

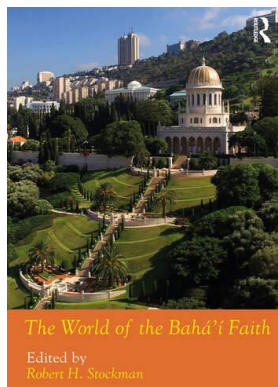
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## **The World of the Bahá'í Faith**

Robert H. Stockman

## **The Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá**

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Mina Yazdani

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# THE WRITINGS AND UTTERANCES OF ‘ABDU’L-BAHÁ

*Mina Yazdani*<sup>1</sup>

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás (1844–1921) was Bahá’u’lláh’s vicegerent, the Centre of His Covenant, the interpreter of His writings, and the perfect exemplar of His teachings. He wrote almost continuously throughout His adult life, for some sixty years. He authored books, treatises, and tens of thousands of letters, prayers, and poems. And He delivered countless speeches, many of which were subsequently compiled and published as books, some authorized by Him and others posthumously. A recent informed record of His available works reports that ‘over 38,000 unique works’ of His have been identified, where by ‘unique works’ is meant unrepeatable written materials ‘from brief acknowledgements conveying greetings to weighty Tablets on spiritual and social matters, from cables of a few words to extensive letters and lengthy books, as well as numerous utterances’. Of the works preserved in the original languages, the same record mentions that 82 percent are in Persian or mixed Arabic and Persian, 16 percent are in Arabic, and the remaining 2 percent are in Turkish (Research Department 2020). A number of His Persian works are in pure Persian (i.e., free of Arabic words). This chapter provides an introduction to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s writings and talks, which cover a variety of themes, including but not limited to spiritual (including moral/ethical), theological, philosophical, mystical, social, historical, and exegetical subjects.

In introducing most of His works, reference will frequently be made to the words of Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s appointed successor and the only other figure sharing with Him the position of authorized interpreter of the Bahá’í Writings. Shoghi Effendi’s assessment of the position occupied by any piece of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s writings in the Bahá’í canon determines that piece’s status.

A disclaimer must be made: This introduction, both in its treatment of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s writings and in its bibliography of studies on them in Persian and English, must of necessity be selective due to the limitations of space. In deciding which of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s writings to focus on in this chapter, this author has opted for elaborating more on the works for which there is less introductory material in English. Before embarking on the discussion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s specific works, a few words must be said on the general characteristics of His writings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s two primary languages, Persian and Arabic, have highly developed literary legacies. Amin Banani, a prominent scholar of Iranian studies and an authority in Persian literature, refers to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s style in these languages as ‘the outward mode of His inspiration and expression’, where ‘[t]he animus is the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh’. Focusing on the harmony of form and content in His writings, Banani further elaborates,

In the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá form is an approach to the content. He makes use of poetic imagery and of a vast range of rhetorical and literary devices such as metaphors, similes, symbols, allegories, alliterations, assonances and dissonances . . . to expand the reader's mind by refraction of the same reality through different planes of perception, cognition and intuition.

(Banani 1971: 68–69)

'Abdu'l-Bahá's extensive use of the literary technique known as *saj'* (rhymed prose) to introduce rhyme and rhythm in his Persian prose gave it 'architectural placidity' and rendered it memorable (Banani 1971: 68). Images, particularly those pertaining to the natural world, mythology, and religious stories abound in His prose (Rásikh 2003: 249–278). Commenting on the novelty and strength of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's prose, Shápúr Rásikh, another expert in Persian literature, maintains that His writings, along with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, 'open a new chapter in Persian literature' (Rásikh 1990: 103), notwithstanding the regrettable fact that their works have been largely ignored not only by the Persian-speaking public but also by the majority of scholars of Persian literary history.

A word must be added here about the general content of His works. Every concept in the writings and speeches of 'Abdu'l-Bahá has its roots in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Most of the similes, allegories, and metaphors He employs occur in Bahá'u'lláh's writings. As a Manifestation of God, Bahá'u'lláh expressed His message and teachings in a concise language and general form, at times devoting a sentence of a much longer work to the articulation of a particular ethical, social, or theological teaching. As the authorized interpreter of His writings, it was left to 'Abdu'l-Bahá to expound on these brief and general statements, without ever adding a teaching or principle that did not originate in at least a succinct form in Bahá'u'lláh's writings. Additionally, the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are full of instances of intertextuality, especially with the Qur'an. In fact, most of His writings contain a Qur'anic reference or allusion of some kind. Another characteristic of His writings is His frequent use of poems, tales, parables, and similitudes.

### I. 1863–1892: Writing at Bahá'u'lláh's instruction

During the twelve-day sojourn of Bahá'u'lláh and His companions in the garden of Najíb Páshá (later known as the Garden of Riḍván) on the outskirts of Baghdad, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, not yet fully nineteen years old, wrote a letter to a relative in Mazandaran, recounting the three-year-long pressure from the government of Persia on the Ottoman government to force Bahá'u'lláh to return to Persia and—when this plot did not materialize—to exile Him farther away from the borders of His country (Fayḍí 1971: 15–20; Balyuzi 1971: 15–17). This letter ('Abdu'l-Bahá *Muntakhabátí* 4: 35–39), which Shoghi Effendi has partly quoted in his description of Bahá'u'lláh's banishment from Baghdad to Constantinople (1950, *God Passes By* 150), is likely the earliest recorded, published writing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. In the near three decades that followed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who acted as the de facto deputy of Bahá'u'lláh in social interactions, penned many other works, usually at the instruction of Bahá'u'lláh. His writings during this period include—but are by no means limited to—several commentaries on Qur'anic chapters or verses, a number of hadiths, and two verses of the Báb's Qayyúmu'l-Asmá', as well as two books: *The Secret of Divine Civilization* and *A Traveler's Narrative*.

#### *Commentaries*

The commentaries 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote on the sacred texts of other religions not only reflected the fundamental Bahá'í belief in the unity of all religions but also sought to unravel the hidden

meanings of these texts and relate them to Bahá'u'lláh's revelation. These commentaries also manifested 'Abdu'l-Bahá's deep knowledge of the previous discourses on relevant texts. One of the most significant commentaries was written on the prophetic hadith, 'I was a hidden treasure' ('Abdu'l-Bahá *Makátib* 2:2–55). 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that He wrote this commentary in His 'early youth' (*ṣabávat*), and Bahá'u'lláh confirms that it was written in Edirne (Bahá'u'lláh 2003: 10). Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání (d. 1914) records that 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote this commentary 'at the age of nineteen' (Mázindarání 132 B.E./1975: 1123). One can thus conclude that this commentary was most likely written soon after the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh and His companions to Edirne, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was still nineteen years old (based on a solar calendar). Written in response to a request from 'Alí-Shawkat Páshá—an Ottoman official with Sufi interests—the commentary is a multi-layered work. At one level, it expounds various Sufi approaches to understanding the expressions and concepts in the hadith, while on deeper levels, it employs familiar mystical and philosophical terms only to imbue them with new meanings and dimensions in order to introduce Bahá'í ideas, in particular the concept of the Manifestation of God, thereby resolving some fundamental conceptual contradictions faced by mystics. The commentary, therefore, is regarded as one of the most important philosophical texts in the Bahá'í canon (Saiedi 1997: 94–95). It is also the only commentary 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote in Persian.

Of the commentaries He wrote in Arabic, of particular note is the commentary on verses 2–3 of the Qur'án's Súriy-i-Rúm ('The Byzantines'), also written, according to Gulpáygání, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was nineteen years old (Mázindarání 132 B.E./1975: 1123). In addition, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote commentaries on verses from several other Súrihs of the Qur'an, including the Súriy-i-Qalam ('The Pen'), the Súriy-i-Ra'd ('Thunder'), the Súriy-i-Kahf ('The Cave'), the Súriy-i-Jinn ('The Jinn'); and the Súriy-i-Furqán ('The Criterion'). Moreover, He wrote commentaries on a number of other hadiths and on the invocation 'In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful', which appears at the beginning of all but one of the chapters of the Qur'an. During the 'Akká period, Bahá'u'lláh instructed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to hold classes on the interpretation of the Qur'an (Mázindarání n.d.a: 507). It has been suggested that the commentaries He wrote may have been the fruit of teaching these classes (Rafati 2012b: 5).

### *The Secret of Divine Civilization*

In 1875, Bahá'u'lláh instructed 'Abdu'l-Bahá, then thirty-one years old, to write a few pages on the topic of the reconstruction and dilapidation of the world in order to reduce the prejudices of the dogmatic conservatives so that they may harken to the divine message (Faydí 1971: 42). The result was the book now known in English as 'The Secret of Divine Civilization'. Shoghi Effendi described it as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's 'outstanding contribution to the future reorganization of the world' (*World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 37). The monograph was lithographed in 1882 in Bombay, India, under the title *Asráru'l-Ghaybiyyih li-Asbábi'l-Madaniyyih* ('The Divine secrets concerning the causes of civilization'). It was the second Bahá'í book ever published, after Bahá'u'lláh's *Kitáb-i-Íqán*. In 1911, it was republished in Egypt under the title *Ar-Risálatu'l-Madaniyyih* ('The treatise on civilization').

The book is a multi-layered and multi-faceted work that lends itself to a variety of studies including literary, historical, religious, philosophical, and socio-political. 'Abdu'l-Bahá chose to write the book anonymously, as He indicates in the text, 'to demonstrate that his one purpose is to promote the general welfare' (Secret 5), and probably to increase the likelihood that it would be read.

As the framework for conveying His message, 'Abdu'l-Bahá used the process of reform and modernization that had been initiated in Iran by the reform-minded statesman Mírzá Ḥusayn Khán Mushíru'd-Dawlih (d. 1881) and supported by Náṣiri'd-Dín Sháh (d. 1896). This was

despite the fact that by 1875, the process of reform had already been halted with the Shah's dismissal of Mushíru'd-Dawlih from premiership following the opposition against him and the reforms coming from some of the Shi'ih clerics and the Qájár princes (Yazdani 2003a: 103–134). Using this framework, *The Secret of Divine Civilization* at one level explains 'Abdu'l-Bahá's concepts of modernity and development. According to sociologist Nader Saiedi, the book 'argues for a new approach to modernity and rationality which harmonizes science and spiritual values in the context of a historical and international approach to culture and society'. An '[a]uthentic modernity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms, is not possible without the combination of material, or formal, and spiritual, or moral, dimensions of civilization' (2000: 1, 21). Saiedi emphasizes, however, that the message of the book is 'far more general and universal' than its immediate context (*ibid.* 11). Of this more general message of the book, Momen writes,

By giving lengthy examples from history of the manner in which a new religious impulse (such as Jesus's message or Muhammad's mission) was able to regenerate and ennoble decadent and stagnant civilisations, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's unexpressed conclusion is that only a fresh religious impulse (which for 'Abdu'l-Bahá is, of course, the religion founded by his father) can revivify the Islamic world.

(1983: 60)

### *A Traveler's Narrative*

Also written and published anonymously, likely for the same reasons mentioned earlier, *A Traveler's Narrative* is, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself describes, 'the correct and brief' history of the new religion that will last ('Abdu'l-Bahá 122/1965: 121). He chose to write this history from the point of view of a 'dispassionate' (Banani 1971: 73) traveller visiting Iran. Even though the full title reads *A Traveler's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb*, the rather short—slightly over 25,000 words—text includes an analysis of the main events of not only the Báb's dispensation, but also the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh and what happened to His community up to around the time of the writing of the book. The deliberate choice of that title for this content conveys the message that the natural continuation of the 'episode' of the Báb is what unfolded following the revelation of His Promised One. This concise historical narrative, in fact, defines the identity of the Bahá'í religion, reflecting the delicate relation between historiography and the act of interpretation (Saiedi 2003: 173). Historical clues in the text suggest that it was written sometime between 1886 and 1890. The exact timing, however, cannot be ascertained (Bihmardí 1998: 40). It is of no minor significance that in choosing to write in the travelogue genre—a familiar genre in the nineteenth- and eighteenth-century Persia—'Abdu'l-Bahá also managed to incorporate in His historical narrative, His views on certain topics ranging from psycho-philosophical to socio-political. Examples include His discussion of the level of humans' mastery over their mind, and the link between a government's power and the degree to which its people enjoy the right to freedom of belief ('Abdu'l-Bahá 119/1964: 40, 97–98).

When the British Iranologist E. G. Browne (d. 1926) visited Bahá'u'lláh in 'Akká in 1890, a copy of the book in the handwriting of Zaynu'l-Muqarrabín, one of Bahá'u'lláh's amanuenses, was given to him. Browne translated the text, and both the original-language text and his annotated English translation were published by Cambridge University Press the following year. Prior to this, however, a more complete copy of the original Persian text in the handwriting of the artist and calligrapher Mishkín-Qalam was published in Bombay in December 1890. The same copy was later republished in Iran, twice, in 1932 and 1962 (Bihmardí 1998: 41).

### *Tablet to Násiri'd-Dín Sháh*

In 1890 (1308 HQ), 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote a letter to the aforementioned Násiri'd-Dín Sháh in order to clarify for the monarch that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are obedient to the government and non-combatant in their manners. As 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains to the monarch, the occasion that had necessitated the writing of this letter pertained to the anti-governmental activities of Siyyid Jamálu'd-Dín-i-Afghání (d. 1897) and his advocates, who had tried to pretend to the government that the followers of Bahá'u'lláh were their collaborators. The letter has been partly published in a non-Bahá'í source (Şafá'í 1967: 283–288). The Research Department of the Universal House of Justice has confirmed the authenticity of the letter (2014). This letter anticipates a longer work (to be discussed later in this chapter) which 'Abdu'l-Bahá wrote on a similar topic two years later, in His new role as head of the Bahá'í community.

### *Lawḥ-i-Khurásán*

Bahá'u'lláh instructed 'Abdu'l-Bahá to send an address and convey His greetings to the Bahá'ís in Khorasan. 'Abdu'l-Bahá carried out this task weeks prior to the passing of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892 ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Muntakhabátí* 5: 87; Rafati 2012a: 68–70; Sulaymání 118/1961: 484–488). The result was an eloquent and graceful Arabic tablet known as the Lawḥ-i-Khurásán. In this tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá encourages the believers of that province, exhorts them to be patient during their tests and tribulations in the path of God, promises the spiritual triumph of Bahá'u'lláh's religion and the ultimate failure of its enemies (*Makátib* 1: 141–145; *Min Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá* 88–90).

## **II. 1892–1910: Protecting the faith and its unity**

Following the passing of Bahá'u'lláh on 29 May 1892, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, whom Bahá'u'lláh had appointed as His successor, became the Centre of the Covenant and the authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. From the passing of Bahá'u'lláh to September 1910, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá embarked on His travels to the West, and particularly until His release from incarceration in 1908, the central themes of His writings were the Covenant and the protection of the community. In the very first year of His ministry, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was forced to guide the nascent community of believers on how to behave at a time of political turmoil in the face of political dissent. For several years, He had to deal with His half-brother's opposition and the Ottoman government's suspicions (which resulted from His half-brother's machinations). Eight years of incarceration from 1901 to 1908, and even threats to His life, ensued. These factors provide the context for His major writings during this period. Throughout this time, He remained in continual correspondence with Bahá'ís.

### *The Treatise on Politics (Risáliy-i-Síyásíyyih)*

The last couple of years of the life of Bahá'u'lláh coincided with the appearance of clandestine political activities in Persia in which the followers of Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother Mírzá Yaḥyá (known as Yaḥyá'ís or Azalís) were also involved. In 1890, the country witnessed a political upheaval when the merchants, some of the clerics, and groups of urban people protested against the Shah's granting a concession for the production, sale, and export of Iran's tobacco to Major G.F. Talbot, a British subject. As a result of these protests, the Shah was forced to repudiate the concession in 1892. Some prominent followers of Mírzá Yaḥyá played a role in these protests as well. In the months and years after the cancellation of the concession, Iran continued to witness political turmoil in the provinces, often with the ulama's leadership (Amanat 2017: 306–312;

Amanat 2009: 31–32). It was in this context that 'Abdu'l-Bahá, now the head of the Bahá'í community, wrote the *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih* (Treatise on Politics) in 1893. It was published for the first time the following year in Bombay, India. 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed Bahá'ís to distribute the treatise far and wide among their countrymen, particularly the authorities. He even sent a prominent Bahá'í to present a copy to the Shah (Balyuzi 1985: 176). He stated that in the *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih*, He had outlined His general guidelines on the relations between the ruler and the ruled ('Abdu'l-Bahá 91BE/1934: title page). The core message of the *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá Himself clarified, is that the interference of the ulama in political affairs leads to dire outcomes (quoted in Ishráqkhávarí 121/1964: 786). This was His counsel for the people of Iran. He asserted that religion and state occupied separate realms. He also clarified that for decades, clerics had used the pulpit to accuse 'this wronged people' of political sedition, but the recent developments proved who the real agitators were ('Abdu'l-Bahá 91BE/1934: 19). The *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih* also guided Bahá'ís on how to comport themselves during periods of political turmoil and agitation and informed the government and the Shah that Bahá'ís obey the government and shun dissent (Yazdani 2003b: 201–210). Given that Azalís were involved in acts of dissent, elucidating the Bahá'í position was urgently needed, because it was possible that the authorities, like the majority of the people, could not differentiate between Bahá'ís and Azalís, both of whom were referred to as 'Bábís'. By bringing the *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih* to their attention in the first year of his ministry as the new leader of the Bahá'í community, 'Abdu'l-Bahá wanted to assure the Shah and the government that He intended to deal with the government (and the question of political dissent) in the same manner as Bahá'u'lláh, Whose writings on the theme of obedience to the government He quotes directly in the *Risáliy-i-Siyásiyyih*.

### ***The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (Alváḥ-i-Vaṣáýá)***

The most significant writing of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is His Will and Testament, known in Persian as *Alváḥ-i-Vaṣáýá*. Shoghi Effendi describes this document as 'His greatest legacy to posterity', 'the brightest emanation of His mind', 'the Charter of a future world civilization', and 'the Charter of Bahá'u'lláh's New World Order' (*God Passes By* 325, 328, xv). He also considers it 'in some of its features' as supplementary to the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the Mother Book of Bahá'u'lláh's Dispensation (*God Passes By* 328). The Will and Testament is entirely written in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's own hand and composed of three sections. As inferred from clues in the text, the first part was likely written in late 1905 or early 1906<sup>2</sup> and the second and third parts sometime around 1907, at a time when His life was in danger. It delineates the institutions that safeguard the unity and integrity of the Bahá'í religion and designs the Administrative Order, appointing Shoghi Effendi as 'Abdu'l-Bahá's successor and the Guardian of the Cause of God and providing instructions about the election of the Universal House of Justice.

### ***Some Answered Questions***

'Some Answered Questions' (title of the original-language text: *An-Núru'l-Abhá fí muṣáwaḍát-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*) comprises 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanations on a range of philosophical, theological, scientific, and social issues. As such, in addition to clarifying the spiritual tenets of the Bahá'í religion, it articulates the Bahá'í understanding on themes as varied as the stations of the Manifestations of God and their unity, religious history, Christian concepts such as the Trinity, interpretation of the Book of Revelation, and more contemporary topics such as the theory of evolution and workers' strikes. These explanations were, in fact, His answers to questions that the young American Bahá'í Laura Clifford Barney (d. 1974) posed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá in her

visits to ‘Akká during the difficult years between 1904 and 1906. During the brief moments He could spare while they ate lunch in the midst of hectic days, Barney asked questions and received answers, at first through Yúnis Khán-i-Afrúkhthih, who acted as interpreter, and later, as her Persian improved, directly and with some help from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s daughters, to whom she had taught English. Both the original Persian text and the English translation were transcribed as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke (Afrúkhthih 2005: 314–316; Stockman 1995: 238).

Barney’s questions reflected the engagement of her keen intellect with both the fundamental religious truths and the influential scientific thoughts of the time. Even though originally she had asked the questions to quench her own thirst for knowledge, upon the completion of the project, she sought permission from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to publish His explanations. Following His authentication of the text, Barney managed to publish both the original Persian text and her English translation of the book in 1908. With the addition of a chapter on workers’ strikes, the second edition was published in 1918 in English and in 1920 in Persian. The latter also included some orthographic redactions. The English translation was republished several times in the United States. The Bahá’í World Centre published a revised English translation of the text in 2014.

Some Answered Questions was one of the first Bahá’í books to attract the attention of Western media. On 28 April 1909, *The Washington Herald* published an article introducing it. It was also among the first few of the Bahá’í Writings to be widely translated; in less than four decades after its first publication, by the end of the first Bahá’í century, it had been translated into six different languages (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 381).

### **Tablets or makátíb**

Before beginning to discuss this large category of His writings, a disclaimer is needed. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was engaged in writing tablets or *makátíb* throughout His life, beginning perhaps even in the Baghdád period and continuing to the last days of His earthly existence. It is only for practical purposes that His tablets are discussed here under the 1892–1910 period.

Correspondence with individuals, groups of people, and institutions—both Bahá’í and non-Bahá’í—constitutes a significant portion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s writings. Shoghi Effendi referred to these works as *alváh* (singular: *lawh*), which he translated into English as ‘tablets’ (Shoghi Effendi, *Tawqí’át* 126; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 303 and *passim*). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in His exemplary humility, referred to these works as *makátíb* (singular: *maktúb*), meaning writings, messages, and letters. One exception in this regard is His Will and Testament, which He titled *Alváh-i-Vašáyá* (see earlier in this chapter). Tablets are distinguished by having specific addressees (Banani 1971: 69), in contrast to prayers that call upon the Divine or books, which have a more general audience. Perhaps unique in the annals of religious history, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s tablets to individuals constitute the ‘largest segment’ of His writings, ‘despite the undoubted fact that a portion of this precious heritage has been irretrievably lost, and a portion remains in non-Bahá’í hands’ (Banani 1971: 69). In 1983, the number of His available tablets was estimated to be 27,000 (Bahá’í World Centre 1986: 98). Even though He was in correspondence with an ever-increasing number of people, His tablets to them were usually highly individualized and attuned to their personal characteristics, names, occupations, and interests (Fathezam 2012: 149–151). Banani refers to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s tablets as ‘masterpieces of Persian epistolary genre’ and describes them as ‘marked by directness, intimacy, warmth, love, humor, forbearance and a myriad other qualities’ (1971: 70).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote or dictated tablets almost every day. As a Bahá’í who spent nine years close to Him in ‘Akká observed, He sometimes wrote or dictated tablets in Arabic or Persian while He was receiving both Bahá’í and non-Bahá’í visitors and even conversing with them



in Turkish. The same observer recorded that He would simultaneously dictate a letter to one of His secretaries in one language (Arabic or Persian) while writing in the other language (Afrúkhthi 2005: 195–196). At other times, for example in 1904 during the turbulent days of incarceration and Ottoman authorities' interrogations, 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have been engaged in correspondence in His bed-chamber throughout the night and to have penned, in His own hand, as many as ninety tablets in a single day (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 267; Balyuzi 1971: 114).

The subject matter of these tablets varied from personal counsels and exhortations to interpretation of verses or chapters from the scriptures of other religions, to explanations of theological or philosophical topics, to the proper conduct of Bahá'ís at times of political upheaval, to the stages of the fulfilment of the Bahá'í ideal of unity, among other topics. These tablets, even though addressed to specific people, went far beyond their immediate audience in their application and influence. They became authoritative texts on their relevant subject matters and part of Bahá'í scripture due the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Head of the Faith and the authorized interpreter of Bahá'u'lláh's writings. One example is the Tablet of Seven Candles, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's response to Jane Whyte, the wife of a Scottish clergyman, who visited Him in 'Akká in 1906 and left Him a letter upon her departure. In this tablet, in discussing world unity, 'Abdu'l-Bahá lists seven stages humanity will need to pass through in order to establish unity (*Selections* 29–32). This tablet is one of the texts that Shoghi Effendi uses to elucidate how 'Abdu'l-Bahá envisaged the future of the world (*World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* 38–39).

'Abdu'l-Bahá's Persian and Arabic tablets have been published in nine volumes of *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, the first three volumes, between 1910 and 1921 in Egypt and the rest in Iran between 1964 and 1978–79 and six volumes of *Muntakhabátí az Makátib-i-Hadrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, the first published in 1979 in the United States, the second in Great Britain in 1984, and the rest between 1992 and 2005 in Germany. To this list must be added one volume of *Min Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, published in Brazil in 1982. Early English translations of some of His tablets were published in three volumes, in 1909, 1915, and 1916, in Chicago. Forty-five tablets published in these three volumes were retranslated in part or in their entirety, and the revised translations were incorporated in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* in 1978. In addition, newly authorized English translations of several of His tablets have been published on the website of the Bahá'í Reference Library.<sup>3</sup>

This brief discussion of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets must include a short description of three of His best-known tablets, as well as a category of His tablets pertaining to a crucial period in the history of Iran and in the history of its Bahá'í community, during which He applied Bahá'u'lláh's teachings under critical political circumstances.

### The two Tablets of a Thousand Verses

Two of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablets are known as 'Tablet of a Thousand Verses' (Lawḥ-i-Hizár Baytí) on account of their length. These two tablets were written on issues pertaining to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's role as the Centre of Bahá'u'lláh's covenant and the authorized interpreter of His word. They were written with regard to His half-brother Muḥammad-'Alí's violation of the Covenant and the challenges Muḥammad-'Alí posed to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's authority. The tablets exposed the machinations of Muḥammad-'Alí and his associates. The first tablet, written in 1897, is addressed to Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání (*Muntakhabátí* 4: 232–259), and the second tablet, written in 1898, is addressed to Jalíl Misgar Khu'í (*Muntakhabátí* 4: 259–300).

## Tablets pertaining to the Iranian Constitutional Revolution

In addition to dealing with the difficulties surrounding Him in Palestine in the first decade of the twentieth century, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá also had to guide the Bahá’í community of Iran, which comprised the majority of the Bahá’í population of the world at the time, during the tumultuous years of Iran’s Constitutional Revolution (1905–1911). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reached out to the Bahá’í community in Iran by writing either to the Spiritual Assembly of Tehran, to the Hands of the Cause of God, or to individual believers. According to a contemporary, He issued between 190 and 200 tablets pertaining to the topic in the first year and a half of the constitutional movement alone (‘Aláqband Yazdí 1975: 9).

Inspired and informed by Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave qualified support for parliamentary democracy. He had advocated a carefully defined form of parliamentary democracy thirty years prior to the beginning of the constitutional revolution in *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Yet although He considered constitutionalism a requirement of the age, He did not support the combative and confrontational measures taken to achieve it on the part of its proponents. He emphasized that salvation would not be achieved unless the government and the people intermingled ‘like honey and milk’. He sent messages to both sides of the conflict to convey this advice and guided Bahá’ís to try to reconcile the two, and if they failed to do so, to withdraw themselves (Yazdani 2014: 54–74, 2003a: 255–322).

### *Tablet of the Two Calls to Success and Prosperity, also known as The Tablet of the East and the West (Lawḥ-i-Du-Nidáy-i-Faláḥ va Najáḥ)*

This tablet was written in 1908, when following the political changes in the Ottoman Empire, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was freed from incarceration on the one hand and relatively relieved from crises caused by the Covenant-breakers on the other. He could now devote His time to expounding on Bahá’u’lláh’s universal message, an undertaking that began in this tablet with a discussion of the necessity of conjoining material and spiritual civilization (*Muntakhabátí* 1: 272–284). The English translation of this tablet has also been published (*Selections* 296–309). In the years that followed, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continued to expatiate upon Bahá’u’lláh’s universal message and social teachings in His travels to the West.

### III. 1910–1913: Expounding Bahá’u’lláh’s principles in the West

That ‘Abdu’l-Bahá travelled to the West to bring the message of universal peace at a time when the West asserted its superiority in all dimensions—socio-political, material, and cultural—in itself defied the norms of East–West relations. He described the results of this trip as being so great that no other event in the history of the Bahá’í religion up to that time could rival it. He added that the value of His travels was not befittingly known at the time and that it would become known only in the future (Zarqání 1914: 200, 227). Comparing His travels to those of other Easterners, He said,

Up to the present time no one has traveled, with a purpose like ours, from Persia to America. Some have made the journey, but it was for their personal gain or for trivial motives. Ours may be said to be the first voyage of Easterners to America.

(Zarqání 1998: 28)

It can be said with certainty that the speeches He delivered during His travels in the West mark the first codified and systematic presentation of the principles of the revelation of Bahá’u’lláh.

As such, His speeches can be considered the ultimate crystallization of His role as the authorized interpreter of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh. It is important to note that there is not a single theme in what He presented in various talks as Bahá'u'lláh's 'teachings' (*ta'álím*) that does not have its roots in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh.

The significance of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's formal talks is evident from a statement made by Shoghi Effendi. In one of his major Persian letters, he defined the 'warp and woof' of the New World Order to consist of the laws of the Kitáb-i-Aqdas and the spiritual and administrative principles expressed in the tablets and talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (*Tawqí'át* 126). In other words, in terms of the inclusion of the spiritual and administrative principles of the Bahá'í religion, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's formal talks have a weight mighty enough to be placed next to the tablets He wrote throughout His ministry. Given that His talks were delivered mostly during His travels to the West, Shoghi Effendi's statement reveals the particular status that these talks have in expatiating upon the principles of the Bahá'í Faith.

The precursor to all His formal talks in the West was the talk 'Abdu'l-Bahá was invited to give at the First Universal Races Congress held at the University of London in July 1911. The congress was to be held about two weeks prior to His sailing on the SS Corsica on 11 August from Egypt to Marseilles. His physical presence there being impossible, He therefore sent the text of His talk to the Congress. The English translation of the text was read at the Congress by Wellesley Tudor Pole (*Khítábát* 1921a: 35–43). A shortened version of this translation was published in the proceedings of the Congress under the title 'Letter from Abdu'l Baha [*sic*] to the First Universal Peace Congress' (Spiller 1911: 155–157).

'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered speeches at various places, including synagogues, churches, and universities, among other public venues. His audiences ranged from leaders of public thought to the masses at large (Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 281). Shortly after He left the United States for the United Kingdom, He recounted that in synagogues, He vindicated the truth of Christianity and Islam; in churches, He extolled the Prophet Muhammad; in assemblies of socialists, He expatiated upon the laws that were needed to establish order and peace in the world; and before materialists, He proved the power of the supernatural. So effective were His talks that all those present at such assemblies humbled themselves in acknowledging the truth of His words (Zarqání 1921: 8). He indicated that He delivered His talks 'according to the capacity of the people and the exigency of the time' (Zarqání 1914: 124, 1998: 133). He usually delivered them spontaneously, with no prior notes. He wondered how some speakers 'can be sure of what God wanted them to say until they look into the faces of their people' (Ives 1962: 73). Even on one or two occasions when He was asked to provide the host with the text of His intended speech, He did not fully stick to the prepared text handed to the host once He actually saw the audience ('Ahdíyyih 1992: 15).

He used various techniques to relate to the audience. In some talks, He highlighted an aspect of the beliefs of the audience and related it to His own message or focused on what they shared with Bahá'ís. For example, in the talk delivered at the Theosophical Lodge, He referred to sharing the same 'aims and purposes' as 'a reflection and evidence of the oneness of the world of humanity'. He then moved on to emphasizing the need for 'a great power by which these glorious principles and purposes may be executed' ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 156). In other talks, He used a current event as the opening point of departure. An example is His expression of regret over the war between Italy and Turkey as an opening to His talk about the hazards of war and the necessity to work towards the achievement of peace ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Khítábát* 1921a: 87). On still other occasions, He used a cultural event as a starting point to elaborate on a spiritual theme. For example, He used All Saints' Day in Paris on 1 November 1911 as an opportunity to discuss who the real saints were ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Khítábát* 1921a: 97).

Conveying Bahá'u'lláh's message of peace and unity to the Western world, He provided the audience, in many of His talks, with a list and summary of some of the most salient teachings and principles of the Bahá'í religion. The number of teachings He listed and expounded on in each speech varied. There were talks in which He discussed only two or four principles and others in which He mentioned several other tenets. In all instances, He clarified that those were 'among' the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, emphasizing thereby the depth and scope of the religion founded by His father. In one of His talks, He is reported to have mentioned twenty-one of the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh (Zarqání 1914: 206; 1998: 222). When enumerating Bahá'u'lláh's teachings, almost invariably, the first and the second teachings, often interchanged, were 'independent search after Truth' and the proclamation of the 'oneness of humankind', and usually the third and the fourth, again frequently interchanged, were 'the basic unity of all religions' and 'the harmony which must exist between religion and science'. Of the teachings and principles, some were expressions of truth while others were ideals to be realized. Writing about 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels in the West, Shoghi Effendi enumerates thirteen of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings as standing out 'as the essential elements of that Divine polity which He proclaimed' to His audience (*God Passes By* 281).

The exact number of speeches 'Abdu'l-Bahá delivered during His travels is not known. It has been estimated to be more than six hundred ('Ahdíyyih 14). Based on the notes of the chronicler of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels, Maḥmúd Zarqání, who accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His journey to North America and on His second trip to Europe, 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave talks almost every day and sometimes two or even three talks per day (Zarqání 1914: passim). In Washington, DC, He spoke before large gatherings of one or two thousand souls (Zarqání 1914: 59, 1998: 67). In a cable sent to the East, He indicated that He had met with three thousand people that day (Zarqání 1914: 54, 1998: 62). The talks were usually simultaneously translated and recorded both in the original language—for the most part, Persian, but also a number in Arabic—and in the English translation. English translations were published in such early collections as *Talks by Abdul Baha Given in Paris* (first published in 1912), *Abdul Baha in London: Addresses & Notes of Conversations* (first published in 1912), and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (first published as two volumes in 1921–22 and 1925). These collections, however, comprise a number of talks for which only the English translation has been preserved, and no original language text is available. In the Bahá'í religion, only the written text is considered authentic (Hornby 1994: 437). 'Abdu'l-Bahá authenticated the transcripts of some of His talks, hence conferring on them the same status as His tablets. This was not the case with other talks (Research Department 1996). In 1912, Maḥmúd Zarqání, who had not accompanied 'Abdu'l-Bahá on His first trip to Europe (10 August to 15 December 1911), managed to collect the transcripts of the talks He delivered on that trip. 'Abdu'l-Bahá reviewed the transcripts and approved the publication of these talks. The collection was published in 1921 in Egypt as the 'first volume' of His talks (see References). Several other collections of His speeches were published in the original languages in the decades that followed.<sup>4</sup>

The authentication and translation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks is an ongoing process. In recent years, the translation of twelve talks, at least five of which were given in response to questions posed by Corinne True and her daughter during their visit to 'Akká, have been published on the website of the Bahá'í Reference Library.<sup>5</sup> It must also be noted that in addition to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's formal talks, Mírzá Maḥmúd-i-Zarqání's chronicles of His travels include the 'authentic record' of random statements expressed during His 1912–13 trips (Universal House of Justice 1984).

#### IV. 1913–1921: Expanding the horizons: on peace, propagation, and philosophy

Following His return to Haifa from the West, the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the final seven years of His life were devoted to issues with global implications and far-reaching consequences,

reaching their culmination with a tablet on major philosophical questions written near the end of His life. Months after 'Abdu'l-Bahá's return from His travels, World War I broke out. At the beginning of the war, He urged humanity to embrace peace. In the isolation caused by the war, He focused first on immortalizing the memory of some faithful believers and then embarked on devising a plan for the propagation of Bahá'u'lláh's teachings—a theme on which He wrote fourteen highly significant tablets, which Bahá'ís consider as among His most significant legacies for posterity. As the war drew to a close, He issued two tablets on the requirements for the establishment of world peace. And in the final months of His life, He wrote one of His most profound philosophical works.

### ***The Call for Universal Peace (Şawt-i-salám-i-'Ámm)***

Two months after the beginning of World War I, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sorrowed by the war, wrote a tablet that can perhaps best be described as an urgent and universal summons to peace. It is reported that He sent this tablet to *The Times of London* for publication on 1 October 1914 (Mázindarání n.d.b: 303–304). In the tablet, usually referred to as 'The Call for Universal Peace' (Şawt-i-salám-i-'Ámm), He mentions Bahá'u'lláh's teachings about world peace and His admonitions, some 'fifty years ago', regarding the danger of a future war. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also reiterates His own warnings, made initially during His travels in Europe and North America from 1910 to 1913, that Europe was on the brink of war, as well as His urgings that everyone embrace peace and unity. He then calls upon the states, the nations, the sages, the philosophers of the West, the dignitaries of the world, and finally, humanity at large to reflect on the disastrous effects of war and do all they can to prevent its prolongation. He ends the general call with an ardent prayer for peace (*Khiṭábát* 99/1942–43: 80–82; *Min Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá* 154–156). An English translation of the tablet was published in the 9 December 1914 issue of *The Christian Commonwealth*. Some three weeks later, the 31 December issue of *The Star of the West* (vol. 6, no. 16, pp. 243–245) published the same translation (by Ahmad Sohrab) with two additional lines at the beginning. *The Star of the West* copy signified the immediate addressee of the tablet as 'Miss Beatrice Irwin in London', and in the two additional lines at the beginning—absent also in the tablet as published in the original Persian—'Abdu'l-Bahá acknowledges the receipt of her letter, adding that He writes this important tablet in response to her questions, instructing her to do her best to publish it. Therefore, it must have been Beatrice Irwin who had the tablet published in *The Christian Commonwealth*.

### ***Memorials of the Faithful (Tadhkiratu'l-Vafá' fi Tarjamat-i-Ḥayát-i-Qudamá'-i'l-Aḥibbá')***

During the latter half of 1915, when communication was interrupted by the war, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who now had more free time than ever before, delivered speeches on the life of more than seventy early believers to weekly gatherings of Bahá'ís at His home in Haifa (Balyuzi 1971: 417). These talks were transcribed, compiled, and authorized by Him. One of those in attendance obtained 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission to publish them in the same year, but it was not until 1924 that they were published. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's title for this collection of short biographical sketches, *Tadhkiratu'l-Vafá'* (meaning literally 'remembrance of faithfulness'), according to Banani, 'places it in a Persian literary tradition some nine centuries old'. The title is reminiscent of the *Tadhkiratu'l-Awliyá'* ('Remembrance of Saints') of the mystic poet Farídu'd-Dín 'Aṭṭár (Banani 1971: 73). The book covers a wide range of characters, from those who served by cleaning, cooking, or making tea to scholars and artists, all embodying the qualities of consecration, loyalty, and

faithfulness. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s approach in this work has been interpreted as the democratization of sainthood (Momen 2016). He saw beauty in the ordinary, broadened the meaning of saintliness, and demonstrated the transformative power of His vision (Cheng and Nash 2015).

### ***The tablets to the Hague***

‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote these two tablets, on 17 December 1919 and 1 July 1920, in response to letters addressed to Him by the Executive Committee of the Central Organization for a Durable Peace in The Hague. The much longer first tablet, which Shoghi Effendi describes as ‘of far-reaching importance’, was published two years after it was written (*God Passes By* 308; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá *Makátib* 3: 100–122), and the second tablet was published many years later (‘Abdu’l-Bahá *Makátib* 4: 199–202). These two tablets encapsulate Bahá’í ideas on the requirements for the establishment of world peace. A partial English translation of the first tablet to The Hague has long been available (*Selections* 310–321). More recently, complete translations of both tablets were published on the website of the Bahá’í Reference Library.<sup>6</sup>

### ***The Tablets of the Divine Plan (Farámín-i-Tablighí)***

From 26 March 1916 to 8 March 1917, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote fourteen tablets to the Bahá’ís of the United States and Canada, exhorting them to spread the Bahá’í teachings to all parts of their own countries and to the rest of the world. Eight of these tablets were addressed to the Bahá’ís in four regions of the United States (Northeastern, Southern, Central, and Western states), two were addressed to the Bahá’ís of Canada only, and four were addresses to the Bahá’ís in the United States and Canada jointly (*Makátib* 3: 2–64; *Tablets of the Divine Plan* 5–107). These tablets contained not only specific instructions about the regions and countries to which Bahá’ís were encouraged to travel and teach their Faith but also counsels on the spiritual qualities the Bahá’í teachers should develop and embody. Shoghi Effendi refers to them as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ‘mandate’ (*God Passes By* 324) and the ‘supreme charter for teaching’ (quoted in *Tablets of the Divine Plan* xv). They constitute the basis for all subsequent teaching plans devised by Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice (*Tablets of the Divine Plan* xix–xxi; Research Department 1986).

### ***Tablet to Dr Auguste Forel***

On 21 September 1921, sixty-seven days before His passing, in response to questions posed in a letter from the well-known Swiss entomologist and psychiatrist, Professor Auguste-Henri Forel (d. 1931), ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote a tablet that can be considered His last significant philosophical work. Known as the ‘Tablet to Dr Auguste Forel’, it expounds the logical necessity of the existence of the mind as the all-unifying agency in the human body, the existence of the Universal Reality as the unifying agency of infinite beings, and the relationship between the faculties of the mind and the human soul (*Makátib* 3: 474–491; ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Khiṭábát* 99/1942–43: 18–29). Shoghi Effendi’s English translation of the tablet was published some years later (‘Abdu’l-Bahá 1976, *Tablet to Dr Auguste-Henri Forel* 37–43). In this last period of His life, as before, He continued to write prayers. A brief description of this large category of His writings is thus in order.

### ***Prayers***

This introduction would be incomplete without at least a brief reference to another category of writings that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá penned in all stages of His life: prayers. Some of these prayers were

written independently while others appeared within or at the end of speeches or tablets. Some prayers are of a general nature while others have a specific theme, such as healing from disease. His hundreds of prayers, varying in length from a few sentences to several pages, are mostly in Arabic or Persian, with a few in Turkish. Special prayers for the deceased (*ziyarat-námih*), often written with instructions that they be read at the resting place of the departed, are all in Arabic. The 'chief distinguishing quality' of His prayers, like those of Bahá'u'lláh, is 'the sustained and expanding expression of man's experience of the Holy by means of poetic language' (Banani 1971: 70). His prayers almost invariably have a three-part structure: an introduction or opening in which He praises the Divine; the body of the prayer, in which 'Abdu'l-Bahá often supplicates for specific spiritual qualities to be attained; and closing words in which He again praises the Divine and mentions some of His attributes.

### Conclusion

'Abdu'l-Bahá accomplished His role as the de facto deputy of Bahá'u'lláh during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime and served as the Center of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant and the interpreter of His writings following His passing, to a large extent through literary and oratory activities. He interpreted the texts of the religions of the past, clarifying their relationship with the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh; He protected the integrity of Bahá'u'lláh's religion; He interpreted Bahá'u'lláh's teachings and clarified their potential to heal the maladies that have befallen humanity; He designed the New World Order; and He provided plans for the propagation of Bahá'u'lláh's message. Meanwhile, He maintained a steady flow of correspondence with both Bahá'ís and non-Bahá'ís from around the world. A feature of many of these works was prayers of a sublime and uplifting nature written for the addressees, their loved ones, their communities, or humanity all together.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's literary production and recorded utterances encompass areas as diverse as Qur'anic exegesis and hadith commentary; biblical hermeneutics; mysticism; philosophy; socio-political thought; nineteenth- and early twentieth-century social, scientific, and political questions; the history of Iran, of religions, and of the world; and liturgical literature. Still largely unexplored—even by the multitudes speaking the languages in which He wrote—the body of His writings presents untapped resources in all these areas for posterity. It is left for future generations to appreciate fully the breadth and depth of the knowledge imbued in these works and the stature of the soul Who penned them.

### Notes

- 1 The author expresses her sincere appreciation to Dr Omid Rastegar-Ghaemmaghami for his careful and helpful advice throughout the preparation of this chapter.
- 2 The exact date when Part One of the Will and Testament was written is not known, but there is an important clue about when it was written in the text. In Part One of the Will and Testament, 'Abdu'l-Bahá quotes from 'the testimony written by Mírzá Shu'á'u'lláh.' Shu'á'u'lláh's testimony is in the form of a letter sent from the United States, and this letter, according to Adib Taherzadeh (*The Child of the Covenant*, Oxford: George Ronald, 2000, page 7), is dated 27 November 1905. Given the time needed for mail to have been delivered from the United States to Palestine, it can be surmised from the date given for Shu'á'u'lláh's letter by Adib Taherzadeh, that Part One of the Will and Testament was likely written in late 1905 or early 1906.
- 3 See <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdul-baha/additional-tablets-extracts-talks/>.
- 4 Following the 1921 volume published in Egypt, another collection of His speeches, which, according to its title page, includes talks delivered in Europe and [North] America but, in fact, also includes talks given in Egypt and Haifa—as well as a number of tablets—was published in 99 BE/1942–43 in Tehran. At the beginning of this 99 BE volume, the transcript of one of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's speeches—which features passages in rhymed prose—is published. A note indicates that the speech was delivered at the place of 'Mr. MacNutt' when the 'moving picture' was taken. The text includes the repetition of the phrase *muẓḥidih*

*bád muẓhđih bád* ('glad tidings, glad tidings'), which is why sometimes the volume is referred to by this phrase. Bahá'ís in Iran used to refer to this volume as 'the Fath-i-A'zam volume,' which suggests that it was probably published by Núru'd-Dín Fath-i-A'zam (d. 1952). In 127 BE/1970, a collection of His speeches in Canada and America was published in Tehran and identified as the 'second volume'. In the same year a small volume containing a selection of the speeches published in the 'first volume' was republished. Later, a 'third volume' was published, which, in fact, was a republication of the talks and tablets of the 99 BE/1942–43 volume with a slightly different ordering and the omission of a number of talks, including five talks from His first trip to Europe appearing at the end of the 99 BE/1942–43 volume. This is despite the fact that a note at the beginning of the 127 BE 'second volume' indicated that the 'third volume' will include 'Abdu'l-Bahá's talks on His second trip to Europe.

- 5 See <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdul-baha/twelve-table-talks-abdul-baha/1#811617070>.
- 6 See <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdul-baha/tablets-hague-abdul-baha/2#381373700> and <https://www.bahai.org/library/authoritative-texts/abdul-baha/tablets-hague-abdul-baha/3#738038819>.

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