

Lights of 'Irfán

Papers Presented at the
'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars



Book Five

Papers published in *Lights of 'Irfán* represent the views of their authors.

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Book Five
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Quaff then, O My brother, from the living waters that We have caused to flow in the oceans of these words. Methinks the seas of grandeur are surging within them, and the gems of divine virtue are shining within and upon them. Divest then thyself of that which debarreth thee from this fathomless crimson sea, and to the cry of "In the name of God and by His grace!" immerse thyself therein. Let the fear of no one dismay thee. Trust in the Lord, thy God, for He is sufficient unto whosoever trusteth in Him. He, verily, shall protect thee, and in Him shalt thou abide in safety.

Bahá'u'lláh, Gems of Divine Mysteries, #83

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Preface

Lights of 'Irfán is a collection of selected texts of the presentations made at various sessions of the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars. The current volume includes ten papers from a total of over forty presentations that were made at various sessions conducted in English in 2003. 'Irfán Colloquia started in 1993 and are held annually in North America and Europe in the English, German and Persian languages. The aim and purpose of the 'Irfán activities are to foster systematic studies of the scriptures of the world's religions from the Bahá'í perspective and to promote scholarly studies in the sacred writings, verities, and fundamental principles of the belief system of the Bahá'í Faith. 'Irfán activities are under the auspicious of the National Spiritual Assemblies of the Bahá'ís in the countries where they take place. 'Irfán is a Persian-Arabic word referring to mystical, theological, and spiritual knowledge and insight.

Starting in 2002, paper presenters were invited to consider contributing papers related to Philosophy, Science and the Bahá'í Faith. Some of the papers in Book Four and Book Five of the *Lights of 'Irfán* represent such studies. Another new category of papers that is now being added to the contents of the *Lights of 'Irfán* includes studies focused on a group of Tablets having a common point

of reference such as the Tablets revealed in honor of one individual, members of one family, a particular group of believers, the Bahá'ís in one geographical locality or to a specific institution. A third category covers studies focusing on how a specific concept or subject is described and presented in a group of Tablets. The present volume contains samples of these new categories of presentations. It is hoped that scholars will enrich these kinds of studies and contribute more such papers to be published in the *Lights of 'Irfán*.

Two papers, one on "An Initial Exploration of Process Philosophy and the Bahá'í Writings" by Ian Kluge and the other on a comparison of Bahá'í principles of unity and progressive revelation with the basic concepts advanced by Teilhard de Chardin by Wolfgang Klebel, belong to the category on Philosophy and the Bahá'í Faith. They open new fields of study and discussion. The paper on the Images of Christ by Maryam Afshar represent studies on a particular topic as elucidated in the published English translation of the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. There are a number of such images that will emerge by undertaking similar studies in the Bahá'í Writings. Dominic Brookshaw's paper on the Tablets revealed in honor of the women of the Ibn-i Asdaq's household is an example of

studies focused on the Tablets revealed in honor of the members of a particular family.

Vahid Brown in his paper on Textual Resurrection discusses the radical notions of textuality underlying the Báb's Qur'anic commentaries. He draws upon categories from contemporary literary studies by providing a framework for his discussion and a brief reference to the history of Qur'anic commentary in Islam, and focuses on elements in Akhbari Shi'i religious thought that can be seen to underpin the Báb's novel approach to the Qur'anic text. He argues that the Báb's readings of the Qur'an were messianic performances, enunciations of an eschatological restoration of the Imam, the cosmos, and of the Qur'an itself. A kaleidoscope is an optical toy, a device in which beautiful colors and forms can be visually experienced. Stephen Lambden has named his paper a kaleidoscope. It presents a mix of notes relating to aspects of cosmology, angelology and color symbolism in Bábí-Bahá'í and other religious and mystical texts.

The paper by Sholeh Quinn examines that portion of Karím Khán Kirmání's *Irshadu'l-'Avám* that Bahá'u'lláh discusses in the Kitáb-i-Iqán, in the light of the section of the Kitáb-i-Iqán known as "Tablet of the True Seeker." Amin Egea in his presentation on "Chronicles of a Birth" examines the sources for Bábí and

Bahá'í history available in Spanish records covering the years 1844-1947. The year 1947 is when the Bahá'í Faith was established in Spain. In "Manifestations of God and Their Functions in Human History", Iscander Tinto writes about the terminology, purpose and mission, sufferings, functions, and the threefold reality of the Manifestations of God. The essay on "Service, Joy and Sacrifice" by James Thomas is a brief review of the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá available in English translation.

The section on Elucidations includes Dr. Muhammad Afnan's clarification of the printing error in two of the subtitles of the facsimile of the twenty Tablets of the Báb published at the beginning of *The Dawn-Breakers*.

All papers in this volume present the views and understandings of their authors. The texts of the papers are published as provided by the authors, without further editing. The writing styles and scholarly approaches are therefore different. Articles are published in this volume according to the alphabetical order of the author's surnames. Abstracts of all the presentations made at the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars are published in a series of separate booklets.

Iraj Ayman
Chicago, March 2004