

Lights of ‘Irfán

Papers Presented at the
‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars



Book Six

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Papers Presented at the ‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars
Book Six
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O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. No sooner had but a glimmer of its effulgent splendour shone forth upon the mirror of love than the blessed word 'I am the Best-Beloved' was reflected therein. It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.

— Lawh-i-Maqşúd
Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 173

Table of Contents

Preface	iii
The Life and Times of August Forel Sheila Banani.....	1
Bahá'í Understanding of Reincarnation in Relation to the World's Faiths Sateh Bayat and Vafa Bayat	21
Autobibliography in the Writings of the Báb Vahid Brown	47
Appendix: A Provision Translation of the Khutba Dhikriyya.....	59
Models and Idols: Towards a Philosophy of the Community of Mind Sháhbaz Fatheazam	69
True of Thyself: The Mystical Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and Ken Wilber's System of Integral Philosophy Wolfgang A. Klebel	87
Bahá'í Ontology: An Initial Reconnaissance by Ian Kluge.....	121
'Abdu'l Bahá's Tablet of the Two Calls: Civilizing Barbarity Manooher Mofidi	161
SunWALK: A Bahá'í-inspired Model of Education Roger Prentice	173
Interpretation and the Guardianship Ian Semple	203
The Signs of Prophet-Hood: An Exposition on a Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá James B. Thomas	217
Elucidations	
Infallibility of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith Research Department of the Universal House of Justice.....	237
A Commentary on the Conclusion on True Mysticism Enoch Tanyi.....	239
Appendices	
Appendix I: Abbreviations of the Bahá'í Writings used in this book....	241
Appendix II: Contents of <i>Lights of 'Irfán</i> Books One-Five	243
Appendix III: Publications of the 'Irfán Colloquia	249

Preface

Baha'u'llah refers to His revelation as a Choice Wine that is unsealed by the Fingers of Might and Power (KA ¶5). He says, "*The Sealed Wine is disclosed in this day before the faces of men.*" (ESW 83). He further praises those who will be blessed by drinking from that choice wine:

Well is it with him whom the changes and chances of this world have failed to deter from recognizing the Day Spring of the Unity of God, who hath quaffed, with unswerving resolve, and in the name of the Self-Subsisting, the sealed wine of His Revelation. Such a man shall be numbered with the inmates of Paradise, in the Book of God, the Lord of all worlds. (GWB, 340-1)

Verily, such a man is blessed by the Concourse on high, and by them who dwell within the Tabernacle of Grandeur, who have quaffed My sealed Wine in My Name, the Omnipotent, the All-Powerful. (ESW 83)

That is why He calls on the believers to "*Seize it in the name of thy Lord, and quaff thy fill in remembrance of Him Who is the Mighty, the Incomparable*" (ESW 88) and urges them to "*Meditate upon this, O men of insight!*" (KA ¶5).

The main goal and purpose of the 'Irfán Colloquium and its publications is to encourage, strengthen and promote systematic studies and deepening in the Bahá'í scriptures and holy texts as well as providing study guides for facilitating the quaffing of that spiritual drink.

The Sacred Texts are revealed in the language of, and with the expressions that are, prevalent among the people receiving them. Consequently, understanding the concepts and messages that such Writings convey requires familiarity with the literary, historical, and cultural background of that language. In other words, one has to learn the linguistic and philological background of that "language." Therefore the other aim and objective of the 'Irfán Colloquium and its publications is to assist in learning such backgrounds. The *Lights of 'Irfán* is a collection of research papers and other items that facilitate achievement of the above goals.

The *Lights of 'Irfán*, starting with Book Six, will be published in standard book size in order to make it easier to keep the volumes on ordinary bookshelves. Another new feature is that in addition to the

articles on the Writings of Baha'u'llah, articles on the Writings of the Báb, and 'Abdu'l-Bahá will also be added to the contents. From the Writings of the Báb the article on His autobiobiography appears in this volume. The article on the famous Tablet of the Two Calls, and the Tablet on the Signs of Prophethood are devoted to the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Articles on the Interpretation of the Guardianship, A Bahá'í Understanding of Reincarnation, and the Bahá'í-inspired Model of Education are expositions on some of the fundamental principles of the Bahá'í belief system. Research papers related to studies in the Bahá'í Faith from the philosophic perspective include the papers On Bahá'í Ontology, The Truth of Thyself, and Models and Idols. A different approach to the study of the Writings is investigating the life history of the recipients of Tablets. An example of such an attempt is the article on the Life and Times of August Forel.

The section on Elucidations contains the response of the Research Department of the Bahá'í World Center concerning the infallibility of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith and a commentary on True Mysticism.

'Irfán Colloquia, in 2004, were conducted in seven sessions in English, Persian and German at the Louhelen and Bosch Bahá'í Schools in North America, at London University in England, UK, at the center for Bahá'í Studies in Acuto, Italy and at the Tambach Conference Center in Germany. In these sessions 62 scholars from 14 different countries made a total of 89 presentations. Thirty-two presentations were delivered in English. The text of some of the papers presented in English is published in this volume. The abstracts of all the presentations are available in the 'Irfán Colloquia website: www.irfancoolloquia.org.

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

Wilmette, June 2005