

The Lamp
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Wilmette Institute Launches New Programs

During 1998 the Wilmette Institute will launch two new programs and possibly a third. The new programs are different in conception and format from the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program and will provide learning opportunities tailored to a variety of interests.

Distance Learning Courses

The first program involves distance-learning ("correspondence") courses. The first course will focus on Bahá'u'lláh's revelation from 1853 to 1868. It starts January 1, 1998, and ends in early May. Open to 75 students, the course will examine Bahá'u'lláh's writings during the Tehran, Baghdad, Constantinople, and Adrianople periods, including such works as the Hidden Words, the Seven Valleys, the Four Valleys, the Book of Certitude, the Tablet of the Holy Mariner, the Tablet of Ahmad, and most of the tablets to the kings.

The course will be divided into eighteen weekly units, each with its own reading assignments. Students will have a choice of learning exercises to complete, including artistic projects, writing assignments, firesides, or deepenings. In addition, an electronic discussion group will be available for those who have e-mail; conference calls for those who don't; and group study exercises for those participating in small groups. Students will submit their learning exercises to the correspondence course faculty so that comments and suggestions can be given. Each weekly assignment will take five to eight hours to complete.

Among the faculty for the correspondence course are Habib Riazati, well-known scholar of and speaker about the Bahá'í writings; Dann May, instructor of religion and philosophy at Oklahoma City University; and Robert Stockman, an instructor in world religions at De Paul University.

Registration for the course has begun and will end when the class is full. To register, one must fill out a form (available from the Wilmette Institute) and send the full tuition (\$200; checks should be made out to "Bahá'í Services Fund"; Visa and Mastercard accepted). To encourage the creation of local discussion groups, the Wilmette Institute is offering a 20 percent discount to each individual who is part of a local group of three or more who have registered for the course and who pledge to study together.

A correspondence course on the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, 1868-92 (the Akka period), is planned for spring 1998.

Weekend Mini-Courses at Bosch

The second new program is a joint effort of the Wilmette Institute and Bosch Bahá'í School: a series of courses on world religions from a Bahá'í perspective. Each will be held at Bosch Bahá'í School starting on a Friday evening and ending at Sunday noon. The class will be followed by five weeks

of home study. The topics planned to date are Hinduism and Buddhism (Jan. 9-11, 1998); Chinese Religion and Philosophy (Feb. 20-22); Judaism and Christianity (March 27-29); the Old and New Testaments (April 24-26); Islam (June 12-14); the Bahá'í Faith and Philosophy (Sept. 11-13); and Bahá'í Theology (Oct. 30-Nov. 1). Teaching the courses will be Moeen Afnani, John Hatcher, Dann May, Brian Miller, Behruz Sabet, and Robert Stockman.

Each course, which will be the equivalent of one quarter of a semester course, will be conducted at the undergraduate level of difficulty. One need not take all of the courses; one may take any one or combination of them. Those who wish to obtain undergraduate credit may be able to do so through their university.

Preregistration is required. Each course costs \$75 if you register two weeks in advance; on-site tuition is \$100. In addition, one must pay the costs of staying at Bosch for a weekend (usually \$110). The curricular materials were originally developed for the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program, the Institute's four-year program of study of the Bahá'í Faith. They have been adapted for the mini-courses at Bosch and include follow-up home study.

Courses in the Persian Language

The National Persian-American Affairs Office and the Wilmette Institute are considering starting intensive courses in the Persian language this summer. The courses would be held at the same time as the Spiritual Foundations residential program (July 17 to August 9). Being discussed are three courses: a beginning class on the basics of reading and writing Persian; an intermediate class for those who know the basics and wish to improve their reading comprehension and writing skills; and a special class for those who have good command of reading and writing Persian and wish to be able to study the Bahá'í writings in the original language.

If you are interested in taking one of the Persian language courses, you should contact the National Persian-American Affairs Office at the Bahá'í National Center (847-733-3526; FAX 847-869-0247; e-mail persian@usbnc.org). The courses will be offered only if interest is sufficient. Tuition, residence hall costs, and registration requirements will be announced later.

Wilmette Institute Inaugurates 24-hour Automated Information Line

To meet growing demand for information about the Wilmette Institute's programs, the Institute has inaugurated an automated twenty-four hour information line in November.

To reach it, one calls 847-733-3595. The information line gives a quick description of the Wilmette Institute, explains the way one can leave voice mail, and describes a menu about the Institute's different programs. To learn about the four-year Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program, one dials "1"; to hear about the Institute's correspondence course on the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, "2"; to hear about the Institute's plan for courses on the Persian language, "3"; and to get information on the Institute's joint course with Bosch on world religions, philosophy, and Bahá'í theology, "4."

After pressing a number, one hears more information about that program and can select from further menus with additional information. Finally, one can leave a voice mail message or can hang up.

The Wilmette Institute's old telephone number (847-733-3415) remains the fastest way to speak directly with a person.

News About the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization Program

Lisa Roy Returning to School

Lisa Roy, the Wilmette Institute's indefatigable registrar, will be returning to school in January to pursue her career in speech pathology. We will miss her terribly. Even though she will be hard to replace, we must make an attempt.

The Wilmette Institute is, therefore, seeking a youth year of service or other volunteer who can come to Wilmette for at least a year of service. The position involves writing letters, responding to e-mails, managing financial information in Quickbooks, maintaining files, and explaining the Wilmette Institute's programs over the telephone (for which training will be provided). Excellent organizational and telephone skills are required. The person should be able to work independently but also to work well in a team environment. Depending on skills available, the person may also be asked to grade homework assignments or write and edit curricular and publicity materials. Contact Robert Stockman at 847-733-3425 or Lisa Roy at 847-733-3415.

New Wilmette Institute Scholarship

The Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Wilmette, on the occasion of Dr. Betty J. Fisher's departure from Wilmette (her husband retired; she is working offsite in Charlotte, N.C.), has set up a scholarship for the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program to honor her many years of service to that community. One does not need to be a Wilmette resident to receive it. More details will be available in a future issue of *The Lamp*.

1997-98 Home Study Underway

The 1997-98 home study portion of the Spiritual Foundations program began in September with a series of weekly assignments about the writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá. Students read about various works of `Abdu'l-Bahá, usually one each week. They also read through the work and write an assignment of their choice about it. Most of `Abdu'l-Bahá's works are too long to complete in a week; hence each assignment is designed to be completed after a few hours of examination of the work (a comprehensive course on the writings of `Abdu'l-Bahá would take a year and is beyond the scope of the Spiritual Foundations program).

In November the Spiritual Foundations students will turn to the nature of the individual and complete a series of reading and writing assignments on the subject. In mid-December they turn to marriage and family life. In late January or early February they begin to study some of the writings of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas. The home study program then wraps up with a final examination exercise.

Mentorship System Has Begun

In early October the Spiritual Foundations program began its mentorship program. Students are assigned to mentors who are either faculty of the Spiritual Foundations program or Board members. Students should call their mentor monthly to discuss their progress and raise any questions they have. Otherwise, the mentor will call to offer encouragement and suggestions for completing the homework.

One of the difficulties with any home study program is that the students are usually isolated from each other and cannot see the faculty. As a result, it is often very difficult for them to get their home study assignments completed on time. The mentoring system is meant to help overcome the students' isolation and provide feedback. In addition, optional conference calls will also be held for those who wish to participate in group discussions.

Spiritual Foundations Students in Action

From Patricia Haynie:

Hope all is well with you. I just wanted to share some of the local activities and excitement from Palm Beach County. After returning from the Wilmette Institute's Spiritual Foundations program, the Bahá'ís had been invited to participate in a Unity Church's series titled "Unity in Diversity," with other religious organizations. Each group provided a speaker for a half hour in the morning with a two hour seminar in the afternoon to present their faith. John (our public speaker in the family) took the morning, and we shared the afternoon. Thanks to your prayers, the day had a special energy, and there is no doubt we felt the assistance. We used the topic of spiritual growth through the five powers, including Dr. Saba Nolley's exercise with the rose. It was very effective. We also used music to illustrate its power in comprehending scripture. There were about 200 people in the morning, and we were welcomed very warmly, as were several members of the Bahá'í community who attended as support. They were instrumental in making friends with many members of the church, and as a result we have had several new guests at our Center. One woman came up immediately after the presentation and asked if she could go to the Center right then! It has been very energizing for the community.

The next worship Service (first Sundays), after devotions we used the topic of the diversity of Bahá'í music. Several songs were played, also the opening of the third day of the World Congress as well as the closing, mixed with quotes and stories of the artists, history of certain songs, and illustrations of how music affects individuals and communities. Thank you Peter Oldziey, for helping to inspire this activity. It was a lot of fun, very moving for the participants, and will be developed into a fireside. Our Auxiliary Board Member is going to appoint an assistant to focus on getting music organized and into the community, and many people are recognizing that you still have to sing, no matter how badly (thank you Dr. Michael Penn)!! We will be deeping on the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, using material from Mr. Habib Riazati. This is a direct result of the influence of the Wilmette Institute, and much needed here, again, much gratitude for this material. We have adult as well as children's classes on Sundays, and the past two classes we have taken the prayer book and a huge dictionary and simply done a vocabulary lesson. Some words were listed and defined in advance, but the participants were simply asked to take five minutes and choose words for discussion. Very helpful

for all of us and requires little preparation.

Last weekend our Center hosted the Auxiliary Board Members from the Southeast and the Islands with two Counselors and a surprise visit from a member of the Universal House of Justice, Dr. Farzam Arbab, as he was returning to Haifa (from South America via south Florida). He specifically asked about the Wilmette Institute, and we (Mary K. Radpour was there as an Auxiliary Board Member; I was there serving dinner!) were delighted to answer his questions.

Hope you are considering attending the Social and Economic Conference in Orlando December 18-21, Sarah and I are planning on being there, and there will be a booth to present the Institute. The program looks wonderful (as always) and the cost is reasonable; \$99 for registration, room rates are \$44 per night (this includes 2 double beds, daily maid service, and private bath with hot water).

From Warren Wittekind:

Greetings from Unit 129 in Washington State (and Oregon too). A Wilmette Institute display along with a two-minute presentation on the Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization program was made. Attendance was by Warren Wittekind and Carol Bardin. A Verna Zeutermeister (whom Carol had been in touch with for some time) does want to register and asked for the registration packet. Carol agreed that I should send the 15 brochures and cover letters to the 15 Spiritual Assemblies in this Area. A start for Wilmette Institute to becoming a more well known Bahá'í resource and avenue of service.

From Patricia Haynie:

Just reporting in to say that WI was presented to conventions twice in Florida today, both coasts. Sarah and I both passed out literature from our ambassador packets and are doing our best to recruit new students from Florida! Hope all is well with each of you. I spoke with Charlotte tonight and teaching opportunities in the Detroit area are exploding, she should be joining in the e-mail conversations soon.

Habib Riazati Writes about the Meaning of "Those Shafts were God's"

(The Wilmette Institute students study both the writings of Bahá'u'lláh and Bahá'í theology. This letter by Habib Riazati relates to both subjects.)

Question: In *Gleanings*, p. 54, on the subject of the station of the Manifestations of God, in the quote that says "Those shafts were God's, not Thine," does `shafts' refer to the cane of Moses? If this interpretation is correct, why is `shafts' plural?

Answer: The passage you quote appears in a section which the beloved Guardian has chosen to extract from the *Kitáb-i-Íqán*, pp. 178-179. The passage in the *Íqán* is:

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God!" He verily speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: "Those shafts were God's, not Thine!" And also He saith: "In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God."

In this passage there are two statements that Bahá'u'lláh quotes:

- 1) "Those shafts were God's, not Thine!"
- 2) "In truth, they who plighted fealty unto thee, really plighted that fealty unto God."

These two statements come from the Holy Qur'án. The first appears in Sura 8 (The Spoils of War [Al-Anfal]), verse 17, and the second one is from Sura 18, verse 110.

The first statement, which was the subject of your question, was revealed by His holiness Muhammad about the defensive battles in which He was involved. During one of the wars, He defended His troops by successfully throwing shafts at the ones who were at war with Him and His followers.

His holiness Bahá'u'lláh is referring to the verses in Qur'án in order to convey to mankind the various stations that the Manifestations of God have. There are three:

1. Their station in relation to God
2. Their station in relation to other Manifestations of God
3. Their station in relation to humankind

The explanation of these stations of the Manifestations of God is one of the major themes in the writings of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. In a way we can say that the whole Persian Bayán is about the nature of the various stations of the Manifestations of God. The Kitáb-i-Panj-Sha'n is, from beginning to end, about the Manifestations of God and their various stations.

It is in regards to the station of the Manifestations of God in relation to God Himself that Bahá'u'lláh quotes the above passages from the holy Qur'án. In their relation to God, they are, as the Báb says in the Seven Proofs, like the mirrors that reflect nothing beside the attributes of God. Everything that pertains to their human nature becomes absolute nothingness in this realm. By their words and their deeds They manifest the will of God. In this station if all of them claim to be God, it is true because they reflect nothing but His attributes. His holiness Bahá'u'lláh in the Kitáb-i-Íqán explains this station in the following words (to repeat the passage in question):

Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God!" He verily speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. For it hath been repeatedly demonstrated that through their Revelation, their attributes and names, the Revelation of God, His name and His attributes, are made manifest in the world. Thus, He hath revealed: "Those shafts were God's, not thine!" (Íqán, pp. 178-179)

There are four extremely important principles about the Manifestations of God that we need to understand:

1. The first and the most important principle is that we do not believe that Manifestations have the same essence as God, rather they only reflect the attributes of God. The only thing that we are saying is that they *represent* God for us.
2. Each and every one of these Manifestations can be considered the "Lord of the age" for the age in which they appear. For instance at the time of Christ and until the coming of Muhammad, Jesus was the Lord of the whole mankind, because it was through Him that mankind saw the attributes of God. When Muhammad manifested, then it was Muhammad who acted as the Lord of the Age until the coming of the Báb, and so on.
3. It is the light that is important and not the Lamp. That means David (who, according to the Báb, appeared before Moses), Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and even Bahá'u'lláh are like mirrors and what they reflect is the light. The mirrors change, but the light is the same.

What makes the Lord of the age unique is the light He reflects. This being the case, we need to realize that it is the latest Manifestation of God who should be the focal point of all of mankind. It should be Him who is the Lord of the age. To accept Him is to accept all of those who were before Him and to deny Him is to deny all of those who were before Him. For some one at the time of the Báb to still consider Muhammad the Lord of the Age is only an indication that he or she has been a worshiper of the lamp and not the light. For him to be considered a true Moslem he should believe in the return of the true light which was in Muhammad and has appeared in a new temple named "the Báb." The same holds true for all the ages.

4. The differences among the Manifestations of God has to do with the intensity of their revelation, which in itself is a function of humanity's capacity and needs of every age. The following passage from Íqán testifies to this fact:

These attributes of God are not and have never been vouchsafed specially unto certain Prophets, and withheld from others. Nay, all the Prophets of God, His well-favoured, His holy, and chosen Messengers, are, without exception, the bearers of His names, and the embodiments of His attributes. They only differ in the intensity of their revelation, and the comparative potency of their light. (The Kitáb-i-Íqán, pp. 103-104)

In conclusion, the statement in *Gleanings* concerning shafts is just another way to demonstrate the concept of divine unity.

The Wilmette Institute and the Bahá'í Distribution Service will soon be producing two sixty-minute videotapes by Dr. John Hatcher, one on "Studying the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh" and the other on "The Kitáb-i-Íqán." The tapes were made for the elective course on the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, Baghdad period, that the Institute held in August. Price and ordering information will be available

in the next issue of *The Lamp*.

T-shirts for the Spiritual Foundations program are still available through the Wilmette Institute. They are natural (off white) in color. "Spiritual Foundations for a Global Civilization" is printed in dark green; the Wilmette Institute logo in tan. The only sizes available are large and extra large. Send \$12 (\$10 for the shirt and \$2 for shipping) to the Institute. Checks should be made out to "Bahá'í Services Fund"; we also take Visa and Mastercard.