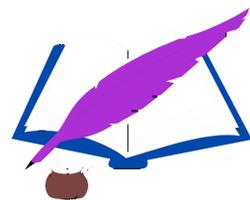


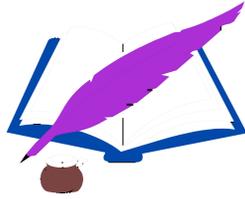
ʿIrfán Colloquium  
Eighty-Third Session

CENTENARY  
COMMEMORATION  
OF THE PUBLICATION OF  
*“SOME ANSWERED  
QUESTIONS”*



**Centre for Bahá'í Studies**  
Acuto, Italy

July 3 – 6, 2008



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 "Irfán 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 and religious trends in the world. *Irfán* being a Persian word referring to mystical, theological and spiritual knowledge.

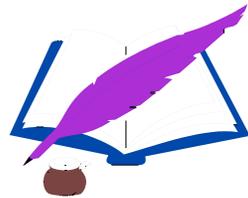
Irfán colloquia are being held annually in North America and Europe, in the English, German, and Persian languages. As of January 2008 seventy nine sessions of colloquia have been held. Selections of papers presented in English at the Irfán Colloquia are published in a series of volumes, *Lights of Irfán*.

# ʿIrfán Colloquium

Eighty-Third Session

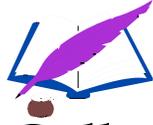
CENTENARY  
COMMEMORATION  
OF THE PUBLICATION OF  
“*SOME ANSWERED QUESTIONS*”

## Program and Abstracts



Sponsored by  
Haj Mehdi Arjmand Memorial Fund  
and with the assistance of  
Nadia Saadat Memorial Scholarships,  
Dr. Nasser & Mrs. Mehrshid Derakhshan Fellowships,  
Manouchehr Salmanpour Memorial Lecturship  
and cooperation of the  
Persian-American Affairs Office  
of the National Spiritual Assembly of  
the Bahá'ís of the United States

Centre for Bahá'í Studies  
Acuto, Italy  
July 3 – 6, 2008



# ʿIrfán Colloquium

## **Eighty-Third Session**

July 3 – 6, 2008

Thursday July 3, 2008

Afternoon

Arrivals and Registration

7:00 p.m.

Dinner and free time

8:30 p.m.

### **Opening Meeting**

Prayers and Meditation

Words of Welcome

*Minou Foadi*

Introduction of the participants

ʿIrfán Colloquium's Program and Activities

Centenary of **“Some Answered Questions”**

*Iraj Ayman*

Manouchehr Salmanpour Memorial Lecture

*Neda Salmanpour*

Bahieh Moayyad-Khademi Memorial Awards

*Mona Khademi*

9:30 p.m.

Open Dialogue

10:00 p.m.

Campus closes

Friday July 4, 2008

7:30 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m.

Opening Prayers and Announcements

9:15 a.m.

**First Manouchehr Salmanpour Memorial Lecture**

**Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit**

*(Some Answered Questions, Chapter 31)*

*Moojan Momen*

10:15 a.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

**Concept of Good and Evil in**

***“Some Answered Questions”***

*Farhang Yazdani*

12:00 noon

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

12:15 p.m.

Lunch and free time

3:00 p.m.

**Peace: Building a New Science**

**on Classical Foundation**

*Kymerly Syphrett*

4:00 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

4:15 p.m.

Break

4:45 p.m.

**Concepts Related to Health, Science and  
Technology in *“Some Answered Questions”***

*Minou Foadi*

5:45 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

6:00 p.m.

Break

6:30 p.m.

**Glimpses into the life of  
Laura Barney Dreyfus (Part I)**

*Mona Khademi*

7:30 p.m.

Dinner and free time

9:00 p.m.

**Glimpses into the life of  
Laura Barney Dreyfus (Part II)**

*Mona Khademi*

10:00 p.m.

Open Dialogue

11:00 p.m.

Campus closes

**Saturday July 5, 2008**

7:30 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m.

Opening Prayers and Announcements

9:15 a.m.

**Shi'ism from the Bahá'í Perspective**

*Armin Eschraghi*

10:15 a.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

**Another Modern-Day Messiah:  
Sulayman Al-Murshid and the political theology**

**of 'Alawi separatism in French Mandatory Syria**

*Jason Pack*

12:00 noon

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

12:30 p.m.

Lunch and free time

3:00 p.m.

**A Commentary on the Last Tablet Revealed by  
'Abdu'l-Bahá for the Bahá'ís in America**

*Katayoun Khazraee*

4:00 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

4:15 p.m.

Break

4:45 p.m.

**A Commentary on Fire Tablet**

*Nadia Khazraee*

5:45 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

6:00 p.m.

Break

6:30 p.m.

**Research Methodology: An open consultation**

*Helen Agahi*

7:30 p.m.

Dinner and free time

9:00 p.m.

**Methods and Qualities of the Seekers  
of Reality in "Some Answered Questions"  
in the light of Bahá'í Scriptures**

*Julio Savi*

10:00 p.m.

Open Dialogue

11:00 p.m.

Campus Closes

Sunday July 6, 2008

7:30 a.m.

Breakfast

9:00 a.m.

Opening Prayers and Announcements

9:15 a.m.

**The Long Obligatory Prayer:**

**The Mystical Dimension**

*Todd Lawson*

10:15 a.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

10:30 a.m.

Break

11:00 a.m.

**Spiritual Self**

*Shahla Mehrgany*

12:00 noon

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

12:15 p.m.

Lunch and free time

3:00 p.m.

**Text, Author, Reader and the**

**Relationship with the Sacred**

*Iskander Tinto*

4:00 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

4:15 p.m.

Break

4:45 p.m.

**The Concept of Holy and Sacred**

*anonymous*

5:45 p.m.

Questions and Answers and Open Discussion

6:00 p.m.

Break

6:30 p.m.

**Comprehension of Truth  
from the Perspective of Elucidations  
in “Some Answered Questions”**

*Arman Fahandej*

7:30 p.m.

Dinner and free time

9:00 p.m.

Open Dialogue

10:00 p.m.

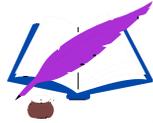
Campus closes

*END OF THE Eighty-Third SESSION OF  
‘IRFAN COLLOQUIUM*

**Program Coordinator: Minou  
Foadi**

# *ABSTRACTS*

*In Alphabetical Order of  
Presenters' Surnames*



## Identifying Roots and Mechanisms of Religious Prejudice: Bahá'u'lláh's Writings on the 12<sup>th</sup> Imám

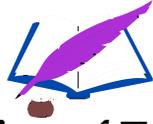
*Armin Eschraghi*

The alleged physical existence of a 12<sup>th</sup> Imam who remains in hiding until the end of time lies at the heart of Twelver-Shiite theology and remains a key issue for legitimizing claims to both political as well as spiritual authority. Bahá'u'lláh, in his writings, confirms the Imamate in principle, but takes a very explicit and sometimes strongly worded stance against belief in existence of a Twelfth Imam. He outrightly denounces the dogma as an invention designed by certain elements within the early Islamic community in order to safeguard their own aspirations to power and control over ordinary believers. He also identifies the idea of a physically existent 12<sup>th</sup> Imam as a superstitious belief that has led Muslims astray and made them deviate from the straight path. Eventually, he claims, this even led to the Báb's martyrdom a thousand years later. Although the Báb never seems to have negated the existence of the 12th Imam as explicitly and directly as Bahá'u'lláh, nevertheless from 1847/8 onwards, there was no more room for such a doctrine as it contradicted the Báb's own claim to be this very promised One.

Apart from theological considerations, a closer examination of the relevant passages in Bahá'u'lláh's writings reveals that while excoriating the Shiite Ulama – it is them he makes responsible, not the entire

Shiite community – he actually engages in some sort of typological exegesis. Most of the passages show that the subject was not of mere historical interest to him, rather he used it to address those Bábís of his own time that did not recognize his claim to be the Manifestation of God foretold by the Báb.

When treating the topic of belief in the Twelfth Imam, Bahá'u'lláh identifies several mechanisms that allow an erroneous belief to gradually become established and eventually be transformed into a dogma and a prerequisite of true faith, sometimes with very painful and dangerous repercussions. It is in this context that extensive treatment of the topic by him can also be understood as a warning to his own followers not to become heedless and consider themselves “chosen people who shall never go astray like the people of old.” Such a reading is supported by passages from 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi, both of whom stressed the centrality of independent search after truth and the negation of blind imitation (taqlid), in fact one of the most characteristic and revolutionary principles in Bahá'u'lláh's entire revelation.



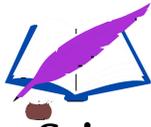
## **Comprehension of Truth From the Perspective of Elucidations in *“Some Answered Questions”***

*Arman Fahandej*

Comprehension of truth and its methods have attracted the thinkers since ancient time in the history of thought. Epistemology is one of the classical fields of knowledge. Man, based on the method which gains his knowledge, is depended to a specific cognitive school. In this paper we will explore the different schools of thought to investigate the reality of things based on one of the chapters of “Some Answered Questions” and two tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá which were written in Arabic. First we review the visions of knowledge during the history, and then we introduce the four main methods of comprehension of truth based on the vision of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: Senses are the most complete mean for scientists. Reason is the higher scale for the philosophers; they try to find the truth by power of reason. People who believe in religion and religious traditions consider Tradition the method of the understanding of the truth. In this tradition, divine texts are understood as the main source for the truth. Finally mystics put the priority for reaching the truth to the inspiration as the main route to find the ultimate perception. Acceptance of any of these methods as the perfect method for understanding of the realm of truth; lead to belonging to one school of thought. We introduce and review the history of these schools mostly based on the Islamic tradition which 'Abdu'l-

Bahá has spoken in this context. After that, we would evaluate all of these methods of knowledge: obviously senses are not the most complete because they have many faults even in exploring the materialistic world; 'Abdu'l-Bahá has introduced reason imperfect because based on logical studies two philosophers obtain two different results in the same subject, even sometimes one philosopher changes his idea based on the same circumstances that he has found another argument. The difference between arguments about truth shows it is not the ultimate method for finding the truth. Text of the Holy Scriptures could not be understood without the usage of reason. Because the reason itself is imperfect, it is not possible to find the divine comprehension just from holy texts; it is easily possible to misunderstand the meanings through interpreting. In case of inspiration, there is no means to distinguish between divine inspiration and satanic temptations. After indicating the imperfections of all these methods we introduce the apex of consciousness and the secret of divine guidance. 'Abdu'l-Bahá considers this method as the most complete method without any faults and mistakes. He refers to this method in "Some Answered Questions" as the "Bounty of Holy spirit". Bahá'u'lláh in his "Four valleys" asserts this station as the most perfected way of understanding the truth. We review the specifications of this station based on Bahá'u'lláh's writings and refer to some Islamic sources which provide some impacts of this strength. Finally we pose the main argument of the paper which is despite the "Fo'ad" is the only confident method to understand the reality of the things, based on some talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá each of the other methods and schools of thought can benefit in their own realm and we need to follow them and use them in our social life to make the better life and find the different aspects of truth. Finally we conclude that 'Abdu'l-Bahá

emphasizes on usage of all four schools of thought to find the truth in our life.



## **Health, Science and Technology Concepts in *“Some Answered Questions”***

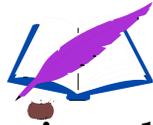
*Minou Foadi*

The paper will survey two talks in “Some Answered Questions” in which the topics of medicine and different treatment modalities are discussed.

'Abdu'l-Bahá stresses the inadequacy of present day knowledge of medical science and emphasizes the importance of the science of medicine progressing and evolving towards finding better treatments and, in particular, cures by natural means. He suggests that the future developments will include the time when fruit, vegetable and food replace chemical compounds in healing diseases. Furthermore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that the material and spiritual means of treatment are complementary and hence it is important to consult a scientifically trained physician as well as incorporating prayer and meditation in healing. Spiritual means of healing can benefit not only those suffering from psychological conditions but also have some effect on physical illness.

Some of the related topics discussed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá on prevention of illness, health and healing will be reviewed and the state of health and practice of medicine in Iran and the West during the ministry of 'Abdu'l-Bahá will be included in the presentation.

I suggest that advances in the science of medicine and therapeutics together with recent trends towards a more holistic approach in medical treatment have brought us closer to what 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisaged for the development of medicine in future.



## **Glimpses into the life of Laura Dreyfus-Barney<sup>1</sup>**

*Mona Khademi*

This paper is an attempt to present glimpses into the life of Laura Dreyfus-Barney (1879-1974), a keenly intelligent woman with an inquisitive mind. She made several trips to Akka and during her visits requested 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who was confined to prison at that time, clarifying a number of points for her. Her greatest achievement was the publication of those questions and answers entitled *Some Answered Questions* in 1908.

In 1900, Laura Barney, a prominent American, was introduced to the Bahá'í Faith in Paris and embraced the Faith. Her mother, Alice Pike Barney, a poet, artist, musician, was a prominent civil and social leader and an eccentric person. She also became Bahá'í and several times hosted 'Abdu'l-Bahá in her home in Washington, DC during 'Abdu'l-Bahá's visits

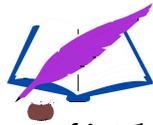
---

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of an on-going research project on the life of Laura Dreyfus-Barney and is based on several diaries, books, articles, obituaries, biographies and original material, both published and unpublished, in English, Persian and French.

in 1912. Laura Barney's father was a wealthy and successful industrialist.

An effort is made in this paper to shed more light on the life of this heroine of the Bahai Faith who was given the title of *Amatu'l-Bahá* by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Three distinct stages of the life of Laura Dreyfus-Barney will be examined in this paper:

- (1) her parents, her childhood, growing up in the United States and receiving education in France;
- (2) becoming a Bahá'í and her services to the Faith and her collaborative work with her husband Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney throughout the world; and
- (3) her humanitarian accomplishments after the passing of her husband.



## **Last Tablet of `Abdu'l-Bahá for the Bahá'ís in America: A Commentary**

*Katayoun Khazraee*

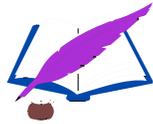
Firmness in the Covenant is the heart of the last Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá to America. Through this tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá protects His faithful followers from the defection caused by egocentric drives and selfish aspiration of certain violators and leads the friends into the firmness in the Covenant which is the major pathway to spiritual health and oneness of the Bahá'í community. Unity of the faith in this dispensation is inevitable and 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His writings, including this very Tablet, has made the believers assured of this great bounty. His focus of concern is individuals who cast themselves away from the covenant and are

entrapped by severe mental tests which may not be easily recognized.

This paper tries to analyze the guidelines provided by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to save His followers from these mental tests. Similes and metaphors used by the Master to reveal the evil intentions of violators, to clarify the reason to shun their company as well as to depict the conditions faced by the future Guardian of the Faith, are also discussed here together with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's provisions about the violators' future activities inside and outside America. The paper, by referring to this and other similar Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tries to provide proof against the vain claims of the violators as well as to deal with doubts and questions which may be raised by the fact that many of violators were among the people well esteemed by the Center of the Covenant.

The paper begins with the concept and forms of the Covenant, the importance of the Covenant in this and previous dispensations, the historical background of the tablet and the atmosphere in which it was revealed, and continues with the concept of covenant-breaking, a brief history of some of the covenant-breakers and their activities, particularly in America. The major points and guidelines of the tablet and the points shared among most tablets by 'Abdu'l-Bahá with the same theme are analyzed and the tablet ends with how American friends, despite the severe tests, remained firm in the Covenant and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's supplication to God were answered for them.

Considering that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets seldom address to the Bahá'ís in general but the contents of most of them can and should be applied by all, and the fact that the activities of the covenant-breakers after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's passing were not confined to America, generalize the subject of the Tablet to Bahá'ís around the world.



## A Commentary on Fire Tablet

*Nadia Khazraee*

Fire Tablet presents the best exemplar of a spiritual journey, one taken by Bahá'u'lláh from His human station upward to His divine seat, where His clay of self is melted in reunion with God. The reader of the Tablet is invited to accompany Bahá'u'lláh in His journey, take a share in what He has endured in the path of beloved and feel a glimpse of the morn of reunion with God.

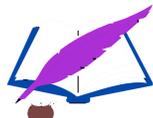
The Tablet includes a brief introduction which is not found in published volumes, the body and a brief conclusion, and the body of the Tablet is divided into three main sections. This paper tries to analyze the metaphors and the mystical concepts used in each section of the body of the Tablet as well as the valleys journeyed through by reference to writings. The first section introduces the valleys of search and love. In this part of the Tablet Bahá'u'lláh in the voice of servant laments first the trials befallen on the righteous believers in the path of God, then laments through the tongues of the prophets of the past and finally laments the passions endured by Himself. Metaphors are used here to depict how all the creatures are in search for God and seek the shelter of God's love.

In the second section, which introduces the valleys of knowledge, unity, contentment, and wonderment, the voice of Bahá'u'lláh changes to the voice of God, and in reunion with God, He addresses His human station and reveals the wisdom behind enduring all the

sufferings and trials. The metaphors in this part are used to depict the kingdom of heaven and victory of the cause as well as to remind us of the greater covenant held between the Báb and people of Bayan.

Finally in the last section, the voice of God once again is shifted to the voice of Servant. In this section the valley of absolute nothingness makes itself manifest. The Tablet ends with a brief conclusion in which the reader expresses the feelings of gratitude as the chance is given to him to feel the meekness of Bahá'u'lláh which will kindle a fire in his veins that burns the world and all he has, so with absolute poverty he enters the realm of God which is the last valley of this journey.

The name of the Tablet may refer to the fire of love of God, disguised in the form of calamity which emits the light of guidance. The calamities are lamented in the beginning and thanked in the end for they help the wayfarer to finalize His journey.

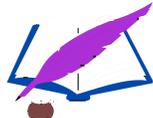


## **The Long Obligatory Prayer: the Mystical Dimension**

*Todd Lawson*

Prayer and fasting have a long history in the religious life of humanity. The focus of this talk is prayer in general and specifically the Long Obligatory Prayer revealed by Bahá'u'lláh. An attempt will be made to put into historical and symbolic context the various postures and body movements associated with the prayer. Attention will also be given to the meaning and significance of various key ideas and terms found

in the prayer: the Daysprings of the Invisible Essence, veils, the fire of love, the stranger, annihilation, here am I, here am I!. It will be seen that this prayer honours and affirms the venerable tradition of Islamic prayer service (salát) and at the same time reconfigures and reorients it.



## Spiritual Self

*Shahla Mehrgany*

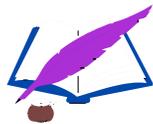
George Herbert Mead (1934) is known as an eminent social psychologist who has made presentations and has written extensively about the concept of '**social self**'. Through reviewing Mead's (1934) notion of self, this article endeavours to provide an insight and a deeper understanding of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's (1908) concept of 'self' as explained in depth in "*Some Answered Questions*".

The main point of this presentation may be summarized in the following statement: "***We can have a spiritual self which grows in a spiritual community through two types of reactions; with God as the source of spirituality, and the 'all-unifying agency' for the society, and also with the faithful people inside the community or society, as the 'generalized other'***"

The first section of this presentation focuses on the terms and concepts of Mead's (1934) famous work: "*Mind, Self, and Society*". The second section attempts to identify to what extent these terms and concepts could have symmetry in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's (1908) concept of self highlighted in "*Some Answered Questions*".

An attempt will be made to answer at least four key questions based on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanation in "*Some Answered Questions*" (1908) and Mead's article (1934):

- 1 What is self?
- 2 What are the most significant factors which shape the self?
- 3 What are the main types of self?
- 4 What is spiritual self? Does it make any sense? Does it matter?



## **Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit: Chapter 31 of "*Some Answered Questions*"**

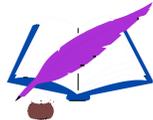
*Moojan Momen*

In Chapter 31 of "*Some Answered Questions*", 'Abdu'l-Bahá gives a commentary on a verse from the Gospel of St Mathew: "Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men, but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men. And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come." (Matt. 12: 31-2).

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this to mean that people who attack the Messenger of God out of ignorance can be forgiven because, if they knew what they were doing, they would desist. People who recognize the station of the Messenger of God and yet still attack Him, cannot, however, be forgiven. It is difficult to be certain, but it

is usually considered that this interpretation refers to covenant-breakers. There are however a number of problems with this assumption. This paper examines these problems.

The paper also considers the general phenomenon of covenant-breaking in the Bahá'í Faith and discusses what a definition of this phenomenon might be.



## **Another Modern-Day Messiah: Sulayman Al-Murshid and the political theology of 'Alawi separatism in French Mandatory Syria**

*Jason Pack*

This presentation begins by briefly reviewing the 'Alawis as a heterodox Shi'i movement and their theology and shared features with Bábí and Bahá'í theology would be noted.

Then it would treat the French policies towards the 'Alawis after WWI and the establishment of the 'Alawi state centered on Ladhhaqia. It would be very briefly shown how French policy until 1936 (the rise of Leon Blum's *Front Populaire*) simultaneously promoted the political rule of secular 'Alawi tribal leaders while subcontracting out jurisprudence in the 'Alawi state to a young guard of 'Alawis who were educated in the Ja'afari madhhab in Sidon. It would be demonstrated that the events of 1936 and Leon Blum's proposed Franco-Syrian treaty, which called for the integration

of the 'Alawi region with the rest of Syria, caused a great upheaval in 'Alawi politics.

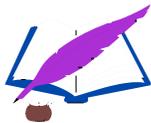
On the ground, the combat was between two groups: 'Alawi separatists (who advocated for a separate 'Alawi statelet) and 'Alawi unionists (who wished for a merger with Syria, they formed alliances with Arab nationalists in the interior.)

Among the group of 'Alawi separatists a messianic figure arose: Sulayman Al-Murshid. As the 'Alawi are Ghulat, he claimed to be the Messiah and God and 'Ali incarnate.

Then we focus on analyzing the theology and the politics of his movement. This movement lends itself to comparison with the messianism of the Báb. (Sulayman Al-Murshid's movement grew up in the milieu of 'Alawism, a heterodox form of Shi'ism which incorporates many Gnostic and anti-nomian and neoplatonic elements.)

Therefore, many comparisons can be drawn between this milieu and that of the circle which surrounded Shaykh Ahsa'i in Karbala and upon which the Báb drew heavily.

After dealing with the differences and similarities of the Báb's and Sulayman Al-Murshid's messianic theologies, the presentation concludes by discussing the political implications of Murshid's theology and why it gained traction among both landless 'Alawi peasants and the shaikhly class.



# **Methods and Qualities of the Seekers of Reality in “*Some Answered Questions*” in the light of Bahá’í Scriptures**

*Julio Savi*

In “*Some Answered Questions*”, 'Abdu'l-Bahá illustrates a number of criteria and qualities of the seekers of Reality. He mentions the senses, the method of reason, the text of the Holy Scriptures and the bounty of the Holy Spirit. He emphasizes the fallacy of the first three criteria and the foremost importance of the last one. A combined and balanced use of the senses, the method of reason and the text of the Holy Scriptures undoubtedly brings the seeker closer to Reality, but only the bounty of the Holy Spirit bestows enlightenment and certitude upon her. If the seeker wants to obtain the bounty of the Holy Spirit, she should realize a number of indispensable qualities and conditions. The enlightenment and certitude bestowed by the Holy Spirit are necessary so that any good action performed by the seeker may be conducive to her true salvation and prosperity.



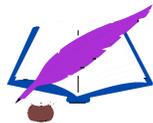
**Peace: Building a New Science**

## on Classical Foundations

*Kimberly Syphrett*

The first premises of the normative field of peace studies can be said to be that “conflict is natural” and, as such, conflict is held to be necessary, inherent, basic, essential, beneficial and inevitable. Moreover, conflict is considered “right” and “common.” Therefore, it is held to be both “universal” and a “normal rule of behavior.” In popular opinion the aim of the fields of peace research, peace studies and conflict intervention (e.g., conflict resolution, mediation, negotiation, peace-building, peacekeeping, et cetera) is to eliminate conflict. However, in these fields, the affirmed aim is to eliminate or to reduce violence: Conflict is conceived as life itself, whereas violence is viewed as an interruption of that life. However, Bahá’u’lláh said, “conflict and contention are categorically forbidden” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, Kitáb-i-`Ahd [Book of the Covenant], 1988: 221) and, elsewhere, conflict is “strictly prohibited.” In the Bahá’í teachings, peace is life. This normative orientation to conflict and to life is intrinsic to “modernist” and “postmodernist” thought originating with a line of thinkers implicitly challenged by the prophet-founder of the Bahá’í Faith when affirming the Empedocles, Pythagoras, Heraclitus (the physician), Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. This work is the first step in declaring a new field of peace research, studies, and intervention. The work is divided into two parts. The first introduces shifts in orientation to research and practice in normative and contemporary peace and conflict-intervention fields. The first shift is to locate peace in the context of the history of science. The second is to identify peace as the master-science rather than as a subordinate and marginal program of

studies within the Academy. The third is to recognize that peace is expressed as a universal law and this has implications for comprehension in the natural as well as the social sciences. The final shift is to indicate the location of a new science of peace in the history of the development of education. The second part of this work provides a literature survey focused on the first principles of the contemporary and normative field. The work is constructed with reference to studies of classical Arabic philosophy as well as to classical Greek, modernist, and postmodernist philosophy and science. It is in thanks to Laura Clifford Barney's efforts to correspond the Bahá'í teachings to her vast reading in modernist thought and her final compilation of her findings when at table with 'Abdu'l-Bahá on these many essential topics that this research was made possible.



## **Text, Author, Reader and the Relationship with the Sacred**

*Islander Micael Tinto*

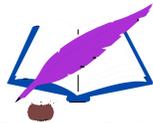
The purpose of this paper is to present the relationship which is going to be established between the reader, the author of a text, and the text itself.

In this specific context we refer to a particular kind of text, namely the Sacred Text, or the Writings divinely revealed by the Founders of the religions of the world.

The reader refers to any individual who decides to undergo the reading of a text and by referring to the

Bahá'í Writings and modern literary theory. We will try to understand the relationship that is developed between the text and the reader and the implications in the daily life of every individual.

We also try to comprehend how the *intentio auctoris* and the *intentio operis* will influence the reader, especially when we are referring to a sacred text which is completely different from a text written by any individual since the Writings of the Manifestation of God differ from that of an individual for the implications it has when the message is applied in the daily life of each person.



## THE CONCEPT OF HOLY AND SACRED

*anonymous*

The concept that an object belonging to a Holy Person is also holy and sacred is a fascinating one. In this paper the concept or belief that a house, a piece of land, water and the like could be holy will be examined. The questions that must be answered in this regard can be listed as follows:

1. Is there such a thing as a holy object or place?
2. What does it mean for an object to be holy?
3. How does an object or a house become holy? How does it change from an ordinary thing to a holy object?
4. Is the holy object different physically from other objects? What are the properties of a holy object or place?

5. Would a holy object or place bring blessings to a believer's life and cure physical ailments and protect the believer?

Each of us have our own views based on what we have read or what makes sense to us; but we need to examine what the Bahá'í Faith teaches us on this subject. In this paper we are going to examine the Bahá'í Writings in search for answers to all these questions.

Before starting on these questions we need to understand the meaning of the word "holy". It is defined in the dictionary as "exalted or worthy of complete devotion as one perfect in goodness and righteousness" and "having a divine quality"; but can dust, earth, ground or soil have divine qualities? Does it mean that a holy object is "worthy of complete devotion"?

Another word that often appears in the Bahá'í Writing is "sacred". Sacred has been defined in the dictionary as something "worthy of religious veneration" or "highly valued and important". In the Kitáb-i-Iqán Bahá'u'lláh uses the word "sacred" to explain this concept. He says:

***“For instance, consider the pervading power of those drops of the blood of Husayn which besprinkled the earth. What ascendancy and influence hath the dust itself, through the sacredness and potency of that blood, exercised over the bodies and souls of men! So much so, that he who sought deliverance from his ills, was healed by touching the dust of that holy ground, and whosoever, wishing to protect his property, treasured with absolute faith and understanding, a little of that holy earth within his house, safeguarded all his possessions. These are the outward manifestations of its potency. And were We to recount its hidden virtues they would assuredly say: ‘He verily hath considered the dust to be the***

*Lord of Lords, and hath utterly forsaken the Faith of God.’’ (1)*

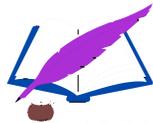
The following words of Shoghi Effendi regarding the construction of the mausoleum of the Báb also address this issue.

*“I cannot at this juncture overemphasize the sacredness of that holy dust embosomed in the heart of the Vineyard of God, or overrate the unimaginable potencies of this mighty institution founded sixty years ago, through the operation of the Will of, and the definite selection made by, the Founder of our Faith, on the occasion of His historic visit to that holy mountain, ...” (2)*

These quotations and many more will be reviewed in search of answers.

#### **References**

- (1) Kitáb-i-Iqán, pp. 127 and 128, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1989, pocket-size edition.
- (2) Citadel of Faith, pp. 94 and 95, Shoghi Effendi, US Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1980, third print.



## **BEYOND THE CONCEPT OF EVIL**

### **A Methodology for Multidisciplinary and Multicultural Ethical Decision-Making**

*Farhan Yazdani*

Ethical decisions have been historically based on considerations of «good» and «evil», but this dualistic outlook is no longer valid facing the complex issues facing modern medicine. The dualistic outlook has been rejected by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in “*Some Answered Questions*” and is certified in a practical clinical study in ethical decision-making in Lyon between 1985 and 1990. A simplified tool-box procedure combines all available assets which converge towards a decision which in a given situation and at a given time is in the best interests of individuals and of the society from which we all derive sustenance.

Notes

Notes

Notes

## IRFÁN PUBLICATIONS

- M. Momen (ed.), *Scripture and Revelation*  
(Oxford: George Ronald, 1997)
- M. Momen (ed.), *The Bahá'í Faith and the World Religions* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2005)
- I. Ayman (ed.) *Lights of 'Irfán: Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia (in English)*,  
Book One to Book Eight. 2000 – 2007
- F. Dustdar (ed.) (*Beiträge des 'Irfán – Kolloquiums: Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia (in German)*), (Bahá'í Verlag GmbH, 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006 und 2007)
- I. Ayman (ed.), *Safini-yi 'Irfán, Compilations of Papers Presented at 'Irfán Colloquia (in Persian)*,  
Book One to Book Ten. 1998 - 2007
- Maryam Afshar, *Images of Christ in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, 2004

## DISTRIBUTORS

### **Bahá'í Distribution Service (BDS)**

415 Linden Ave., Wilmette, IL 60091-2886, USA  
Tel.: (847)425-7950                      Fax: (847)425-7951  
E-mail: [BDS@usbnc.org](mailto:BDS@usbnc.org)

### **Bosch Bahá'í School, Bookshop**

500 Comstock Lane, Santa Cruz, CA 95060-9677  
Tel.: (831) 423-3387                      Fax: (831) 423-7564  
E-mail: [bosch@usbnc.org](mailto:bosch@usbnc.org)

### **Bahá'í Verlag**

Eppsteiner Str. 89, D-65719, Hofheim, Germany  
Tel.: (49) 6192-22921                      Fax: ( 49)6192-22936  
E-mail: [office@bahai-verlag.de](mailto:office@bahai-verlag.de)

`Irfán Colloquium

Bahá'í National Center

1233 Central Street

Evanston, IL 60201

USA

Telephone : (847) 733-3501

Fax : (773) 493-8641

E.Mail : [contact@irfancolloquium.org](mailto:contact@irfancolloquium.org)

[www.IrfanColloquia.org](http://www.IrfanColloquia.org)