

`Irfán Colloquium

One Hundred-and-Eighteenth
Session

JUBILEE CELEBRATION Establishment of the Universal House of Justice



PROGRAM AND ABSTRACTS

Center for Bahá'í Studies
Acuto, Italy
June 30 – July 3, 2013



`Irfán Colloquium

The **Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund** was established in 1992 to honor Haj Mehdi Arjmand (1861-1941) and is dedicated to promoting the scholarly study 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.

The `Irfan Colloquium is sponsored by Haj Mehdi Memorial Fund and supported by Nadia Saadat Memorial Scholarships and Mirafzali Family's Fellowship grants. 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 `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.

As of June 2013 one hundred and Sixteen sessions of colloquia have been held. Papers in English presented or received at the `Irfán Colloquia are annually published in a series of volumes of the *Lights of `Irfán*.



`Irfán Colloquium
One-Hundred-and-Eighteenth Session
June 30 – July 3, 2013

Sunday June 30, 2013

Participants' Arrival

12:00 p.m.

Lunch

Registration

6:15 p.m. – Dinner and Free Time

7:30 p.m.

Opening Session

Words of Welcome and Announcements

Getting to Know Each Other

Roya Ayman

Getting to Know Each Other

***Jubilee Celebration of the Establishment of Universal
House of Justice***

Irfan Colloquium Aims, Mission, and Program

Iraj Ayman

8:30 p.m.

The Last Refuge

**Fifty years of the Ministry of
the Universal House of Justice**

Shahbaz Fatheazam

10:00

Free Time

Monday, July 1, 2013

7:30 -8:00 a.m.

Devotional (*Optional*)

8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:15 a.m.

Opening Prayers

Announcements

9:30 a.m.

**Consultation in the Bahá'í Faith –
A Review of its Developmental Process**

Moojan Momen

10:15 a.m.

Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

The Universal House of Justice: 1963-2013

Ali Nakhjavani

11:45 a.m.

Discussion

11:00 - 11:30 AM

Break

12:00

Lunch and Free Time

3:00 p.m.

Scientific Insight into 'here am I' ('Labbaik')

Mehrdad Ehsani

3:45 p.m.

Discussion

4:00 p.m.

Break

4:30 p.m.

Conflict Transformation

Mahyad Zaeerpour Rahnamaie

5:15 p.m.
Discussion
5:30
Break
6:00

**How Economics and Business
is Addressed in the Bahá'í Faith**

Lagha Momtazian

6:45 p.m.
Discussion
Dinner and Free Time
8:30 p.m.\

**Leadership and Succession in Taoist-Buddhist
Temples**

CHEW Ghim Lian Phyllis

9:15
Discussion
9:30 p.m.
Open Dialogue
10:00 p.m.
Free Time

Tuesday, July 2, 2013

7:30 -8:00 a.m.
Devotional (*Optional*)
8:00 a.m.
Breakfast
9:15 a.m.
Opening Prayers
Announcements
9:30 a.m.

Scientific Insight into the Reality of Man

Mehrdad Ehsani

10:15 a.m.
Discussion

10:30
Break
11:00

Some Reflections and Observations

Ali Nakhjavani

11:45
Discussion
12:00
Lunch and Free Time
3:00 p.m.

**The Individual and the Collective - A Conceptual
Reading of the Will and Testament**

Sasha Dehghani

3:45 p.m.
Discussion
4:00 p.m.
Break
4:30 p.m.

**`Abdu'l-Bahá's Articulation of the Bahá'í Concept
of Peace on His Western Travels**

Wendi Momen

5:15 p.m.
Break
5:45 p.m.

**`Abdu'l-Bahá's Contacts with the Theosophist and
Spiritualist Movements, especially in Europe.**

Amin Egea

6:30 p.m.
Discussion
6:45 p.m.
Dinner and Free Time
8:30 p.m.

**English Translation and a Commentary of one of
Bahá'u'lláh's Persian poems**

Julio Savi

9:15 p.m.

Discussion

9:30

Open Dialogue

10:00 p.m.

Free Time

Wednesday, July 3, 2013

7:30 -8:00 a.m.

Devotional (*Optional*)

8:00 a.m.

Breakfast

9:15 a.m.

Opening Prayers

Announcements

9:30 a.m.

`Abdu'l-Bahá's Contacts with the Peace

Organizations in America

Amin Egea

10:15 a.m.

Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

Question and Answers

Ali Nakhjavani

11:45 a.m.

Discussion

12:00

Lunch and Free Time

3:00 p.m.

**“At Dawn the Friend Came to My Bed,” an early
fruit of the Supreme Pen**

Julio Savi

3:45 p.m.

Discussion

4:00 p.m.

Break

4:30 p.m.

**Child Education and Development:
Comparing Guidance Given by `Abdu'l-Bahá
During His North American Visit with
Contemporary Theories of the Time**

Saba Ayman-Nolley

5:15 p.m.

Discussion

5:30 p.m.

**Preliminary Contemplation on What May Be
Considered as a Bahá'í Theology**

Shahla Mehrgani

6:00 p.m.

Discussion

6:15

Dinner and Free Time

8:30 p.m.

**Integration of Centralization and Decentralization
in the Bahá'í Administrative Order**

Iraj Ayman

9:15

Discussion

9:30

Open Dialogue

10:00 p.m.

Free Time

END OF THE PROGRAM

Program Coordinator:

Roya Ayman

Jubilee Celebration
The Universal House of Justice
1963 – 2013

Ali Nakhjavani

The advent of the 50th Anniversary of the election of the Universal House of Justice is an appropriate time to recall the bewilderment of the Bahá'í world at the sudden passing of the beloved Guardian in November 1957, the pivotal role played by the Hands of the Cause of God, as Chief Stewards and Custodians of the Faith during the interregnum, the emergence of the Universal House of Justice, on the Hundredth Anniversary of the Declaration of Bahá'u'lláh in Baghdad, and the holding of the Most Great Jubilee in London to mark the conclusion of Shoghi Effendi's monumental Ten Year Crusade.

The friends were on the one hand grieved because of the physical absence of the beloved Guardian, but, on the other, they were rejoicing at the victories won during the Crusade, and at the inception of an Institution ordained in the Most Holy Book and destined to become the "last refuge of a tottering civilization."

There was a need, however, for the friends to be assured that the year 1963 had been anticipated in our texts. They also

wondered: Will there be new Teaching Plans? Will there be future Guardians? Opposition to the Faith was clearly anticipated in the Writings. If the Administrative Order were to be attacked on the grounds that no living Guardian existed, as foreshadowed in the first section of `Abdu'l-Bahá's Will and Testament, how were the friends to respond? Was there any text to indicate that the Guardianship will not be an on-going Institution throughout the Bahá'í Dispensation? Had Shoghi Effendi given any hints in his writings on the future leadership of the Faith after his passing?

This presentation will deal with such issues. Its main purpose is to help the friends in defending the Administrative Order in its present form. An important part of this presentation will deal with historical facts after the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, the defection of Mirzá Muhammad-`Alí, the similarity of method and purpose in the application of the Law of Succession by Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá, the resolution of apparent problems arising from statements made by the Guardian in his "The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh," and the guarantees stipulated in the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice that the Covenant of God's Holy Cause will continue to be impregnable, unassailable

and incorruptible till the end of the
Dispensation, when God's new Manifestation
will appear, to Whom, in the words of the
Constitution "will belong all authority and
power."

ABSTRACTS

*In Alphabetical Order of
Presenters' Surnames*

Integration of Centralization and Decentralization in the Bahá'í Administrative Order

Iraj Ayman

Universal House of Justice is a unique institution in the field and the discipline of Public Administration. It is the only international governing council whose members, every five years, are internationally elected by all the members of its community, namely, Bahá'ís around the world, in a three stage election free from any kind of electioneering. It is the center of an order that “constitutes the very pattern of that divine civilization which the almighty Law of Bahá'u'lláh is designed to establish upon earth.”¹ Among its many features, it functions as the nerve center of an unprecedented administrative structure that combines the advantages of both centralized and decentralized systems of administration and management.

The Bahá'í Administrative Order is an organic entity gradually growing and developing under the care and guidance of the Universal House of Justice and presents a solution to many of

the challenges and problems in the field of Public Administration. This study concentrates on one of those issues and problems, i.e. centralized versus decentralized systems of administration from the perspective of the Bahá'í pattern of administration and also the role and function of the Universal House of Justice and other Bahá'í senior administrative institutions concerning centralization and decentralization.

Child Education and Development: Comparing guidance given by `Abdu'l-Bahá during his North American visit with some academic theories of the time

Saba Ayman-Nolley

This presentation will systematically examine the guidance and advice that `Abdu'l-Bahá gave to various audiences throughout his talks during His North America travels in 1912. The structure and content of these passages will be analyzed and consolidated to clarify the cohesive approach that `Abdu'l-Bahá offered parents and those working with children. The roles and tasks of the various components of human society in this approach will be examined as well as variations He may have

¹ *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 152

suggested across child developmental lines such as varying approaches to infants, children, or adolescents. In addition there will be a preliminary comparison of `Abdu'l-Bahá's ideas on education and child development with early 20th century theories of human development and educational psychology.

Leadership and Succession in Taoist-Buddhist Temples

Phyllis Ghim-Lian Chew

While there is a large body of research on religion, there is very little on the internal structure of religious organizations. More specifically, on the topic of leadership and succession, a keyword search on Amazon produced more than 7000 titles, which indicate these are topics of wide appeal. Yet there is hardly anything on leadership and succession in Chinese religious organizations.

This paper examines leadership hierarchical structures and processes in traditional Chinese temples. My research questions fall into three major clusters:

STRUCTURE -- Who chooses the leader or the assembly? What is the length of the appointment (for life or for a fixed term length)? How powerful are the leadership

positions? How does the leadership of Chinese temples and mosques compare with each other?

PROCESS & IDEOLOGY -- What are the ideologies and presuppositions behind the internal structure of these religious organizations? How do Chinese temples and mosques influence their membership or help their group to live out its purpose and character?

CHALLENGE & CHANGE -- How do Chinese religious organizations keep relevant in the winds of globalization and change? Are leadership and succession policies in both the Chinese temple and the Chinese mosque able to meet the challenge of operating in highly demanding political, social, and economic climate?

`Abdu'l-Bahá's contacts with the Theosophical and Spiritualist movements

Amin Egea

In the first decades of the twentieth century two alternative religious movements, the Theosophical Society and spiritualism were at their peak. Some of the early Bahá'ís in the West either had belonged to one of these

movements or still retained membership in them at the time of the travels of the Master. Thus, both movements had strong ties with the Bahá'í community.

During His travels in Europe and America, `Abdu'l-Bahá met with many representatives and leaders of the two movements. He was also invited to speak at public and private meetings specially arranged for Him and also wrote to some of the journals of these organizations as well as to their leaders.

This presentation will survey these contacts and will attempt to analyze some of the comments made by `Abdu'l-Bahá on some key issues for theosophists, such as reincarnation and the coming of a world savior, and for spiritualists, such as the powers of the soul and the communication with the departed ones.

`Abdu'l-Bahá and the Peace Movement in America

Amin Egea

`Abdu'l-Bahá defined as one of the purposes of His travels in the West the establishment of "the spiritual foundations of international peace." During this period He personally met with various leaders of the peace movement such as Edward Carnegie, David Starr Jordan,

William H. Short, Albert K. Smiley or the Nobel prized Baroness von Suttner. He was also invited to participate in various peace conferences such as the Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration and some organizations arranged special public meetings for Him.

This presentation will attempt to survey these contacts between `Abdu'l-Bahá and the peace organizations in the West. It will also offer a preliminary comparison of `Abdu'l-Bahá's discourse on war, peace and international arbitration with the prevalent discourses at the time on these areas, and will finally offer a tentative analysis of how His comments on these topics were received by the western public.

Scientific Insights into "Here Am I" (Consciousness and Space-Time)

Mehrdad Ehsani

In the Long Obligatory Prayer of Bahá'u'lláh there is a passage:

"... I entreat Thee by Thy footsteps in this wilderness and by the words 'Here am I, Here am I' which Thy chosen ones have uttered in this immensity ...".

We will use “Here Am I” as the gateway to a scientific investigation of the nature of consciousness and its significance in our spiritual development and in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh.

Through a simple review of the special theory of relativity of Einstein and Lorentz transform equations of we will establish the relationship between consciousness and space-time.

Further, we will show that there exists for every entity a privileged present moment of time and that the present moment has an almost magical nature, as it is only in the present moment that reality lives and things happen. All entities must exist only in the same present moment to be able to interact.

This is the only place in time in which anything actually exists and has reality.

It will become apparent that there is clearly something incredibly mysterious that only this one instant actually exists. There is a present moment independent of clock time through which clock time flows, that this flow carries a sequence of seemingly connected 'experiences' that become real only as they pass through the present moment. This will lead us to the spiritual concept of “ancient-eternal”, “domain of eternity”, and seeing “the end and the beginning as one” according to Baha’u’llah’s *Seven Valleys*.

We will use this physical insight as a stepping stone into spiritual approach to “consciousness”, “enlightenment”, and the state of “Absolute Nothingness”, as described by Bahá’u’lláh in the *Seven Valleys*.

The talk will end with describing some of the attributes and consequences of human enlightenment, how this is the purpose of our being, and the greatest obstacle to its realization: the human ego. The topics of ego and liberation from “self and passion” will then be the subject of follow up talks in this conference or future conferences.

Scientific Insights into the “Reality of Man”

Mehrdad Ehsani

The Universe is very simple: mostly made of hydrogen, helium and energy. However, the earth contains amazing complexity that is nearly unique in the universe. Unique circumstances have made possible organic chemistry and life on earth, leading to the most complex structure in the universe: human brain. For example, we can show that the energy consumption of human brain per kilogram is 100,000 times the energy per kilogram that our sun can produce. The

purpose of all this miraculous combination of events is human consciousness and spiritual awareness. We will explore this physical-spiritual phenomenon in this talk.

This presentation is intended to show the nobility of man and his/her divine purpose. Quotes from Bahá'u'lláh will be referenced to show that this is the central teaching in his writings. Further, it will be shown that keen observation of the world around us, all the way to the edge of the universe, will enlighten the sensitive observer to the same realization.

Thus, we will see that one can progress from “faith” to “certitude”, first through the intellect, then through the heart, and finally, through unconditioned consciousness (I bear witness O my God ...) . This is what Bahá'u'lláh calls the state of “Absolute Nothingness”, where “even love is a barrier between the lover and the Beloved”.

I will offer scientific and spiritual pointers to how evident and yet subtle the notion Absolute Nothingness, the unity of one with all, is.

Although the talk is intended to be simple, it is hoped that it will open a window to our true nature, or our essence.

We will start with the notion of simplicity and complexity: how as we travel from the outer universe toward the planet earth and toward the human brain we go from simplicity to

complexity. This will show that the human brain is at the apex of the very large pyramid of the manifest universe. The brain realizes human mind and spiritual awareness. All of this is to show how noble and sacred the world around us, and the station of man and in it, is. The talk will briefly use the current scientific knowledge to illuminate the nature of the “physical reality”. This is to show how mysterious this world really is. In fact, there is no gap between reality and nothingness (this is alluded to in the *Book of Certitude*). This will show us that what we see as the manifest reality is in fact dependent on our capacity to perceive. The finer and more sensitive our perception, the more we realize the nothingness that manifests itself as the real world and we are part of this dance of nothingness as form.

The above talk will be given as the personal journey of this speaker who started as a Bahá'í and after spending a lifetime in search of deeper truths in science and spirituality, arrived at the ancient and simple insight that is “the most manifest of the manifest and the most hidden of the hidden”. This insight melted his heart in the love of Bahá'u'lláh and his teachings.

The Last Refuge

Fifty years of the Ministry of the Universal House of Justice

Shahbaz Fatheazam

This paper focuses on the emergence of the Universal House of Justice and studies the experience of the Bahá'í world community with its supreme body since its inception. As a corollary, the organizational structure of Bahá'í polity and its special vision of politics and government is also examined highlighting the connection between the institutional and the cultural and how the influence and durability of institutions is a function of the extent to which they are inculcated in political actors at the individual or organizational level. To this end, cognitive scripts, moral templates and personal perceptions are used liberally. The task is made difficult by the limitations imposed by: (a) our intellect which is not fixed but always relative to the culture, ideas, arts and sciences, of the times. It needs aging before it is potable and safe; (b) the absence of precedence which raises the problem of how to move the information we have gathered into any form of conceptual framework – a set of concepts that are easy to understand and that can travel' – i.e. are truly comparative across

systems – and can thus be related to the political process in various societies and to which all people may easily connect; and (c) the very contemporary nature of a complex subject so closely rooted to the present with no proper distance that our proximity to the passage of time brings us too close to and perhaps even too much part of the events to make proper historical judgements compounded by how little we know about what is yet to happen in an institution whose provisions and implications are yet to be unveiled. We also underline the importance of how the evolution of any religious community rests on its ability to analyze its institutional set-up and how the constitution of the international governing body of the Bahá'í Faith is necessary to its viability quite apart from the need to maintain a healthy interaction between masses and leaders whose outcome must match, as closely as possible, intended results, assured only by man's willingness or ability to live within the structure of authority.

Preliminary Contemplation on What May Be Considered as a Bahá'í Theology

Shahla Mehrgani

Basic beliefs are probably the main source for particular social actions and interactions. Therefore, it is necessary to understand these basic beliefs and insights to be able to interpret and understand those actions and interactions properly.

Theological studies used to be among the first areas of religious education in previous religions. Bahá'í Faith has not yet produced a systematic body of knowledge known as Bahá'í theology. It seems that almost the time has come to ask ourselves, why?

This paper is not supposed to sketch out the substance of Bahá'í theology, which is a huge task in its own right. It intends to explore the ways that Bahá'í scholars have proposed and indicated Bahá'í theology. This research may be regarded as a primary attempt in sociology of knowledge and religion rather than theology per se. It discusses the following questions:

- 1- Will Bahá'í theology be proposed and designed in classic frameworks such as the theology of the previous religions? In other word: is Bahá'í classic theology possible?
- 2- What are the key features of the Bahá'í theology?
- 3- How can Bahá'í theology become possible?

Bahá'í theology may be identified, explored and proposed not just from Bahá'í writings and by intellectual struggles, but through social actions and interactions of everyday life among all Bahá'í believers.

Some of the features of the Bahá'í theology

- 1- Pluralism vs. Exclusivism
- 2- Relativism vs. Absolutism
- 3- Apophatic vs. Kataphatic
- 4- Rational and disenchanted vs. Enchanted and mythological
- 5- Developing vs. Accomplished
- 6- Pragmatic vs. Dogmatic
- 7- Subjective vs. Objective
- 8- Existentialism vs. Determinism

What we can derive from the expositions of Bahá'í scholars could be summarized as follows:

- Bahá'í writings are supposed to give the criteria for practice and action
- The word of God is the criteria for knowledge and cognition
- The believer is in interaction with “the others” and him/her self, and can evaluate his/her experience and knowledge through rationality and mind.
- Bahá'í theology is beyond just reading and understanding the Bahá'í writings, it requires experiencing these writings through social actions and interactions.

As far as it is a product of experience, it can be varied from time to time and location to location. And while the world is changing, its requirements are changing as well. Hence, we have to be ready to forget and give up our old beliefs and establish new ones in accordance with the changing world. Therefore, Bahá'í theology is always under construction and deconstruction.

- Bahá'í theology is not for reading and discussion among the intellectuals and elites; on the contrary, it is for practice and to live our lives in accordance with. Our realization of it is also affected by our social interaction requirements.
- Everyday life is as a laboratory to test and evaluate our understandings and interpretations of Bahá'í theology as well as construction, reviewing and deconstruction of it.
- Bahá'í theology, thus does not claim dogmatism and absolutism, it is as much relative and plural as other aspects of the faith and is based on practice rather than theory.
- As the nature is a manifestation of His creative Name, every single effort in science is regarded as an effort in

cognition and recognition of Bahá'í theology.

- Bahá'í theology is creative, not only because it is disenchanted and interpreted and explained by the official interpreters of the faith, but also because it is under construction by actions and interactions of a massive range of cultural backgrounds of believers all around the world.
- Nevertheless, Bahá'í theology is not banal and vulgar, because it is necessary for Bahá'ís to be knowledgeable in history, Holy Bible, Holy Quran, at least basic philosophy, and literature to be able to understand Bahá'í writings at the first stage and then practice them in their daily life.
- This theology can be identified as an **empirical and experimental theology**.

Consultation in the Bahá'í Faith – A Review of its Developmental Process

Moojan Momen

This paper looks at the history of consultation in the Bahá'í Faith. It starts from the mention of this process in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* and the

manner in which this was initially put into practice in Iran in the late 1870s. It then looks at the ways in which each of the successive leaders of the Bahá'í Faith - Bahá'u'lláh, `Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi - emphasized the importance of consultation and promoted its use in the community. Finally, the paper looks at the role of consultation in the movement from the present established and customary practices in the world towards the new World Order that Bahá'u'lláh envisaged.

`Abdu'l-Bahá's Articulation of the Bahá'í Concept of Peace During His Western Travels

Wendi Momen

A primary teaching of the Bahá'í Faith is that world peace is not only possible but inevitable. The Bahá'í writings describe two stages in the achievement of world peace: the Lesser Peace, which is a political peace agreed by national governments, and the Most Great Peace, which is associated with the evolution of a world civilization that is imbued with spiritual characteristics. As the clouds of the First World War were gathering across Europe, `Abdu'l-Bahá accepted an invitation to the speak at the

Lake Mohonk Conference on International Arbitration in May 1912. He continued to develop the theme of world peace as He travelled in the West in 1911 and again in 1912-13. He spoke extensively about this principle in numerous meetings, challenging His followers and His listeners to establish peace before humankind was overwhelmed by war.

This paper looks at `Abdu'l-Bahá's elucidation of the principle of peace in His talks in the West, primarily in the United States.

How Economics and Business is Addressed in the Bahá'í Faith!

Lagha Momtazian

Bahá'í principles are multi-dimensional in their concepts application. The Bahá'í principle of "solution of the economic problems" (`Abdu'l-Bahá, 1979, p. 32) does not refer to a Bahá'í economic system but can refer to reforms and development in the economic and business structures and goals and performance to be more ethical and responsible towards the society. Shoghi effendi describes this matter as:

"Cause is not an economic system, nor can its Founders be considered as having been technical economists. The contribution of the Faith to this subject is essentially indirect, as it consists of the application of spiritual principles to our present day economic system. Bahá'u'lláh has given us a few basic principles which should guide future Bahá'í economists in establishing such institutions as will adjust the economic relations of the world."
(Shoghi Effendi, 1974, pp. 27-28)

There are specific values discussed in Bahá'í writings which are discussed differently in other religions or not mentioned before. This paper tries to investigate the principles in common with regards to economics and business in the Bahá'í Faith, Islam, Christianity and Judaism; and to discuss in more details how Bahá'í principles can have a distinctive impact on betterment of the business decisions and practices through establishing a value based system with specific characteristics.

Among the principles distinctively discussed in the Bahá'í Faith is the spirit of service! Work has been regarded as "calling" (Miller and Timothy, 2010) in different religions and as a

way of worship. It is similar in Bahá'í principles but under a significant condition. 'Abdu'l-Bahá says work is the highest form of service if "done in the spirit of service" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1918). This seems a simple distinction but might make huge differences in application of this principle and its results! (It becomes more clear when compared to Weber's ideology of protestant ethics and capitalism.) The question for discussion is how the spirit of service can be applied in business? Another principle is the noble human being with spiritual qualities which need to "reveal its treasures" through education! (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 259) The economic world has known human as a rational being driven by self-interest (Smith, 2005). This is the foundation on which the economic system has been built over the years. If man is regarded with the dual nature and the spiritual nature attended and educated at the first place, his/her decisions and actions might be different which can result in different economic structures than currently exist. The implications of viewing man with spiritual qualities will be discussed shortly. Yet another principle is consultation. The shining spark of truth 'Abdu'l-Bahá says "comes forth after the clash of differing opinions" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982, p.87). The

members of a village, profession and industry are advised to refer to consultation to find the right solution but with its essential characteristics. Consultation is widely advised with different disciplines and contemporary schools of thought advocate the significance of consultation. The effective consultation in Bahá'í writings necessitates attainment of some pre-requisites. `Abdu'l-Bahá says : *“The prime requisites for them that take counsel together are **purity of motive, radiance of spirit, detachment from all else save God, attraction to His Divine Fragrances, humility and lowliness amongst His loved ones, patience and long-suffering in difficulties and servitude to His exalted Threshold.** Should they be graciously aided to acquire these attributes, victory from the unseen Kingdom of Bahá shall be vouchsafed to them.* (`Abdu'l-Bahá, 1982, p.87)

Unlike the general trend to consultation in business matters, this principle can suggest a distinctive structure to consultation. Based on the above mentioned prime requisites, the members to consultation need to free themselves from self-interest and enter the conversation with the motive to find the truth and the best solution to the matter under consultation rather than trying to gain their benefit or follow their cause. This is hard to

practice knowing that business has operated in a different manner for a long time and has expanded its roots deep in monetary and immediate gain!

This is an application to recognition of the spiritual qualities of human being at the same time with his/her material qualities.

Another application of this approach is the introduction of the concept of sacrifice to the business terminology! `Abdu'l-Bahá says:

*“And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is **voluntary sharing** of one's property with others among mankind. **This voluntary sharing is greater than equality,** and consists in this, that **man should not prefer himself to others, but rather should sacrifice his life and property for others.** But this should not be introduced by coercion so that it becomes a law and man is compelled to follow it. Nay, rather, man should voluntarily and of his own choice sacrifice his property and life for others, and spend willingly for the poor, just as is done in Iran among the Bahá'ís.* (`Abdu'l-Bahá, 1976, p. 288)

In the above mentioned passage, the ready willingness to share is discussed which is

different from the ‘sharing’ in its common practice. The ‘sharing’ currently practiced in business is generally with the purpose to increase the employee productivity and sense of belonging, or towards an improved image of the company! In a rather deeper level, it is spoken about sacrifice in the above mentioned paragraph! It implies that man would willingly and voluntarily sacrifice his wealth for the poor! Neither of the above mentioned qualities can be perceived nor practiced without appreciation and education of the spiritual nature and qualities of human soul!

Another yet essential principle is love of God! Ives (Ives quotes from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 1983, p. 156) as “All economic problems may be solved by the application of the science of the Love of God.” How application of the science of love of God can solve economic problems is a serious question, for both the believers in God and non-believers!

In business it can be described with some measurable terms such as responsibility and accountability and consciousness (Robinson, 2007).

How these principles might be applied in business will be discussed in more details in order to be a cause of an inspiration to the participants to connect the Bahá’í values to their businesses and to raise the question of

how to apply them in their own ways and to their own decisions and financial performances.

The session can incorporate periods of short consultation by participants in order to best achieve its objectives and provide an environment for clash of differing opinions in finding the unique methods each participant might prefer to employ!

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Conflict Transformation:

A Case Study of the Universal House of
Justice Messages to the Bahá'ís in Iran

Mahyad Zaerpour Rahnamaie

In the *Old Testament*, the history of conflict is as old as human history, starting from the Genesis. This talk comprises of two parts: it will first cover the gradual developments of how humans have been dealing with conflicts both on interpersonal and community levels. There are at least five distinct but overlapping stages of facing conflicts. The two more traditional forms of “conflict eradication” and “conflict denial” use power and aggression as the basic modes of operation. The two more recent stages of “conflict management” and “conflict resolution” use modern tools of consultation rather than confrontation. After a brief review of these familiar stages, the newest stage of “Conflict Transformation” will be more fully discussed. This recent concept welcomes social conflicts as effective catalysts to foster constructive changes that reduce violence, increase justice in direct interactions and social structures, and respond to real life problems in human relationship. Clearly, most of these recent ideas have obvious counterparts

and examples both in the Bahá'í Sacred Writings and its history.

In the second part of the talk, an attempt will be made to detect components of “conflict transformation” in the contents and tone of the letters written by the UHJ to the Bahá'ís in Iran. In the past thirty some years, Bahá'ís of Iran have been subjected to horrendous human rights violation and bravely endured their ghastly conditions. The dynamics of growth and maturation within the community has been, to a great part, due to the continual guidance received from UHJ. It seems that the tone and the content of these letters have themselves gone through a gradual change and more in line with the underlying concepts of “conflict transformation.” It seems that the letters from the House are more and more encouraging the Persian Bahá'ís to see the present conflicts and the adversarial role of the government as a propelling force for growth, creating positives from the difficult or negatives.

**“At Dawn the Friend came to my bed”
An early fruit of the Supreme Pen**

Julio Savi

This paper attempts to analyse a poem revealed by the Blessed Beauty, both in its

form and in its contents. This poem seems a *qaṣīdih*. The features of *qaṣīdih* are briefly explained. Some of the literary devices used in the poem are described. Of the four major themes of Persian lyrical poetry as described by Bausani, that is ‘wine, love, springtime and mystics,’ only wine is absent.

Associated with springtime motifs are a number of nature tropes. Also theological and scriptural motifs are used in this poem.

Moreover, this ode offers didactic themes, the early seeds of the new mystical way that Bahá’u’lláh was opening to His lovers. This poem also has many biographical references.

Qaṣīdihs can be usually divided into three parts. In this ode, the first part tells the state of the lover. In the second part, usually a eulogy of the addressee of the poem, only two verses, 15 and 16, depict the Beloved.

The other verses continue portraying the Poet, in His relation with the Beloved, and especially in His faithfulness to His love for the Beloved. In the third part, usually a petition to the addressee of the poem, the Most Great Spirit is implored, His advent is invoked, for the good of all “mortals,” “pilgrims and companions” on the spiritual path.

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