

BAHA'IS OF MANHATTAN BEACH  
AUGUST 15, 2021

DYNAMIC BAHÁ'Í  
PRINCIPLES  
EXPRESSED AS  
ACTIONS

CHRISTOPHER BUCK

Christopher  
Buck

Bahá'í  
Faith

the basics

# The Tablet of Glad-Tidings (1891)



# THE TABLET OF GLAD-TIDINGS

- This article is a historical and textual study of the one of the major writings of Baha'u'llah: the Lawh-i Bisharāt ('Tablet of Glad-Tidings'), revealed circa 1891, and advances new theories as to its provenance and purpose. The 'Tablet of Glad-Tidings' is a selective compendium of Baha'u'llah's laws and principles, sequentially presented in a series of 15 'Glad-Tidings'. As the Arabic term, Bisharāt, suggests, these 'Glad-Tidings' were a public announcement of some of the essential teachings of the new Baha'i religion. The 'Glad-Tidings' is the most extensive of several 'tablets' by Baha'u'llah that present key teachings in a numbered structure. The Glad-Tidings may, in part, be regarded as serially articulated 'world reforms' intermixed with religious reforms emanating from Baha'u'llah in his professed role as 'World Reformer'. The 'Glad-Tidings' also functioned analogously (albeit anachronistically) to a press release, serving not only as a public proclamation but to rectify the inaccuracies and gross misrepresentations that had previously circulated in print. Intended for widespread translation and publication, the Glad-Tidings was sent to scholars – notably Russian orientalist, Baron Viktor Rosen (1849–1908) and Cambridge orientalist, Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) – and possibly pre-revolutionary Russian statesmen as well.

## Baha'u'llah's Bisharāt (Glad-Tidings): A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen

Christopher Buck

Youli A. Ioannesyan

### Abstract

*This article is a historical and textual study of the one of the major writings of Baha'u'llah: the Lawh-i Bisharāt ('Tablet of Glad-Tidings'), revealed circa 1891, and advances new theories as to its provenance and purpose. The 'Tablet of Glad-Tidings' is a selective compendium of Baha'u'llah's laws and principles, sequentially presented in a series of 15 'Glad-Tidings'. As the Arabic term, Bisharāt, suggests, these 'Glad-Tidings' were a public announcement of some of the essential teachings of the new Baha'i religion. The 'Glad-Tidings' is the most extensive of several 'tablets' by Baha'u'llah that present key teachings in a numbered structure. The Glad-Tidings may, in part, be regarded as serially articulated 'world reforms' intermixed with religious reforms emanating from Baha'u'llah in his professed role as 'World Reformer'. The 'Glad-Tidings' also functioned analogously (albeit anachronistically) to a press release, serving not only as a public proclamation but to rectify the inaccuracies and gross misrepresentations that had previously circulated in print. Intended for widespread translation and publication, the Glad-Tidings was sent to scholars – notably Russian orientalist, Baron Viktor Rosen (1849–1908) and Cambridge orientalist, Edward Granville Browne (1862–1926) – and possibly pre-revolutionary Russian statesmen as well. As a 'Proclamatory Aqdas', the Tablet of Glad-Tidings was part of a much broader proclamation by Baha'u'llah, who proclaimed his mission to the political and religious leaders of the world. This study will argue that Baha'u'llah may have revealed the Tablet of Glad-Tidings for E. G. Browne – or rather through him, since Baha'u'llah evidently intended that Browne should translate and publish the Bisharāt in order to make the nature of the Baha'i teachings more widely known. This would then correct the distortions that had previously been published regarding Baha'u'llah's purpose and the nature of the religion that he founded, thereby promoting a public awareness that a new world religion was on the horizon of modernity.*

### Keywords

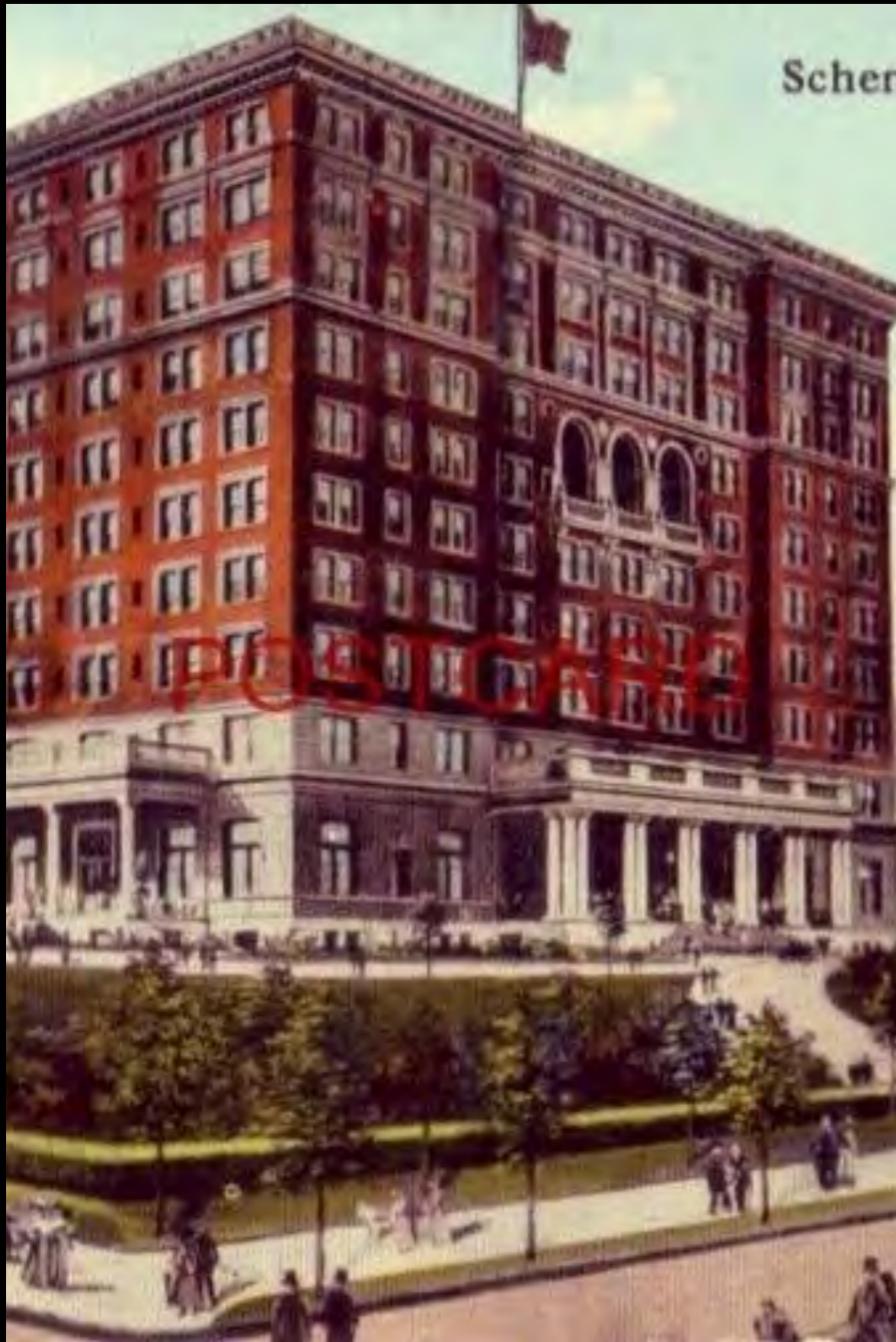
Baha'u'llah  
Edward Granville  
Browne  
Baron Viktor Rosen  
Bisharāt  
Tablet of  
Glad-Tidings  
Proclamatory Aqdas  
world reforms  
modernity  
sacralizing/  
desacralizing

This article is a historical and textual study of the one of the major writings of Baha'u'llah: the Lawh-i Bisharāt ('Tablet of Glad-Tidings'), revealed circa 1891, and advances new theories as to its provenance and purpose.<sup>1</sup> The manuscript of this work used in this article is manuscript F. 25 of the Edward Granville Browne Collection held at Cambridge University Library. The manuscript contains the Bisharāt itself (ff. 372–7), the anonymous inscription that immediately precedes it, along with a cover letter, dated 22 January 1891,

1. See English translation: Bahā'u'llāh, *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed After the Kitāb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette, IL: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1988) 21–9 (hereinafter TB). For the

Pittsburgh, May 7, 1912

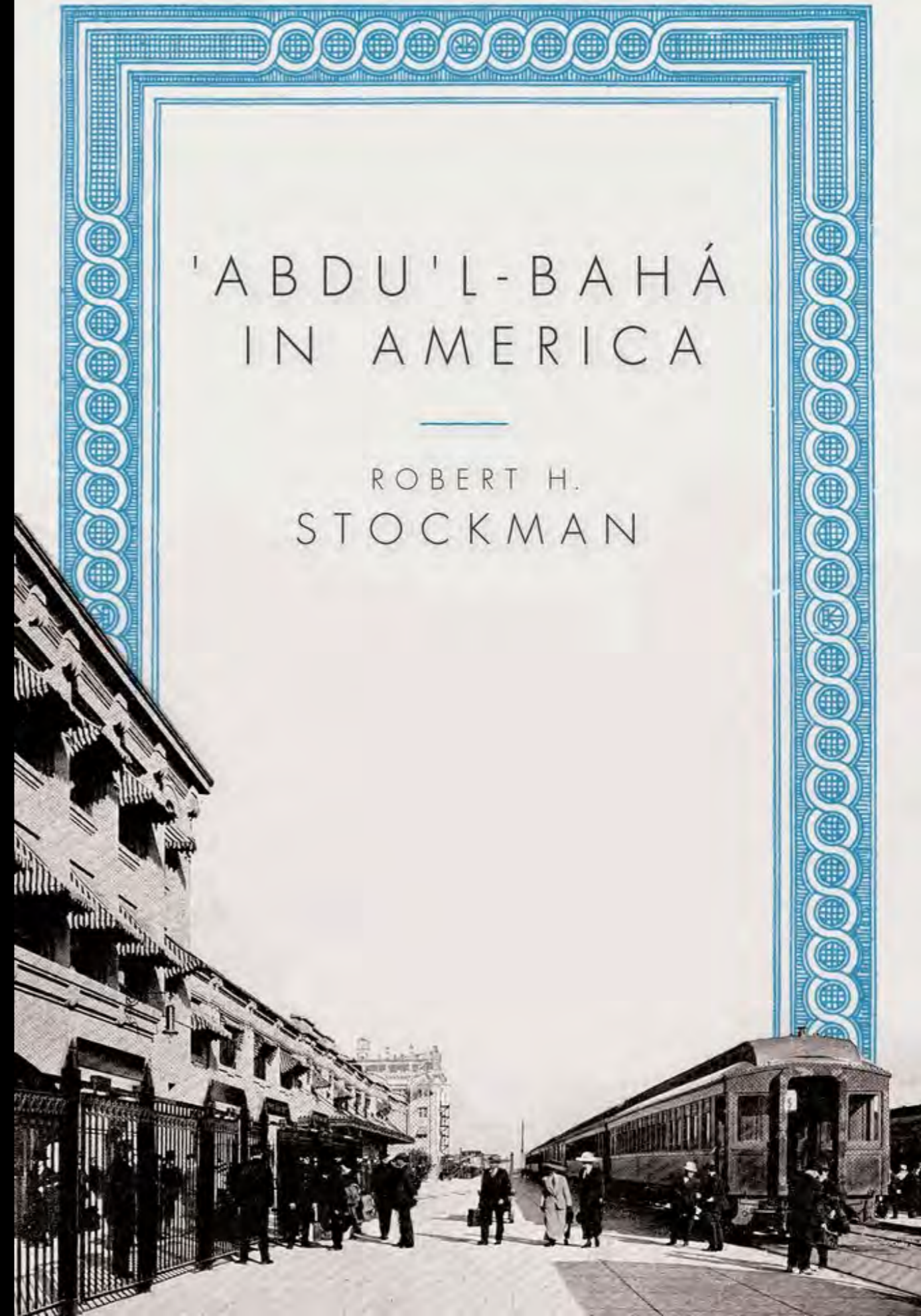






# PITTSBURGH, MAY 7, 1912

- It was a significant talk because it was the first time 'Abdu'l-Bahá had enunciated a series of Bahá'í principles to a public audience in North America. He did not just list principles, however; he set them in the context of the inadequacy of material civilization and the need for spiritual civilization. It was a point that, later, Bahá'ís did not always understand or emphasize when they explained the Faith's teachings.
- After the talk, 'Abdu'l-Bahá met privately with leaders of thought. Five local newspaper articles were a product of his visit. – Robert H. Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Publishing, 2012), pp. 152–153.





– 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ

“I will speak to you  
concerning the special  
teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.”

2 December 1912

Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs.  
Edward B. Kinney

780 West End Avenue, New York



# THE SPECIAL [NEW] TEACHINGS OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH

- This same question, in fact, came up again a little over two weeks later. On Monday, 2 December 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave a talk in New York on the "the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh" in direct response to the question: "You have asked me what new principles have been revealed by Him" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL). In answer to this excellent question, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had responded:
- I will speak to you concerning the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. All the divine principles announced by the tongue of the Prophets of the past are to be found in the words of Bahá'u'lláh; but in addition to these He has revealed certain new teachings which are not found in any of the sacred Books of former times. I shall mention some of them; the others, which are many in number, may be found in the Books, Tablets and Epistles written by Bahá'u'lláh—such as the Hidden Words, the Glad Tidings, the Words of Paradise, Tajallíyát, Ṭarázát and others. Likewise, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas there are new teachings which cannot be found in any of the past Books or Epistles of the Prophets. ...
- – Excerpt from Baha'i Faith: The Basics (p. 45).

they are old and familiar; we have heard them before." Therefore, I will speak to you upon the distinctive characteristics of the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh and prove that from every standpoint His Cause is distinguished from all others. It is distinguished by its didactic character and method of exposition, by its practical effects and application to present world conditions, but especially distinguished from the standpoint of its spread and progress.

(‘Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL)

‘Abdu'l-Bahá's opening statement, at this public meeting held in the home of Bahá'í artist, Julia Thompson, is quoted, in full, for the simple reason that few, if any, other such declarations by ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, available in English, state the case so clearly, i.e. that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings are *sui generis* (Latin, literally "of its own kind")—that is, unique in the history of religions. This same question, in fact, came up again a little over two weeks later. On Monday, 2 December 1912, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá gave a talk in New York on the "the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh" in direct response to the question: "You have asked me what new principles have been revealed by Him" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, BRL). In answer to this excellent question, ‘Abdu'l-Bahá had responded:

I will speak to you concerning *the special teachings of Bahá'u'lláh*. All the divine principles announced by the tongue of the Prophets of the past are to be found in the words of Bahá'u'lláh; *but in addition to these He has revealed certain new teachings which are not found in any of the sacred Books of former times*. I shall mention some of them; the others, which are many in number, may be found in the Books, Tablets and Epistles written by Bahá'u'lláh—such as the Hidden Words, the Glad Tidings, the Words of Paradise, Tajallíyát, Ṭarázát and others. Likewise, in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* there are *new teachings which cannot be found in any of the past Books or Epistles of the Prophets*. ...

1. A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. ...
2. Another *new principle* revealed by Bahá'u'lláh is the injunction to investigate truth—that is to say, no man should blindly follow his ancestors and forefathers. ...
3. Bahá'u'lláh has announced that the foundation of all the religions of God is one, that oneness is truth and truth is oneness which does not admit of plurality. *This teaching is new and specialized to this Manifestation.*



# 1. Search for Truth

## 1. SEARCH FOR TRUTH

---

*First among the great principles revealed by Him [Bahá'u'lláh] is that of the investigation of reality. The meaning is that every individual member of humankind is exhorted and commanded to set aside superstitious beliefs, traditions and blind imitation of ancestral forms in religion and investigate reality for himself. Inasmuch as the fundamental reality is one, all religions and nations of the world will become one through investigation of reality. The announcement of this principle is not found in any of the sacred Books of the past. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Bahá'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 49).*

'Abdu'l-Bahá



2. See Humankind as One

## 2. SEE HUMANKIND AS ONE

---

A second characteristic principle of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is that which commands recognition of the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing all mankind, He says, "Ye are all the leaves of one tree." There are no differences or distinctions of race among you in the sight of God. . . . *No other scriptures contain such breadth and universality of statement; no other teachings proclaim this unequivocal principle of the solidarity of humanity.* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 51).

'Abdu'l-Bahá



3. See Religion as One

### 3. SEE RELIGION AS ONE

---

Bahá'u'lláh has announced that the foundation of all the religions of God is one, that oneness is truth and truth is oneness which does not admit of plurality. *This teaching is new and specialized to this Manifestation [Bahá'u'lláh].* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 53).

'Abdu'l-Bahá



# 4. Religions Should Unify

## 4. RELIGIONS SHOULD UNIFY

---

Another fundamental announcement made by Bahá'u'lláh is that religion must be the source of unity and fellowship in the world. If it is productive of enmity, hatred and bigotry, the absence of religion would be preferable. *This is a new principle of revelation found only in the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh. ...*

*He [Bahá'u'lláh] sets forth a new principle for this day in the announcement that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement among mankind. If it is the cause of discord and hostility, if it leads to separation and creates conflict, the absence of religion would be preferable in the world. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 54).*

'Abdu'l-Bahá

# 5. Religion Respects Science



## 5. RELIGION RESPECTS SCIENCE

---

Furthermore, He [Bahá'u'lláh] proclaims that religion must be in harmony with science and reason. If it does not conform to science and reconcile with reason, it is superstition. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a religious teaching, even though it was not in accord with human reason and judgment. *The harmony of religious belief with reason is a new vista which Bahá'u'lláh has opened for the soul of man.* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Bahá'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 56).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

6. Women and Men Are Equal

## 6. WOMEN AND MEN ARE EQUAL

---

Spiritually, women and men are equal, but, not socially—yet. *“Another [new] teaching,”* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá announced at the Thompson event, *“is that there shall be perfect equality between men and women”* (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). This is both a mandate and prophecy. For ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, this issue had great social importance, and is a distinctive feature of the Bahá’í social agenda. Bahá’u’lláh *“establishes the equality of man and woman,”* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá declared at the Kinney event, hastening to add: *“This is peculiar to the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, for all other religions have placed man above woman”* (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Bahá’i Faith: The Basics* (p. 57).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



7. Abolish Every Prejudice

## 7. ABOLISH EVERY PREJUDICE

---

Again, Bahá'u'lláh declares that all forms of prejudice among mankind must be abandoned and that until existing prejudices are entirely removed, the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure. *This principle cannot be found in any other sacred volume than the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. ...*

*A new religious principle* is that prejudice and fanaticism—whether sectarian, denominational, patriotic or political—are destructive to the foundation of human solidarity; therefore, man should release himself from such bonds in order that the oneness of the world of humanity may become manifest. ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 59).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

8. Promote World Peace



## 8. PROMOTE WORLD PEACE

---

Universal peace is assured by Bahá'u'lláh as a fundamental accomplishment of the religion of God—that peace shall prevail among nations, governments and peoples, among religions, races and all conditions of mankind. *This is one of the special characteristics of the Word of God revealed in this Manifestation.*

('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 60).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

9. Provide Education for All

## 9. PROVIDE EDUCATION FOR ALL

---

"He has also proclaimed the principle that all mankind shall be educated and that no illiteracy be allowed to remain," 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared by adding: *"This practical remedy for the need of the world cannot be found in the text of any other sacred Books"* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). . . .

"Bahá'u'lláh declares that all mankind should attain knowledge and acquire an education," 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares, adding: *"This is a necessary principle of religious belief and observance, characteristically new in this dispensation"* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 61).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

10. Economic Problems Require  
Spiritual Solutions

## 10. ECONOMIC PROBLEMS REQUIRE SPIRITUAL SOLUTIONS

---

In brief, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, at the Kinney meeting in New York, introduced the idea that Bahá'u'lláh's teachings offer spiritual solutions to economic problems as follows, "He [Bahá'u'lláh] has set forth the solution and provided the remedy for the economic question. *No religious Books of the past Prophets speak of this important human problem*" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). ...

To their credit, the Bahá'í writings set forth various economic teachings, although not systematically developed (a task for economists). *Bahá'í teachings do so largely by anchoring economic values in human values.* – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (pp. 62–63).

'Abdu'l-Bahá



1 1. The Universal House of  
Justice is Unique

## 11. THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE IS UNIQUE

---

*This “principle” is actually an institutional principal, i.e. the Universal House of Justice, which is a unique religious institution. Ordained by Bahá'u'lláh in his Most Holy Book, the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (1873), the Universal House of Justice was established in 1963. This august institution is the democratically elected council that oversees the affairs of the global Bahá'í community today and has no real precedent or parallel in prior religious history. Bahá'u'lláh “has ordained and established the House of Justice. ... A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá proclaimed at the Kinney event. “Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, and that which the Universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind,” that this “international House of Justice shall be appointed and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL). – Excerpt from *Baha’i Faith: The Basics* (p. 63).*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

# 12. The Special Bahá'í “Covenant” Protects Bahá'í Unity

## 12. THE SPECIAL BAHÁ'Í "COVENANT" PROTECTS BAHÁ'Í UNITY

---

... Bahá'u'lláh designated 'Abdu'l-Bahá as successor, interpreter, and exemplar of Bahá'u'lláh himself and his teachings. As such, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is referred to as the "Center of the Covenant." At the Kinney meeting, 'Abdul-Bahá briefly introduced this key Bahá'í institution. *"As to the most great characteristic of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, a specific teaching not given by any of the Prophets of the past: It is the ordination and appointment of the Center of the Covenant,"* 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared, adding, "By this appointment and provision He has safeguarded and protected the religion of God against differences and schisms, making it impossible for anyone to create a new sect or faction of belief" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 64).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

# 1893 RUSSIAN PUBLICATION OF BAHA'U'LLAH'S WILL & TESTAMENT

- This study concerns the publication of a document that may well be unique in the history of religions: the written designation of a successor by the charismatic founder of a world religion. Mīrzā Ḥusayn-'Alī (1817–1892), known as Bahā'-Allāh (more commonly, Baha'u'llah, 'Splendor of God'), prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī Faith. In the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī ('Book of My Covenant'), Baha'u'llah designated his eldest son, 'Abbās Effendī, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1844–1921), as successor. Baha'u'llah died on 29 May 1892 (at 3:00 a.m.) in Bahjī (near 'Akkā), Palestine (now modern-day Israel), and the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was read aloud nine days later. In 1893, Russian orientalist, Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski (1861–1920) published this document, in the original Persian, with Russian translation, together with a eulogy composed by the celebrated Bahā'ī poet, Mīrzā 'Alī-Ashraf-i Lāhījānī, known by his sobriquet, 'Andalīb ('Nightingale'; d. 1920). Since 'Andalīb was an eyewitness to the events he describes, his eulogy may be treated as a historical source. Tumanski's scholarly publication of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is discussed in the context of Russian scholarly and diplomatic interests.

*Baha'i Studies Review*, Volume 19 © Intellect Ltd 2013 Article. English language. doi: 10.1386/bsr.19.3/1

## **The 1893 Russian Publication of Baha'u'llah's Last Will and Testament: An Academic Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship**

**Christopher Buck** *Independent Scholar, Pittsburgh*

**Youli A. Ioannesyan** *Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg)*

### **Abstract**

*This study concerns the publication of a document that may well be unique in the history of religions: the written designation of a successor by the charismatic founder of a world religion. Mīrzā Ḥusayn-'Alī (1817–1892), known as Bahā'-Allāh (more commonly, Baha'u'llah, 'Splendor of God'), prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī Faith. In the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī ('Book of My Covenant'), Baha'u'llah designated his eldest son, 'Abbās Effendī, known as 'Abdu'l-Bahā (1844–1921), as successor. Baha'u'llah died on 29 May 1892 (at 3:00 a.m.) in Bahjī (near 'Akkā), Palestine (now modern-day Israel), and the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī was read aloud nine days later. In 1893, Russian orientalist, Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski (1861–1920) published this document, in the original Persian, with Russian translation, together with a eulogy composed by the celebrated Bahā'ī poet, Mīrzā 'Alī-Ashraf-i Lāhījānī, known by his sobriquet, 'Andalīb ('Nightingale'; d. 1920). Since 'Andalīb was an eyewitness to the events he describes, his eulogy may be treated as a historical source. Tumanski's scholarly publication of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī is discussed in the context of Russian scholarly and diplomatic interests. The present study is presented as follows: (1) Introduction; (2) Aleksandr Grigor'evich Tumanski; (3) Contents of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and Brief Commentary; (4) 'Andalīb's Eyewitness Account of the Reading of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī, 1892; (5) The St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī; (6) The Original Manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and the Textus Receptus; (7) Textual Variants Between the St. Petersburg Edition of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī and the Textus Receptus; (8) The Cambridge Manuscript of the Kitāb-i 'Ahdī in the E. G. Browne Collection; and (9) Conclusion: Contemporary-Historical Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship by Tumanski and other Russian Notables.*

### **Keywords**

Baha'i Faith · Baha'u'llah · Abdu'l-Baha · covenant · successor · Kitāb-i 'Ahd · Aleksandr Tumanski · Baron Rosen · Edward Granville Browne ·



13. Adopt a Universal Auxiliary  
Language

## 13. ADOPT A UNIVERSAL AUXILIARY LANGUAGE

---

Another new religious teaching of Bahá'u'lláh, which 'Abdu'l-Bahá often spoke about, is the adoption of a universal auxiliary language: "Bahá'u'lláh has announced the necessity for a universal language which shall serve as a means of international communication and thus remove misunderstandings and difficulties," 'Abdu'l-Bahá declared at the Thompson meeting. "*This [new] teaching is set forth in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas (Most Holy Book) published fifty years ago*" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added). This is why: "And among the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh is the origination of one language that may be spread universally among the people," 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated in the "Tablet to the Hague," further explaining: "This teaching was revealed from the pen of Bahá'u'lláh in order that this universal language may eliminate misunderstandings from among mankind" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections, BRL). – Excerpt from *Bahá'i Faith: The Basics* (pp. 64–65).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

# 14. Work is Worship

## 14. WORK IS WORSHIP

---

*The following principle was also presented by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the context of the "new" teachings given by Bahá'u'lláh. At the Kinney event, 'Abdu'l-Bahá emphasized that Bahá'u'lláh "teaches that it is incumbent upon all mankind to become fitted for some useful trade, craft, or profession by which subsistence may be assured, and this efficiency is to be considered as an act of worship" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL). "If a man engageth with all his power in the acquisition of a science or in the perfection of an art, it is as if he has been worshipping God in churches and temples," 'Abdu'l-Bahá, elsewhere states, adding, "In this universal dispensation man's wondrous craftsmanship is reckoned as worship of the Resplendent Beauty" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections, BRL). – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 65).*

'Abdu'l-Bahá

# 15. The Bahá'í Faith Offers Other “New Principles”



## 15. THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH OFFERS OTHER "NEW PRINCIPLES"

---

At the end of his discourse at the Kinney event on 2 December 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá concluded, "The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are boundless and illimitable. *You have asked me what new principles have been revealed by Him. I have mentioned a few only. There are many others, but time does not permit their mention tonight*" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Promulgation, BRL) (italics added).

As corroboration of this reported statement, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, in a Tablet, likens Bahá'u'lláh's "new principles" to a "new garment" for the new age: "Out of this pitch blackness there dawned the morning splendour of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. *He hath dressed the world with a garment new and fair, and that new garment is the principles which have come down from God.*" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, Selections, BRL) (italics added). – Excerpt from *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (pp. 65–66).

'Abdu'l-Bahá

# 50 BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLES OF UNITY (1)

- As one indication of the breadth and depth of Bahá'í principles, the present writer has researched, for well over two decades, the Bahá'í paradigm of unity. Based on an extensive and intensive study of the original Bahá'í writings in Persian and Arabic (to the best of his ability), and on Bahá'í texts available in English as well, this author has identified "Fifty Bahá'í Principles of Unity," which were identified and selected using a particular method:
- As a preliminary investigation into the Bahá'í illness/cure soteriology, with its paradigm of unity, the methodology pursued in the present study is simply to inventory those Bahá'í principles that are directly presented as "unity of" or "oneness of" formulations, as indicated by selected genitive constructions, or "of-constructions" ... . (Buck 2015b, 10)
- – Excerpt from *Baha'i Faith: The Basics* (p. 68).

As one indication of the breadth and depth of Bahá'í principles, the present writer has researched, for well over two decades, the Bahá'í paradigm of unity. Based on an extensive and intensive study of the original Bahá'í writings in Persian and Arabic (to the best of his ability), and on Bahá'í texts available in English as well, this author has identified "Fifty Bahá'í Principles of Unity," which were identified and selected using a particular method:

As a preliminary investigation into the Bahá'í illness/cure soteriology, with its paradigm of unity, the methodology pursued in the present study is simply to inventory those Bahá'í principles that are directly presented as "unity of" or "oneness of" formulations, as indicated by selected genitive constructions, or "of-constructions" (i.e. the Persian/Arabic *'idāfa*) involving the Persian/Arabic terms of *ittihād*, *ittifāq*, *yigānigī*, *vahdat*, *ulfat*, etc.

(Buck 2015b, 10)

In other words, each of these "Fifty Bahá'í Principles of Unity" was selected whenever a Bahá'í teaching was presented with such expressions as "unity of" or "oneness of." This list is exemplary, not exhaustive. With this explanation of the research and selection method (and with this disclaimer also in mind), the "Fifty Bahá'í Principles of Unity" are enumerated below, as follows:

## FIFTY BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLES OF UNITY

INDIVIDUAL RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD: (1) Mystic Feeling which Unites Man with God; II. FAMILY RELATIONS: (2) Unity of Husband and Wife; (3) Unity of the Family; III. INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS: (4) Oneness of Emotions; (5) Spiritual Oneness; IV. GENDER RELATIONS: (6) Unity of the Rights of Men and Women; (7) Unity in Education; V. ECONOMIC RELATIONS: (8) Economic Unity; (9) Unity of People and Wealth; VI. RACE RELATIONS: (10) Unity in Diversity; (11) Unity of Races; VII. ENVIRONMENTAL RELATIONS: (12) Unity of Existence (Oneness of Being and Manifestation; (13) Unity of Species; (14) Unity with the Environment; VIII. INTERFAITH RELATIONS: (15) Unity of God; (16) Mystic Unity of God and His Manifestations; (17) Unity of the

# 50 BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLES OF UNITY (2)

- For more, see: “Fifty Bahá’í Principles of Unity: A Paradigm of Social Salvation.” *Baha’i Studies Review* 18 (cover date, 2012; publication date, 2015): 3–44. (Published June 23, 2015.) (Edited by Steve Cooney.) [https://bahai-library.com/buck\\_unity\\_social\\_salvation](https://bahai-library.com/buck_unity_social_salvation)
- (Presented at Princeton University, February 21, 2014.) Video of presentation: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38\\_ElzcX6Wo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38_ElzcX6Wo). Thanks to Emily Goshey, PhD (for setting up this event with Princeton), and to Tahi Hicks and Sahand Keshavarz Rahbar (for posting the video of the presentation).

Manifestations of God; (18) Unity of Truth; (19) Unity Among Religions; (20) Peace Among Religions; IX. SCIENTIFIC RELATIONS: (21) Unity of Science and Religion; (22) Methodological Coherence; (23) Unity of Thought in World Undertakings; X. LINGUISTIC RELATIONS: (24) Unity of Language; XI. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: (25) Unity of Conscience; (26) Unity in Freedom; (27) Evolving Social Unities; (28) Unity in the Political Realm; (29) Unity of Nations; (30) Unity of All Mankind/World Unity; (31) Unity of the World Commonwealth of the Bahá’í Revelation; (34) All-Unifying Power; (35) Unity of Doctrine; (36) Unity of Meaning; (37) Bahá’í Unity; (38) Unity among Bahá’í Women; (39) Unity in Religion; (40) Unity of Station; (41) Unity of Souls; (42) Unity in Speech; (43) Unity in [Ritual] Acts; (44) Unity of Bahá’í Administration; (45) Unity of Purpose; (46) Unity of Means; (47) Unity of Vision; (48) Unity of Action; (49) Unity of the Spiritual Assembly; (50) Unity of Houses of Justice and Governments.

(Buck 2015a, 329.)

This research finding was published as an academic journal article, and presented at Princeton University in an invited lecture on 21 February 2014. By way of a disclaimer, this research is an individual contribution by an independent Bahá’í scholar, and does not represent an official Bahá’í position. These research results, furthermore, are tentative and subject to revision. That said, these “Fifty Bahá’í Principles of Unity” are impressive, and give pause for thought, considering that the world today stands to greatly benefit from these powerful Bahá’í principles of unity, which represent new teachings by a relatively new world religion, the Bahá’í Faith. Although they have intrinsic merit, independent of how others view them, suffice it to say that, pursuant to the Bahá’í principle of independent “search for truth,” it is up to the readers of this book, *Bahá’í Faith: The Basics*, to judge for themselves.

## SUMMARY

- The Bahá’í Faith is a new, independent world religion.
- The purpose of the Bahá’í Faith is to unify the world.



# TRANSFORMING TIME: TURNING GODLY PERFECTIONS INTO GOODLY ACTIONS (1)

- These dynamic “names of God” each highlight a distinctive quality of sterling character and human nobility, in a process of transformation that could be called “**theophoric metamorphosis**” (Buck and Melton, “Bahá’í Calendar and Rhythms of Worship,” 2011). Literally, the term “theophoric,” as its Greek root indicates, means “God-bearing.” Here, the names of God may be conceived as qualities or, better still, as powers of God that individuals can potentially develop. In the Báb’s *Kitáb al-Asmá’* (Book of [Divine] Names), which exceeds 3,000 pages and is said to be “the largest revealed book in sacred history” (Saiedi 2008, 36), the Báb treats human beings as reflections of divine names and attributes. To the extent that a person is a “bearer” of one of the “names” (i.e. qualities or powers) of God, that individual is empowered to express that quality in human action.
- – Excerpt from *Baha’i Faith: The Basics* (p. 9).

## ESSENTIAL ACTIVITIES

### BASIS: THE BAHÁ’Í CALENDAR

The rhythm of Bahá’í worship and spiritual life is based on a special and rather unique Bahá’í Calendar. Just about every world religion has its own sacred calendar. The Bahá’í Faith is no exception. Originally created by the Báb, then adapted by Bahá’u’lláh, the Bahá’í Calendar consists of 19 months of 19 days, with several “Intercalary Days” rounding out the solar year (see Keil 2008). The Bahá’í New Year (Naw-Rúz, Persian for “New Day”) begins on the vernal equinox (which is astronomically determined and falls on 19, 20, or 21 March on the Gregorian calendar). Although not strictly astronomical (since 19-day months are neither solar nor lunar), the Bahá’í Calendar is heavenly in the spiritual sense. In every way, it reminds one of God, and of all that is angelic, noble, and virtuous.

The Bahá’í Calendar is distinctive in several respects. The Bahá’í Calendar charts not only chronological time but marks the progress of the soul as well. Each weekday, each day of the month, each month, each year, and each cycle of 19 years is given a special name—a “Name of God,” meaning an attribute of God that can also be manifested as a human virtue. For example, the Gregorian calendar date of Sunday, 21 March 2010, may be expressed as follows in the Bahá’í Calendar: The weekday of “Beauty” (*Jamál*, i.e. Sunday), the (first) day “Splendor” (*Bahá*) in the (first) month of “Splendor” (*Bahá*) in the year (15th) of “Affection” (*Vidád*), in the cycle (19 years) of “Unity” (*Váhíd*) of the first Grand Cycle (361 years) of “All Things” (Arabic, *Kullu Shay’*; Persian, *Kull-i-Shay’*). The original terms, although foreign, are familiar in English.

The Bahá’í Calendar transforms time into opportune moments for reflection on matters of spirit, which are both timely and timeless alike. Originally called the “Wondrous (*Badí’*) Calendar” when it was first created by the Báb (and later adopted and adapted by Bahá’u’lláh), the Bahá’í Calendar invests time with spiritual significance by naming weekdays, days of the month, months, years, and cycles of years after godly perfections. These Names of God represent far more than simple designations of units of time. They connect to the timeless, yet timely, progress of the soul in its spiritual growth and advancement throughout life. This is because these godly qualities—which

# TRANSFORMING TIME: TURNING GODLY PERFECTIONS INTO GOODLY ACTIONS (2)

- So how does all this relate to Baha'i *theosis*, or the Baha'i process of self-transformation through spiritualization, thereby becoming more "godlike," or godly? As Abdu'l-Baha has said, "man is intended to become the recipient of the effulgences of divine attributes," and God is the source of every "Name of God" or "attribute of God," as the following schematic may well illustrate:
- Source: God as the Supreme Questioner
- Attribute: Questions
- Recipient: Man as a questioner
- Action: Questioning in the search after truth
- Transformation: Increased capacity to question
- Virtue: Greater grasp of the question – the truth of the matter.
- <https://bahaiteachings.org/bahai-theosis-exemplifying-godly-attributes-acquiring-virtues/>

represent spiritual energies—can be translated into an array of goodly virtues. This Bahá'í almanac, therefore, inspires spiritual progress by associating time with reminders of God and all that enhances human nobility, i.e. of saintly qualities. By and through the progressive spiritualization of all persons—and, indeed, of all things—the Báb wished to transform all of social and physical reality into “mirrors”—reflecting the perfections represented by these divine names, as expressed in action and function. The present writer has devoted a series of short articles on each of these names in the Bahá'í Calendar (see Buck, *Transforming Time: Turning Godly Perfections into Goodly Actions*).

In this wondrous calendric system, each and every unit of time gives pause for spiritual thought and reflection. This is part of the Báb's comprehensive system of precepts and practices, all calculated to keep the believer in a constant, God-conscious frame of mind. Each of these dynamic names of God highlights a distinctive quality of sterling character and human nobility—which not only may be invoked in prayer and meditation but may be evoked in thought and action. In doing so, the mirror of the human heart, or soul, may reflect a ray of the spiritual sun. With this background in mind, highlights of Bahá'í essential activities may be presented as follows.

## NINETEEN DAY FEASTS

As in other faiths, Bahá'ís worship individually and collectively. At the heart of Bahá'í community life is the Nineteen Day Feast, when the local Bahá'í community meets for worship, consultation, and fellowship. As the name suggests, the Bahá'í Feast is held once every nineteen days—that is, in each and every Bahá'í month, usually at the beginning of each Bahá'í month. Typically, a Bahá'í Feast is conducted in three parts: (1) devotions; (2) consultation; and (3) fellowship. In other words, the Feast begins with the reading (and often chanting) of Bahá'í sacred scriptures (especially prayers), followed by consultation on community affairs, ending with food and fellowship (social), although this order of events may be varied. Although the Feast offers physical repast—in the form of refreshments served during the social portion—the primary emphasis is on spiritual nourishment through prayers and readings invoked and recited during devotions. This is the real food for the soul!



Questions?