

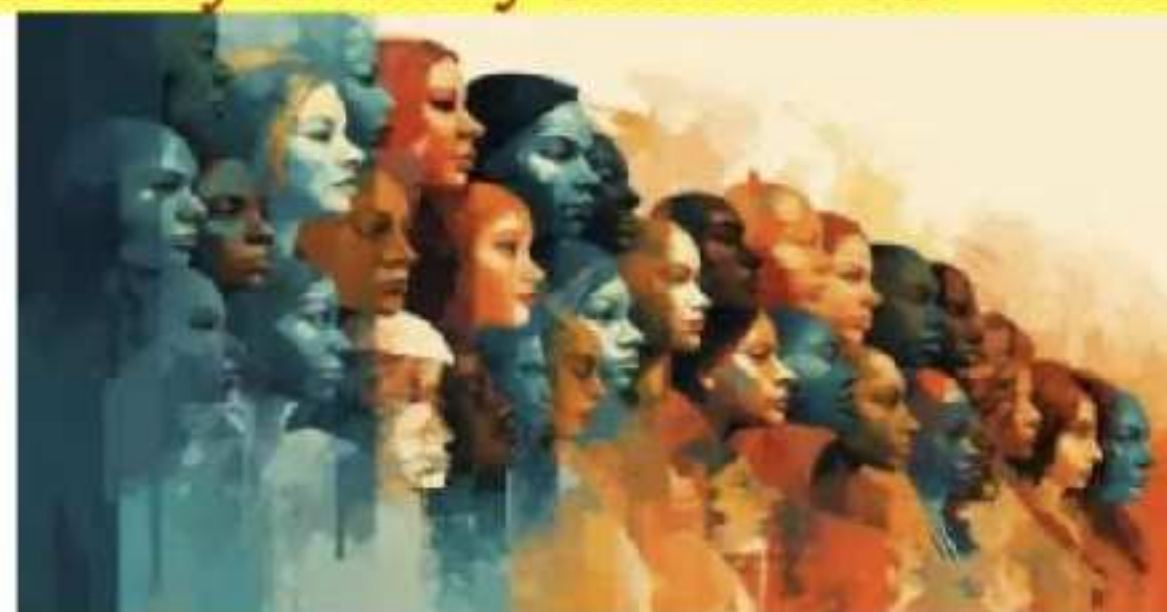
Baha'i

Evening Fireside

Zoom Online

Meeting ID# 386 997 6360 Passcode 1844

"All human beings have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization...The well-being of mankind, its peace and security are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established." – Baha'u'llah



What Teachings of the Baha'i Faith are New & Distinct?

Presentation & Discussion with Christopher Buck, PhD
Author of several books including Baha'i Faith: The Basics
Introduction to the Baha'i Faith: Tim Macy



Friday, June 12

6:30 p.m. (MST), Flagstaff, AZ



What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

Bahá'í Evening Fireside
Flagstaff, Arizona

Christopher Buck, PhD, JD

Hosted by Tim Macy

Friday, June 12, 2026 (6:30 PM MST)

First Disclaimer

In a podcast ("High Strangeness Show" – June 5, 2025), I was asked if there are any clergy in the Bahá'í Faith. My answer: "*Look at my collar. – I'm not a cleric. – We have no clergy in the Bahá'í Faith.*"

Christopher Buck

What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

What is the Bahá'í Faith?

Christopher
Buck

Bahá'í Faith

the basics

**“The distinctive feature
of the Bahá'í religion
is its emphasis
on promoting unity,
from family relations
to international relations.”**

Bahá'í Faith: The Basics (2021), p. 3.



Cambridge University Professor
Edward Granville Browne's

**Pen Portrait of
Bahá'u'lláh (1890)**

"... my conductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, replaced the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure...."

Edward Granville Browne

"The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain! A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued:"

Edward Granville Browne

'Praise be to God that thou hast attained! . . . Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile . . . We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment . . . That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? . . . '

Bahá'u'lláh

'Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the "Most Great Peace" shall come . . . Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? . . . Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind . . . These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family . . . Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind . . .'

Bahá'u'lláh

"Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides many others, I heard from Behá [Bahá'u'lláh]. Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion."

– Edward Granville Browne, quoted in H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (1970), pp. 56–57.

Edward Granville Browne

See further:

**“Scholar Meets Prophet:
Edward Granville Browne and Bahá’u’lláh
(Acre, 1890)”**

Baha’i Studies Review
Published online: 2018



Cambridge University Professor
Edward Granville Browne's

Obituary of 'Abdu'l-
Bahá (1921)

"The death of 'Abbás Efendi [sic], better known since he succeeded his father, Bahá'u'lláh, thirty years ago as 'Abdu'l-Bahá, deprives Persia of one of the most notable of her children and the East of a remarkable personality, who has probably exercised a greater influence not only in the Orient but in the Occident than any Asiatic thinker and teacher of recent times. ..."

Edward Granville Browne

"One of the most notable practical results of the Bahá'í ethical teaching in the United States has been, according to the recent testimony of an impartial and qualified observer, the establishment in Bahá'í circles in New York of a real fraternity between black and white, and an unprecedented lifting of the "colour bar", described by the said observer as 'almost miraculous'."

– Edward Granville Browne, "Sir 'Abdu'l-Bahá 'Abbas: Died 28th November, 1921," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, new series, Vol. 1: (January 1922): pp. 145–146.

Edward Granville Browne

See further:

**“Edward Granville Browne
(1862–1926)”**

British Writers, Supplement XXI
Published: 2015

'Abdu'l-Bahá's "New" Bahá'í Principles Expressed as Actions

1. Search for truth.
2. See humankind as one.
3. See religion as one.
4. Religions should unify.
5. Religion respects science.
6. Women and men are equal.
7. Abolish every prejudice.
8. Promote world peace.
9. Provide education for all.
10. Economic problems require spiritual solutions.
11. The Universal House of Justice is unique.
12. The special Bahá'í "Covenant" protects Bahá'í unity.
13. Adopt a universal auxiliary language.
14. Work is worship.
15. The Bahá'í Faith offers other "new principles."

Second Disclaimer

The 15 answers on the previous slide are based on my research of **three public discourses by 'Abdu'l-Bahá – (1) June 19, 1913; (2) November 15, 1912; and (3) December 2, 1912** – but expressed in my own wording.

Christopher Buck

What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

What Bahá'í teachings are “new” and distinctive, according to ‘Abdu’l–Bahá?

On 15 November 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked:

**“What has Bahá’u’lláh brought
that we have not heard before?”**

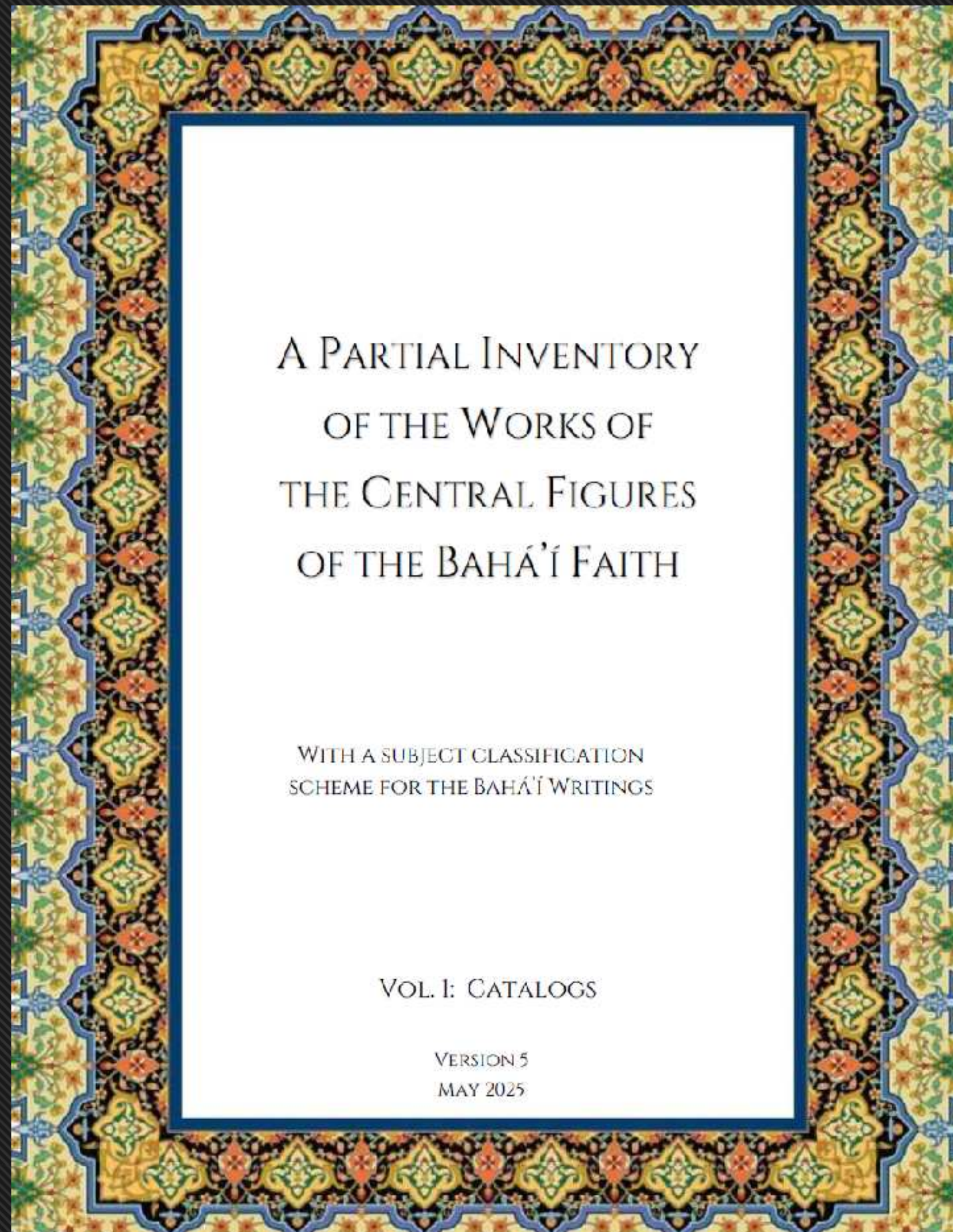
The Promulgation of Universal Peace

www.bahai.org/r/591469335

On 2 December 1912, ‘Abdu’l–Bahá was asked:

**“You have asked me what new principles
have been revealed by Him.” (Bahá’u’lláh)**

The Promulgation of Universal Peace
www.bahai.org/r/322194491



Words spoken on 1913-06-19 in Port Said

- ❖ "*Partial Inventory*" ID – **ABU0231**
- ❖ 860 words, mixed.
- ❖ **Persian/Arabic text:**
- ❖ <https://www.bahai.org/r/918230707>
- ❖ Source: *Partial Inventory* (2025), p. 1466.
- ❖ **Update:** *Partial Inventory* (May 2026), **p. 1209.**
- ❖ [194 volumes. Requires **Dropbox** account.]

A PARTIAL INVENTORY
OF THE WORKS OF
THE CENTRAL FIGURES
OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH

WITH A SUBJECT CLASSIFICATION
SCHEME FOR THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS

VOLUME 193:

CATALOGS

VERSION 6.0 • MAY 2026

Authenticated and authoritative Persian text, with
authorized English translation (posted 29 August 2024):

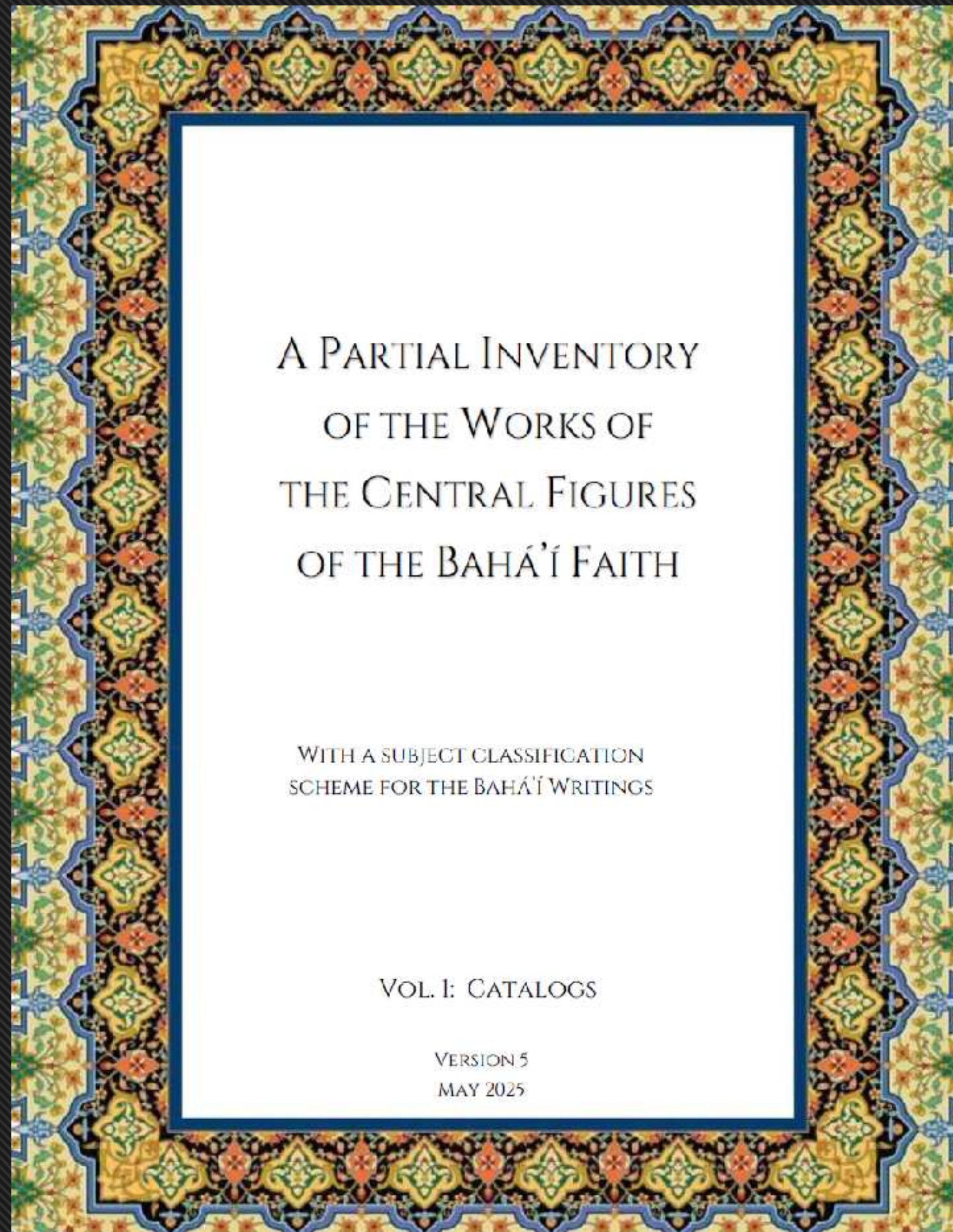
**Persian Text of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Talk in the Hotel Sultání in
Port Sa’íd, Egypt (19 June 1913)**

نهایت اعتراض این بود، اگر نفسی می‌گفت در انجیل هم شبیه این تعالیم هست، می‌گفتیم از جمله این تعالیم وحدت عالم انسانی است، این در کدام کتاب است؟ نشان بدهید و صلح عمومی است، این در کدام کتاب است؟ و دین باید سبب محبت و الفت باشد، اگر نباشد عدم دین بهتر است، در کدام کتاب است؟ و دین باید مطابق با عقل سلیم و علم صحیح باشد، این در کدام کتاب است؟ و مساوات بین رجال و نساء، در کدام کتاب است؟ و ترک تعصب مذهبی و دینی و تعصب وطنی و تعصب سیاسی و تعصب جنسی است، و این در کدام کتاب است؟ و از این قبیل و السّلام

Original Persian published in: [Khitábát-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá](#), Vol. 3, pp. 76–78.

See also: <https://oceanoflights.org/selection-from-talks-of-abdul-baha-140-fa>.

Persian typescript courtesy of Adib Masumian.



Address at Thompson home, New York, 1912-11-15

- ❖ "*Partial Inventory*" ID – **ABU0038**
- ❖ **1760 words.**
- ❖ Source: *Partial Inventory* (2025), p. 1453.
- ❖ **Update:** *Partial Inventory* (May 2026), p. **1199**.
- ❖ [194 volumes. Requires **Dropbox** account.]

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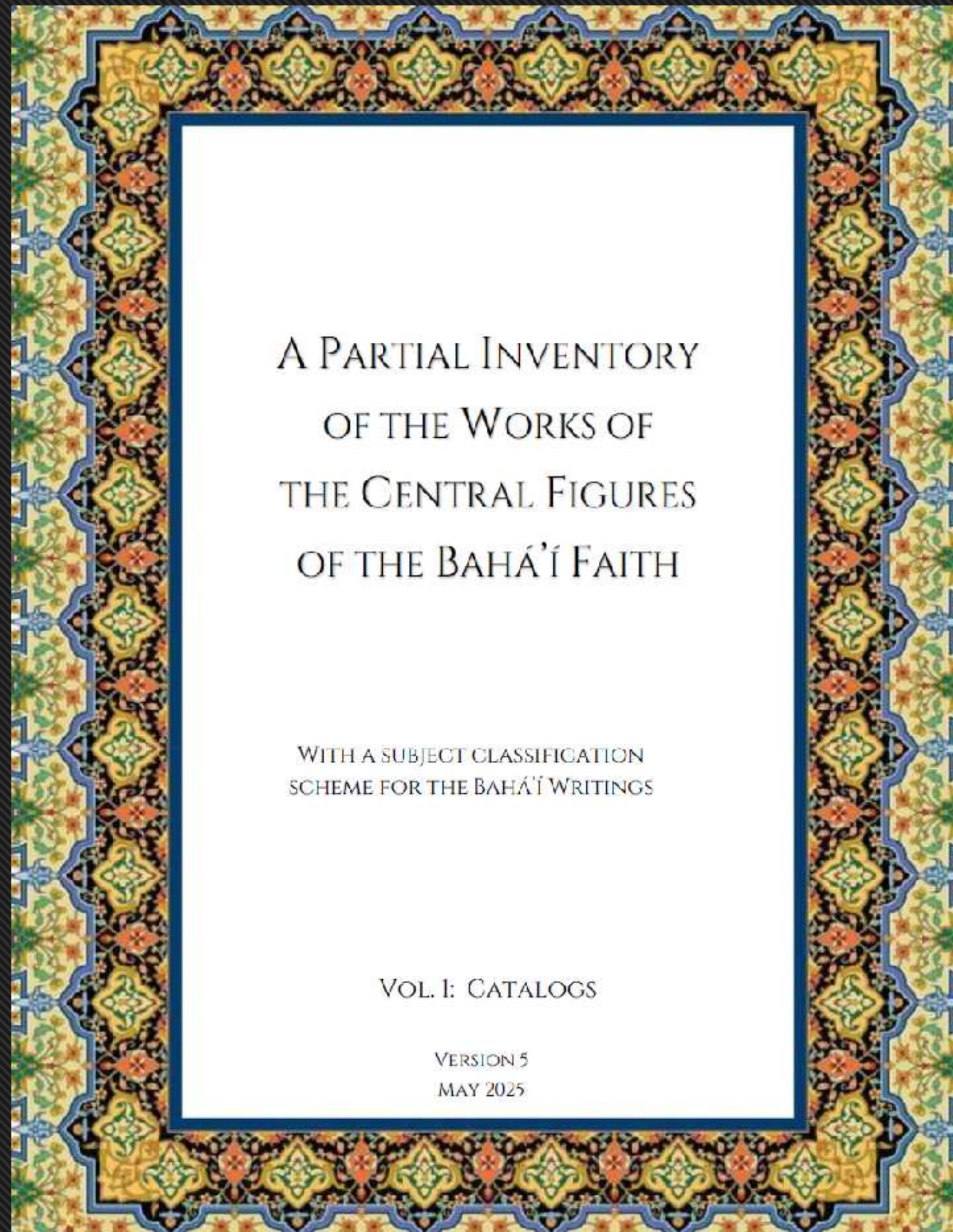
VOLUME 193:

CATALOGS

VERSION 6.0 • MAY 2026

Teachings confirmed in “Tablet to the Hague.”

No Persian Text of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s November 15, 1912 talk



Address at 780 West End (Kinney home) New York 1912-12-02

- ❖ "*Partial Inventory*" ID – **ABU0130**.
- ❖ **1090 words, Persian:**
- ❖ www.bahai.org/r/918230707
- ❖ Source: *Partial Inventory* (2025), p. 1459.
- ❖ **Update:** *Partial Inventory* (May 2026), **p. 1204**.
- ❖ [194 volumes. Requires **Dropbox** account.]

A PARTIAL INVENTORY
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SCHEME FOR THE BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS

VOLUME 193:

CATALOGS

VERSION 6.0 • MAY 2026

Rediscovered/published Sep 14, 2023 (110 years later):

Persian Text of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's December 2, 1912 talk

خوش آمدید خوب مجمعی است الحمد لله وجوه منجذب بملکوت ابهی رویها متوجه باسماں است قلوب ما مستبشر به بشارات الله خوب مجلسی است خوب مجلسی است امشب می خواهم که صحبت از خصایص تعالیم بهاء الله بدارم جمیع تعالیمی که از پیش در ظهور مظاهر مقدسه قبل داده شده در مظهر بهاء الله هست اما تعالیم جدیدی هست که در هیچ کتابی نیست بعضی ها من می گویم ما بقی را خود استنباط از الواح بهاء الله بکنید زیرا تعالیم جدید بهاء الله بسیار است اگر لوح کلمات مکنونه را بخوانید ملاحظه می کنید که هر فقره از آن فقرات تعلیمی است الواح لوح بشارات تعالیم مخصوصه دارد لوح کلمات تعالیم مخصوصه دارد لوح تجلیات تعالیم مخصوصه دارد و همچنین سایر الواح بهاء الله هر یک تعالیم جدیدی دارد که در هیچ کتبی و صحفی نیست و همچنین در کتاب اقدس تعالیم جدیدی دارد که در هیچ کتبی نیست آنها را که مطالعه می کنید واقف می شوید حالا من بعضی ها را ذکر می کنم (خوش آمدید خوب مجمعی است الحمد لله وجوه منجذب بملکوت ابهی)

What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

**The Story (History) of How, When, and Why
'Abdu'l-Bahá Identified New and Distinctive
Bahá'í Principles**



What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

‘Abdu’l-Baha’s Talk in Port Sa’id (19 June 1913)

Hotel Sultání in Port Sa'íd, Egypt (19 June 1913)

- ❖ In the afternoon of June 17th 1913, 'Abdu'l-Bahá landed at Port Said. [...]
- ❖ As the hotel in which they were to be housed proved too small for their numbers and activities, a huge tent of the type which Egyptians used for public functions was pitched on the roof of the hotel. [...]
- ❖ Another day, under that tent, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, looking at the ranks assembled, said it was truly remarkable that such a gathering had been made possible.
- ❖ Hasan M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá, The Centre of the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1971), pp. 396–398.



Authenticated and authoritative Persian text, with
authorized English translation (posted 29 August 2024):

**Persian Text of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Talk in the Hotel Sultání in
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Original Persian published in: [Khitábát-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá](#), Vol. 3, pp. 76–78.

See also: <https://oceanoflights.org/selection-from-talks-of-abdul-baha-140-fa>.

Persian typescript courtesy of Adib Masumian.

**No talk is there in town save of the loved one's rippling hair;
No spell abroad except her eyebrow's curve—exquisite snare!¹**

**So resoundingly was the Divine Call raised that all ears were
thrilled by it and all souls stirred. "What call is this," minds
marvelled, "that hath been so raised? What star is this, that
hath thus risen in the heavens?"**

'Abdu'l-Bahá

"Extract from a talk of 'Abdu'l-Bahá" (Authorized Translation)

www.bahai.org/r/918412038 (Bahá'í Reference Library)

Some were lost in wonder, others made inquiry; still others set forth proofs and arguments.

All confessed that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh were, in truth, unparalleled, and that they constituted the spirit of this age, the illumination of this century.

'Abdu'l-Bahá

“Extract from a talk of 'Abdu'l-Bahá” (Authorized Translation)

www.bahai.org/r/918412038 (Bahá'í Reference Library)

At most, such criticism as was voiced against them did not extend beyond the claim that similar teachings had been enunciated in the Gospel, in reply to which we said:

“Among these teachings is the unity of mankind—show us in which book this is recorded.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“Extract from a talk of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Authorized Translation)

www.bahai.org/r/918412038 (Bahá’í Reference Library)

“Another teaching is universal peace—in which book is this?

**That religion should be a cause of love and unity, otherwise it
would be better to do without it—in which book is this?**

**And that religion should be conformable with sound reason and
true knowledge—in which book is this?”**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“Extract from a talk of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Authorized Translation)

www.bahai.org/r/918412038 (Bahá’í Reference Library)

In the original Persian:

این در کدام کتاب است؟
 “Ín dar kudám kitáb ast?”

Literally: “This (ín) in (dar) which (kudám) book (kitáb) is (ast)?”

“In which book is this?”

— ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Port Sa’íd, Egypt (19 June 1913)

Authorized Translation (Bahá’í Reference Library) Original Persian text:
<https://oceanoflights.org/selection-from-talks-of-abdul-baha-140-fa>

“In which book hath the equality of men and women been established?”

And the elimination of all forms of prejudice, whether of creed, religion, nation, politics, or race—in which book is this?”

These and similar considerations we set forth in reply.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“Extract from a talk of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá” (Authorized Translation)

www.bahai.org/r/918412038 (Bahá’í Reference Library)

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Six Port Sa'id Principles (19 June 1913)

- ❖ Principle #1: "Among these teachings is the unity of mankind—*show us in which book this is recorded.*"
- ❖ Principle #2: "Another teaching is universal peace—*in which book is this?*"
- ❖ Principle #3: "That religion should be a cause of love and unity, otherwise it would be better to do without it—*in which book is this?*"
- ❖ Principle #4: "And that religion should be conformable with sound reason and true knowledge—*in which book is this?*"
- ❖ Principle #5: "*In which book* hath the equality of men and women been established?"
- ❖ Principle #6: "And the elimination of all forms of prejudice, whether of creed, religion, nation, politics, or race—*in which book is this?*"



**Therefore, I will speak to you upon
the distinctive characteristics of
the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh . . .**

**Talk at Home of Miss Juliet Thompson
48 West Tenth Street, New York**

15 November 1912

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Notes by Hooper Harris

THE DIARY OF JULIET THOMPSON



47

On November 15, the Master came to our house (48 West Tenth Street) and gave a most wonderful talk in the front room on the first floor to a great crowd of people who filled both the front and back rooms and the hall.

I brought George up from the basement and stood him on a chair, so that he could see the Master. He thought the Master was God and was frightened.

Driving down to us with Mrs Champney, our Lord had said: "The time has come for Me to throw bombs!" And He threw them in His talk that night.

Juliet Thompson, *The Diary of Juliet Thompson* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1983), p. 362.

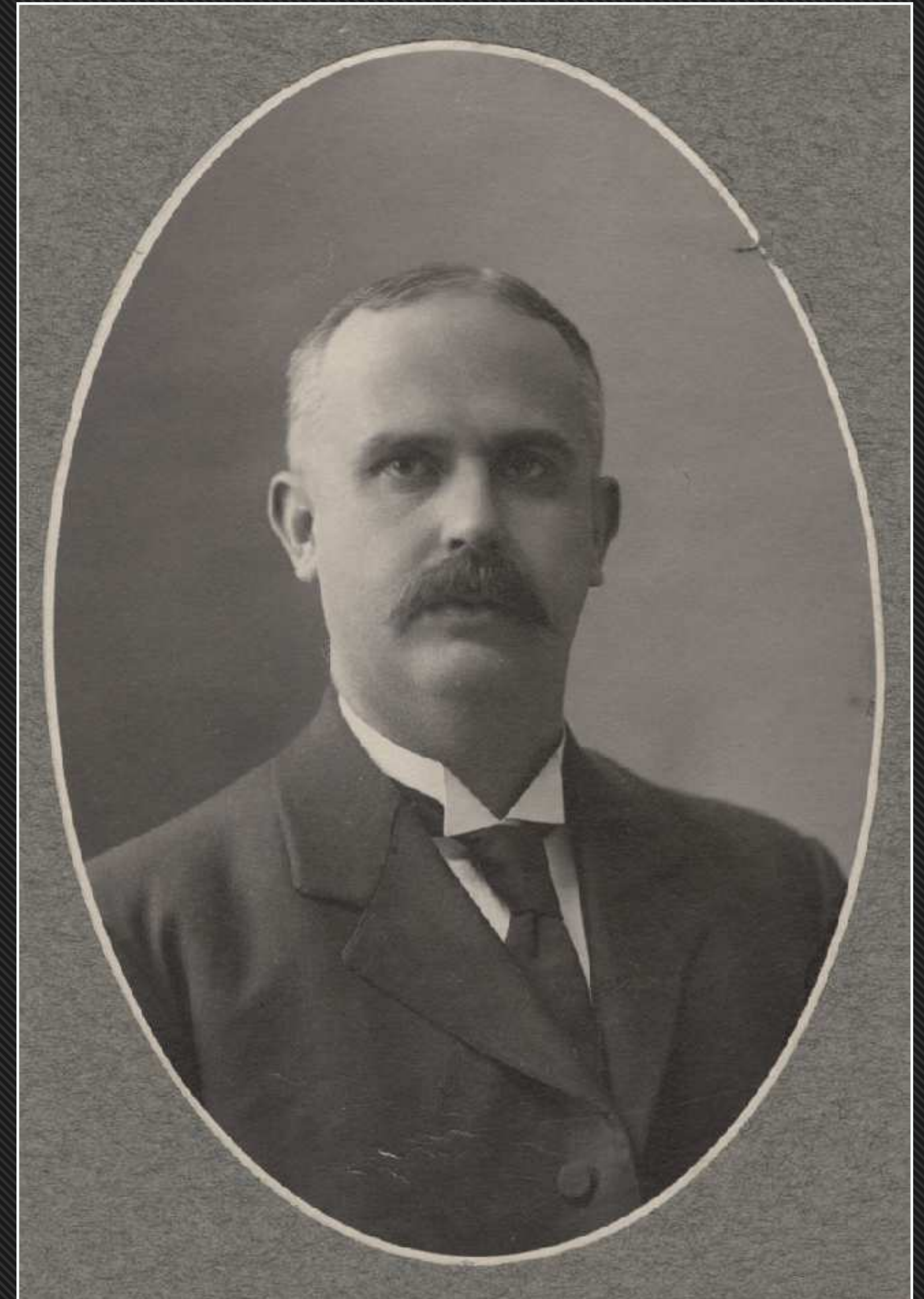


Juliet Thompson, Bahá'í
artist. Host of 'Abdu'l-
Bahá's 15 Nov. 1912 talk.

Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.

“Notes by Hooper Harris” (Court Reporter)

- ❖ William Hooper Harris (1866–1934) “worked by day, studied law at night and was admitted to the bar in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1893” and “in 1894, ... came to New York City to live, where he became an expert court reporter, doing work of unusually high quality till the very day of his death.”
- ❖ “He was indeed one of the leading apostles of Bahá'u'lláh.” – Shoghi Effendi, letter dated September 20, 1934, to Mrs. Harris. – Marie B. Moore, “Hooper Harris” (“In Memoriam,” *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. VI (1934–1936), pp. 486–488 [p.486].





Hooper Harris (photo 1906) prior to trip to India (1907). Transcribed translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 15 Nov. 1912 talk.

Photo ID: P1529.
Courtesy of the National Bahá'í Archives, United States (9 Sept. 2022).



L-R: Mirza Mahmud Zarqani, Hooper Harris, Harlan Ober, Hand of the Cause of God, Ibn-i-Abhar.

Photo: Bombay, India (1907). Courtesy of the National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

Talk at Juliet Thompson's Home (15 Nov. 1912)

- ❖ Saturday, November 15, 1912 [New York]
- ❖ "There was a public meeting in the evening at the home of Miss Juliet Thompson. The Master spoke about the greatness of this cycle, the victory of the Cause and the influence and importance of the teachings and laws of Bahá'u'lláh. His talk was delivered in such awe-inspiring tones that the minds were dazzled and the hearts captivated by the grandeur and majesty of the Center of the Covenant. Both before and after the meeting many people were honored to visit with Him in a separate room."
- ❖ Mahmúd's Diary: The Diary of Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání Chronicling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey to America (Oxford: George Ronald, 1998).

STAR OF THE WEST

"We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; that all nations shall become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men shall be strengthened; that diversity of religion shall cease and differences of race be annulled. So it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come." — BAHÁ'O'LLAH.

Vol. VIII

Jamal 1, 73 (April 28, 1917)

No. 3

The Distinctive Characteristics of the Teachings of Baha'o'llah

Address by Abdul-Baha, November 15, 1912, at the home of Miss Juliet Thompson, New York City

I HAVE spoken in the various Christian churches and in the synagogues, and in no assemblage has there been a dissenting voice. All have listened and all have conceded that the teachings of Baha'o'llah are superlative in character; have acknowledged the fact that they constitute the very essence or spirit of this new age and that there is no better path-way to the attainment of its ideals. Not a single voice has been raised in objection. At most there have been those who have refused to acknowledge the mission of Baha'o'llah; though they have universally admitted that he was a great teacher, a most powerful soul, a very great man.

Some of them, however, who could find no other pretext whatsoever, have said, "these teachings are not new; they are old; we have heard them before."

Therefore I wish to speak to you this evening on the distinctive characteristics of the manifestation of Baha'o'llah, and to prove that from every standpoint his Cause is distinguished from all others.

From the standpoint of its didactic character, or its method of teaching it is distinguished.

From the standpoint of its practical effects, it is distinguished.

From the standpoint of its spread and progress, it is quite distinguished. . . .

The story of . . . of Baha'o'llah is as follows:

When he appeared in Persia all of the contemporaneous sects and religions rose against him. His enemies were kings. While the enemies of his holiness Christ were the Jews, the Pharisees; the enemies of Baha'o'llah were rulers who could command armies and bring into the arena of operation hundreds of thousands of soldiers. These kings were the representatives of some fifty millions of people all of whom under their influence and domination were opposed to Baha'o'llah. Therefore, in effect, Baha'o'llah, singly and alone virtually withstood fifty millions of enemies. Yet these fifty millions so far from being able to dominate the situation were unable to withstand his wonderful personality and the power and influence of his wonderful Cause. Though they were bent upon extinguishing the light in that most brilliant lantern they were ultimately defeated and day unto day his light became more radiant. These fifty millions of souls tried to lessen his greatness but day unto day his greatness grew in proportion to their increased efforts to diminish it.

Surrounded by enemies who were seeking his life he made no effort whatever to conceal himself; he did nothing to

protect himself, nay, rather, in his spiritual might and power he was at all times visible before the faces of men, easy of access, ever withstanding these fifty millions who were opposing him. At last his banner was held aloft.

If we glance through history and review the pages of holy writ we will find that none of the prophets of the past ever spread his teachings or promulgated his cause from a prison. But his holiness Baha'o'llah held aloft the banner of the Cause of God while he was in a dungeon, addressing the kings of the earth from his prison cell and severely arraigning them for their oppression of their subjects and their misuse of power. The letter he sent to the Shah of Persia under such conditions may now be read by anyone. Likewise his epistle to the Sultan of Turkey is current among men as are also his epistles to Napoleon, the Emperor of the French, and to the other rulers of the world, including the President of the United States.

The book, or tablet, containing these "Epistles to the Kings," was published in India some thirty years ago and is known as the *Surat'l'Hykl*, or the "Discourse on the Temple." Whatever is recorded in these epistles has come to pass. Some of the prophecies contained in these "Epistles to the Kings" came to pass after two years; others were fulfilled after five or ten years; still others after twenty years. Some of the most important prophecies, relative to events transpiring in the Balkans are being fulfilled at the present time though written long ago. For instance, in the epistle which Baha'o'llah addressed to the Sultan of Turkey the war and the occurrences of the present day were foretold by him. These events were also prophesied in the tablet he addressed to the City of Constantinople. All of the events which are taking place in Constantinople at present were foretold by him long ago.

Now, during all this time, while he was addressing himself to these powerful rulers, he was a prisoner in a Turkish

dungeon. Consider how marvelous it was for a prisoner under the eye and control of the Turks to address so daringly, so boldly and so severely the very king who was responsible for his imprisonment! What power is this! What greatness! Nowhere in history is the record of such an episode to be found. In spite of the iron rule and absolute dominion of these kings his function was to withstand them; and so constant and firm was he that he caused their banners to come down and his own standard to be upraised; for today the flags of both the Ottoman and the Persian empires are trailing in the dust, whereas the standard of Baha'o'llah is being held aloft in the world both in the East and in the West. Consider what tremendous power this is! What a decisive argument! Although a prisoner in a fortress, he paid no heed to these kings, regarded not their power of life and death but on the contrary addressed them in plain and fearless language telling them explicitly that the time would come when their flags would be brought low, whereas his own flag would be held aloft. He declared freely:

"Ere long you will find yourselves in manifest loss. Your sovereignties will be laid waste; your empires will become a wilderness and a heap of ruins; hosts from without will come and subdue your lands; lamentation and mourning will emanate from your homes. There will be no throne; there will be no crown; there will be no palace; there will be no armies. Nay, rather, all these will be brought low. But the standard of the Cause of God will be held aloft. Then you will see that hosts and hosts will enter the Cause of God and that this mighty revelation will be spread throughout the world."

All of you should get the "Discourse on the Temple," the *Surat'l'Hykl*, read these prophecies carefully, and ponder over them.

Now this is one of the characteristics of Baha'o'llah. Of what prophetic dispensation can you recount such events?

In what cycle have such things taken place? In which one of the sacred books do you find such prophecies of the future? Turn to the holy books of the past and study them and see if you can find such explicit statements!

And now let us compare the teachings of Baha'o'llah with the holy teachings which have descended in the past.

First among the great teachings of Baha'o'llah is that of the

Investigation of Reality.

The meaning is that every individual member of humanity is exhorted to set aside superstitions, traditions and the blind imitation of ancestors and forefathers and investigate, for himself, reality. Inasmuch as the reality is one, through the investigation of reality all the religions and nations of the world will become one.

In which one of the sacred books of the past do you find the announcement of this principle?

The second great principle of the teachings of Baha'o'llah is that respecting the

Oneness of the world of humanity.

Baha'o'llah addresses all mankind, saying:

"You are all the leaves of one tree; there are no race differences or distinctions. Nay, rather, all of you are the servants of God and all of you are submerged in the ocean of his oneness. Not a single soul is bereft. On the contrary, all humanity is the recipient of the bounties of God. Every human creature has a portion of his bestowals and a share of the effulgence of his reality. God is kind to all; all mankind are his sheep and he is their real Shepherd."

In what Scriptures do you find such a statement? Where else is there such universality? Where else such breadth? Where else this unequivocal statement of the solidarity of mankind? In what

sacred record can you show such a teaching? As regards any possible distinctions the utmost that Baha'o'llah says is that conditions among men vary; that some, for instance, are defective. Therefore such souls must be educated in order that they may be brought to the level of perfection. Or, some are sick; they must be treated and cared for until they are healed. Or, some are asleep; they should be awakened. Some are but children; they should be helped to attain maturity. But all must be loved. The child must not be disliked simply because it is a child. Nay, rather, it should be educated. The sick man must not be avoided or slighted merely because he is sick. Nay, rather, he must be loved and treated until he is healed. Nor must the soul that is asleep be treated contemptuously. Nay, rather, he must be awakened.

Next, Baha'o'llah teaches that:

Religion must be in conformity with reason and science.

If it is not then it is not religion at all and is not worthy of credence.

Where do you find any such statement as this in any of the sacred books?

Another fundamental teaching of Baha'o'llah is that

Religion must be the cause of unity and good fellowship.

If it is productive of enmity, hatred and rancor then it is better to abandon it and be without any religion at all.

In which one of the sacred books do you find such a statement?

Again, Baha'o'llah declares that:

Prejudice in all its forms . . . must be abolished.

and that until these prejudices are entirely removed the world of humanity will not and cannot attain peace, prosperity and composure.

In which one of the sacred volumes do you find the annunciation of such a principle?

(Continued on page 39)

The Distinctive Characteristics of the Teachings of Baha'o'llah

(Continued from page 31)

Next Baha'o'llah declares that—

There shall be perfect equality between men and women.

For God, he says, has created all and has not permitted any distinction between the two. Why should man create a distinction which God does not recognize? In the kingdoms beneath man, while, indeed, there is distinction of gender, yet the differences between male and female are not found to be at all vital. The mare, for instance, is as strong and even more speedy than the horse. In the animal and vegetable kingdoms there is perfect equality between the male and female. That person the mirror of whose heart is the purest and cleanest, whose character is the highest is the nearest and dearest to God be that person male or female.

Next, Baha'o'llah has declared the necessity for a

Universal language.

that it may serve as a means of international communication and thus remove misunderstandings. This teaching as to the importance of a universal language is set forth in the *Kitab'l Akdas*, or "Book of Laws," published fifty years ago.

Next, there is a principle initiated by Baha'o'llah relative to

Universal Education.

In other words, that all mankind shall become educated and that no illiteracy shall remain.

In which one of the sacred books do you find such a text?

Work an act of worship.

Next, Baha'o'llah teaches that it is incumbent upon every soul to be qualified as the practitioner of some useful trade, craft or profession and that the honest practice of such trade, craft or profession is to be regarded as an act of devotion.

But the teachings of Baha'o'llah are limitless and there is no time now to go into further details. The point is that

these teachings are new and that they are not to be found in any of the religious books of the past. Therefore if anyone should raise an objection and ask the question, "What has Baha'o'llah brought that is new," in response you should refer to and cite these statements.

In brief, the manifestation of Baha'o'llah is distinguished from every standpoint.

The majesty of his manifestation was remarkable.

The power of God shown in this dispensation is remarkable.

The efficacy of the Word of God therein is remarkable.

All the prophets during their life time were scoffed at. For instance, consider how his holiness Moses was scorned. The people called him a murderer. They said, "You killed a man and fled, for you were afraid of retribution and is it possible that now, after your former acts, you have come to be a prophet?" There are many similar episodes recorded not only of Moses but of the other prophets. How severe was their molestation! But his holiness Moses endured all these difficulties, for he had engaged in the spread of the Word of God.

How much they endeavored to belittle his holiness Christ! They placed upon his head a crown of thorns and paraded him through the streets and bazaars. One passer-by or on-looker would say, "Peace be upon thee, thou king of the Jews!" This, instead of being said with respect would be uttered in mockery. Another would bow to him backward and say in scornful tones: "Thou King of the Jews!" or "Lord of Lords, peace be upon thee!" Still another would spit upon his blessed countenance.

In short, the various forms of persecution which they used are mentioned in the books of the old cycle, whether Jewish, Roman or Greek,—the persecution which Christ suffered during the time of his manifestation. There were

no praises offered, nay, rather, the only praise which was offered Christ was offered by the believers. His holiness Peter, for instance, was one of those who praised him; and his disciples who were firm believers eulogized him. But how numerous are the books which were written against his holiness Christ! Refer to the history of the church and find how many were the books written against him by the Roman, Greek and Egyptian philosophers. How many were the calumnies which they attributed to him and how many were the libels against him!

But during the manifestation of his holiness Baha'o'llah, from the day of his appearance to the day of his disappearance all the nations of the world acknowledged his greatness and even those who were his bitterest enemies have recorded in their books: "This man was truly great; his influence was majestic. This person was a glorious man; his power was tremendous, his speech was most eloquent, but alas, he was a misleader of the people." This was the nature of their eulogies. It is evident that the writer of such a statement as this that Baha'o'llah was a misleader of the people must have been an enemy; but nevertheless, before making that statement he had first written: "This person was most glorious, was most mighty, was peerless, his speech was most eloquent." After that the writer adds: "But, alas, he was a misleader of the people!" His enemies have even written poems about him, which, though intended for satire have in reality been praise. For instance, a certain poet opposed to his Cause, has said:

"Beware! Beware! lest ye approach this person for he is possessed of such power, of such an eloquent tongue that he is a sorcerer. This person charms men, he drugs them, he is a hypnotizer and hypnotizes them. Beware! Beware! lest you read his book, lest you follow his example, lest you associate with his companions, because they are the possessors of tremendous power and they are misleaders." He used these charac-

terizations believing them to be terms of belittlement, unaware that they were in reality praises, because a wise man, after reading such a warning would say, "The power of this man must be tremendous if even his enemies acknowledge his greatness. Undoubtedly such a power is heavenly in character." This was one of the reasons that so many were moved to investigate. The more they wrote against Baha'o'llah the more the people were attracted and the greater the number who came to investigate the truth. They would say, "This is remarkable! This is a great man and we must investigate. We must look into this Cause to find out what it all means, what is the purpose, what are the proofs, that we may learn for ourselves." Thus the maligning statements of the enemies caused the people to become friends and approach.

In Persia the mullahs went so far as to go into the pulpits and from the pulpits to proclaim against the Cause of Baha'o'llah, throwing their turbans upon the ground,—a sign of great agitation,—and saying, "O people, this Baha'o'llah is a sorcerer, he is mesmerizing you, he is alienating you from your own religion, he is making you a follower of his. Beware! Beware! lest you read his book; beware! beware! lest you associate with his friends."

Of these very ones who were thus decrying him, Baha'o'llah says:

"They are my heralds; they are the ones who are proclaiming my message; they are the ones who are spreading my word. Pray that they may be multiplied, pray that their number may increase and that they may cry more vociferously. The more badly they speak of me and the greater their agitation, the more tremendous will be the efficacy of the Cause of God, the more luminous the Word and the greater the radiance of the divine sun. And eventually the gloomy darkness of the world will disappear and the light of Reality will shine, until the whole earth shall be illuminated."

“The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are superlative in character.”

I have spoken in the various Christian churches and in the synagogues, and in no assemblage has there been a dissenting voice. All have listened, and all have conceded that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are superlative in character. [...] Not a single voice has been raised in objection. At most there have been some who have refused to acknowledge the mission of Bahá'u'lláh. www.bahai.org/r/280647098

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“I will speak to you upon the distinctive characteristics of Bahá'u'lláh.”

Some who could find no other pretext have said, “These teachings are not new; 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. www.bahai.org/r/280647098

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Search for truth.

First among the great principles revealed by Him is that of the investigation of reality. The meaning is that every individual member of humankind is exhorted and commanded to [...] 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. www.bahai.org/r/451466439

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

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. www.bahai.org/r/326996889

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Religion respects science.

Bahá'u'lláh teaches that religion must be in conformity with science and reason. If belief and teaching are opposed to the analysis of reason and principles of science, they are not worthy of acceptance. This principle has not been revealed in any of the former Books of divine teaching.

www.bahai.org/r/770255389

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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. www.bahai.org/r/343577848

'Abdu'l-Bahá

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.

www.bahai.org/r/297488343

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Women and men are equal.

Another teaching is that there shall be perfect equality between men and women. Why should man create a distinction which God does not recognize? [...] In the kingdom of mankind this equality must likewise exist, and the one whose heart is purest, whose life and character are highest and nearest to the divine standard is most worthy and excellent in the sight of God. This is the only true and real distinction, be that one man or woman. www.bahai.org/r/749055499

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Adopt 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. This teaching is set forth in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas ("Most Holy Book") published fifty years ago.

www.bahai.org/r/712728620

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Provide education for all.

He has also proclaimed the principle that all mankind shall be educated and that no illiteracy be allowed to remain. This practical remedy for the need of the world cannot be found in the text of any other sacred Books.

www.bahai.org/r/261915011

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www.bahai.org/r/261915011

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

Work is worship.

He 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.

www.bahai.org/r/068656283

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

The Bahá'í Faith offers other new principles.

The teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are boundless and without end in their far-reaching benefit to mankind. **The point and purpose of our statement today is that they are new and that they are not found in any of the religious Books of the past. This is in answer to the question, "What has Bahá'u'lláh brought that we have not heard before?"** Therefore, it is conclusive and evident that the Manifestation of God in this day is distinguished from all former appearances and revelations by His majesty, His power and the efficacy and application of His Word. www.bahai.org/r/591469335

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

See further:

**“Baha’u’llah’s Bishārāt (Glad–Tidings):
A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen”**

Baha’i Studies Review
Published: 2010



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

**Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney
780 West End Avenue, New York**

2 December 1912

The Promulgation of Universal Peace

Notes by Esther Foster

ABOUT THIS HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPH

'Abdu'l-Bahá, December 2, 1912. Portrait by Jacob Schloss (1857–1938), famed New York City photographer known for his portraits of theatrical stars. Photograph taken at the home of Bahá'í hosts, Edward B. Kinney (1863–1950) and Carrie Kinney (1878–1959), 780 West End Avenue, New York. Courtesy of the U.S. National Bahá'í Archives (Edward Sevcik, Archivist).

First published in *Star of the West*, Vol. 10, No. 8 (August 1, 1919), p. 31. See: https://bahai.works/index.php?title=File:SW_Volume10.pdf&page=175.

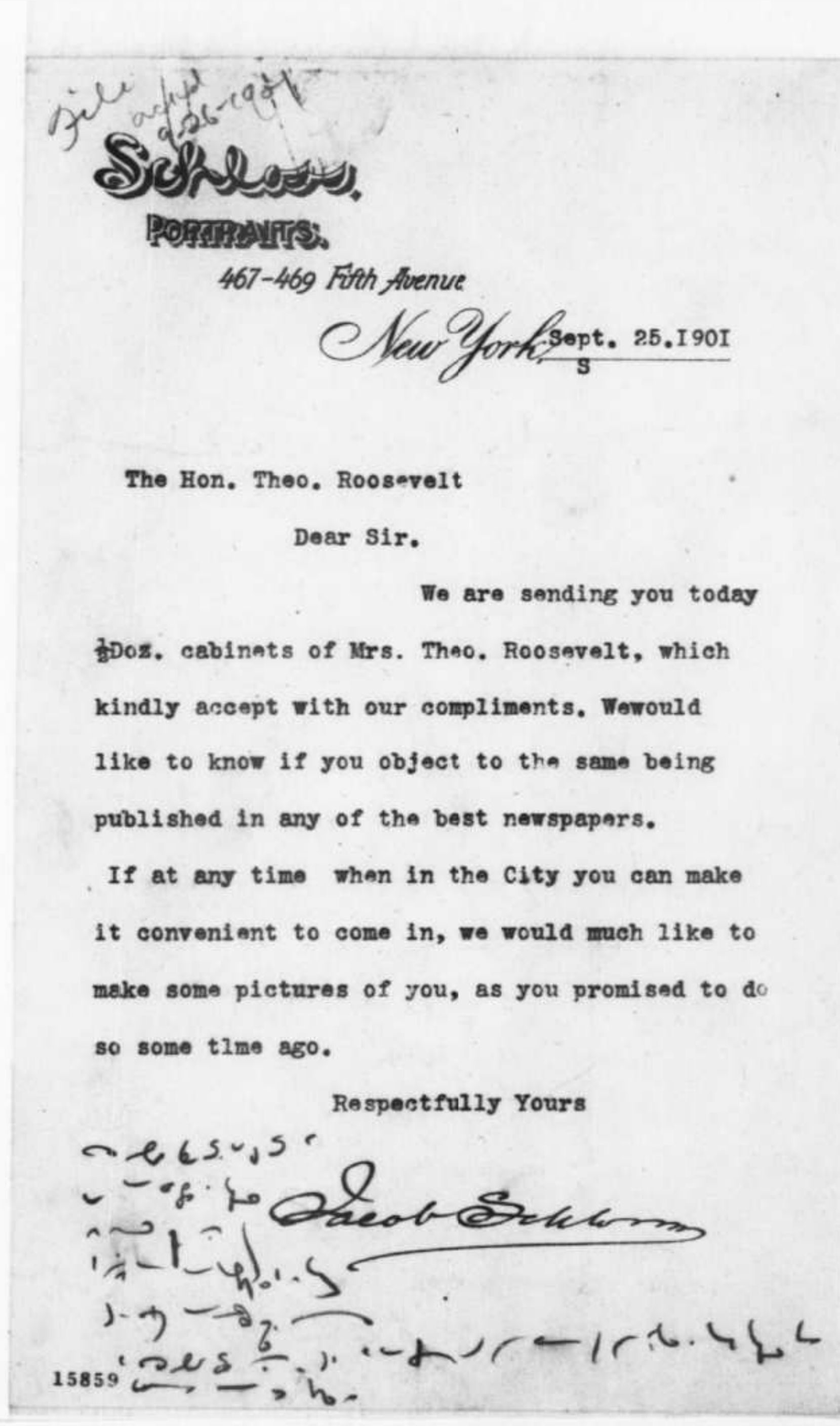
Page 1 of the same issue invites purchases of the photograph:

"BULLETIN—The photograph of ABDUL-BAHA shown in this issue can be had from Jacob Schloss, 2511 Broadway, New York City. Size, 7½x9¼ inches. Price \$1.50 and postage."

Jacob Schloss, Celebrity Photographer

- ❖ "Others (Napoleon Sarony, Schloss, Aimé Dupont, and Dana) intentionally sought the higher end of the profession and chose locations for their studios that assured such patronage—indeed, **having one's portrait taken by Jacob Schloss in his studios on West 23rd Street or Fifth Avenue was a badge of success**, indicating an actor had achieved some professional standing."
- ❖ David Mayer, "Quote the Words To Prompt the Attitudes': The Victorian Performer, the Photographer, and the Photograph," *Theatre Survey* 43:2 (November 2002) : 223–251 [240].
- ❖ Photo: "The First Lady of the Land" [Edith Roosevelt] "Copyright, 1902, by Schloss," *Harper's Weekly*, Vol. 46 (January 18, 1902), p. 77.





First photograph of
'Abdu'l-Bahá taken by
Jacob Schloss, 2 Dec.
1912, in Kinney home.



Photo ID: P7946.
Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.

First photograph
(enhanced) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
taken by Jacob Schloss, 2
Dec. 1912, in Kinney home.

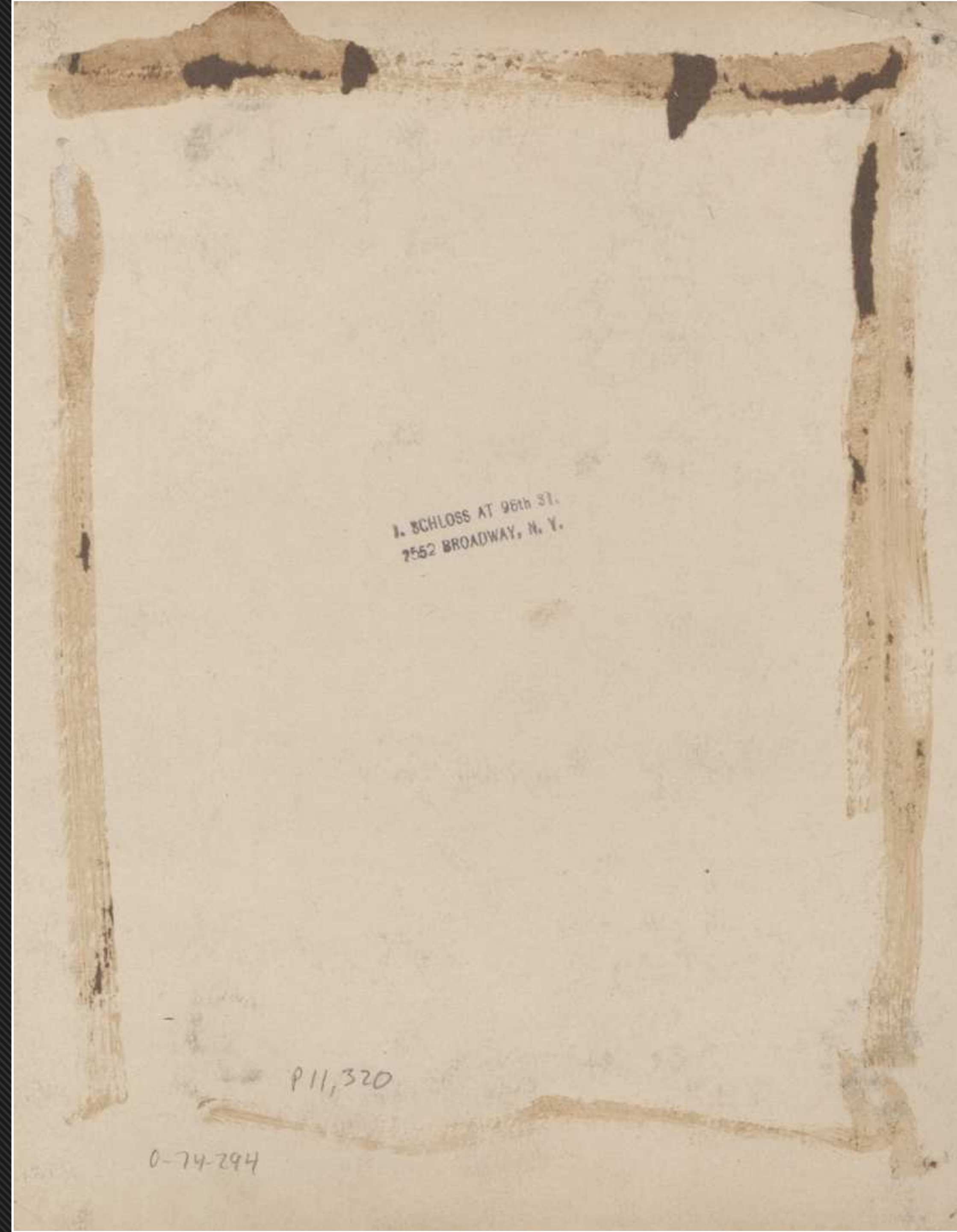


Photo ID: P7946.
Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.

Second photograph of
'Abdu'l-Bahá taken by
Jacob Schloss, 2 Dec.
1912, in Kinney home.



Photo ID: P11320.
Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.



Second photo of 'Abdu'l-Bahá taken by Jacob Schloss, 2 Dec. 1912, with Schloss stamp on back.

Photo ID: P11320 (verso).
Courtesy of the National Bahá'í Archives, United States.

Second photograph
(enhanced) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
taken by Jacob Schloss, 2
Dec. 1912, in Kinney home.



Photo ID: P23194.
Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.

Third photograph of
'Abdu'l-Bahá taken by
Jacob Schloss, 2 Dec.
1912, in Kinney home.



Photo ID: P23212.
Courtesy of the National
Bahá'í Archives, United
States.

Third photograph (framed)
of 'Abdu'l-Bahá taken by
Jacob Schloss, 2 Dec.
1912, in Kinney home.



Photo ID:P001757
(recto). Courtesy of the
National Bahá'í Archives,
United States.



Third photograph
(enhanced) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá
taken by Jacob Schloss, 2
Dec. 1912, in Kinney home.

Courtesy Bahá'í Media
Bank, Bahá'í World Centre.
(Note: Schloss's no. "3" and
"©" signature are removed.)

Ali Kuli Khan Translates

- ❖ "Ish'te'al Ebn-Kalanter interpreter; stenographic notes by Esther Foster."
- ❖ "Three young Persians—Ali-Kuli Khan, Ahmad Sohrab, and Ameen Fareed—had resided in the United States over a decade, had mastered English, and were translating Bahá'u'lláh's works and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets into English." — Robert H. Stockman, *'Abdu'l-Bahá in America* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá'í Pub., 2012), p. 53.
- ❖ "'Abdu'l-Bahá With 'Ali Kuli Khan & Florence Breed Khan at the Home of Saffa & Vaffa Kinney in New York City." (Photograph by Jacob Schloss, 2 December, 1912.)





Edward B. Kinney (1863–1950), Host

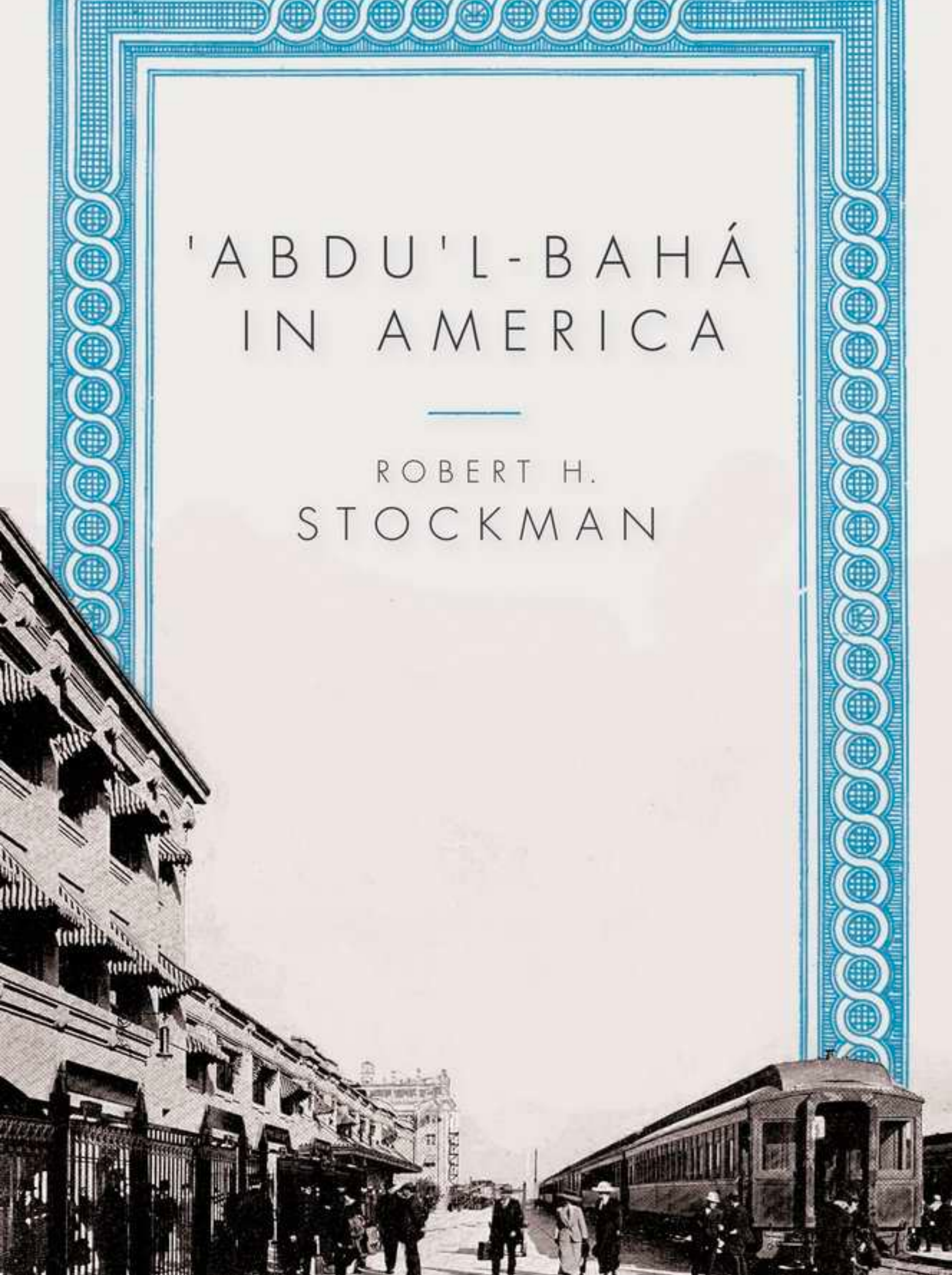
- ❖ *"Edward B. Kinney: Grieve at passing of dearly loved, highly admired, greatly trusted, staunch, indefatigable, self-sacrificing teacher, pillar of Faith, Saffa Kinney. His leonine spirit, exemplary steadfastness, notable record of services enriched annals of closing period of Heroic Age and opening phase of Formative Age of Bahá'í Dispensation. Beautiful reward assured in Abhá Kingdom beneath the shadow of the Master he loved so dearly, served so nobly, defended so heroically until last breath."*
- ❖ Shoghi Effendi [[Cablegram dated December 16, 1950](#)], *Citadel of Faith*.
- ❖ Photo: Edward Kinney, seen on top left of group photo taken June 29, 1912 on the occasion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Unity Feast" at Roy Wilhelm's home in Englewood, New Jersey. ([See full photograph](#) below.)





Carrie Kinney (1878–1959), Co-Host

- ❖ Shoghi Effendi called Mr. and Mrs. Kinney "Pillars of the Faith in the City of the Covenant" and "Pillars of the Cause of God." (*Bahá'í World* Vol. XII, pp. 678–9; Vol. XIII, p. 865.)
- ❖ Photo: Carrie Kinney, seen on top right of group photo taken June 29, 1912 on the occasion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Unity Feast" at Roy Wilhelm's home in Englewood, New Jersey. (See full photograph above.)



'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN AMERICA

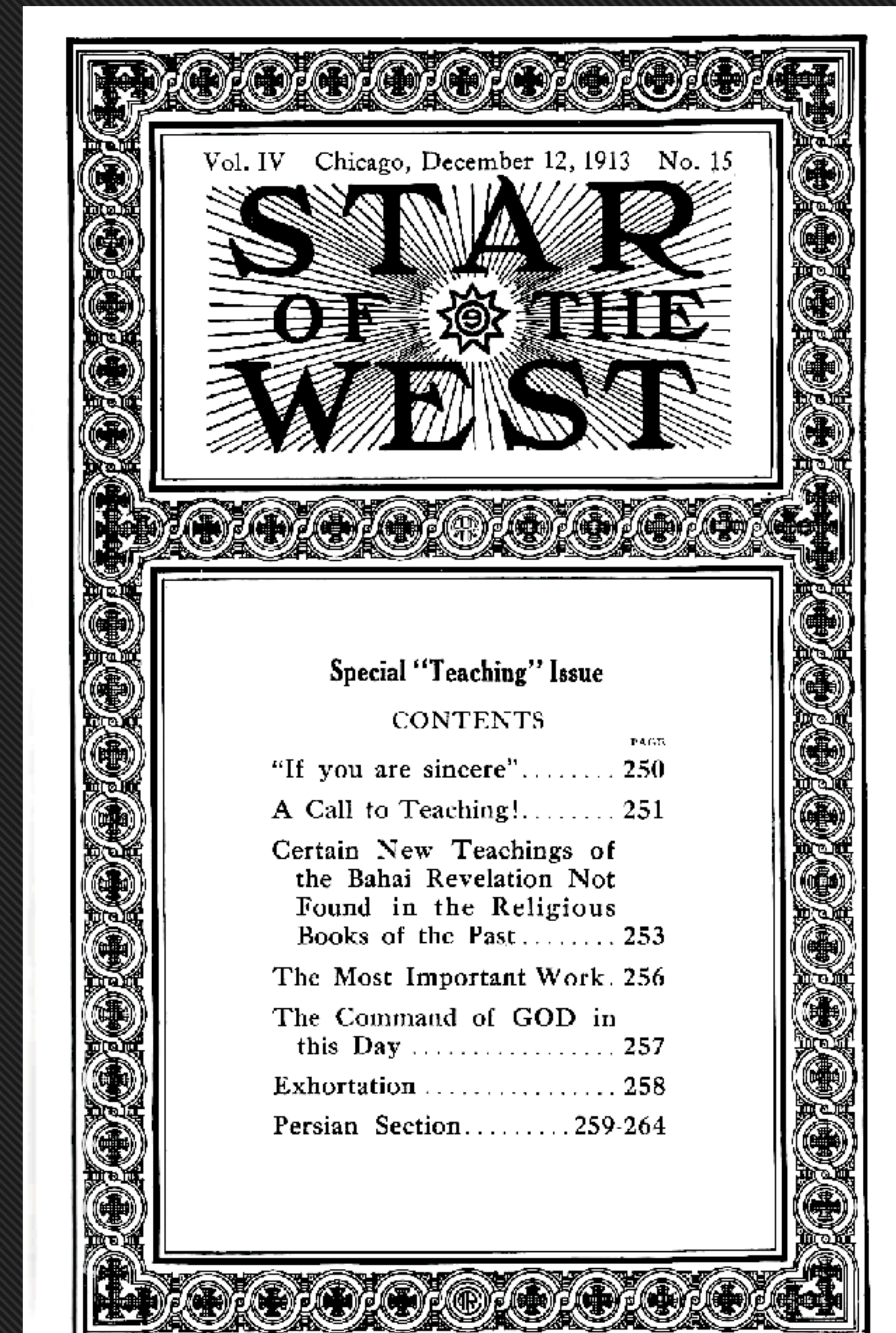
ROBERT H.
STOCKMAN

His talk at the Kinney residence on December 2, 1912—three days before his departure—perhaps summarized the Bahá'í approach to race, religion, and the progress of humanity most fully. That day, he offered “certain new teachings which are not found in any of the religious books of the past.” The list of twelve distinctive Bahá'í teachings began with the oneness of humanity, followed by independent investigation of truth, the oneness of the religions of the world, the need for religion to be a cause of unity and harmony, the principle that religion must be in accord with science and reason, the equality of men and women, the principle that human beings must free themselves from religious and patriotic prejudices, the need to establish universal peace, the importance of universal education, the solution to economic questions, the need for the organization of the Universal House of Justice to explain and implement the commands of Bahá'u'lláh, and Bahá'u'lláh's establishment of a Covenant. All this will be possible, he asserted, through obedience to the Center of the Covenant. (*Abdu'l-Bahá in America*, pp. 379–380.)

Talk at the Kinney's Home (2 Dec. 1912)

Monday, December 2, 1912

- ❖ Monday, December 2, 1912 [New York]
- ❖ "In the evening, He spoke to a gathering of the friends and said: 'I supplicate and implore that the clouds of mercy may shower upon you and the Sun of Truth may shine upon you so that you may attain to the purpose of the holy Manifestations of God. This is my supplication because you are the beloved ones of the Blessed Beauty and the servants of the Greatest Name.'
- ❖ I undertook this voyage in order to see you and, God willing, you will come to the Holy Land and we shall meet there in that land which was trodden by the sacred feet of the Prophets of God'."
- ❖ Mahmúd's Diary: The Diary of Mírzá Mahmúd-i-Zarqání Chronicling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Journey to America (1998).



destroyed, and their crowns thrown to the dust.

"But the signs of any one of the maid-servants of God who arose in the diffusion of the Fragrances of God, serving the Kingdom of God, summoning the people to the Word of God, are widely spread eternally and handed down through centuries and cycles; her dawn is ever luminous; her star always shining; her flag continually flying; her station divinely glorified; her crown scintillating; her message living; her fame immortal; her voice resonant, her spirit in the apex of the Kingdom and her effulgence in the horizon of the Realm of Might.

"I beg of God to make thee one of these maid-servants."

Extract from Tablet by ABDUL-BAHA.
Quoted in "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab,"
July 14, 1913.

The Superlative Degree of Success and Prosperity

"O ye believers of God! Supplicate and entreat at the Threshold of the Almighty to confirm you in the diffusion of the Fragrances of Holiness which are wafting from the direction of the Garden of God. Blow ye over all creation like the breezes of the early morn, and impart ye freshness and verdancy, through the Power of Truth, upon the flowers, sweet hyacinths and the roses of the garden of existence. This is the quintessence of meeting

and the superlative degree of success and prosperity—for it causes the attainment of man to the Kingdom of ABHA, attracts him to the Sacred Court of His Highness the Almighty, and suffers him to reach the Sublime Presence of the Powerful and Omnipotent Lord."

Extract from Tablet by ABDUL-BAHA.
Quoted in "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab,"
July 21, 1913.

Attracting Souls to the Kingdom of ABHA

"If thou desirest to be confirmed in the service of the Kingdom of God, live in accord with the Teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, and that is: real love for the world of humanity and the utmost of kindness for the believers of God. This real love, like unto the magnetic power, attracts the Divine confirmations."

"If a soul calls the people to the Kingdom of God according to the Principles of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, there will be many listeners. First one must teach by deeds; then speak the Word! First one must become thirsty; then the salubrious water be offered. No matter how delicious the water is, one who is not thirsty will not enjoy it. Therefore, make ye an effort so that the people may become thirsty; then cause them to quaff from the Divine Chalice."

Extract from Tablet by ABDUL-BAHA.
Quoted in "Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab,"
July 24, 1913.

The Editors.

CERTAIN NEW TEACHINGS OF THE BAHAI REVELATION NOT FOUND IN THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS OF THE PAST.

Address by Abdul-Baha at 780 West End Avenue, New York City, December 2, 1912.
Ish'at al Ebn-Kalantar interpreter; stenographic notes by Esther Foster.

YOU are all welcome! This is a good assemblage. Praise be to God, the hearts are directed to the Kingdom of ABHA! The souls are rejoiced by the glad-tidings of God. This is an excellent gathering.

This evening I wish to speak to you concerning the special teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH. All the teachings which have been given during the past days and ages are to be found in the Revelation of BAHÁ'U'LLAH; but in addition to those, this Revelation has certain new teachings which are not to be found in any of the religious books of the past. I shall now refer to some of the new teachings given by BAHÁ'U'LLAH; as for the rest of them you may obtain them from the Tablets and Epistles

written by BAHÁ'U'LLAH, for the new teachings given by BAHÁ'U'LLAH are many.

While in the *Hidden Words* we read concerning that which has descended upon the Prophets of the past,* yet there are in the *Hidden Words* teachings which are new and particular to this Revelation. Then the Tablet of the *Glad Tidings* revealed by BAHÁ'U'LLAH contains special teachings. The Tablet by

*Refers to the introductory paragraph of the *Hidden Words* as follows: "This is that which descended from the Source of Majesty, through the tongue of Power and Strength upon the Prophets of the past. We have taken its essences and clothed them with the garment of brevity, as a favor to the beloved, that they may fulfil the Covenant of GOD; that they may perform in themselves that which He has entrusted to them, and attain the victory by virtue of devotion in the land of the Spirit."

BAHÁ'U'LLAH called, *The Words of Paradise*, contains special teachings. Again the Tablet of *Tajalliat* contains special teachings by BAHÁ'U'LLAH. Similarly, all the other Tablets of BAHÁ'U'LLAH contain new teachings which have not been revealed in any Books and Epistles of the past Prophets. Likewise in the *Book of Akdas* there are new teachings which are not to be found in any of the past Books or Epistles. When you peruse those teachings you shall comprehend this fact.

Now I shall speak of a few of those teachings. For instance, the Oneness of the world of humanity is one of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, for BAHÁ'U'LLAH addresses Himself to the world of men, saying, "Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one arbor." That is, the world of existence is no other than one tree, and the nations or peoples are like unto the different branches or limbs thereof, and human individuals are similar to the fruits and blossoms thereof. Thus BAHÁ'U'LLAH presented the Oneness of the world of humanity, while in all past religions Books and Epistles, the world of humanity has been divided into two parts; one called the people of the Book, or the Pure Tree, and the other, the Evil Tree. One-half of the people of the world were looked upon as belonging to the faithful, and the other half as belonging to the irreligious and the infidel; one-half of the people were consigned to the mercy of their Creator, and the other half were considered as objects of the wrath of their Maker.

But His Holiness, BAHÁ'U'LLAH, proclaimed the Oneness of the world of humanity, and this teaching is specialized to the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, for He submerged all mankind in the Sea of Divine Generosity. At most some of the people are asleep, they need to be awakened; some of them are ill, they need to be healed; some are children, they need to be trained. In a word: this teaching is a special one of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

As to the second teaching which is a new one given by BAHÁ'U'LLAH: it is the injunction to investigate Truth,—that is, no man should follow blindly his ancestors and forefathers. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears, and investigate Truth in order that he may find the Truth;—whereas the religion of forefathers and ancestors is based upon blind imitation, while man should investigate the Truth. This again is one of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

The third teaching of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, which is

new for this Day, is that the foundation of all the Religions of God is One, and that Oneness is the Truth, and the Truth is but One, and it cannot be made plural. This teaching is again special to BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

The fourth teaching of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, which is special for this Day, is that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and accord amongst men. If religion be the cause of in-harmony, or leads to separating men one from the other, and creates conflict amongst them, then irreligion is better than that religion. This again is likewise one of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

The fifth teaching of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, which is new for this Day, is that religion must be in accord with science and reason. If religion is not in conformity with science and reason, then it is superstition. This is one of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH. Down to the present day it has been customary for man to accept a thing because it was called religion, even though it were not in accord with judgment or human reason.

The sixth new teaching of BAHÁ'U'LLAH is the equality between men and women. This is peculiar to the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, for all other religions placed men above women.

The seventh of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH, which is new for this Day, is that prejudice and fanaticism, whether religious, sectarian, sectional, denominational or patriotic,—are destructive of the foundation of the human solidarity, so that man should release himself from such bonds in order that the Oneness of the world of humanity might become manifest.

The eighth of His teachings is Universal Peace; that all men and nations shall make peace amongst them; that there shall be Universal Peace amongst governments, Universal Peace amongst religions, Universal Peace amongst races, Universal Peace amongst the denizens of all regions. This is one of the special characteristics of the Revelation of BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

The ninth of these special teachings is that all mankind should partake of both knowledge and education, and this partaking of knowledge and of education is one of the necessities of religion. This again is one of the special characteristics of the teachings of BAHÁ'U'LLAH.

The tenth teaching is the solution of the economic question. For no religious books of the past Prophets speak of the economic

question, while the economic problem has been thoroughly solved in the teachings of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH.

The eleventh teaching is the organization called, The House of Justice, which is endowed with a political as well as a religious aspect. It embodies both aspects, and it is protected by the Preserving Power of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH Himself. A Universal or World House of Justice shall be organized. That which it orders shall be the Truth in explaining the Commands of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH, and that which the House of Justice ordains concerning the Commands of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH shall be obeyed by all. But that will be the House of Justice organized from amongst the members of the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all men shall be under the supervision of that House of Justice.

As to the most Great Characteristic,—and it is a specific teaching of the Revelation of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH and not given by any of the Prophets of the past, it is the teaching concerning The Center of The Covenant. By giving the teaching concerning The Centre of The Covenant He made provision against all kinds of differences, so that no man should be able to create a new sect. To guard against that state of thing, He entered into a Covenant with all the people of the world, indicating the Person or the Interpreter of His teachings, so that no man should be able to say that he explains a certain teaching in this way, and thus create a sect revolving around his individual understanding of a part of the teachings. Thus the "Book of the Covenant" and the Testament of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH is the means of preventing such a possibility, for whoever shall say a word from his own self shall be degraded. Be ye cognizant of this. Beware lest anyone shall secretly say anything to you against this! There are some people of self-will and self-desire who do not communicate their selfish intentions to you in a clear language. They secretly and by insinuation do this. They praise a certain individual, saying such an individual is so and so, is wise, is learned, is perfect, he was glorified in the presence of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH, or in an insidious way they make this statement. Or they may take you one by one into a dark corner of a room and convey to you these things by certain innuendoes. Be ye aware! For His Holiness Christ has said that no one hides the lamp under a bushel.

[Continued on page 258]

The purpose is this that some people shall come before you in order to secure something in their own favor. Be ye greatly upon your guard, so that no one may infringe upon the Oneness of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH's Cause. Praise be to God! BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH left nothing unsaid! He explained everything. He left no room for anything further to be said. Yet, still there are souls some persons who, for the sake of personal profit and interest, will attempt to sow the seeds of sedition. Whoever may say a thing, whoever praises an individual, ask him to give you a written proof concerning the praise he offers of that individual. Let him show you a trace from the pen of The Center of the Covenant substantiating his praise of that certain individual; otherwise, say to him that you are not allowed to give heed to the words of everyone. Say, "You may love a person today and praise him, tomorrow another, and the next day still another. We cannot afford to listen to this or that individual. Where is your document? Where is your authority from the pen of the Center of the Covenant?"

My purpose is to convey to you that it is your duty to guard the Religion of God, so that none shall be able to assail it either outwardly or inwardly. If you see injurious teachings coming from an individual, no matter who that individual may be, even though he be my own son, know ye verily that I am quit of him. If you see anyone speaking against The Covenant, even though he be my own son, know ye that I am averse to him. If a person speaks falsehoods, know ye that I am quit of him. He who covets things worldly and seeks after his own desire to accumulate the riches of this world, and is looking at the hand of the people to give him something, know ye that I am quit of such an one.

But when you see a person living up to the teachings of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH, living up to the teachings in the *Hidden Words*, know ye that verily I proclaim that he is of me.—know ye that he belongs to BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH. If you see anyone whose deeds and conduct are contrary to, and not in conformity with, the good pleasure of the Blessed Perfection, and are not in conformity with the requirements in the *Hidden Words*, let that be the criterion, your standard by which to judge that person. If you find anyone opposed to the Spirit of these teachings, know ye that I am quit of him, no matter who he may be. This is the Truth.

CERTAIN NEW TEACHINGS OF THE BAHAI REVELATION NOT FOUND IN THE RELIGIOUS BOOKS OF THE PAST

[Continued from page 255]

In short, the purpose is that the teachings of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH are many. Were I to speak to you concerning them until morning they would not be exhausted. I have explained to you some of them. You can read the rest in the Tablets of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH. In a word; some have asked the question as to what are the new things that BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH has taught, and

were I to continue to tell you more of these new teachings the subject would not be exhausted even if I spoke all night. I therefore pray to God to strengthen you in good deeds. I pray to God to confirm you, in order that you may live in accord with the teachings of BAHÁ'Ó'LLAH.

Upon ye be BAHÁ EL-ABHÁ!

EXHORTATION

O PEOPLE! *The Doors of the Kingdom are opened; the Sun of Truth is shining upon the world; the Fountains of Life are flowing; the Daysprings of Mercy have appeared; the Greatest and Most Glorious Light is now manifest to illuminate the hearts of men.*

Wake up and hear the Voice of GOD calling from all parts of the Supreme World—"Come unto Me, O ye children of men; come unto Me, O ye who are thirsty, and drink from this sweet Water which is descending in torrents upon all parts of the globe."

Now is the time! Now is the Accepted Time!

Look ye at the time of Christ: had the people realized that the Holy Spirit of GOD was speaking to them through His Divine Mouth, they would not have waited three centuries before accepting Him.

And now is it meet for you that you are sleeping upon the beds of idleness and neglect while THE FATHER, whose coming Christ foretold, has come among us, and opened the Greatest Door of Bounteous Gifts and Divine Favours?

Let us not be like those in past centuries, who were deaf to His Call, and blind to His Beauty; but let us try and open our eyes, that we may see Him; and open our ears that we may hear Him; and cleanse our hearts that He may come and abide in our temples.

These days are the days of Faith and Deeds—not the days of words and lip service: Let us arise from the slcet of negligence, and realize what a great feast is prepared for us; first eating thereof ourselves, then giving unto others who are thirsting for the Water of Knowledge, and hungering for the Bread of Life.

These Great Days are swiftly passing; and once gone they can never be recalled. So, while the Rays of the Sun of Truth are still shining and THE CENTER OF THE COVENANT OF GOD is manifest, let us go forth to work.

ABDUL-BAHA.

CABLEGRAM FROM ABDUL-BAHA.

Bagdadi, Chicago:

Arrived safely Holy Land.

Acca, Syria.

ABBAS.

Dec. 10th.

VOICE RECORDS OF ABDUL-BAHA may be obtained from Mrs. M. S. MacNutt, 935 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, N. Y., at 65 cents each. These are disc records and can be used upon various phonographs.

OUR PERSIAN SECTION this issue contains: (1)

Tablets to assemblies in the Orient regarding Abdul-Baha's sojourn in America and Europe; (2) progress of the Cause of God in Stuttgart, Germany; (3) Tablet revealed for the "Parity Assembly" in Arastan; (4) news from Yazd by F. F. Teerondazi; (5) the Feast of The Center of The Covenant; (6) "Glad-tidings" a cablegram from Acca, Syria.

“Bahá'u'lláh revealed new teachings not found in sacred Books of former times.”

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. www.bahai.org/r/416617759

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

“There are new teachings which cannot be found in any of the past Books.”

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. www.bahai.org/r/416617759

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

See humankind as one.

A fundamental teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity. Addressing mankind, He says, "Ye are all leaves of one tree and the fruits of one branch" [...] and this principle is specialized in His teachings, for He has submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity. www.bahai.org/r/002832906

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Search for truth.

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. Nay, each must see with his own eyes, hear with his own ears and investigate the truth himself in order that he may follow the truth instead of blind acquiescence and imitation of ancestral beliefs. www.bahai.org/r/223823957

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

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.

www.bahai.org/r/267476850

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Religions should unify.

He 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. www.bahai.org/r/151295936

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

Religion respects science.

Furthermore, He 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.

www.bahai.org/r/365707717

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Women and men are equal.

He establishes the equality of man and woman. This is peculiar to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, for all other religions have placed man above woman. www.bahai.org/r/535131399

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Abolish every prejudice.

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. www.bahai.org/r/794165873

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

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.

www.bahai.org/r/411802675

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

Provide education for all.

Bahá'u'lláh declares that all mankind should attain knowledge and acquire an education. This is a necessary principle of religious belief and observance, characteristically new in this dispensation.

www.bahai.org/r/675725426

'Abdu'l-Bahá

Economic problems require spiritual solutions.

He 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. www.bahai.org/r/369201893

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

The Universal House of Justice is unique.

He has ordained and established the House of Justice. [...] This institution is under the protecting power of Bahá'u'lláh Himself. A universal, or international, House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh [...]. www.bahai.org/r/507368549

'Abdu'l-Bahá

What surprised me most was that, evidently, this was the first and only talk he gave in America in which Abdu'l-Baha mentioned the Universal House of Justice:

“When New, Authentic Baha’i Teachings Come to Light”

(Part 82 in Series: “Figuring Out Prophecy”)

BahaiTeachings.org (Nov 16, 2023)

The special Bahá'í “Covenant” protects Bahá'í unity.

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. [...] The Book of the Covenant or Testament of Bahá'u'lláh is the means of preventing such a possibility [...] To protect and safeguard the religion of God from this and all other attack, the Center of the Covenant has been named and appointed by Bahá'u'lláh. www.bahai.org/r/510080411

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

See further:

**“The 1893 Russian Publication of
Bahá’u’lláh’s Last Will and Testament:
An Academic Attestation of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s
Successorship”**

Baha’i Studies Review
Published online: 2017

The Bahá'í Faith offers other “new principles.”

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. I, therefore, pray to God that you may be strengthened in good deeds. I pray that God may confirm you in order that you may live according to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh.

www.bahai.org/r/322194491

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

See further:

**“Fifty Bahá’í Principles of Unity:
A Paradigm of Social Salvation”**

Baha’i Studies Review
Published online: 2015

What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

Conclusions

Conclusions

- ❖ 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 19 June 1913 talk in Port Said, Egypt, sheds new light on His prior responses, on 15 November 1912 and 2 December 1912 in New York, to questions as to what is "new" and distinctive in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.
- ❖ A close comparison between (1) the first publication of these two key talks in the *Star the West* magazine, and (2) their later, edited republication in *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, shows that the earlier versions were probably more true to the original.
- ❖ This is most evident in the 15 November 1912 talk where, in editing the text for republication in *Promulgation*, editor Howard MacNutt turns 'Abdu'l-Bahá's rhetorical questions into categorical answers.
- ❖ For Bahá'ís, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's approach has potentially and possibly profound implications for public discourse, considering 'Abdu'l-Bahá's role as the "Perfect Exemplar" – not only as a paragon and paradigm of all Bahá'í virtues, but as a model for how best to present and teach the Bahá'í Faith.

“A New Gospel”

Its implications are deeper, its claims greater than any which the Prophets of old were allowed to advance. [...] It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, [...] which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to **a new gospel**, fundamentally different from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. (*The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*)

Shoghi Effendi

“These New Principles”

Out of this pitch blackness there dawned the morning splendor 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. [...] The people, therefore, must be set completely free from their old patterns of thought, that all their attention may be focused upon these new principles, for these are the light of this time and the very spirit of this age. (*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*)

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

“Unless these Teachings are effectively spread, this world of being will find no peace.”

Unless these Teachings are effectively spread among the people, until the old ways, the old concepts, are gone and forgotten, **this world of being will find no peace**, nor will it reflect the perfections of the Heavenly Kingdom. Strive ye with all your hearts to make the heedless conscious, to waken those who sleep [...] and restore the dead to life. It behooveth you to show forth such power, such endurance, as to astonish all beholders. (*Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*)

‘Abdu’l–Bahá

What Teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are New & Distinct?

Questions & Discussion

Appendix 1:

What does the word “new” mean, relatively speaking, within the “history of ideas”?

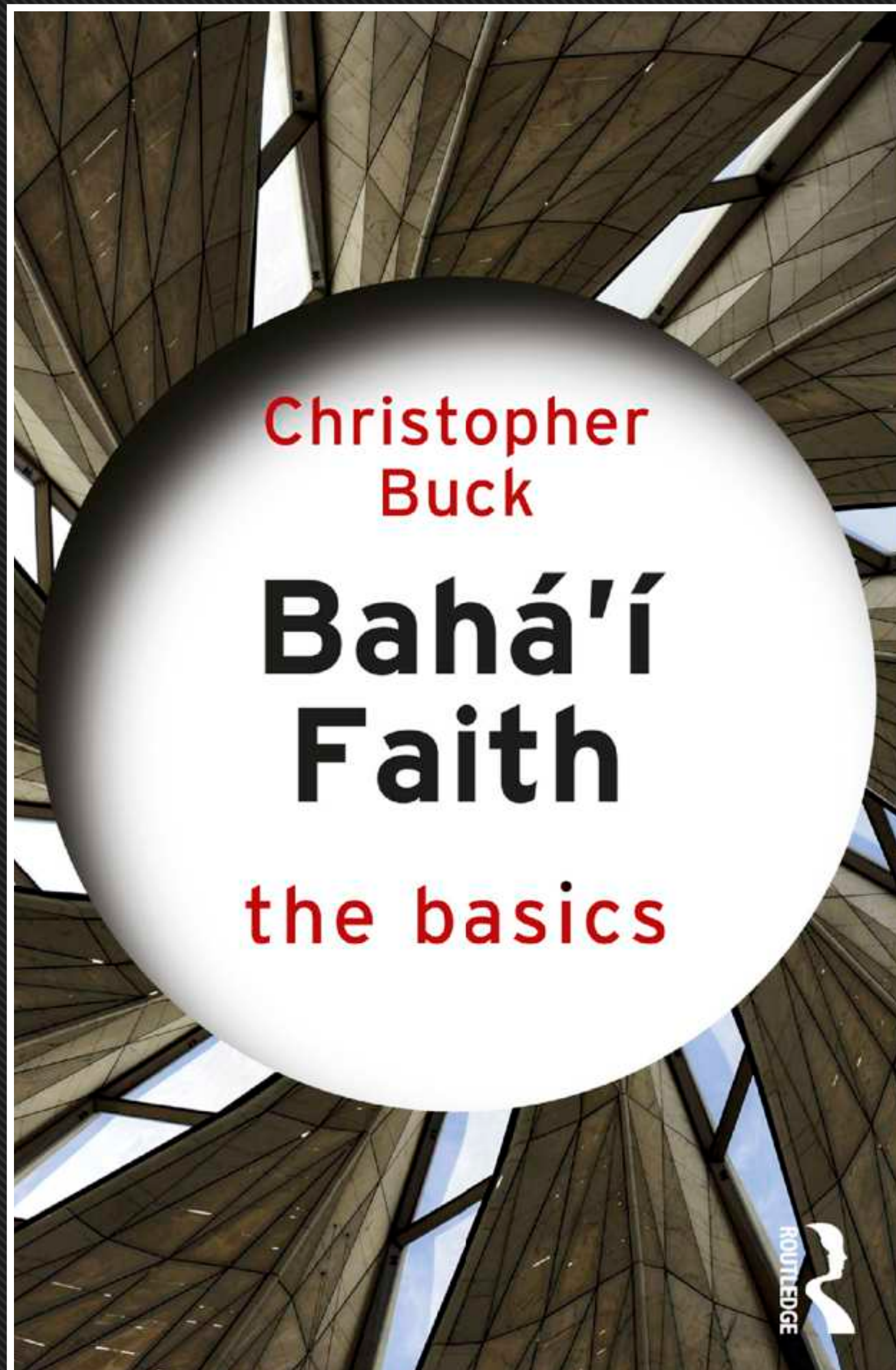


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- ❖ 6. Institutions: The Bahá'í Administrative Order
- ❖ 7. Building Community: What Bahá'ís Do
- ❖ 8. Social Action: Social and Economic Development
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- ❖ 10. Vision: Foundations for a Future Golden Age

3

PRINCIPLES BAHÁ'Í SOCIAL TEACHINGS

BAHÁ'Í PRINCIPLES—NEW AND RENEWED

The Bahá'í Faith, as noted earlier, is a new and independent world religion. This book, *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics*, is one introduction in a rich legacy of introductions to the Bahá'í Faith. So, it may be useful to consider how the Bahá'í Faith has been presented in the past, in order to appreciate some of its new and distinctive features in the present day. With the advent of the new religion, naturally, new religious teachings would be expected. This certainly holds true with the appearance of the Bahá'í Faith on the world's historical horizon, in the full glare of modernity.

As readers will recall, Bahá'u'lláh (1817–1892) had designated his eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844–1921), as the former's successor, interpreter, and exemplar. (See Chapter 4.) 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks were many. His grandson and appointed successor, Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), wrote that 'Abdu'l-Bahá

had arisen not only to proclaim from pulpit and platform, in some of the chief capitals of Europe and in the leading cities of the North American continent, *the distinctive verities enshrined in His Father's Faith*, but to demonstrate as well the Divine origin of the Prophets gone before Him, and to disclose the nature of the tie binding them to that Faith.

(Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, BRL) (italics added)

Bahá'í Principles — New and Renewed

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- ❖ "had arisen not only to proclaim from pulpit and platform, in some of the chief capitals of Europe and in the leading cities of the North American continent, *the distinctive verities enshrined in His Father's Faith*, but to demonstrate as well the Divine origin of the Prophets gone before Him, and to disclose the nature of the tie binding them to that Faith." (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, BRL) (italics added).
- ❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 42.

This chapter will adopt a somewhat novel approach, based on an old one, by focusing on a couple of speeches by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, presented in America in 1912. What makes these two speeches important and relevant is that 'Abdu'l-Bahá focused on what he himself identified as “new” teachings brought by Bahá'u'lláh. Since the term “new” may be somewhat elastic and relative, perhaps a better descriptor would be the term, “distinctive,” with respect to the Bahá'í teachings that will be surveyed in this chapter.

Of course, many of the Bahá'í spiritual, ethical, and moral teachings—and, to certain extent, some of its doctrinal teachings as well—resonate with similar teachings found in earlier religions. Those resonances create a kind of spiritual harmonics, worthy of appreciation. In that sense, the Bahá'í teachings effectively revoice and thereby “renew” the venerable teachings of prior religions. This fact, of course, is significant and important, in and of itself. But, for the purposes of this introduction, this chapter focuses on the relatively new Bahá'í teachings, as previously privileged and presented by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In so doing, this will serve to highlight an aspect of Bahá'í history that has contemporary relevance today. In presenting these new teachings, no absolute claims to exclusivity are being made. Rather, such new Bahá'í teachings are important to consider in any basic overview of the Bahá'í Faith. These novel teachings primarily take the form of what may be considered to be modern-day social principles.

“New” is a relative term, as far as ideas go. In the history of ideas, many, if not most, important ideas may have their roots in past notions articulated centuries ago. Just about any idea may have its precursors. The legacy of any given concept therefore can be analyzed within a “history of ideas” approach, in which a “trajectory” of any given idea may be mapped out over time. Many major ideas, in their respective historical contexts, may be traced back to their roots, often to antiquity. However, this is not to say that any present-day idea can necessarily be fully explained and accounted for by reference to its ideological predecessors. Nor is it necessary, or even methodologically valid, to reduce any given idea to a “genetic” chain of origination. While some modern ideas may have been anticipated in the past, their current expression is properly regarded as new. Here, “new” will be used to refer to specific, noteworthy Bahá'í teachings that may be regarded as relatively original and recent within the history of religions.

“New” is a Relative Term

- ❖ “New” is a relative term, as far as ideas go. Just about any idea may have its precursors.
- ❖ The legacy of any given concept therefore can be analyzed within a “history of ideas” approach, in which a “trajectory” of any given idea may be mapped out over time.
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- ❖ Here, “new” will be used to refer to specific, noteworthy Bahá'í teachings that may be regarded as relatively original and recent within the history of religions.
- ❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 43.

These new Bahá'í teachings have received special emphasis in some of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks—especially in America in 1912—that specifically focus on Bahá'u'lláh's distinctive principles. For instance, on Sunday, 14 July 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke in the All Souls Unitarian Church, Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue South) and Twentieth Street, in West Englewood, New York. (15–17 November 2019 marks the bicentennial of the founding of the All Souls Church.) There, the pastor of the church, Rev. Leon A. Harvey, had advertised 'Abdu'l-Bahá's public appearance in the local newspapers and also posted announcements outside the church. After Rev. Harvey introduced his guest speaker, 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed the congregation. "First," 'Abdu'l-Bahá explained, "He [Bahá'u'lláh] has proclaimed the oneness of mankind and specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, BRL) (italics added). The other principles set forth during the rest of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talk were also presented in the context of Bahá'u'lláh's "specialized religious teachings for existing human conditions" current in the 20th-century in 1912, the year that 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke throughout the United States and Canada.

'Abdu'l-Bahá may have assumed that his audiences understood that Bahá'u'lláh's "specialized religious teachings," for the most part, were quite new. Probably some audience members did appreciate that fact. Such a perception may have been fairly obvious in the minds of many who attended these events, although it is impossible to know for certain. Yet we do know that there were others who openly questioned just how distinctive these new teachings of Bahá'u'lláh really were. It was only a matter of time before such questions were bound to arise. So, on Friday, 15 November 1912, also in New York, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was asked the following question: "What has Bahá'u'lláh brought that we have not heard before?" 'Abdu'l-Bahá himself refers to this very question—one that was posed directly to him, in fact:

I have spoken in the various Christian churches and in the synagogues, and in no assemblage has there been a dissenting voice. All have listened, and all have conceded that the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh are superlative in character, acknowledging that they constitute the very essence or spirit of this new age and that there is no better pathway to the attainment of its ideals. Not a single voice has been raised in objection. At most there have been some who have refused to acknowledge the mission of Bahá'u'lláh, although even these have admitted that He was a great teacher, a most powerful soul, a very great man. Some who could find no other pretext have said, "These teachings are not new;

"What has Bahá'u'lláh brought not heard before?"

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- ❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 44.

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, Tajalliyát, Tarázát 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*.

“New Teachings Not Found in Sacred Books”

❖ 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.**” In answer to this excellent question, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had responded:

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

❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 45.

4. He sets forth a *new principle* for this day in the announcement that religion must be the cause of unity, harmony and agreement among mankind. ...
5. Furthermore, He proclaims that religion must be in harmony with science and reason. ... *The harmony of religious belief with reason is a new vista which Bahá'u'lláh has opened for the soul of man.*
6. He establishes the equality of man and woman. *This is peculiar to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh*, for all other religions have placed man above woman.
7. 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.
8. 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.*
9. Bahá'u'lláh declares that all mankind should attain knowledge and acquire an education. This is a necessary principle of religious belief and observance, *characteristically new in this dispensation.*
10. He 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.*
11. He has ordained and established the House of Justice. ... Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. ...
12. 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, *Promulgation*, BRL)
(italics and numbers added)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explicitly cites some of Bahá'u'lláh's most well-known "Tablets" (sacred writings)—"such as the Hidden Words, the Glad Tidings, the Words of Paradise, Tajalliyát, Tarázát and others" including the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*—although these texts were not widely available in the West at that time. (These Bahá'í sacred writings will be discussed in Chapter Five: "Scripture and Authoritative Writings: Bahá'í Sacred Texts and Inspired Guidance.") After being asked which of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings were new, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave some definite and explicit

"Teaching not given by any of the Prophets"

- ❖ "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."
- ❖ After being asked which of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings were new, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave some definite and explicit answers—this time, making sure that there could be no ambiguity as to the relative distinctiveness of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings.
- ❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), pp. 46–47.

answers—this time, making sure that there could be no ambiguity as to the relative distinctiveness of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's claims to the new and unique nature of Bahá'u'lláh's precepts should be understood and appreciated as relative, rather than absolute, in nature—since the roots of some of these teachings may be traced back, in various forms, in the history of ideas. In their fully developed and coherent form, these teachings, taken together, are certainly distinctive.

These two talks—i.e. of Friday, 15 November 1912 and Monday, 2 December 1912—are highly significant because the Bahá'í principles given were in direct response to questions, by Americans at that time, directly asking 'Abdu'l-Bahá to clearly identify what new teachings the Bahá'í Faith had to offer. Although these very same principles are set forth in later "Tablets" (writings) of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, they were not clearly characterized as new or otherwise distinctive Bahá'í teachings per se. Based primarily on these two talks, those principles of Bahá'u'lláh that are explicitly distinguished by 'Abdu'l-Bahá as "new," "specialized," or otherwise "distinctive" or "distinguished" have been selected for this chapter.

In the following presentation of each of these Bahá'í principles, selected quotes from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 15 November 1912 and 2 December 1912 talks will be offered along with parallel statements from 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "Tablet to the Hague" (the first of two) for purposes of further corroboration. Dated 17 December 1919, the "Tablet to the Hague," according to Shoghi Effendi, is a "Tablet of far-reaching importance," noting that this was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's "reply to a communication addressed to Him by the Executive Committee of the 'Central Organization for a Durable Peace'" which was "dispatched to them at The Hague by the hands of a special delegation" (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, BRL). There is a good reason for this method: The translations that are available for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 15 November 1912 and 2 December 1912 talks are simply contemporaneous notes transcribed, as in dictation, by Americans Bahá'ís, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's translator would voice aloud English translations in real time. As for the "15 November 1912 Talk at Home of Miss Juliet Thompson, 48 West Tenth Street, New York," the available English translation consists of the "Notes by Hooper Harris" (*Promulgation of Universal Peace*, BRL). In the case of the "2 December 1912, Talk at Home of Mr. and Mrs. Edward B. Kinney, 780 West End Avenue, New York," the transcript of record are "Notes by Esther Foster" (*Promulgation of Universal Peace*, BRL).

These contemporaneous English translations—subsequently edited and later published—no doubt accurately convey the gist of what

These two talks...are highly significant

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- ❖ These two talks—i.e. of Friday, 15 November 1912 and Monday, 2 December 1912—are highly significant because the Bahá'í principles given were in direct response to questions, by Americans at that time, directly asking 'Abdu'l-Bahá to clearly identify what new teachings the Bahá'í Faith had to offer.
- ❖ Source: *Bahá'í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 47.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá actually said, and therefore have historical value. The reported English record, however, cannot be fully authenticated at present, and therefore may not represent exact translations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s words verbatim. Doing so would require a retranslation from the original Persian texts, if extant. So, by citing parallel statements from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s first “Tablet to the Hague” (the second “Tablet to the Hague” was sent, after the First World War, on 1 July 1920), some measure of substantive authentication of the 15 November 1912 and 2 December 1912 talks themselves is achieved. (If no parallel statement in the Tablet to the Hague is available, then another parallel will be provided.)

The practice of presenting Bahá’í principles in numeric form began with Bahá’u’lláh himself and was later enlarged upon by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Perhaps the most well known of these numbered lists of principles by Bahá’u’lláh is the “Tablet of Glad Tidings.” (See Buck and Ioannesyan 2010.) Although the number, order, and substance of these principles would vary, depending on the audience and occasion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was quite consistent in setting forth what may be regarded as Bahá’í social paradigms.

SEARCH FOR TRUTH

The order in which ‘Abdu’l-Bahá presented Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings would vary from time to time. The sequence in which Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings were presented really made no difference, with one exception. Often, at the top of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s lists of Bahá’u’lláh’s principles was the independent investigation of truth. For instance, prior to his visit to America and Canada in 1912, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, in Paris on 11 November 1911:

I spoke yesterday of the first principle of the Teaching of Bahá’u’lláh, “The Search for Truth”; ... It is essential that he search for truth in all religions, and, if his seeking be in earnest, he will assuredly succeed. Now the first discovery which we make in our “Search after Truth”, will lead us to the second principle, which is the “Unity of Mankind”.
(‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, BRL)

This “Search for Truth” principle has foreseeable consequences, one of which is the “first discovery” of the “Unity of Mankind.” This fundamental Bahá’í principle did enjoy a certain priority—and for good reason: Receptivity requires open-mindedness. Search for truth—that is, an open-minded willingness to investigate—is a necessary precondition to all inquiry, especially scientific investigation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

These two talks...are highly significant

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❖ Source: *Bahá’í Faith: The Basics* (2021), p. 48.