

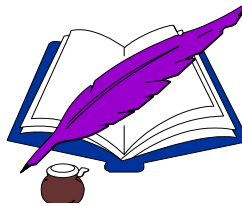
# `Irfán Colloquium

One-Hundred-and-Eleventh Session

*Discovering Pearls in  
The Ocean of His Words*

and

*Centenary Celebration of  
'Abdu'l-Bahá's Travels and Talks  
in Europe and North America*

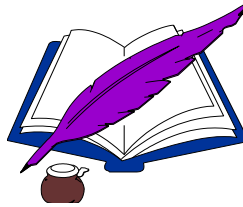


*Program and Abstracts*

Centre for Bahá'í Studies

Acuto, Italy

30 June – 5 July 2012



ʻIrfán Colloquium, in 2010, inaugurated  
a four year centenary celebration of  
ʻAbdu'l-Bahá's Talks  
and the significant events associated with  
His historic travels to the West (1911-1913)

**The Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund** was established in 1992 to honor Haj Mehdi Arjmand (1861-1941), a Persian 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.

Starting in 1993, the Fund began to sponsor “**ʻIrfán Colloquia**” to foster scholarly studies in fundamental principles of the Bahá'í belief system, Writings of the Central Figures of the Bahá'í Faith, and the interface of the Bahá'í Faith and current intellectual, scientific and religious trends in the world. *ʻIrfán* being a Persian word referring to mystical, theological and spiritual knowledge.

ʻIrfán colloquia are being held annually in North America and Europe, in the English, German, and Persian languages. As of January 2011 one hundred and seven sessions of colloquia have been held. Selections of papers presented in English at the ʻIrfán Colloquia are published in a series of volumes, *Lights of ʻIrfán*.

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ʿIrfán Colloquium is held under the auspicious of  
National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Italy

Sponsored by  
Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund

Supported by  
Nadia Saadat Memorial Scholarships,  
and  
Contributions in Memory of Nureddin Momtazi

Centre for Bahá'í Studies  
Acuto, Italy  
30 June – 3 July, 2012



# ʿIrfán Colloquium

## One-Hundred-and-Eleventh Session

Centre for Bahá'í Studies

Acuto, Italy

30 June – 3 July, 2012

*Saturday, 30 June 2012*

4:00 PM – Registration

7:00 PM – Dinner

8:00 – 8:10 PM

**Opening Prayers**

8:10 – 8:20 PM

**Welcoming Remarks**

*Roya Ayman*

8:20 – 08:30 PM

**Introducing Participants**

8:30 – 9:00 PM

**`Irfán Colloquium: Program and Activities**

*Iraj Ayman*

9:00 – 9:40 PM

**‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Naples**

*Iscander Micael Tinto*

9:40 – 10:00 PM

Discussion

***Sunday, 1 July 2012***

7:30 – 8:00 AM

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Optional)

8:00 – 9:00 AM

**Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:15 AM

**Opening Prayer and Announcements**

9:15 – 10:00 AM

**Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh Revealed in Honor of  
Hand of the Cause Jináb-i-Ibn-i-Abhar**

*Vahid Rafati*

10:00 – 10:30 AM

Discussion

10:30 – 11:00 AM

Break

11:00 – 11:45 AM

**Yin-Yang Cosmology and the Bahá'í Faith**

*Phyllis Ghim Lian Chew*

11:45 – 12:15

Discussion

12:30 – 2:00 PM

**Lunch**

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Rest, Bookshop, Recreation

3:00 – 3:45 PM

**Connection and Disconnection between Bahá'í  
Faith and Enlightenment Philosophy in Islam**

*Vahid Rafati*

4:00 – 4:15 PM

Discussion

4:15 – 5:00 PM

Break

5:15 – 6:00 PM

**Role of Religion in the Progress of Civilization**

*Ramin Vasli*

6:00 – 6:30

Discussion

6:30 - 8:00 PM

**Dinner**

8:00 – 8:40 PM

**Understanding Economic Moral Hazard and Its  
Implications in the Writings of `Abdu'l- Bahá**

*Rama Ayman*

8:40 – 9:00 PM

Discussion

9:00 – 10:00 PM

**Open Dialogue**

***Monday, 2 July 2012***

7:30 – 8:00 AM

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Optional)

8:00 – 9:00 AM

**Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:15 AM

Opening Prayer and Announcements

9:15 – 10:00 AM

**An Officer and an Academic: Alexander  
Grigorevich Tumanskii and His Contribution to  
Russian Historiography on and Policy towards the  
Bábí-Bahá'í Religion**

*Soli Shahvar*

10:00 – 10:30 AM

Discussion

10:30 – 11:00 AM

Break

11:00 – 11:45 AM

**Awakening: The Birth and Tribulations of a Bahá'í  
Community in Iran**

*Hussein Ahdieh*

11:45 - 12:15

Discussion

12:30 – 2:00 PM

**Lunch**

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Rest, Bookshop, Recreation



3:00 – 3:45 PM

**The Inebriation of His Enrapturing Call**

*Julio Savi*

3:45 – 4:15 PM

Discussion

4:15 – 5:00 PM

Break

5:15 – 6:00 PM

**The Rise and Fall of the Bahá'í Settlements  
in the Jordan Valley, 1880s-1950s**

*Shay Rozen*

6:00 – 6:30 PM

Discussion

6:30 – 8:00 PM

**Dinner**

8:00 – 8:40 PM

**'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt**

*Julio Savi*

8:40 – 9:00 PM

Discussion

9:00 – 10:00 PM

**Open Dialogue**

***Tuesday, 3 July 2012***

7:30 – 8:00 AM

Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Optional)

8:00 – 9:00 AM

**Breakfast**

9:00 – 9:15 AM

**Opening Prayer and Announcements**

9:15 – 10:00 AM

**International Unity and Universality of Education:  
Guidelines Given in the Talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá**

*Iraj Ayman*

10:00 – 10:30 AM

Discussion

10:30 – 11:00 AM

Break

11:00 – 11:45 AM

**`Abdu'l-Bahá's Elucidation of the Concept of the  
Oneness of Humanity During His Western Travels**

*Wendi Momen*

11:45 – 12:15

Discussion

12:30 – 2:00 PM

**Lunch**

2:00 – 3:00 PM

Rest, Bookshop, Recreation

3:00 – 3:45 PM

**Shared Leadership and Bahá'í Community Life**

*Roya Ayman*

3:45 – 4:15 PM

Discussion

4:15 – 5:00 PM

Break

5:15 – 6:00 PM

**Uniting Space and Time: Ritual and the Bahá'í  
Faith**

*Moojan Momen*

6:00 – 6:30

Discussion

6:30 – 8:00 PM

**Dinner**

8:00 – 8:40 PM

**Exploring Learning Processes within a  
Collaborative Study Circle: Cultural-historical  
activity theory perspective on individual and social  
transformation**

*Jean-Marie Nau*

8:40 – 9:00 PM

Discussion

9:00 – 10:00 PM

**`Abdu'l-Bahá's Visit to North America: An  
Illustrated Story**

*Hussein Ahdieh*

*Program Ends*

*ABSTRACTS*

*In Alphabetical Order of  
Presenters' Surnames*



## **Awakening: The Birth and Tribulations of a Bahá'í Community in Iran**

*Hussein Ahdieh*

In 1850, Nayriz was a sleepy farm town in the Fars province of Iran. Most people tended their farms by day and mingled with family and friends at night under the dim light of kerosene lamps. Life for the inhabitants of Nayriz was peaceful—but it was a stifling peace without any hope, where the future was merely a continuation of the past.

On May 27, 1850, Vahid, a scholarly representative of the Báb, proclaimed the new Prophet's stirring message from the pulpit of a mosque. And Nayriz would never be the same. The sleepy town had been jolted into the painful throes of awakening.

The presentation covers the tumultuous birth of the Bábí movement in Nayriz and its later evolution into that city's Bahá'í community. In details it will recount the heroic struggles of the Bábís in 1850 and 1853 against the overwhelming forces of Iran's despotic monarchy and the horrific treatment of the survivors, including elderly, women and children. We will cover in depth the story of Vahid as a spiritual as well as practical leader and as the harbinger of a new way of life to the people of Nayriz. I will

also provide a detailed account of the less-known but dramatic upheaval of 1909.

Aside from the skirmishes, battles, and executions, the book *Awakening* brings to light the daily trials and occasional triumphs of the Nayriz Bahá'ís as they endured the hostility of their Muslim neighbors. It is a story of ordinary people transforming themselves into heroes and heroines through the empowering Message brought by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh.

The presentation is in the audio-visual form which includes numerous tablets, historical pictures, maps etc. to enhance the appreciation of the history of the town.



## **Centennial Celebration: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s 1912 Visit to America. Focus: New York City**

*Hussein Ahdieh*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent the majority of his stay while in North America in or near the city of New York, which he announced to be the City of the Covenant and where he proclaimed Lua Getsinger to be the Herald, and himself as the Center of the Covenant.

He gave the majority of his lectures while there. News coverage of his time in New York was extensive and reported in papers around the country. A film was recorded of his meeting with friends and we have recordings of his melodious chanting of a Persian prayer. New York was the hub of his east coast stay.

The purpose of the study is to cover the following points:

- Gain a deeper understanding of the spiritual concepts and social principles of the Bahá'í Faith as explained by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Center of the Covenant. Use the Example of the Master in assisting us to transform our lives.
- Understand the social context of the people of New York with whom the Master met. Understand their beliefs and concerns.
- The lecture will cover the lives of the early Bahá'ís: their personal stories, beliefs and aspirations, the struggles and successes they had in community building and the development of their understanding of the Faith of Bahá'u'lláh.

The class presenter will facilitate class discussion of questions such as the following:

1. Why did 'Abdu'l-Bahá come to America?
2. What were His accomplishments?
3. What role was played by the Covenant, the Peace Movement, the concept of Unity, Racism, Woman's Suffrage, and the Socialist



Movement on the growth of the Bahá'í Community at the time of the Master's visit to America.



## **International Unity and Universality of Education: Guidelines Given in the Talks of `Abdu'l-Bahá**

*Iraj Ayman*

Talks delivered by `Abdu'l-Bahá during his travels in Europe and America includes a number of guidelines on various educational subjects. In view of the fact that those talks were essentially aimed at promoting peace and unity and preventing conflict and war in human society, `Abdu'l-Bahá's utterances concerning education were also related to the ways and means of the establishment of permanent peace and universal exercise of justice. He recommended a new and comprehensive vision of education that in many ways were unprecedented, and in some instances contrary to the prevailing systems and practices.

Both formal and informal education play major roles in the formation of our thoughts and behavior regarding social and political activities. Therefore, achieving permanent peace and unity in human society requires unity in educational curriculum and universality of access to quality

education. At the time that access to education was not available to the majority of people and was dominated by nationalistic tendencies and prejudices, `Abdu'l-Bahá recommended the necessity of observing unity in education provided by the schools around the world and the need for compulsory universal education. He emphasized priority of moral and spiritual education. Such measures will bring people of the world closer to each other and remove prejudices and self-centered policies that are the root cause of war and conflict.

Research and studies have shown that divisive behavior is acquired and not innate. `Abdu'l-Bahá in a talk delivered in Montreal on 12 September 1912 emphasizes that all the people of the world should receive proper education in order to eliminate misunderstandings so that they can be united. In another talk in Philadelphia on 9 June 1912 he said: “education is essential, and all standards of training and teaching throughout the world of mankind should be brought into conformity and agreement; a universal curriculum should be established, and the basis of ethics be the same.”

On yet another occasion, in His public talk on 7 May 1912 in Hotel Schenley in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, He said: “Bahá'u'lláh counsels the education of all members of society. No individual should be denied or deprived of intellectual training, although each should receive according to capacity. None must be left in the grades of ignorance, for ignorance is a defect in the human world... All cannot be scientists and philosophers, but each should be educated according to his needs and deserved training...” He, then,

continues, “There must be no difference in the education of male and female in order that womankind may develop equal capacity and importance with man in the social and economic equation. Then the world will attain unity and harmony.

In past ages humanity has been defective and inefficient because it has been incomplete. War and its ravages have blighted the world; the education of woman will be a mighty step toward its abolition and ending, for she will use her whole influence against war. Woman rears the child and educates the youth to maturity. She will refuse to give her sons for sacrifice upon the field of battle. In truth, she will be the greatest factor in establishing universal peace and international arbitration. Assuredly, woman will abolish warfare among mankind. Inasmuch as human society consists of two parts, the male and female, each the complement of the other, the happiness and stability of humanity cannot be assured unless both are perfected. Therefore, the standard and status of man and woman must become equalized.”



## **Understanding Economic Moral Hazard and its Implications in the writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá**

*Rama Ayman*

The role of society and governments in resolving financial crises and addressing the persistence of poverty and unemployment, including their prevalence in the wealthiest countries of the world, is now under the widest scrutiny since the Industrial Revolution brought about the confluence of forces that had led to the Great Depression over 8 decades ago. Once again, our society is forced to reflect on its motives and priorities at individual and aggregate levels in order to address and avoid a pending economic collapse. The identification and understanding of moral hazards, which have perpetuated an economic system fraught with structural weaknesses, is a necessary step towards understanding the current devolution and potential demise of Western economies.

Less than 2 decades before the Great Depression, `Abdu'l-Bahá, through his writings and frequent public addresses in Europe and North America, revealed far-reaching insights into understanding and eventually resolving these moral hazards, thus setting the stage for arriving at a more comprehensive resolution of economic problems that shall confront humanity over the coming century.

This paper would strive to analyze how `Abdu'l-Bahá's selected public addresses provide insights into these economic moral hazards and how our society should respond, by examining:

1. Who bears the responsibility for addressing persistence of poverty?

2. How can governments and individuals address the structurally imbedded moral hazards when confronting pervasive poverty and unemployment?
3. Can a fair and democratic society eliminate extreme wealth created by corporate responsibilities towards profit maximization of shareholders?
4. Why universal and affordable education, along with widely available free information provided by technological revolution of the past 2 decades, have not reduced the acceleration of extremes of wealth and poverty?

We shall reflect on `Abdu'l-Bahá's public discourses, a century ago, in this regard and on how he addressed these moral hazards and what would be their implications.



## **Shared Leadership and Bahá'ís Community Life**

*Roya Ayman*

Bahá'í Faith presents a new approach to social structure of the community. Today, God has ordained a major paradigm shift in society where no longer an individual may exercise authority and power over others. Bahá'u'lláh has abrogated the position of professional clergy in the Bahá'í community. Furthermore, for the first

time, He has separated the function of assuming individual responsibility from exercising individual authority over others. In essence, with the inception of the Bahá'í dispensation, the divine plan revealed a new concept of shared leadership.

In this presentation we will review the phenomenon of shared or distributive leadership in contrast to vertical, hierarchical, or heroic leadership. The conditions that allow for shared leadership to function will be explored. Also we will examine the vision of Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá regarding leadership in the Bahá'í community. We will also discuss how the Bahá'í community in its infancy is preparing for this new structure and how the recent messages from the universal house of Justice guide the Bahá'í community to be poised to implement shared leadership.

This presentation is a preliminary exploration of a new concept in the field of leadership. Additionally, it is a brief overview of the recent developments in the Bahá'í community in preparation for entry by troops through exercising a new concept of community leadership in the form of shared leadership.



## **Yin-Yang Cosmology and the Bahá'í Faith**

*Phyllis Ghim Lian Chew*

The yin-yang concept is a pivotal theory in traditional Chinese thought influencing many aspects of Chinese civilization, government, architecture, personal relationships and ethics. The literacies of this paradigm has astounding similarities with the literacies of the Bahá'í faith, especially with regards to the origin of matter, historical perspective, gender relationships and practices related to health and healing. This paper will set out to discuss how these similarities may be helpful in the modern encounter between the Chinese culture and the Bahá'í Faith.



## **Uniting Space and Time: Ritual and the Bahá'í Faith**

*Moojan Momen*

The Bahá'í Faith has very few communal rituals. There is almost no structure or set form to the regular meetings of the community or to such ceremonial occasions as weddings and funerals. Furthermore, there are textual instructions in the authoritative texts of the Bahá'í Faith that prohibit the creation of a clerical class and the development of rituals over time. If the ritual is an essential part of religion, then what substitutes for ritual in the Bahá'í community? To answer this question, this paper goes back to Durkheim's functionalist ideas that ritual creates the boundaries between

the sacred and profane and also creates a sense of awe and an experience of the community as a living reality, thus reinforcing the sense of unity and strengthens the community.

With regard to the first of these functions, in fact the boundaries between the sacred and the profane are deliberately blurred in the Bahá'í Faith and all of space and time potentially sacralized. With regard to the second of these functions, if Durkheim's analysis is correct, ritual is not essential to religion in itself but on account of the unity and reinforcement of the sense of community that it creates. When we come to consider the Bahá'í Faith, there are a number of other factors that create unity. First, there are doctrinal factors such as the doctrine of the Covenant. Second, there are psychological factors such as a common vision (oneness of humanity and world unity). Third, there is the camaraderie of working together to achieve that vision - a common pathway along which all Bahá'ís are travelling. In all, these factors appear to be sufficient to substitute for the function of ritual in the Bahá'í Faith.



## **`Abdu'l-Bahá's Elucidation of the Concept of the Oneness of Humanity, During His Western Travels**

*Wendi Momen*



The central teaching of the Bahá'í Faith is the oneness of humankind. Although wholly associated with the Bahá'í Faith today, it was a very difficult concept for Bahá'ís in earlier times to put into practice in their personal lives. As `Abdu'l-Bahá travelled in the West in 1911 and again in 1912-13, He not only spoke extensively about this principle in numerous meetings but demonstrated its meaning in practical ways and challenged His followers to take up the fight against racism within themselves and their society. This paper looks at `Abdu'l-Bahá's elucidation of the principle of the oneness of humankind in His talks in the West, primarily in the United States, and through His own actions



## **Exploring Learning Processes within a Collaborative Study Circle<sup>1</sup>**

*Jean-Marie Nau*

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<sup>1</sup> This paper is a summary of the thesis for the award of Master in Learning and Development in Multilingual and Multicultural Contexts, presented in February 2012 at the University of Luxembourg.

This study explores learning processes within a collaborative study group, engaged on a path of individual and social transformation. The topic opens up a window on processes in learning communities beyond school-related education. How does learning take place in the activity? What tools do the participants use in the activity? How do they guide their learning, and how does the participants' multivoicedness influences the learning process?

The two-fold moral purpose of any human being - to develop their latent potentialities through efforts to contribute to the advancement of civilization, - constitutes the core element of a conceptual framework that governs Bahá'í educational activity. This research explores a facet and fragment of social reality, is not a description of the world as it is, but represents one perspective on social reality, a reality that is whole.

I use activity theory to frame the analysis and discourse analysis to analyze the data. Activity theory states, that a collective activity, with the basic purpose shared by others, is undertaken by people who are motivated by a purpose or towards the solution of a problem, which is mediated by tools, used in order to achieve an outcome. When we communicate, we may strive for clarity, but we are always situated in an historical context and what we say is influenced by our multivoicedness. Reflecting on what people have said and written, and thereby discovering meaning and interpretation is the basis of discourse analysis.

The study shows how learning takes place through a complex interaction between all of the elements in the activity system. Nine distinct instances offer insights that this particular type of collaborative activity encourages and promotes the exchange of questions, ideas, experiences, thoughts and knowledge among participants; that participants negotiate tools given by the content-based curriculum and suggests that participants in a collaborative learning activity focus on their objectives and outcome, and thus choose, define and appropriate themselves suitable tools. Several mediating artifacts, tools and signs were used by the participants and shaped their learning.

The study suggests that the existence and deliberate creation of certain conditions among participants in a learning activity influence the learning process. They include mutual trust, honesty, unity, a welcoming and encouraging attitude, a respect for the opinion of others, adopting a humble learning attitude, humour, and taking ownership of one's learning.



## **Connection and Disconnection between Bahá'í Faith and the Philosophy of Illumination**

*Vahid Rafati*

One of the most significant and influential philosophical schools in Islamic world that developed in Iranian culture in the twelfth century is the Illumination School of Suhravardi.

Shihabud'din Suhravardi (1155-1191), known in the history of Islamic philosophy as Shaykh-i Ishraq (Master of Illumination), and Shaykh-i Maqtul (the Murdered Shaykh), was the founder of the Philosophy of Illumination (Hikmat-i Ishraq), or Oriental Theosophy. During his short period of life, less than forty years, it is reported that he left behind series of some fifty works in Islamic philosophy, in both Arabic and Persian, such as his leading work, Hikmatu'l Ishraq (Philosophy of Illumination), in Arabic.

Primarily rooted in Pre-Islamic Iranian tradition, Suhravardi was well versed in Islamic literature as well as in Greek Gnosticism, Hermeticism, New Platonic philosophy, Islamic mysticism. Rich in using a complex, and highly symbolic language, Suhravadi in his philosophy advanced the idea that intuitive knowledge is more significant than the scientific knowledge and the essence is more important than the existence. Other central doctrines in Suhravardi's ideology revolve around the notion of light which is used as a way of exploring the links between God, the Light of Lights, and His creation. He, in his Philosophy of Illumination,... "developed a truly original light ontology. While light always remains in itself identical, its proximity or distance from Light of Lights determines the ontic light reality of all beings. Light operates through the activities of dominion of the higher 'triumphal' or 'victorial' lights, as well as the desire of the lower lights for

the higher ones, operating at all levels and hierarchies of reality (PI. 97.7-98.11). Reality proceeds from the Light of Lights and unfolds via the First Light and all the subsequent lights whose exponential interactions bring about the existence of all entities. As each new light interacts with other existing lights, more light and dark substances are generated. Light produces both immaterial and substantial lights, such as immaterial intellects (angels), human and animal souls. Light produces dusky substances, such as bodies. Light can generate both luminous accidents, such as those in immaterial lights, physical lights or rays, and dark accidents, whether it be in immaterial lights or in bodies(PI, 77.1-78.9)...” {“Suhrawardi”, in: Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy}.

The purpose of the presentation is to describe the main doctrines of the School and to consider a few areas of connection and disconnection that one can find in the Bahá'í Writings in relation to the principle of Philosophy of Illumination.



## **Bahá'u'lláh's Tablets to Ibn-i-Abhar**

*Vahid Rafati*

Approximately thirty Tablets revealed by Bahá'u'lláh in honour of Ibn-i-Abhar, a Hand of the Cause of God, have

so far been identified. These range in length from as little as four lines to fifteen pages. While most of the longer Tablets were revealed by Bahá'u'lláh under the signature of Mirza Aqa Jan, the shorter ones are written by Bahá'u'lláh Himself. The Tablets are written in the Persian and Arabic languages, with some written in a mixture of the two. Although the majority of these Tablets are undated, those that are dated were revealed around 1298 to 1307AH/1880-1890. This, however, by no means suggests that the exact duration of Bahá'u'lláh's revelation of the Tablets to Ibn-I Abhar was restricted to those years.

The collection of Ibn-i-Abhar's Tablets can be characterized as one of the richest sources of information on a vast range of topics related to different aspects of the Bahá'í Faith, particularly during the last two decades of Bahá'u'lláh's life. Social, communal and individual issues are reported by Ibn-i-Abhar to Bahá'u'lláh and received His attention, comments and explanations. Historical events of the Faith, such as the martyrdom of Badí` and the King and the Beloved of the Martyrs; principles of Bahá'í ethics; steadfastness in the face of opposition and persecution; unity among the believers, and the significance of teaching and serving the Faith are but a few topics of the main topics addressed in Ibn-i-Abhar's Tablets. Many prayers, all in Arabic, are also revealed within those Tablets. It should also be noted that in Ibn-i-Abhar's longer Tablets, one will find dozens of smaller Tablets that are revealed in honour of those individuals whose mentions were made by Ibn-i-Abhar in his letters to Bahá'u'lláh.

In addition to the Tablets that are directly revealed for him, Ibn-i-Abhar's services to the Cause, his qualifications and his efforts in the teaching, promotion, and consolidation of the Faith as a distinguished member of the Bahá'í community and a Hand of the Cause of God are repeatedly referred to in tens of Tablets that Bahá'u'lláh wrote to the Bahá'ís around Persia. He was also the recipient of Tablets from Abdu'l-Bahá.



## **The Rise and Fall of the Bahá'í Settlements in the Jordan Valley, 1880s- 1950s**

*Shay Rozen*

Among the religious communities that were active in the nineteenth century in Palestine, the Bahá'í community was one of the smallest. Since 1868, this religious community established their presence at the Haifa/Acre bay. The Bahá'í holy places at Haifa and the Western Galilee were announced as "World Heritage Sites", by UNESCO, in 2008.

Among the Bahá'í properties in Palestine, the information on the Bahá'í settlements in the Jordan Valley is very scant and almost unknown. During the 1880s three settlements were established at the east and south shores of

Lake Tiberias: Umm-Jūna, Es-Samrā and Nuqeib. A fourth settlement, El-Adasiyeh, was established during the first years of the twentieth century, near the Yarmuk River.

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, portions of the Bahá'í lands in the Jordan valley were sold to the Zionist organizations and as a result a number of kibbutzim, such as Deganya Aleph, Deganya Beth, and Ein Gev were built on these lands.

During the 1948 war, the Bahá'í settlers of Nuqeib were ordered by the local Ha-Hagana commander to evacuate their settlements. Since these Bahá'ís were not allowed to return after the war ended, they were compensated by land near Acre. The Bahá'í lands of Es-Samrā, that were part of the demilitarized zones, were bought by the Israeli government and their owners left the state. The inhabitants of El-Adasiyeh, the last Bahá'í settlement in the area, left the village in the 1960s and spread all over Jordan and thus the Bahá'í settlements in the Jordan Valley became an unknown part of the local and the national history of Israel.

In my paper I propose to discuss the findings of my MA research on the Bahá'í settlements in the Jordan Valley, which also forms part of my PhD research on the Bahá'ís in Palestine.





## **‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Egypt: Early September 1910 – 5 December 1913**

*Julio Savi*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá discontinuously sojourned in Egypt from early September 1910 to 5 December 1913. This paper is a concise study of the historical and political background of this sojourn and of its chronicle. Egyptian cities and towns visited by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá are briefly described as they were in those days. Members of the Holy Family who visited Him in Egypt are mentioned. The public opinion reaction and the press coverage are succinctly outlined. Several important personages and resident and visiting Bahá’ís who met Him are listed. A short comment on possible meanings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence in Egypt concludes the paper.



## **The Inebriation of His Enrapturing Call: A provisional translation (and commentary) of “Mastand Bulbulán”**

*Julio Savi*

During the two years when Bahá'u'lláh lived in isolation in Kurdistan, He composed a number of poems, in which He gave vent to the mighty emotions aroused in His great heart by the mystical experiences He had while confined in the Síyáh-Chál. One of those poems, Mastand Bulbulán zin Naghmiy-i yá Húy-i-ú, Nightingales are inebriated by the melody of His enrapturing Call, is the subject of this paper, which is an attempt to explain the metaphors and images that embellish this jewel, in the light of both later Writings by Bahá'u'lláh and the Persian literary tradition, in whose style the poem has been written.



## **An Officer and an Orientalist: Alexander Grigorevich Tumanskii and His Contribution to Russian Historiography on, and Policy towards, the Bábí-Bahá'í Religion**

*Soli Shahvar*

Official Russian attitude towards the Bábí-Bahá'í religion seems to have changed dramatically between the mid to the end of the nineteenth century. At first, in the formative years of the Bábí movement in Iran in the 1840s, Tsarist Russia saw in it what British India saw later in Bolshevism, namely something that could not only destabilize Iran, but could even spill-over into their own territory. Thus, Russian diplomats in Iran requested from

the Iranian authorities to keep the Báb away from the Russian borders. This attitude changed almost dramatically some four decades later, when from the mid-1880s and onwards Iranian Bahá'ís were not only permitted to immigrate into Russian territory, but even to create their own communities under the protection of the Russian government.

One of the main reasons for this *volte-face* with regards to Russian policy towards the Bábí-Bahá'í religion seems to have been the relatively poor knowledge of that religion in its formative, or Bábí years; while gradually, especially following the declaration of Bahá'u'lláh and with the vast majority of Bábís adopting the Bahá'í faith, fears of the negative implications of the Bábí-Bahá'í religion made way for a more positive attitude of it. This trend stood in direct relation to the growing flow of information on the Bábí-Bahá'í religion, which came not only from Russian academic circles, but growingly from a new breed of Russian officers and officials, who also had academic training in "oriental studies". One of these "orientalist" officers and officials, who were tasked to collect material on the Bábí-Bahá'í religion and communities, was Alexander Tumanskii, who stands out in both the volume and depth of his research and findings about the Bábí-Bahá'í religion. His official reports were quite important for the direction of Russian policy towards the Bábí-Bahá'í religion, and his academic publications (and primarily the translation of *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and several tablets into Russian) are still used by scholars today. It is the purpose of this paper to try and evaluate the contribution of Tumanskii on Russian

historiography, and on policy towards the Bábí-Bahá'í religion.



## **`Abdu'l-Bahá in Naples**

*Iscander Micael Tinto*

The journey that leads Abdu'l-Bahá from Alexandria to New York City is marked by the episode happened in Naples that scored in a negative way the beginning of the journey of the Master with his grandson, Shoghi Effendi.

Throughout this article I will present the historical context and the relationship between Italy and Turkey at the time, references to the departure, journey and stay in Naples, the Naples episode inserted in the context of the journey of the Master, identifying those who were His companions. Also a brief reference will be made to the Master and His relationship with the Custodian



## **The Role of Religion in the Progress of Civilization**

*Ramin Vasli*

Today, the majority of intellectuals and scholars believe that religion no longer has any validity. It is generally regarded as superstition or a phenomenon of the past which has no longer efficiency for the modern world. However, fair-minded intellectuals and scholars, although do not believe in the validity of religion, they cannot fully deny or ignore the functions of the religion in the history of civilization as a social institution, i.e., they cannot, in fairness, deny the social impact and power of religion in the history of civilization.

Jacob Bourkhart says: “three factors have essential and vital role in advancing and establishing a civilization: Religion, government and culture”. Hegel, on the other hand, claims, “The attitude of each nation towards God and religion forms and institutes other social and political institutions”. According to Hegel, the role of religion, in this process, is more important than other social factors, because religion plays an essential role in the formation of other factors.

According to the Bahá'í Faith, “The greatest bestowal of God in the world of humanity is religion; for assuredly the divine teachings of religion are above all other sources of instruction and development for man. Religion confers upon man eternal life and guides his footsteps in the world of morality. It opens the doors of unending happiness and bestows everlasting honor upon the human kingdom. It has

been the basis of all civilization and progress in the history of mankind.”<sup>2</sup>

My intention in this article is to prove the fact that how true religion has promoted the civilization and has been the basis of all civilizations and progress in the history of mankind.

This article is divided into two sections. The first section deals with the difference between true religion and reason-based faith and blind and imitation-based faith. According to Bahá'í Faith, only true religion or reasoned faith has been and will be the cause of the progress of civilization.

In the second section, I shall consider the influence of true religion on the philosophical thinking in the ancient time, in particular in Greece, and in the modern time by focusing on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings.

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<sup>2</sup> - Baha'i World Faith--Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Bahá ('Abdu'l-Bahá's Section Only), Pages 270-280 g

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