
Lights of 'Irfán

Papers Presented at the
'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars



Book One

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Book One
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O My servants! My holy, My divinely ordained Revelation may be likened unto an ocean in whose depths are concealed innumerable pearls of great price, of surpassing luster. It is the duty of every seeker to bestir himself and strive to attain the shores of this ocean, so that he may, in proportion to the eagerness of his search and the efforts he hath exerted, partake of such benefits as have been pre-ordained in God's irrevocable and hidden Tablets.

—Bahá'u'lláh
Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 326

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Preface

The *Lights of ‘Irfán* is a new series of the ‘Irfán publications in the English language, containing the text of the papers presented at the ‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars, sponsored by the Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund. ‘*Irfán* is a Persian-Arabic word referring to mystical, theological, and spiritual knowledge. *Haj Mehdi Arjmand* (1861–1941) was a distinguished Bahá’í scholar of Biblical studies and a prominent teacher of the Bahá’í Faith in Iran.

The ‘Irfán Colloquia started in 1993 and have continued to be held annually in North America and Europe. The aim and purpose of the ‘Irfán activities is to foster systematic studies of the scriptures of the world’s religions from a Bahá’í perspective and to promote scholarly studies in the sacred writings, verities, and theological principles of the Bahá’í Faith. Annual colloquia and seminars are held separately in the English and Persian languages.

Beginning in 1996, a series of annual seminars was added to the ‘Irfán colloquia for the purpose of presenting studies on the writings of the Bahá’í Faith, starting with the study of the writings of Bahá’u’lláh, the founder-prophet of the Bahá’í Faith. In the seminars, each year selected writings from one of the main periods of Bahá’u’lláh’s ministry have been presented and discussed in chronological order.

In 1999, more than forty topics were presented at the ‘Irfán colloquia and seminars, which were held at the Trent Park Campus of Middlesex University in London, England, and at the Louhelen and Bosch Bahá’í Schools in Michigan and California in the United States. Book One of the *Lights of ‘Irfán* contains a dozen papers that were presented at those colloquia and seminars in 1999. We hope and intend to continue publishing the *Lights of ‘Irfán* series in the years to come.

One of the main themes of the ‘Irfán Colloquia in 1999 was “World Religions and the Bahá’í Faith.” Papers on “Pilgrimage and Religious Identity in the Bahá’í Faith,” “Common Teachings in Chinese Culture and the Bahá’í Faith: From Material Civilization to Spiritual Civilization,” “The New Age Phenomenon and the Bahá’í Faith,” “A Study of the Meaning of the Word ‘Al-Amr in the Qur’án and in the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh,” and “The Book of Revelation Revealed in Glory: A Summary of *Glorious Revelation*,” “The Development of Humankind,” and “The Concept of Sacred Justice in Hebrew Eschatology” are related to that theme.

“The Bedrock of Bahá’í Belief: The Doctrine of Progressive Revelation” and “‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Explanation of the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh: Tablets and Talks Translated into English (1911-1920)” are related to the other theme of the colloquia—“Fundamental Verities and the Principles of the Bahá’í Belief System.” “Kitáb-i-Aqdas as Described and Glorified by Shoghi Effendi,” “The Seven Valleys of Bahá’u’lláh and Farid ud-Din Attár,” and “Some Chronological Issues in the Lawḥ-i-Hikmat of Bahá’u’lláh” are papers that were presented at the ‘Irfán Seminars.

The present volume contains the papers that were received for publication before the end of December 1999. The texts of these papers are published as provided by their authors without further editing; therefore, they do not follow the same style or scholarly approach. In addition, there may be errors of transliteration, which were not corrected due to time constraints related to publication. The papers represent the views and understandings of the authors. They are published in this volume according to the alphabetical order of the names of the authors. Abstracts of all the presentations made at the colloquia and seminars are published in separate booklets. The papers presented at the first and second sessions of the ‘Irfán Colloquia, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England, in December 1993 and Wilmette, Illinois, in March 1994 are published by George Ronald, Oxford, England, 1997 under the title *Scripture and Revelation*.

Iraj Ayman

