

Lights of ‘Irfán

Studies in the Principal Bahá’í Beliefs

*Papers Presented at the
‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars*



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Behold, how many are the mysteries that lie as yet unravelled within the tabernacle of the knowledge of God, and how numerous the gems of His wisdom that are still concealed in His inviolable treasures! Shouldest thou ponder this in thine heart, thou wouldst realize that His handiwork knoweth neither beginning nor end. The domain of His decree is too vast for the tongue of mortals to describe, or for the bird of the human mind to traverse; and the dispensations of His providence are too mysterious for the mind of man to comprehend. His creation no end hath overtaken, and it hath ever existed from the “Beginning that hath no beginning”; and the Manifestations of His Beauty no beginning hath beheld, and they will continue to the “End that knoweth no end.” Ponder this utterance in thine heart.

— Bahá’u’lláh, *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, ¶178

Table of Contents

Preface	3
The Manifestation of God in the View of Process Theology Roland Faber	7
The Mystery of Consciousness: Learning from Neuroscience and Insights from Bahá'í Sacred Writings Jena Khadem Khodadad.....	55
Sow the Seeds of My Divine Wisdom in the Pure Soil of Thy Heart: Towards Coordinating Langs' Communicative Approach of Psychoanalysis with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Wolfgang Klebel.....	75
The Baha'i Writings and the Buddhist Doctrine of Emptiness: An Initial Survey Ian Kluge	99
Two Episodes from the Life of Bahá'u'lláh in Iran Moojan Momen.....	139
Qá'im-Maqám Faráhání in the Bahá'í Writings Vahid Rafati, trans. Adib Masumian	161
Dei Verbum: A Bahá'í Perspective on the Roman Catholic Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation Marco Oliveira	197
An Analysis of the Salient Features of <i>Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih</i> Foad Seddigh	219
A Commentary on the Occultation Prayer, or <i>Risáliy-i-Ja'faríyyih</i> Provisional translation by Foad Seddigh.....	248
Elucidation	
Social Action, Public Discourse, and Non-Involvement in Political Affairs The Universal House of Justice	253

In Memoriam

Dr. Mehrangiz Afnan (1937-2018)..... 259

Sohrab Arjmand (1935-2019) 262

Lily Ayman (Áhy) (1929-2018) 264

Appendices

Bibliography of the Bahá’í Writings and Their Abbreviations used in
this book 271

Contents of *Lights of ‘Irfán* Books 1-19 273

Publications of the ‘Irfán Colloquium 288

Distributors of ‘Irfán Publications..... 288

Vision and Aims of the ‘Irfán Colloquium 289

Preface

Publication of this volume of the *Lights of Irfan* coincides with the bicentennial celebration of the birth of The Báb, the dawn of a new cycle in the spiritual development of mankind. The manifestation of The Báb was soon followed by the divine manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh, leading human society to the final fulfillment of the prophecies of previous religions that have appeared from time to time and spread in various regions of the world. Both The Báb and Bahá'u'lláh revealed a very large volume of written texts containing their teachings and plan of action for the realization of the final goal, establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. 'Irfán project aims at encouraging and promoting deeper and systematic studies in those revealed words.

The Writings of the Báb, revealed in Persian and Arabic, are, so far, only available in those two languages of revelation. The first step is finding the original manuscript or authorized and reliable text for each item of writing. The second step is publishing and making it accessible. Then necessary action is taken to produce an authorized translation of each item. A good example is a compilation of the Writing of the Báb published in both original Arabic and Persian as well as in English translation by the Bahá'í World Center. We welcome articles conveying the contents of some of the texts revealed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

In this volume the contents of one of the major Writings of the Báb, "Risaliy-i-Ja'fariyyih", is presented in two successive articles. This treatise is revealed in Arabic, toward the very beginning of His ministry. It is concerning, but not exclusively, the commentary on a particular Islamic prayer for the advent of the promised Qá'im. It has fourteen chapters, only three of them are mainly concerning that prayer. In the other chapters, He discreetly alludes to His real station.

"The Bahá'í Writings and the Buddhist Doctrine of Emptiness" and "Dei Verbum: A Bahá'í perspective on the Roman Catholic Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation" are in the category of comparative studies of Bahá'í Faith and various religious traditions. The former article is an expansion of the section on emptiness in a

previous paper by the same author, “Buddhism and the Bahá’í Writings: An Ontological Rapprochement” (*Lights of Irfán*, Vol. 8, 2007). This paper provides further evidence that despite differences of expression, the Bahá’í Writings and Buddhist sutras show agreements and strong convergences on the subject of emptiness and offer additional support for Bahá’u’lláh’s teaching of the essential unity of all religions. The latter article is an attempt to compare the contents of each chapter of *Dei Verbum* (“Word of God” in Latin) with the Baha’i teachings. *Dei Verbum* is described as Roman Catholic authentic doctrine on divine revelation.

An example of interface of Bahá’í Faith and scientific disciplines is discussed in “The Mystery of Consciousness: Learning from Neuroscience and insights from Bahá’í sacred Writings” and “Towards Coordinating Langs’ Communicative Approach of Psychoanalysis with the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.” It is hoped that such an interface studies are further increased and cover more branches of science. “The Manifestation of God in the View of Process Theology” is another example of such interface studies. It discusses the resonances of the concept of Manifestation of God with the philosophical tradition of process thought which is steeped in history from Heraclitus to Hegel, yet it connects with Alfred North Whitehead’s “philosophy of organism” and its religious explanation in “Process Theology.”

Bahá’í sacred texts occasionally include accounts of history or history related materials. In this volume, we have two examples of studies of Bahá’í Writings related to historical subjects. “Two Episodes from the life of Bahá’u’lláh in Iran” is an attempt to clarify an event occurred to Bahá’u’lláh during the time that He lived in Iran and reported in two of His Tablets which is different from what has been recorded in history books. The other article is the translation of an article on “Qá’im-Maqám Farahání in the Bahá’í Writings,” which was published in *Safini-yi- Irfán*, Vol. 18. We always wished some of the articles written in Persian or German and published in *Irfán* publications in those languages be translated into English to be presented in the *Lights of Irfán*. Now we are pleased that for the first time one of the articles written and published in Persian is translated into English and is included in this volume. This article contains a brief biography of Qá’im-Maqám Farahání, Grand Vazir of

Muhammad Shah Qájár and a close friend and associate of Bahá'u'lláh's father, and some samples of his writings and texts of the Baha'i Writings related to him.

The section on Elucidations contain a recent message of the Universal House of Justice clarifying various aspects of the principle of non-involvement in politics, differentiating participation in partisan politics from involvement in civil services which are also considered political activities.

During the recent months we regretfully lost three of our dear colleagues: Dr. Mehrangiz Afnan, Sohrab Arjmand, and Lily Ayman (Áhy). Short biographies of these colleagues are presented in the section "In Memoriam."

`Irfán publications are supported by the generous and voluntary contributions of the friends of the `Irfan Colloquium. It is hoped that the continuation of such supports as well as the most valuable collaboration of scholars would make it possible to continue `Irfán project and services.

Iraj Ayman
May 2019