of history and by its literary concept of history as story. For Shoghi Effendi, likewise, history is both drama and story and has strong literary qualities. For Collingwood, who followed Kant in this respect, the imagination was a structural faculty, not ornamental as it was for Macaulay:" it is this which, operating not capriciously as fancy but in its *a priori* form, does the entire work of historical construction."^[39]

Heroes and Villains

Heroes and villains figure predominantly into the Guardian's mode of characterization. His heroes are not the world's heroes. Kings, prime ministers and courtiers are often his villains. The rich and the powerful, those whom commoners, the dispossessed and disenfranchised regard with awe and envy, become in Shoghi Effendi's vision of things, tragic and pitiful figures who were nonetheless worthy of abject condemnation. The Guardian's overall negative assessment of kings and ecclesiastics followed closely Bahá'u'lláh's generally dim view of the sacerdotal caste, especially regarding the clerics of Persia, whose prelates he castigated as: "...they that worship no God but their own desire, who bear allegiance to naught but gold, who are wrapt in the densest veils of learning, and who, enmeshed by its obscurities, are lost in the wilds of error."^[40] As for kings, although he praised exemplary rulers,^[41] Bahá'u'lláh also wrote: "The faults of kings, like their favours, can be great."^[42] This saying applies in pointed fashion to the recipients of Bahá'u'lláh's tablets.

The opening pages of *God Passes By* make clear this great divide between those who joined forces with the new revelation and those who aligned themselves in opposition. Villains are not merely villains. They are "*arch villains*" (GPB 4). Heroes display supernatural powers and abilities far beyond those of mortal men. They are virtual gods.^[43] The following description of the Bábís, although partially quoted above, bears repeating here since it stands, in context, in such marked contrast to the villains whom Shoghi Effendi so graphically portrays:

The arch villains who joined hands with the prime movers of so wicked a conspiracy were the two grand vizirs, Hájí Mirzá Áqásí, the idolized tutor of Muhammad Sháh, a vulgar, false-hearted and fickle-minded schemer, and the arbitrary, bloodthirsty, reckless Amír-Nizám, Mirzá Taqí Khán, the first of whom exiled the Báb to the mountain fastnesses of Adhirbáyján, and the latter decreed His death in Tabríz. Their accomplice in these and other heinous crimes was a government bolstered up by a flock of idle, parasitical princelings and governors, corrupt, incompetent, tenaciously holding to their ill-gotten privileges, and utterly subservient to a notoriously degraded clerical order. The heroes whose deeds shine upon the record of this fierce spiritual contest, involving at once people, clergy, monarch and government, were the Báb's chosen disciples, the Letters of the Living, and their companions, the trail-breakers of the New Day, who to so much intrigue, ignorance, depravity, cruelty, superstition and cowardice opposed a spirit exalted, unquenchable and awe-inspiring, a knowledge surprisingly profound, an eloquence sweeping in its force, a piety unexcelled in fervor, a courage leonine in its fierceness, a self-abnegation saintly in its purity, a resolve granite-like in its firmness, a vision stupendous in its range, a veneration for the Prophet and His Imáms disconcerting to their adversaries, a power of persuasion alarming to their antagonists, a standard of faith and a code of conduct that challenged and revolutionized the lives of their countrymen (GPB 4-5).

Should the reader find such descriptions over-dramatic or stretching the limits of credibility, it is because there are very few precedents in human experience by which to register the unique events that were unleashed in mid-nineteenth century Persia with the declaration of the Báb. The Bábí revolution created a situation, not only uniquely inspirational, but also volatile in the extreme. The true prophet, "standing in the midst," through whom "...the splendour of the Face of God is made manifest"^[44] distilled a "divine elixir"^[45] that worked a uniquely transformative effect on both converts and self-declared enemies. The converts, "...a galaxy of God-intoxicated heroes..." (GPB 3) win our admiration, not with rhetoric, nor with literary devices and figures of speech, but with the full weight of history behind them, a history that has been generated by the Divine Presence.

Shoghi Effendi does not engage us here in an abstract discussion of spiritual principles. He spells out deeds. In these pages, history is made the ancillary, even the foundation of theology and spirituality. For we have fully entered a domain in which his vehicle, hyperbole, in another strange reversal, becomes the virtual

imposter. Hyperbole cannot itself measure up to the telling of these dramatic events. We become witnesses by proxy to the rare privilege of "touching the Absolute," passive observers of the ultimately real and sacrificial effects of a first creation — what the newly revealed Word of God wrought in the souls, hearts, minds and bodies of men, women and children who are Its first vital offspring and who performed by It extraordinary deeds.

It is these events and their effects that Shoghi Effendi is striving to convey beyond what may seem to some at first reading like sheer dramatization. The Guardian's art is not only a literal, close *mimesis*, a representation of life in another form, but is also eloquent testimony to those supernatural forces that have created such art. In this endeavour, Shoghi Effendi strives to reawaken, not only our own somnolent faith, but to inspire a fresh sense of awe and wonder that such deeds could have been done, were done, and to provoke our sombre and profound reflection as to their causes. At this point, we are returned to a basic, ancient motive of rhetoric — persuasion — one of the several conduits of faith, a persuasion that moves to the point, not only of assent, but beyond assent to action, the *ultima Thulé*^[46] in the act of reading.

On the other side of the divide, the characters that he finds wanting are not just any old historical figures resistant to change. With the possible exception of Queen Victoria, they are sovereigns depicted as negligent, unaware, or retrograde individuals who are drunk with power and pride, blinded by ignorance, irreligion and ruled by fierce passions. These sovereigns, in another startling reversal, become the very antagonists who thwart the progress and prosperity of humanity by rejecting the Bahá'í Cause. What, we wonder, might have been the outcome for Persia and the world if "... *the bigoted, the sickly, the vacillating Muhammad Sháh...*" had not "...*at the last moment cancelled the Báb's imminent visit to the capital...*"? (GPB 4). But again, on this photographic plate of history, there is the counterpart sovereign; Marie of Rumania, the queen who became a believer.^[47]

Correlating the Character of Mírzá Yahyá to the Literary World of Dostoyevsky^[48]

Of the several demonic characters briefly sketched by Shoghi Effendi, that of Mírzá Yahyá, Bahá'u'lláh's younger brother, is the fullest. It is a significant measure of the devastating effects of the rebellion of Yahyá, who attempted, by all means, to overthrow Bahá'u'lláh that Shoghi Effendi writes that its gravity outweighed even the "...*tragic martyrdom of the Báb.*" This was a "...*crisis of the first magnitude...*" that shook the twenty-year-old Faith "...*to its roots.*" Yahyá's behaviour is "*monstrous*" (GPB 163), a word that alludes to an ego grown ugly and vicious beyond all proportions. Shoghi Effendi's moral indictment of Yahyá's

crimes reads like a formal accusation in a court of law which gives at the same time its verdict:

His corruption, in scores of instances, of the text of the Báb's writings; the blasphemous addition he made to the formula of the adhán by the introduction of a passage in which he identified himself with the Godhead; his insertion of references in those writings to a succession in which he nominated himself and his descendants as heirs of the Báb; the vacillation and apathy he had betrayed when informed of the tragic death which his Master had suffered; his condemnation to death of all the Mirrors of the Bábí Dispensation, though he himself was one of those Mirrors; his dastardly act in causing the murder of Dayyán, whom he feared and envied; his foul deed in bringing about, during the absence of Bahá'u'lláh from Baghdád the assassination of Mírzá `Alí-Akbar, the Báb's cousin; and, most heinous of all, his unspeakably repugnant violation, during that same period, of the honor of the Báb Himself ^[49] — all these, as attested by Áqáy-I-Kalím, and reported by Nabil in his Narrative, were to be thrown into a yet more lurid light by further acts the perpetration of which were to seal irretrievably his doom (GPB 165).

These last lines refer, of course, to Yahyá's poisoning of Bahá'u'lláh, one of several "*desperate designs*" (165) to do so. Succumbing to his inner urges as an evil apothecary, Yahyá, smeared the edge of Bahá'u'lláh's tea cup with a toxic herbal substance he had concocted himself. ^[50] The attempt very nearly succeeded. The effects of the attack poisoned Bahá'u'lláh "*...sufficiently to produce a serious illness which lasted no less than a month, and which was accompanied by severe pains and high fever, the aftermath of which left Bahá'u'lláh with a shaking hand till the end of His life*" (GPB 165). The sum total of Yahyá's litany of crimes was such that "*It brought incalculable sorrow to Bahá'u'lláh, visibly aged Him, and inflicted, through its repercussions, the heaviest blow ever sustained by Him in His lifetime*" (163-4).

But beyond Shoghi Effendi's indictment and condemnation of Yahyá, what further insights can we gain into the motivations of this character, epithetized as "*credulous and cowardly*" and that "*vain and flaccid man*" (112), and into the significance of the poisoning itself? Following the principle of correlation endorsed by Shoghi Effendi, ^[51] it is instructive to view Yahyá from the perspective of the fictional world created by the great Russian novelist Fyodor (Theodore) Mikhailovich Dostoyevsky (1821-1881), who positively influenced Nietzsche, ^[52] and who is regarded, along with Kierkegaard, as one of two founding figures of modern existentialism. By comparing the bizarre spirituality of Dostoyevsky's characters to the twisted behaviour of Yahyá, we can derive a set of propositions

that better informs both Yahyá's conduct and the religiously existential world to which I maintain he belongs.^[53]

The first correlative — the bizarre religious world.

Dostoyevsky's characters are pervasively marked by the influence of religion but are situated, as is Yahyá, within a bizarre and twisted internal universe. Dostoyevsky's depiction of the practice of Russian orthodox Christianity with its believers, doubting Thomases, saints, sinners, atheists and nihilists travesties the polite, ideal theological standards of prescriptive religion, just as Yahyá repeatedly violated the moral and spiritual norms of the Bábí-Bahá'í Faith. Religion, for Dostoyevsky's characters, becomes an oppressive instrument of conscience but one that also liberates and redeems at the same time. On the sacred soil of Mother Russia, we find the most paradoxical collection of *religieux manqués* ever assembled, "...a strange gallery of men and women.

There is an innocent prostitute like Sonia Semanova [*Crime and Punishment*], a saintly adulteress such as Sonia Andreievna and a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church who no longer believes in God"^[54] [*The Brothers Karamazov*] (1879-1880) In the explication of the fourth correlative below, we will return to the paradox of the atheistic cardinal,^[55] the "Grand Inquisitor," who arrests Christ when the Messiah returns to Seville, Spain at the height of the Inquisition. In Ivan Karamazov's prose poem (Book V, Chapter 5), an interrogation takes place in a prison cell, during which the cardinal finds fault with Christ for rejecting Satan's three temptations in the desert (Luke 4:1-13) and argues that Jesus' offer of salvation renders only the elect truly free. This salvation of the few would interfere with the institutionalised church's plan of keeping the dull masses content. But Christ's divine economy would dispense with the need for the church itself. The cardinal releases Jesus, who remains silent throughout, and orders him never to return.^[56]

Yahyá, while not psychotic, is a character in the extreme and lives and breathes, as does the gross and vulgar sensualist, the murdered father Fyodor Karamazov [*The Brothers Karamazov*] in a dark, subterranean realm. Yahyá is very much an "Underground Man."^[57] He dwells perpetually in the cloak-and-dagger world of the vile scheme and the hatching plot. His world is ruled by the imperious and inflexible demands of "the insistent self," one of `Abdu'l-Bahá's indications of the presence of the demonic. Yahyá was "*spurred on by this mounting jealousy and impelled by his passionate love of leadership*" (GPB 165). He will stop at nothing to get what he wants, not even at the horror of murdering the very Elder Brother who "*had watched over his early youth and manhood*" (165). Of such "covenant-breakers,"^[58] `Abdu'l-Bahá writes: "They gave up

everlasting glory in exchange for human pride, and they sacrificed greatness in both worlds to the demands of "the insistent self."^[59]

While evil may be a metaphysical non-reality for the speculative theologian,^[60] it remains a disturbing fact of life and grist for the mill of many a writer who generally finds an evil character easier to portray than a virtuous one. Hubben comments that evil and sin are easier to analyze than "...virtue, perfection and saintliness...".... "...because evil and sin are finite and human," whereas these higher qualities "...reach out into the infinite realm of eternity."^[61] Shoghi Effendi's graphic depictions of the evil forces that governed Yahyá highlight, by contrast, the benevolence and magnanimity of Bahá'u'lláh.

The presentation of evil, in which Kierkegaard also succeeded so admirably, evokes by contrast the image of perfection. But virtue and perfection transcend the borders of psychology, and our inability to understand them when they appear in great strength is as irremediable as our incompetence fully to understand Jesus.^[62] Or Bahá'u'lláh.

The second correlative — character as soul.

Dostoyevsky's characters are the concrete intra subjective expressions of the human soul which becomes, as much as Mother Russia is the external locus, the inner setting of his novels: "The soul is the stage for triumph, defeat, and suffering, and all that seems to matter in life is the consideration of what life has done or will do to man's soul."^[63] This thought is akin to Shoghi Effendi's statement through his secretary: "The troubles of this world pass, and what we have left is what we have made of our souls; so it is to this we must look — no matter what our human minds and bodies go through."^[64] William Hubben writes of Dostoyevsky's characters: "The intersubjective conditions of friendship, love, hate, suspicion, and tension seem to occupy them more than anything else, and they are forever engaged in this tempestuous business of loving, hating, helping, or destroying themselves and others, in finding or losing life, in rushing headlong into the hell of despair or the heaven of happiness."^[65]

These characters strike the reader as being graphically real because they are representations and composites of individuals Dostoyevsky had encountered throughout his lifetime in such places as the prison in Omsk, Siberia where he was exiled (1850-1855) following his arrest on April 23, 1849 for being a member of the Petrashevsky Circle, "a socialist group of middle-class liberals interested in Fournier's theories."^[66] As a member of the lesser nobility, Dostoyevsky was familiar with all types in Russian society — peasants, prisoners, clerics and nobles. With Yahyá also, hell and damnation take place within the subterranean regions of

the mortal soul. Tragically, he refused the heaven of salvation proffered to him by Bahá'u'lláh.

Yahyá is a complex individual who nonetheless exhibits traits of a stereotypical personification of evil with his morbidly unidimensional, "flat"^[67] character. Like the "negative space" on an artist's canvas that helps the eye to focus on those elements that really make the painting, Yahyá seems to stretch laterally into infinite darkness. In his theory of narrative texts, Mieke Bal notes that characters may change and that "The changes or transformations which a character undergoes sometimes alter the entire configuration of character as it looked during the analysis of mutual relations."^[68] Yahyá, however, while accelerating into evil, remains negatively static.

But his very negativity draws the reader's attention to Bahá'u'lláh's magnanimity, forgiveness and patience, his willingness to bear unbearable suffering at the hands of the younger brother. Yahyá is possessed by the pathetic yet dangerous drives of a starving ego in need of constant feeding. In this respect, `Abdu'l-Bahá's descriptive imagery characterizing the relationship between Yahyá and Siyyid Muhammad of Isfáhán, "...the Antichrist^[69] of the Bahá'í Revelation..." "...the black-hearted scoundrel who befooled and manipulated..." Yahyá, is pointed indeed. He describes their relationship as that of "the sucking child" to the "much-prized breast" of its mother (GPB 112-113). The Freudian implications are not lost on the reader. Yahyá is stuck at an infantile stage of development.

The motivation for Yahyá's irrational crimes results in the mystery and the conundrum of the chilling notion of the unforgivable sin. Simply put, his soul hates the light. Because of overweening vanity, he cannot be content to show his paltry candle to the illumination of the sun. He imagines that he can extinguish the sun itself. This condition goes far beyond mere dislike for Bahá'u'lláh, in either his human station as elder brother or in his divine station as Manifestation of God. `Abdu'l-Bahá teaches that "If a soul remains far from the manifestation, he may yet be awakened; for he did not recognize the manifestation of the divine perfections. But if he loathe the divine perfections themselves — in other words, the Holy Spirit — it is evident that he is like a bat which hates the light."^[70] There is no remedy and no forgiveness for this aversion.^[71] (There can be no help for a ravaging, life-threatening disease if the patient refuses the remedy). Nevertheless, Bahá'u'lláh assures Yahyá of God's forgiveness, were he to truly repent.^[72]

The third correlative — redemption and damnation.

Redemption and damnation are central to the destiny of Dostoyevsky's gospel-like figures. In *Crime and Punishment* (1866), the main character Raskolnikov, who

has murdered money lender Alonya Ivanova and her sister Lizaveta, allows himself to be redeemed by the love of Sofia (nickname Sonia) Semyanova Marmaledov, the prostitute. Raskolnikov is moved to accept the full responsibility for his crimes by Sonia's compassion, openness and simple child-like faith. This raises the question of how redemption might have applied to Yahyá.

The redemption parallel is valid, but only in a backhanded way. If Yahyá does have any redeeming qualities, Shoghi Effendi is not about to tell us what they are. The Guardian seems to forgo the possibility: "*All these [acts]...the perpetration of which were to seal irretrievably his doom*" (GPB 165). If we view this last comment as a post-Aqdas reflection on forgiveness, it would appear to underscore a belief in eternal damnation, i.e. where the offer of forgiveness has been refused. Redemption, however, *is secured* through the vicarious suffering endured for all humanity. Yahyá, unregenerate, becomes the catalyst that reveals the magnificent patience and long-suffering of the Persian prisoner:

“The Ancient Beauty hath consented to be bound with chains that mankind may be released from its bondage, and hath accepted to be made a prisoner within this most mighty Stronghold that the whole world may attain unto true liberty. He hath drained to its dregs the cup of sorrow, that all the peoples of the earth may attain unto abiding joy, and be filled with gladness.”^[73]

This "cup of sorrow" is far from being an ornamental literary device. The phrase takes on a heightened, literal meaning when viewed in the lurid light of the poisoned tea cup. C.S. Lewis had made some observations that relate directly to `Abdu'l-Bahá's teaching above on the innate detestation of the divine light. Among Shoghi Effendi's several epithets of Yahyá, we find the word "*vain*" (GPB 112). Vanity (vainglory) is, of course, related to pride. These two negative qualities are closely linked by Bahá'u'lláh in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* in those passages of this preeminent doctrinal work that qualify the attributes of the "true seeker": "He must never seek to exalt himself above any one, must wash away from the tablet of his heart every trace of pride and vainglory."^[74] It would seem that Bahá'u'lláh, in the same context, continues to refer to this negative attribute as the one that most seriously endangers the salvation of the soul: "How often hath a sinner, at the hour of death, attained to the essence of faith, and, quaffing the immortal draught, hath taken his flight unto the celestial Concourse. And how often hath a devout believer, at the hour of his soul's ascension, been so changed as to fall into the nethermost fire."^[75]

Lewis remarks that pride or vanity is essentially a competitive sin which at bottom conceals enmity or hatred. The proud or vain person props up his/her ego

by deriving satisfaction in looking down on others in a spirit of imaginary comparative greatness. When you encounter God, "you come up against something that is in every respect immeasurably superior to yourself."^[76] This immeasurable superiority is precisely what Yahyá saw in Bahá'u'lláh. But instead of humbling himself before that manifest light, Yahyá was consumed with envy. Succumbing to the sin of "covetousness,"^[77] he began to plot how he might destroy the Glory of God.

In a concise sketch of Dostoyevsky's life and work, Alfred Kazin observes that "Dostoevsky's greatest novels are all, ritualistically as well as symbolically, stories of murder. And the murder, as Dostoevsky well knew, is always of the Father God."^[78] In Yahyá's unsuccessful attempts to strike down the Elder Brother, we encounter the ultimate futility — the literal attempt at deicide, the death of God. But even here, he is a bungler. Bahá'u'lláh, while gravely injured, will defy Yahyá and live on until divine omnipotence bids him depart. The lot of the Glory of God will be that of a living martyr.

The fourth correlative — free will and divine omniscience.

Dostoyevsky's characters and the rebellion of Yahyá raise the vexing problem of human liberty in relation to evil and the justification of God or the problem of theodicy, "...the attempt to justify God's goodness in spite of the existence of evil and suffering."^[79] In the context of the poisoning, we must ask ourselves, why, in view of his omniscience, did Bahá'u'lláh allow Yahyá to poison him, in spite of the great hardship he had already endured as prisoner and exile and despite the great illness which it subsequently caused him?

Ivan Karamazov, the religiously philosophic yet tortured atheistic^[80] son in *The Brothers Karamazov* convinces his illegitimate brother and household servant, Smerdyakov that if God and the immortality of the soul do not exist then 'everything is lawful (permitted).'^[81] Ivan, a much subtler version of Siyyid Muhammad of Isfáhán, who acted as the "*vile whisperer*" (GPB 164) who led Yahyá astray, and using Smerdyakov as the willing tool of his own murderous urges, thus removes any fear of divine retribution and thereby clears the way for the epileptic brother to murder the bestial father, Fyodor Karamazov. The multitude of Mirzá's crimes suggests that Yahyá considered himself to be fully justified and beyond the pale of the reprehensible deed. This must bring us to the conclusion that, in spite of his claims of divinity, Yahyá is a *de facto* atheist.

The suffering to which Bahá'u'lláh was subjected, like the "mystery of sacrifice",^[82] to which it is closely connected, cannot be fully understood in the abstract. In ultimate theological terms, `Abdu'l-Bahá argues that nothing at all happens without God's consent, in the sense that God supplies a latent power to all

actions, even though an event x may be secondarily caused by something other than divine intervention.^[83] Despite the repeated affirmations of divine omnipotence in scripture, however, much of the course of human history has been determined by the baser actions of human beings in violation of God's will. Religious history is replete with examples of how the will of the Divine Manifestation was frequently countermanded by ill-willed, ordinary human beings.

Here we encounter one of the essentials of divine tragedy: that the Divine Will does not in space-time always prevail over human will. Purely theological arguments, however they are calculated, that the rejection and/or unlawful death of the Divine Manifestation, or his sufferings, were predestined are not really helpful here. To argue that the outcome of all events was predetermined by God destroys the whole notion of tragedy by removing the quality of free-will. Free will in theological and dramatic terms is the very source of both tragedy and the events of history.

But despite his persistent misdeeds, Yahyá knew, of course, that he was wrong, just as Judas Iscariot (Judas of Kerioth) knew that he was betraying Jesus. That Judas hanged himself at the moment of Christ's arrest offers vivid proof (Matt: 27:5). This confrontation of psycho-spiritual motivation in rebellion, with its consequent performance of deeds that fly in the face of divine good-pleasure, raises the puzzling question of what I have called "the irony of knowledge." In an essay that reflects upon the "existential moment," through a discussion of Judas's betrayal and Peter's momentary denial of Christ, I have reflected upon the powerlessness of knowledge in the face of a malevolent will:

"Here is a cogent example of the irony of knowledge. We are accustomed to believing that knowledge is power and that to be forewarned is to be forearmed. We are taught that with knowledge and foresight souls can be educated, behaviour can change. Judas, however, could not be dissuaded by the foreknowledge of Christ from enacting the treacherous deed which, according to `Abdu'l-Bahá, was motivated by a conflagration of hate and envy which had consumed his heart...The meaning of Judas's existential moment is that foreknowledge is a useless thing in the face of the malevolent will. And in the face, too, of the inexorable will of destiny by which such woes must come into the world....Without will, knowledge is lame."^[84]

We encounter the same phenomenon in Part One of Dostoyevsky's *Notes From Underground* (1864) which was the precursor to all modern, existentialist literature with the Underground Man's brutal, anxiety-driven, self-analysis and self-condemnation. In typical Dostoyevskian fashion, from the very first lines we jump right into the conflicted mind of the unnamed narrator who engages in a

disturbing, rambling, hyper-introspective monologue that exposes his mean and spiteful psychological underground, the world of `the real man of the Russian majority.'^[85]

“I am a sick man....I am an angry man. I am an unattractive man. I think there is something wrong with my liver. But I don't understand the least thing about my illness, and I don't know for certain what part of me is affected. I am not having any treatment for it, and never have had, although I have a great respect for medicine and for doctors....No, I refuse treatment out of spite...I know better than anybody that I am harming nobody but myself.”^[86]

While the reader may be sympathetic to some of the protests of the embittered Underground Man expressed in Part One against the utopian socialism which Dostoyevsky once favoured, the Underground Man of Part Two emerges as a twisted anti-hero who psychologically abuses Liza the prostitute and who merits the misery of the subterranean realm from which he is powerless to escape. The Underground Man is lamentably defective in will power; skilled in diagnosis but inept at prescribing the remedy. Like Yahyá, in violation of conscience, he knowingly commits reprehensible acts.

The fifth correlative — the existential mood of estrangement.

Both Dostoyevsky's characters and the acts committed by Yahyá raise the theme of self-and-other estrangement, a singularly "modern,"^[87] existential theme. Some of Dostoyevsky's characters (Raskolnikov, Fyodor Karamazov) are violent, fear-ridden and lonely. They live in the faceless, loveless world of the discontented, insatiable, or quietly despairing self, a self that lives perpetually at odds with its own conscience in a hostile or friendless environment. Yahyá, whose starving ego craved attention to a pathological degree, lives in a fearful and lonely world.

In its extreme form as antipathy, estrangement is another aspect of the demonic. Yahyá's estrangement from Bahá'u'lláh is both ironic and complete since self-knowledge, abiding love and reunion with God were perfectly manifested in the person of the Elder Brother. But, instead, what a lonely world he chooses: the flights in disguise, the cowardly retreats from the maddened crowd, the stays *in communicado*, the incessant improprieties, interpolations and intrigues conducted in secret. The slow escalation into evil came finally to that not so subtle homicidal insinuation that Ustád Muhammad-`Alí Salmání, the barber, assassinate Bahá'u'lláh in the public bath.^[88] Finally, his direct attempts on Bahá'u'lláh's life.

His outlandish crimes finally necessitated that Bahá'u'lláh drive a wedge between Yahyá and himself. Estranged from Bahá'u'lláh, he is, above all, a man profoundly estranged from the reality of his own soul. His repeated flights from

others were only the obverse of the great flight from self. Consumed in the firepit of his own ego, Yahyá forgot God and cut himself off from the very roots of his own being: "True loss is for him whose days have been spent in utter ignorance of his self."^[89] With only the perpetual stings and stabs of his thwarted ambitions as company, his only reality and goal in life became satisfying the omnivorous leviathans of his insatiable envy. Cast adrift by his own deeds, Yahyá became one titanic, solitary iceberg, aflame in a sea of boiling desire: "And be ye not like those who forget God, and whom He hath therefore caused to forget their own selves."^[90] In a quasi-literal sense, Yahyá had known God. Seen in the light of the blind envy that possessed him, this saying of Muhammad takes on an ironic twist: "He hath known God who hath known himself."^[91]

Conclusion

In this paper I have argued that condensed characterization is a significant element of Shoghi Effendi's style. In both *The Promised Day is Come* and *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi's character assessments follow the morally evaluative tendencies of nineteenth century historians. Written in the spirit of the charisma of office that he occupied as defender of the faith and interpreter of the Bahá'í sacred writings and its history, his character sketches involve strong moral judgements of motives and deeds that inform our notions of both spirituality and moral theology. For Shoghi Effendi, there is no divide between character as individual eschatology and the events of history. The character of Mírzá Yahyá, Bahá'u'lláh's younger brother and chief antagonist, while corresponding to a classical demonic type, when correlated to the larger literary world of the existentialist character portrayal, raises thoroughly modern, complex issues of theodicy, i.e. the attempt to reconcile, as mercy and justice, the existence of evil with the goodness and sovereignty of God.

^[1] For the sake of emphasis, all quotations from Shoghi Effendi's writings will be italicised throughout.

^[2] Quoted by Walter Allen, *The English Novel*, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1954) 14. From L.C. Knights in "How Many Children Had Lady Macbeth?" in *Explorations*. No page reference cited by Allan or L.C. Knights. The more complete sentence reads: "This assumption that it is the main business of writer — other than the lyric poet — to create characters... long ago invaded criticism of the novel.." The beginnings of the modern novel are generally dated with the publication of Richardson's *Pamela* in 1740.

^[3] William Hazlitt, source uncited, quoted by Walter Allen in *The English Novel* 14.

^[4] Otto Reinert ed., *Drama An Introductory Anthology* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1961) xiii.

^[5] This statement is only generally true since characters in the novel may be either thinly-disguised or transformed figures from "real life."

^[6] This non-identification of historical sources should not be viewed as merely an eastern or oriental method of historiography. It was also typical of English-speaking prose writers at the turn of the century.

- [7]. Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, *The Promised Day Is Come* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1996) 53. To economize space, all subsequent quotations from *The Promised Day Is Come* will be identified in parenthesis immediately following the quotation as follows: (PDC 48).
- [8]. Lord Curzon of Kedleston quoted in *God Passes By*, intro. George Townshend (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1974) 203. The source of the quotation is unidentified by Shoghi Effendi but is probably from Curzon's *Persia and the Persian Question* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1892) which the Guardian lists among the works he consulted for his translation of *Nabil's Narrative. The Dawn-Breakers*. (Nabil-I-Azam [Muhammad-I-Zarandí], *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, trans. and ed. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1932). Shoghi Effendi's mention of Lord Curzon by name is the exception to the Guardian's general tendency. To have named Curzon in this context was only natural since it served Shoghi Effendi's apologetic purpose .
- [9]. In his tablet to Russian Czar Alexander II Bahá'u'lláh wrote: "We, verily, have heard the thing for which thou didst supplicate thy Lord, whilst secretly communing with Him. Wherefore, the breeze of My loving-kindness wafted forth, and the sea of My mercy surged, and We answered thee in truth. Thy Lord, verily, is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise" (PDC 33). Bahá'u'lláh also saw into the dream world of Napoleon III by revealing a private communication between Napoleon and the Russian Czar about the Crimean War: "Thou didst say: 'I lay asleep upon my couch, when the cry of the oppressed, who were drowned in the Black Sea awakened me.'...We testify that that which wakened thee was not their cry, but the promptings of thine own passions, for We tested thee, and found thee wanting" (PDC 29-30).
- [10]. It could be that this epithet was penned in light of certain historical details that the Guardian encountered in his readings.
- [11]. Max Weber coined the term "charisma" through the medium of sociology of religion. See Max Weber *On Charisma and Institution Building, Selected Papers*, edited and with an Introduction by S. N. Eisenstadt (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1968). See especially "The Sociology of Charismatic Authority" (18-27) in which Weber distinguishes "personal" charisma from the charisma of "office".
- [12]. Erich Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man*, with a translation from *Marx's Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* by T.B. Bottomore (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961) 46. Fromm refers to Tillich's *Der Mensch im Christentum und im Marxismus* (The Human Being in Christianity and Marxism) Düsseldorf, 1953, 14. The reference to Hegel is from 47 in Fromm.
- [13]. Bahá'ís sometimes remark that Queen Victoria was an exception to the general rejection accorded to Bahá'u'lláh's message, perhaps in light of Shoghi Effendi's statement: " *Queen Victoria, it is said, upon reading the Tablet revealed for her remarked: "If this is of God, it will endure; if not, it can do no harm."* (PDC 65). However, her remark, while not contrary, is at best lukewarm. In his proclamation epistle to the Queen, Bahá'u'lláh praised her for abolishing the slave trade and assured her of God's reward for this act. He also praised Victoria for allowing some latitude with representative government (*Proclamation of Bahá'u'lláh* 33-34), a progressive measure of the day compared to absolute monarchs.
- [14]. The following statement of Bahá'u'lláh to Czar Alexander II would seem to indicate the principle of a conditional reward: "Whilst I lay chained and fettered in the prison, one of thy ministers extended Me his aid. Wherefore hath God ordained for thee a station which the knowledge of none can comprehend except His knowledge. Beware lest thou barter away this sublime station.... Beware lest thy sovereignty withhold thee from Him Who is the Supreme Sovereign" (PDC 33).
- [15]. An Arabic expression that refers to the unseen action of God.
- [16]. *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1969) 196.
- [17]. Introduction, Macaulay, *The History of England* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1906 and 1953) 1, x.
- [18]. Volumes one and three of Macaulay's *History of England* were in the Guardian's library and have now been transferred to the library at the Bahá'í World Center in Haifa . I am also assuming that Madame Rabbani was quoting Macaulay from Shoghi Effendi's own library.
- [19]. *History of England* 1, 338.
- [20]. A.C. Bradley, *Shakespearean Tragedy* (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd., 1961) 7.
- [21]. Taken from the title of the Guardian's letters to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles: *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá'í Community. The Messages from the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith to the Bahá'ís of the British Isles* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981). The phrase is not contained in any of the letters.
- [22]. *God Passes By* 163. All subsequent quotations from *God Passes By* will be indicated in parenthesis immediately following the quotation as follows: (GPB 5).
- [23]. Hazlitt, source uncited, quoted by Walter Allan in *The English Novel* 14.
- [24]. This phrase is taken from a letter written by Shoghi Effendi to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Germany, March 7, 1925, in which he refers to "*the vast company of the believers throughout your land.*" (*Light of Divine Guidance*, vol.1, 21.
- [25]. Non-collegiate students were members of Oxford without being members of a college or hall. After a delay of almost six months in the processing of his application for admission, Shoghi Effendi officially "migrated" to Balliol College on January 17, 1921. For a more complete account, consult Riaz Khadem, *Shoghi Effendi in Oxford* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1999) 79-82, 90-92.
- [26]. Aldous Huxley, "Tragedy and the Whole Truth," in W.E. Williams, ed., *A Book of English Essays* (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, Penguin Books, 1942) 357.
- [27]. "Tragedy and the Whole Truth" 357.

- [28]. Introduction to *Nabil's Narrative, The Dawn-Breakers* xxiii.
- [29]. Humphrey House, *Aristotle's Poetic* (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1966) 71.
- [30]. The expression is from `Abdu'l-Bahá in *Selections From the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) 169) and is also used by Shoghi Effendi, *Directives of the Guardian* 41-42 and *God Passes By* 165.
- [31]. Hand of the Cause of God Leroy Ioas (1896-1965), his assistant secretary from March 1952-November 4, 1957, commented in a tape-recorded talk given at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Quigley in Johannesburg, South Africa, October 31, 1958 that "He didn't look at their shortcomings. What registered before the Guardian was what a person was offering to God and not his sins and shortcomings." This statement is borne out by certain of Shoghi Effendi's letters of spiritual counsel. He wrote, for example, through his secretary: "But individuals towards each other are governed by love, unity, forgiveness and a sin-covering eye" (*Directives of the Guardian* 41-42). [details]
- [32]. Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-I-Íqán*. The Book of Certitude, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983) 15. In context, Bahá'u'lláh is referring to the persecution of the prophets by the leaders of religion.
- [33]. Collingwood, described by Passmore as one of a number of "recalcitrant metaphysicians" wrote *Speculum Mentis* (1924), *An Essay on Philosophical Method* (1933) and his *Autobiography* (1939).
- [34]. R.G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956) 213. The examples in parenthesis are Collingwood's.
- [35]. *The Idea of History* 216.
- [36]. Dilthey, as summarised by Collingwood in *The Idea of History* (172-175), believed that in order for the historian to really know the past he had to relive it through the richness of his own internal intellectual life, and in a sense appropriate history into his own being, "...must become part of the historian's personal experience" (174). Although Collingwood shared Dilthey's view to a point, Collingwood held that the historian's analysis alone — and the same was true of the philosopher — was either right or wrong, and not due, as Dilthey maintained, to some "psychological structure of disposition" (173) as elaborated in such works as *Introduction to the Sciences of Mind (Einleitung in die Geisteswissenschaften)* (1883) and *Das Wesen der Philosophie (The Essence of Philosophy)*.
- [37]. *The Idea of History* 213.
- [38]. Quoted by R.G. Collingwood in *The Idea of History* 241.
- [39]. *The Idea of History* 241.
- [40]. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 214.
- [41]. "A king who is not deterred by the vainglory of power and authority from observing justice, nor is deprived of the splendours of the day-star of equity by luxury, riches, glory or the marshalling of hosts and legions shall occupy a high rank and a sublime station amongst the Concourse on high. It is incumbent upon everyone to extend aid and to manifest kindness to so noble a soul." (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* revealed after the *Kitáb-I-Aqdas*, comp.by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice and trans. by Habib Taherzadeh *et al* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1978) 65).
- [42]. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 65.
- [43]. Examples here are Mullá Husayn's sundering of the man, the musket and the tree in two with one cut of the sword; his sortie, with 313 men, against the prince's army in which he captured no less than seven barricades before being struck down; the attack by a mere 19 besieged Bábís on two regiments of infantry and cavalry which caused Mullá Husayn's assassin to flee in consternation and to take refuge in the headquarters of the prince. (GPB 40-41).
- [44]. *The Kitáb-I-Íqán* 142.
- [45]. In his preeminent doctrinal work, Bahá'u'lláh pursues an alchemical discourse involving the substances of copper and gold in which he discusses the precursor of the science of metallurgy, not only *per se*, but also as a symbol of spiritual transformation in which the divine elixir, as the Word of God, is the counterpart to the alchemist's magnetic lodestone. "For their agitation was turned into peace, their doubt into certitude, their timidity into courage. Such is the potency of the Divine Elixir, which, swift as the twinkling of an eye, transmutes the souls of men! ...Likewise, these souls, through the potency of the Divine Elixir, traverse, in the twinkling of an eye, the world of dust and advance into the realm of holiness; and with one step cover the earth of limitations and reach the domain of the Placeless (*The Kitáb-I-Íqán* 156-158).
- [46]. Gk., "the furthest island."
- [47]. Having been taught by the foremost Bahá'í teacher of the age, Martha Root, in eight successive visits (1926-1936), Queen Marie bore witnesses, in several encomiums, not only to the quality of her faith, but also to the transforming influence of her distinguished visitor.
- [48]. Many thanks to John W. Ferrill, Master's candidate at the Virginia Theological Seminary in Alexandria, Virginia, a regular contributor to the Dostoyevsky Internet Discussion Group <dostoevsky@egroups.com> for the instructive exchanges on Dostoyevsky and for verifying the Dostoyevsky perspective in this section. Thanks also to the members of Dostoyevsky Discussion Group who answered my several queries about the particulars of Dostoyevsky's characters.
- [49]. Shoghi Effendi refers to Yahyá's marriage to the Bab's second wife and to his giving her in marriage to Siyyid Muhammad one month later. See Adib Taherzadeh's *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, 1, 249. Thanks to Phyllis Perakkis for drawing this passage to my attention.

- [50]. Yahya surreptitiously extracted medicinal information on the effect of herbs and poisons from Bahá'u'lláh's faithful brother Áqáy-I-Kalím. (*God Passes By* 165).
- [51]. In three of his letters, Shoghi Effendi advocated a method of correlation in order to relate the Bahá'í Faith "to modern aspects of philosophy and science" and "to correlate" the Bahá'í Faith with "all the progressive movements and thoughts being put forth today" and with the various branches of the university curriculum. These two quotations are from letters written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi and cited by The Universal House of Justice in a letter to an individual October 19, 1993. Also, from a letter dated July 5, 1947 cited in *The Importance of Deepening* 228-229.
- [52]. Dostoyevsky's *Notes From Underground*, in a French translation (*L'esprit souterrain*), was discovered fortuitously by Nietzsche in a book shop in 1887. Said Nietzsche of Dostoyevsky: "The instinct of kinship (or how should I name it?) spoke up immediately. My joy was extraordinary." Walter Kaufmann ed., *Existentialism From Dostoevsky to Sartre* (New York: A Meridian Book (Penguin), 1975) 52.
- [53]. This statement is not meant to ignore the obvious fact that Yahyá is a fully historical, not a fictional character. But as a historical character, he can be correlated to the fictional characters of the existential literary world. As I have stated below, Dostoyevsky's characters were only partly fictitious, i.e., they were composites of real people he had met during the course of his life.
- [54]. William Hubben, *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka. Four Prophets of our Destiny* (New York: Collier Books, 1952) 63.
- [55]. Not all Dostoyevsky aficionados agree with the commonly accepted view that the cardinal was an atheist. This point was debated by the Internet Dostoyevsky Discussion Group. One member, "GJG" wrote: "It is my impression that he is not an atheist at all. Rather — much like Ivan Karamazov — he believes in God but rejects God's solution...He rejects man's ability to cope with his freedom and resorts to an attitude of "Religion is the opiate of the masses."" (Internet communication, March 18, 2000).
- [56]. "He went to the door, opened it, and said to Him: 'Go, and come no more....Come not all, never, never!' And he let Him out into the dark alleys of the town. The Prisoner went away." *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.) 272.
- [57]. The first of Dostoyevsky's great novels is generally considered to be *Notes From Underground* (1864). It contains one of the most bizarre, disturbing and introspective psychological monologues ever written. The Underground Man is a neurotic and overly self-analytical simple clerk, a cog lost in the great wheel of the Russian bureaucracy who vents a relentless tirade of his internal sufferings against the faceless bureaucracy and himself. His rantings amounts to a severe indictment of Russian society and/or European civilisation since the Enlightenment, symbolised as 'the great crystal palace', and reveals the hitherto unexpressed, tortured inner world of alienated modern man.
- [58]. Bahá'í terminology for those professed followers who work to undermine the unity of the faith and/or who wish to supplant the recognized leadership with themselves or persons of their own choosing or who would like to reform the structure or "administrative order" consequent to their own preconceptions.
- [59]. *Selections From the Writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá* 259.
- [60]. `Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on the nonexistence of evil are virtually identical to those of St. Thomas Aquinas in the *Summa*. `Abdu'l-Bahá says that evil is the privation of positive qualities: "Evil is simply their nonexistence....so death is the absence of life....Darkness is the absence of light:" (*Some Answered Questions* 263-64). Aquinas writes in the *Summa Theologica*: "As was said above, evil indicates the absence of good." For Aquinas's logic on the nonexistence of evil see Q. 48, Art. 4 and Q. 49, Art. 1-3 of the *Summa*. (*Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*, Anton C. Pegis, ed. (New York: Random House, 1948) 268. Aquinas was following, in part, the logic of Aristotle and the medieval mystical theologian Pseudo-Dionysius who wrote: "Evil does not exist, nor is it in that which exists." (*On the Divine Names*, IV, 33). However, Shoghi Effendi made it clear that evil, while metaphysical non-entity, was a very real moral fact: "So evil exists too, and we cannot close our eyes to it, even though it is a negative existence." (*Lights of Guidance. A Bahá'í Reference File*, comp. Helen Bassett Hornby (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 3rd rev. ed. 1994) no. 1734.
- [61]. William Hubben, *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka* 67.
- [62]. Hubben, *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka* 67.
- [63]. *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, and Kafka* 61.
- [64]. From a letter written by Shoghi Effendi's secretary, August 5, 1949, *Bahá'í News*, no. 231, May 1950.
- [65]. *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Kafka* 62.
- [66]. *Dostoevsky, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche and Kafka* 55. The reference to the "Petashevski Circle" is from "Dostoevski, Theodore (Fyodor) Mikhailovich" in the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1959).
- [67]. Based on Forster's classical literary-psychological definition of "round" and "flat" characters and used by literary critics for more than seventy years. Flat characters are usually one-sided and exhibit a single trait whereas round characters are more complex, subject to change or "in the round." See Mieke Bal's description and critique in *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto:University of Toronto Press, 1985) 116-118
- [68]. Mieke Bal, *Narratology. Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* 125.
- [69]. Regarding the Antichrist, Shoghi Effendi wrote through his secretary: "We do not believe in Anti-Christ in the sense the Christians do. Anyone who violently and determinedly sought to oppose the Manifestation could be called an "anti-Christ," such as the Vazir in the Báb's day, Hájí Mirzá Áqásí." *High Endeavors* [details] 69.

- [70]. *Some Answered Questions*, collected and translated from the Persian by Laura Clifford Barney (Wilmette: Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1981) 127-128.
- [71]. `Abdu'l-Bahá says: "This detestation of the light has no remedy and cannot be forgiven — ". *Some Answered Questions* 128.
- [72]. In sections 184-185 of *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, an address devoted solely to Yahyá, Bahá'u'lláh writes: "Turn unto Him, and fear not because of thy deeds. He, in truth, forgiveth whomsoever He desireth as a bounty on His part; no God is there but Him, the Ever-Forgiving, the All-Bounteous" (184). That Bahá'u'lláh includes this statement in his most holy book underscores the belief in God's forgiveness and mercy, even for the most heinous of crimes. This forgiveness is naturally conditioned upon sincere penance. *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas* [Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1993].
- [73]. Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings From the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, trans. Shoghi Effendi, 2d ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1976) 99.
- [74]. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 193.
- [75]. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 194-195.
- [76]. C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (London and Glasgow: Fontana Books, 1956) 108.
- [77]. Heb. *Haimad*=to desire/Gr. *Pleoneksia*=desiring more. The prohibition in Exodus 20: 17 refers mainly to material goods but may be extended to include any inordinate desire for things one does not possess. The harm caused by covetousness is that it produces discontent and/or may lead to dishonest gain. Cf. St. Paul's admonition to "Be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5).
- [78]. Alfred Kazin, "Fëdor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky" in Louis Kronenberger ed., *Atlantic Brief Lives. A Biographical Companion to the Arts* (Boston: Atlantic-Little, Brown, 1965) 237.
- [79]. Alan L. Berger, "Evil and Suffering" in T. William Hall, general ed., *Introduction to the Study of Religion* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 182.
- [80]. That Ivan was an atheist is also debated by Dostoyevsky aficionados. Camus' discussion of Ivan in *The Rebel (Le Révolté)* indicates that he believed that Ivan was a theist. See the chapter entitled "Metaphysical Rebellion."
- [81]. Ivan in a conversation with the novice Alyosha. *The Brothers Karamazov*, trans. Constance Garnett (New York: The Modern Library, n.d.) 273. The idea that if God and the soul do not exist, then everything is permitted is a key idea in this novel and appears frequently (Miusov, Book II, Chp. 6, Rakitin, Book II, Chp. 7, Aloysha, Book V, Chp. 5, Dimitri, Book XI, Chp. 4).
- [82]. This is the theme of a talk given by `Abdu'l-Bahá, November 29, 1912 in New York at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney. See *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by `Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*. Comp. Howard MacNutt. 2d ed. (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982) 449-452.
- [83]. "That is to say, though the choice of good and evil belongs to man, under all circumstances he is dependent upon the sustaining help of life, which comes from the Omnipotent." (*Some Answered Questions*) 250.
- [84]. J.A. McLean, *Under the Divine Lote Tree. Essays and Reflections* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1999) 26-28.
- [85]. This phrase is from Dostoyevsky's notebooks as quoted in the translator's introduction. *Notes From Underground. The Double*, trans. and introduction by Jessie Coulson (Harmondsworth, Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1972) 9.
- [86]. *Notes From Underground* 15.
- [87]. The self-estrangement of modern existentialism has nonetheless very ancient roots. These roots can be traced to the biblical accounts of the banishment from Eden, the disillusionment of the book of Ecclesiastes and the despair of Job, to Plato's allegory of the cave in which man follows the illusions of change and thereby fails to gain knowledge of unchanging reality. In Augustine, man is alienated from God and himself through the wilfulness of sin. In Blaise Pascal, the fear of the great spaces of the universe, the ever-present possibility of annihilation coupled with wretchedness and "ennui" alienate man from himself. In Marx, self-estrangement occurs since authentic human relations can only take place between social and economic equals.
- [88]. "He even had, gradually and with great circumspection, disclosed to one of the companions, on whom he had lavished great marks of favor, his wish that he, on some propitious occasion, when attending Bahá'u'lláh in His bath, should assassinate Him" (GPB 166).
- [89]. *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 153-156.
- [90]. *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 101.
- [91]. Bahá'u'lláh, quoted in *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* 102.