

Lights of ‘Irfán

Papers Presented at the
‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars



Book Seven

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Book Seven
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Incline your hearts, O people of God, unto the counsels of your true, your incomparable Friend. The Word of God may be likened unto a sapling, whose roots have been implanted in the hearts of men. It is incumbent upon you to foster its growth through the living waters of wisdom, of sanctified and holy words, so that its root may become firmly fixed and its branches may spread out as high as the heavens and beyond.

— Lawḥ-i-Dunyá

Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, pp. 93-94

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Preface

Bahá'u'lláh refers to His Revelation as an ocean with innumerable fine and luminous pearls hidden in its depths. Then He adds that whoever desires them must exert to reach the shore of that ocean, immerse in that ocean, and depending on the degree of his efforts, acquire his predestined share of those pearls.¹ In this exhortation there are several points that deserve our special attention:

1. Pearls of divine knowledge are hidden in the revealed words of God
2. Those desiring to acquire them must exert every effort to reach the depths of the revealed words
3. Everyone has a predestined share of those pearls
4. What may be acquired from the destined share depends on the degree of exerted effort.

Following this guidance He calls for applying knowledge and skills needed for deep and systematic study. The 'Irfán Colloquia and its publications are attempts at promoting and facilitating the efforts recommended by Bahá'u'lláh, hoping to present some of those "fine and luminous pearls" to those who desire them.

This volume of the *Lights of 'Irfán* contains some of the papers presented at various sessions of the Irfan Colloquium in 2005 that were conducted in the English language, as well as some articles that were received during that same year. 'Irfán Colloquia in 2005 were convened in seven separate sessions: in North America at Bosch Bahá'í School in Northern California and at Louhelen Bahá'í School in Michigan; and in Europe at the Center for Bahá'í Studies in Acuto, Italy, and the Conference Center in Tambach, Germany. The sessions were conducted in English, Persian, and German. At those sessions 87 scholars from different countries made a total of 96 presentations, and participated in dialogue and exchange of information with the participants. See a listing of all at <http://irfanco colloquia.org>.

In this volume, the presentation on "Bahá'í Ontology" that was published in Book Six is continued and expanded. Also "Chronicles of a Birth: Early References to the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions in Spain (1850-1853)" published in Book Five is continued, covering the period 1854-1676. "The St. Petersburg 19th Century Orientalist Collection of Materials on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths" provides valuable information on a number of unpublished Writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. "The Bahá'í Faith in the Arabic Speaking

Middle East” presents the beginning of a new line of studies that reveal the background, extent and various aspects of the presence of the Bahá'í Faith in that region. Some comparative studies are presented on “Andalusi Theosophy”, “Prayer Patterns in Jewish, Christian, Muslim and Bahá'í Worship”, “Origins of the Bahá'í Concept of Unity and Causality” and “Religion and Exclusivism.” Various mystical connotations of some items in the Bahá'í scripture are explored in “The Newly Born Babe of that Day” and “Seeds of Revelation and Mystic Bond between the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.” Some theological studies are presented in the article on “Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom.”

Starting from Book Six we have adopted two changes in the ‘Irfán Colloquia's style guide. All "authoritative" publications are cited by an abbreviation; see Appendix I, “Bibliography of the Bahá'í Writings and Their Abbreviations Used in This Book,” on page 285. Words of Prophets/Manifestations, i.e. quotations from Sacred Writings (not including statements by Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice, or informal provisional translations), are italicized.

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 last names. Abstracts of all the presentations made at the ‘Irfán Colloquia and Seminars are published in a series of separate booklets.

Iraj Ayman
Wilmette, May 2006

NOTES

¹ *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* #181 and *Majmu'í-yi Alwáh-i Mubáraki-yi Hadrat-i-Bahá'u'lláh* (“Collection of Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets”) p. 324