

'Irfán Colloquium

One Hundred and Fifty-Third Session

*Bicentennial Celebrations of the
Births of Bahá'u'lláh and The Báb*

Program and Abstracts



Centre for Bahá'í Studies

Acuto, Italy

July 3–6, 2018

Vision and Aims of `Irfan Colloquium

The `Irfán Colloquium aims at promoting and supporting systematic studies of fundamental principles of the Bahá'í beliefs, the Writings of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith, the interface of the Bahá'í Faith with intellectual schools of thought and religious traditions, and looking at current challenges in human society from the Bahá'í perspective. *`Irfán* is a Persian word referring to mystical, theological and spiritual knowledge.

The `Irfan Colloquium is sponsored by **Haj Mehdi Memorial Fund** and supported by **Nadia Saadat Memorial Scholarships**. In 2012, benefiting from the guidance received from the Universal House of Justice, a management board was appointed for this fund to function as a Bahá'í agency under the direction of the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States. `Irfán Colloquia, are presently held in North America and Western Europe in English, Persian and German languages. `Irfan Colloquia at the Acuto Center for Bahá'í Studies are held under the auspices of the National Assembly of the Baha'is of Italy.

The Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund was established in 1992 to honor Haj Mehdi Arjmand (1861-1941) and is dedicated to promoting scholarly studies of the Bahá'í Faith. Haj Mehdi Arjmand was a Persian scholar and teacher of the Bahá'í Faith who became well known in Iran for his profound knowledge of the Bible, Qur'an, and Bahá'í scriptures. The primary activity of the Fund is sponsoring `Irfán Colloquium and its publications.

Articles written in English and presented or received at the `Irfán Colloquia are annually published in a series of volumes of the *Lights of `Irfán*.

Program

Tuesday, July 3, 2018

Participants' Arrival

12:00 p.m. Lunch

Afternoon Registration

6:15 p.m.

Dinner and Free Time

7:30 p.m.

Opening Session

Words of Welcome and Announcements

Hooman Momen

Getting to Know Each Other

8:00 p.m.

Iraj Ayman

Irfan Colloquium Aims, Mission, and Programs

8:15 p.m.

Vahid Rafati

Bahá'u'lláh's Arrival in the Holy Land – 1868

9:30

Free Time

Wednesday, July 4, 2018

7:30 - 8:00 a.m.

Devotional (*Optional*)

8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:15 a.m
Opening Prayers
Announcements

Session 2: Wednesday Morning - 4 July

9:30-10:30 a.m.

Habib Riazati

**An analytical contents review of two major Writings of the Báb:
*Sahifī-yi- Adlyieh and Panj Sh'an***

10:30

Break

11:00 – 12:00 a.m.

Vahid Rafati

Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets to the Bahá'ís of Milán

12:00 – 12:15

Questions and Answers

12:15-3:00 p. m.

Lunch

Session 3: Wednesday Afternoon – 4 July

3.00-4.00

Hooshmand Badee

The Power of Virtuous Economic Choice

4:00 – 4:30

Break

4.30-5.30 p.m.

Farzana Al-Ansari

Mysticism and the Bahá'í Writings

5:30 p.m.

Discussion

6.00-7.30 p.m.

Dinner

Session 4: Wednesday Evening – 4 July

8.00-9.00 p.m.

Moojan Momen

Bahá'u'lláh in Iran

9:00 - 9:15 p.m.

Questions and Answers

Thursday, July 5, 2018

7:30 - 8:00 a.m.

Devotional (*Optional*)

8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:15 a.m.

Opening Prayers

Announcements

Session 5: Thursday morning – 5 July

9.30-10.30: a.m.

Vahid Rafati

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh in Early Akka Period, Part I

10:30 a.m.

Break

11.00 – 12.00

Vahid Rafati

Writings of Bahá'u'lláh in Early Akka Period, Part II

12.00

Group photograph

12:30

Lunch

Session 6: Thursday Afternoon – 5 July

3.00-4.00

Marco Oliveira

Catholic Orthodoxy and Bahá'í theology

4:00 p.m.

Break

4.30-5.30

Habib Riazati

The relationship between Bábí and Bahá'í Religions

6.00-7.30

Dinner

Session 7: Thursday Evening – 5 July

8.00-9.00 pm

Moojan Momen

Bahá'u'lláh in Iraq

9:00 - 9:15 p.m.

Questions and Answers

Friday, July 6, 2018

7:30 - 8:00 a.m.

Devotional (*Optional*)

8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:15 a.m.

Opening Prayers

Announcements

Session 8: Friday Morning – 6 July

9.30-10.30

Shahla Mehrgani

Manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and the birth of a new civilization

10:30 a.m.

Break

11.00 – 12.00

Wendi Momen

Insights from the Bahá'í writings on governance and business

12:00 – 12:15

Discussion

12.15

Lunch

Session 9: Friday Afternoon – 6 July

3.00-4:00

Habib Riazati

The Station and position of the Báb in the Bahá'í Writings

4:00 p.m

Break

4.30-5.30 p.m.

Ajit Giani

Tablet (s) to Napoleon III, warnings ignored and consequences

6.00-7.30

Dinner

END OF THE PROGRAM

Program Coordinator

Hooman Momen

***End of the 156th Session
of `Irfán Colloquium***

Abstracts

In Alphabetical Order of Presenters' Surnames



The Power of Virtuous Economic Choice

Hooshmand Badee

The Universal House of Justice in a statement to the Bahá'ís of the world dated 1 March 2017 states: 'Every choice a Bahá'í makes ... demands that one's economic decisions be in accordance with lofty ideals...' In this analytical presentation the concept of economic choice and its relation to lofty ideals will be explored. Rational decision making is the most problematic subject in every one's economic life. Extending choice and control over lifestyle is the right of human beings and should be central to policies of governments and organizations of a society. Such policies have immense potential for independence, freedom, creating opportunities and well-being of individuals and families. However, it is still not clear how people conceptualise choices, what choices are important, for which groups of people, in what areas of life and why. In this analytical presentation, the concept of choice will be explored for those preferring to have a simpler life or a

luxurious life style. The view will be presented that most people make most of their choices in their own self-interest. A Bahá'í view, on the other hand, would be making choices that promote collective interest rather than self-interest. These choices would lead to an effective and efficient use of resources and distribute goods and services that are fair amongst members of society. Using Bahá'í teachings, qualitative study of choice and the way it controls over the life-cycle will be explored. The view will be presented that while most people want to be free and able to make choices in all areas of their lives, there are significant differences in the importance they attach to specific choices. It will be concluded that for making adequate choices, equal opportunities must be created for all citizens in an environment that freedom exists, this way the economic choices we make has positive effects on the entire society.



Tablet(s) to Napoleon III, warnings ignored and consequences

Ajit Giani

Baha'u'llah specifically addressed Napoleon III twice in letters (tablets) sent to him, and once generally in the Suriy-i-Muluk which was addressed to all rulers collectively. The second tablet to Napoleon III was in response to the contempt shown by him on receipt of the first. This document traces the meteoric rise of Napoleon III and his equally dramatic fall from

power and the contempt heaped upon him at by fellow Frenchmen his downfall.

This presentation will show why and how Napoleon III became king of France, and why he ultimately failed to create a new monarchy.



Bahá'u'lláh's revelation and construction of a divine civilization

Shahla Mehrgani

“Every human society is an enterprise of world-building. Religion occupies a distinctive place in this enterprise” (Berger 1967, 13)

This study seeks to define *nomos* and the *cosmos* that are the main mechanisms of the role of religion in the world-building activities (Berger 1967). Then, they will be applied in the Baha'i Faith world-building enterprise.

In the history of civilization, religion has been thought of as a key factor in construction and deconstruction of the society. Peter Berger (1967) has developed a relevant theory to interpret the role of religion in the world-building activity. The concepts of “Cosmic frame of reference” and “*nomos*” are central to Berger's theory (1967) because as Berger illuminates, religion plays the crucial role in the social construction of reality by

introducing a sacred cosmos as well as a related nomos or a set of sacred order that directs the community towards it.

This study explores the crucial concepts of Berger's theory (1967) to equip itself enough to elucidate the Baha'i procedure of erecting a desired society. There are two very vital concepts defined by Berger (1967) to be applied to the interpretation of the world building endeavours of a given community that is cosmic frame of reference and nomos. This article analyses the related Baha'i scriptures using the benefit of these two concepts and their derivatives such as cosmization, cosmology, and nomization.

Correspondingly, this study attempts to introduce the Unity of Mankind as the cosmic frame of reference and the Baha'i Administrative Order as the nomos in Baha'i community building efforts. A brief exploration of Berger's theory about the relationship between religion and world-building will clarify the meanings and the status of the central concepts of his theory, namely cosmos and nomos. Then by exploring relevant Baha'i sacred writings a case for the Unity of Mankind as the cosmic frame of reference and the Baha'i Administrative Order as the nomos will be formulated.



Baha'u'llah in Iran

Moojan Momen

This paper looks at the events that occurred to Baha'u'llah during the time that he lived in Iran. Particular attention is given to two historical episodes where close attention to the text of two Tablets of Baha'u'llah leads to some conclusions that are different to those that are currently in the Baha'i history books.



Insights from the Baha'i writings on governance and business

Wendi Momen

At a time of tremendous political, social, economic and business upheaval, uncertainty and disruption, long-established institutions and systems are being overturned and uprooted. The Baha'i writings provide insights into this process and offer alternative models of governance and business that will not only reshape these institutions but the whole of civilization.

This paper looks at some of the elements of the transformative ideas found in the Baha'i writings and in the writings of Shoghi Effendi.



Catholic Orthodoxy and Baha'i theology

Marco Oliveira

Dei Verbum (meaning “Word of God” in Latin) is one of the most important documents of the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965); it is described as the “Roman Catholic Dogmatic Constitution on Divine Revelation.” Its intention was to explain the “authentic doctrine on divine revelation” and how it was transmitted throughout the history.

This presentation aims to compare the content of each chapter of the *Dei Verbum* with the Bahá’í teachings, allowing us to find similarities and differences between the Bahá’í Faith and the core beliefs of the Roman Catholic Church on several topics related to Divine Revelation.

It is expected that both Bahá’ís and Catholics can use this presentation to dialogue and better understand each other beliefs’.



An Introduction to Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Addressed to the Bahá’ís of Milan

Vahid Rafati

There are numerous collections of Tablets addressed to specific Bahá’í families or all the believers in a given town or region, most of which remain unpublished. This presentation

will introduce a collection of Tablets addressed to Ḥájí Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Mílání and his descendants, transcribed by Mr. Ḥusayn Lámi‘ in 1965.

A complete list of all the core messages of the Tablets in this collection is beyond the scope of this presentation. Among the themes encountered are the greatness of the Manifestation of God, the importance of recognizing Him, the obligation to follow His laws and ordinances and abide by moral and spiritual teachings such as truthfulness, trustworthiness, selflessness, courtesy, and service to the community.



1868: The Arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land

Vahid Rafati

Bahá'u'lláh arrived in ‘Akká in August of 1868 after having endured some five years of exile in Adrianople (Edirne). His arrival in ‘Akká marks the beginning of numerous transformations in His life and in the historical advancement of the Bahá'í Faith in the Holy Land, the Middle East and throughout the world. This presentation will focus on the following developments:

1. With the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in the Holy Land, His followers came into contact with Jews, Christians, Sunnis and Druze.

2. The independence of the Faith became more pronounced as it grew in size and gained greater prestige.
3. The distinction between Bahá'ís and Azalís became definite and categorical.
4. Residential properties of the Holy Family in the Holy Land came into the possession of the Faith.
5. The legal, spiritual, moral and administrative needs of the community resulted in the revelation of numerous Tablets.
6. The declaration of the Faith declared to kings, rulers, religious leaders, and people of all classes of society, a process which had begun in Adrianople, accelerated in momentum and expanded. As a result, the social principles and vision of the Faith for the advancement of human civilization became more defined.
7. The Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh was enunciated to ensure the unity of the Faith and the well-being of human society.



Writings of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed in the Early 'Akká Period

Vahid Rafati

The arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká, after the Most Great Separation had been irrevocably effected in Adrianople, His followers came to be known as the People of Bahá, and the greeting Alláh-u-Abhá gained currency among Bahá'ís, consolidated the individual and social life and identity of

Bahá'ís. The Writings of Bahá'u'lláh revealed in the early 'Akká period coincided with the public declaration of the Faith, the invitation of Bahá'ís to appreciate their new religious and social identity, and the revelation of laws and ordinances related to the individual and communal life of the community. At the same time, the Writings of this period expand the understanding of the mental and religious connection of Bahá'ís with the followers of previous religions and elucidate the place and the position of the Bahá'í Faith in the process of advancing human civilization. This presentation will highlight some of the Books and Tablets revealed during the early years of the 'Akká period, including:

1. The Kitáb-i-Aqdas (The Most Holy Book)
2. The Lawḥ-i-Qiná'
3. Tablets addressed to the kings and rulers of the world
4. The Lawḥ-i-Ḥikmat (Tablet of Wisdom)
5. A Tablet addressed to an Egyptian priest residing in Alexandria.



The Image of the Bab in the Baha'i Writings

Habib Riazati

The main objective of this presentation is to see how the Bab has been described in writings of Baha'u'llah, Abdu'l-Baha and in particular Shoghi Effendi. It will be focused on how the

Blessed Beauty in His major works starting in Baghdad up to the Akka period describes the station and mission of the Bab, His oneness and unity with Him, the major attributes of Bab's revelation, Bab's position and station in relation to the revelations of the past and the manifestations after Him, especially with that of Baha'u'llah Himself.

We, moreover, shall consider the manner in which ; the Master and especially beloved Shoghi Effendi in his major works such as World Order Letters, Dispensation of Baha'u'llah and God Passes By describes, in a glowing terms, the Bab's stations and removes the major misconceptions about the Bab's real stations and His Main mission.



The dialectical stations of the Bab as seen in His own Writings

and

His intrinsic historical and scriptural relationships with the Revelation of Baha'u'llah

Habib Riazati

The purpose of this presentation is two fold:

1) First to look at the station of the Bab and His mission as is described in His own writings during His six years ministry

and understand how His ultimate mission was revealed using Wisdom through different stages of His Revelation.

2) we moreover, examine some of His major Theological/Metaphysical Concepts, themes, Laws and Ordinances that have either directly and indirectly provided the groundwork for some of the main concepts and ordinances that were later revealed in the Baha'u'llah's writings and the works of the beloved Master and Shoghi Effendi.



**An analytical contents review of two major Writings of
the Báb: Safini-ye Adlyieh and Panj Sh'an**

Habib Riazati

'Irfán Colloquia Publications

Moojan. Momen (ed.), *Scripture and Revelation* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1997)

Moojan Momen (ed.), *The Bahá'í Faith and the World Religions*(Oxford: George Ronald, 2005)

Iraj Ayman (ed.), *The Lights of 'Irfán: Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia* (in English), Books One to Fourteen (2000–2013)

Iraj Ayman (ed.), *Safíni-yi 'Irfán: Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia* (in Persian). Books One to Fifteen, (1998–2012)

Farah Dustdar (ed.), *Beiträge des 'Irfán-Kolloquiums: Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia* (in German) Books One to Five (Hofheim, Germany: Bahá'í Verlag, 2004–2009)

Maryam Afshar, *Images of Christ in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (2004)

Wolfgang Klebel, *Revelation of Unity, Unity of Revelation* (Darmsdat, Germany: Reyhani Verlag, 2009)

Vahid Rafati, *Áftab Ámad Dalil-i Áftáb* (The proof of the Sun is the Sun) (Darmsdat, Germany: Reyhani Verlag, 2010)

Vahid Rafati, *Badáy'-i-Ma'áni va Tafsír* (The Wonders of Inner Meanings and Interpretation): *Selected Commentaries of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on Qur'anic Verses and Islamic Traditions* (Darmsdat, Germany: Reyhani Verlag, 2013)

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