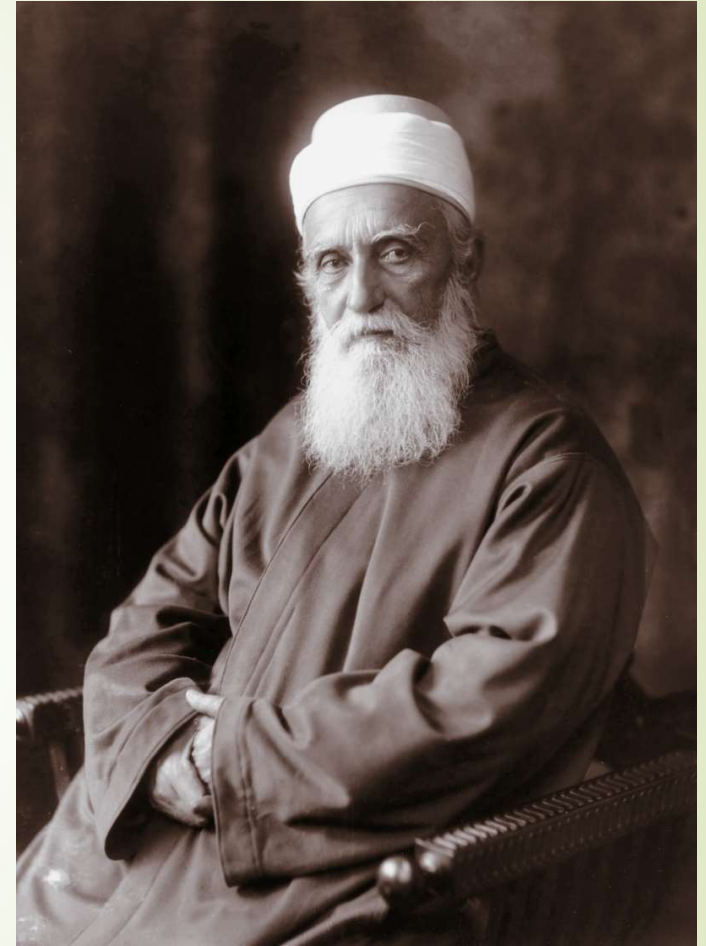


'The magic touch of progress': 'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Necati Alkan



Wilmette Institute Webinar, 27 March 2021

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Late Ottoman Period/Reforms (Westernization/Modernization)

- 1789 – 1839: Military Reforms, Sultan Selim III (r. 1789-1808) & Mahmud II (1808-1839), latter paved the way for later reforms, centralization
- 1839 – 1876: *Tanzimat* ('Reorganization'), extensive reforms in all spheres, Sultan Abdülmecid (1839-1861) & Abdülaziz (1861-1876)
- 1876: Deposition & death of Abdülaziz, 3 months ineffective interregnum of Murad V
- 1876 – 1878: Sultan Abdülhamid II (1876-1909), First Constitutional Era, constitutional monarchy & parliament

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

SULTAN ABDÜLMECID

1839 officially proclaimed Tanzimat/Reform period with the first edict:

- guaranteeing and securing the safety of the life, honour, and property of all the subjects
- introduction of a tax system
- conscription into the army, the limitation of military service to a certain period
- provincial cabinets, including leaders of the Muslim and non-Muslim communities

1856 second edict:

- reiterated equality of all Ottoman subjects
- equality of Muslims and all non-Muslims, especially Christians, comprised every aspect of society and even gave the latter some advantages over the Muslims
- other political & social reforms
- paved the way for first Ottoman constitution



Sultan Abdülmecid

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

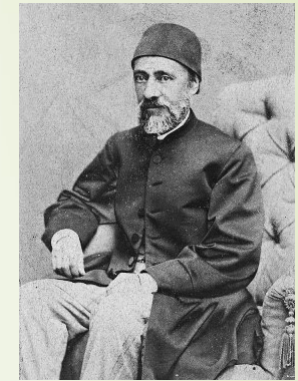
- SULTAN ABDÜLAZİZ
- Tanzimat reforms continued under the leadership of his chief ministers, Mehmed Fuad Pasha and Mehmed Emin Âli Pasha; exchanged offices as Prime/Foreign Minister
- New provinces set up 1864
- Council of State (consultative) 1868
- Public education based on French model 1861
- First Ottoman railroads in Anatolia, to Cairo & Europe; later to Baghdad & Arabia
- First civil code
- First Ottoman sultan to Western Europe 1867; met Napoleon III & Victoria
- First imperial museum: Istanbul Archeology Museum
- First postage stamps
- Expensive modernization of Navy: financial difficulties, combined with natural disasters & new palaces
- Ottoman public debt announced in Oct. 1875
- 1876 Abdülaziz deposed & death



Sultan Abdülaziz

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

- Since 1865 young Ottoman intellectuals opposed top-down state reforms
- 'Young Ottomans' against 'superficial' reforms/Westernization of Âli & Fuad Pasha
- Âli & Fuad elitist & autocratic, favoured bureaucratic oligarchy (rule of a few ministers)
- Sultan's power limited
- Reforms along Western ideals/laws, Sharia less important
- Young Ottomans wanted synthesis of Islam & West
- Claimed Islamic roots for 'parliament', 'consultation', etc.
- After Âli & Fuad died, Young Ottomans realized their goals: constitution & parliament with reps. of all ethnic & religious groups
- Group feeling/ideology of 'Ottomanism' should prevent nationalisms in the OE; failed later



Âli Pasha (d. 1871)



Fuad Pasha (d. 1869)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

- Patron of Young Ottomans in the 1870s:
- Midhat Pasha, province governor, e.g. Baghdad 1869-1872; Syria 1878-1880
- twice prime minister, 1872 & 1876-1877
- Outstanding Ottoman statesman, 'father of the liberals'
- 'Father of the Ottoman constitution', 1876:
- equal rights for all citizens without distinction of race or creed
- abolition of slavery
- independent judiciary based on civil (rather than religious) law
- universal elementary education
- bicameral parliament, Senate appointed by the Sultan, directly-elected Chamber of Deputies
- internal, financial and diplomatic crises of 1875-1876 provided Midhat a chance to introduce the Constitution
- Midhat responsible for deposition & death of Abdülaziz



Midhat Pasha (d. 1884)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

- 1876: Midhat installs Abdülhamid as sultan after his brother Murad V
- Abdülhamid II agrees to Constitution & Parliament
- 1877-1878 Ottoman-Russian War; defeat of OE
- Owing to the confusion of the War he suspended Parliament and Constitution in 1878
- autocratic rule until 1908
- Suspicious of anyone with liberal ideas; spy network & censorship
- Got rid of Midhat Pasha due to Abdülaziz affair
- Nevertheless far-reaching modernization & reforms esp. in education: secular Ottoman schools to counter foreign (missionary) influence
- Utilized Pan-Islamism as state ideology for unity of Muslims, Ottoman-Islamic identity & morality
- Aimed at civilizing 'unruly' non-Sunni peoples and converting to Hanafi-Sunnism
- Despite reforms OE lost territories esp. in the Balkans



Sultan Abdülhamid II
(d. 1918)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Baha'u'llah's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Good relations with some but also bad ones, esp. in Istanbul
- He observed that 'nothing has been seen from its [Istanbul's] inhabitants but conventional, officious formalities'
- with regard to the statesmen in Istanbul He stated that they were not mature enough, 'its governors and elders as children gathered about and disporting themselves with clay.'
- Heavily criticized Âli & Fuad Pasha in Lawh-i Ra'is, Surih-yi Ra'is and Lawh-i Fu'ad
- His criticism is similar to Young Ottomans': no justice, no care for the people etc.



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Baha'u'llah's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Despite the injustice by Abdülaziz Baha'u'llah presents Himself as his adviser
- *Suratu'l-Muluk* (Istanbul):
- advised the sultan to follow the commandments of God; act impartially towards his subjects; not to allow anybody to oppress them; be a just king
- Sultan should not to leave the affairs of state to the hand of others; not to rely on his ministers who are not worthy of his trust but on ministers who are upright and just
- Advises to to 'take counsel with them' (*shāwirhum*) in state affairs
- → necessity of consultation in human affairs in general; specifically in the government; Quranic/Islamic Notion: *shura*
- 'consultation' (*meşveret / mashvarat*) common terminology with Young Ottoman & Iranian reformers; in the 19th c. equivalent with 'parliament'
- → implying real democracy

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Baha'u'llah's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Baha'u'llah tells Ottoman statesmen that the real aim of the Prophets is the 'rehabilitation of the peoples of the earth' (*iṣlāḥ al-‘ālam*)
- Despite His criticism of the Ottomans, in one Tablet He commends Sultan Abdülhamid II for 'being occupied day and night personally with the reformation (*iṣlāḥ*) of the subjects and the empire'
- Ultimately Baha'u'llah presents Himself in His Writings as the 'Lifegiver and World Reformer'

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

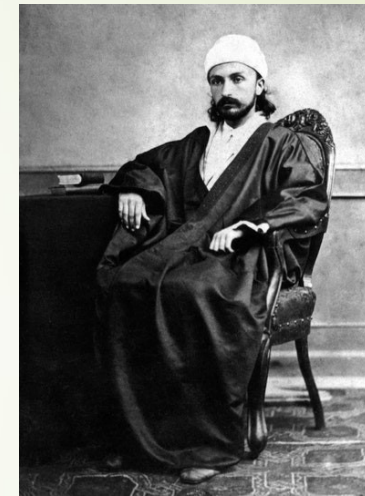
- 'Abdu'l-Bahá is reported to have said that the thoughts of the statesmen of the East were atrophied, their hearts devoid of desire for the progress of the nation, their ideas petty, selfish, local and not general. They thought of their own interests rather than of those of the country:
- 'They think more of the advancement of their own interests, than of those of the country. They are not far-seeing patriots, but inexperienced tyros. They sell the resources of their country, if they think that by so doing they can fill their own pockets.'
- (Sohrab, *Abdul Baha in Egypt*)



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- From early on in Baghdad known for His intellectual capacities and wisdom
- men of learning came to ask for His advice or put forward philosophical questions; His replies amazed them
- In Edirne also widely known for His qualities and deep intellect
- Ottoman officials high and low were His admirers
- One of them: Hurşid (Khurshid) Pasha, governor of Edirne
 - Consulted Him about the future of the OE
 - 'Abdu'l-Baha told him a story about a sick man who was given opium by the watchman that did not recover him, made him sleep and got worse.
 - Abdul Baha told the Governor: 'It is your watch-time. You are not doing anything to improve the condition of the sick country. You are putting it to sleep by giving it narcotics, and when you leave your position, what do you care whether the patient will live or die? You have had your night's sleep. Instead of watching the patient solicitously, and pulling him through, you prefer your own rest and comfort.' (Sohrab, *Abdul Baha in Egypt*)



Mehmed Hurşid Pasha
(d. 1878)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Other Ottoman reformist intellectuals:
- Abbas Effendi is 'an erudite and noble figure who is cognisant of the conditions of the age.'
- 'If 'Abbas Effendi's character and attitude are carefully examined it appears that his behaviour and manner remind of being more political than sheikh-like.'
- 'If an article on Iran in the foreign press came across his attentive eyes he would, devoting himself to it, explain his thoughts for hours and enjoy this so much that he sacrificed his sleep and comfort. Sometimes, having written articles in Arabic and Persian, he sent them with their French translations to the European press.'
- → 'Abdu'l-Baha active in promoting Baha'i ideas

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Other Ottoman reformist intellectuals:
- 'In my childhood and youth, I often used to be in his erudite presence and would profit from the pearls of his wisdom and perfect exemplary conduct. Everybody at his gatherings was filled with admiration about his superior merits and was a lover of his natural disposition and virtues...
- ... to those present in his assembly, Shaykh Effendi would only talk about science, morality, philosophy and the arts, and nothing would proceed from his mouth except that by which the listeners would benefit from the abundance of his knowledge.'

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Hasan Bedreddin (Bedri) Pasha
- military commander, writer & translator from French
- involved in the deposition of Sultan Abdülaziz
- Exiled to Palestine & Syria as colonel
- After 1908 YT Rev. Bedri was governor general in an Albanian province (1909-1911)
- Persian Baha'i sources mention Bedri Bey (Badri Beg), exiled to 'Akka, translator of 'Abdu'l-Baha into French and a Baha'i



Bedri Bey (Hasan Bedrettin Paşa).

1908 meşrutiyetinden sonra erkânıharb ferûki ve İşkodra valisi iken*.
1851-1914

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Turkish letters of 'Abdu'l-Baha to Bedri, some political
- praises his 'exceptional administration' in Albania
- encourages Bedri to establish unity based on Baha'i core beliefs by abolishing division and enmity among the diverse people of the province
- The means for this 'foremost achievement': diffusion of knowledge and education, making it accessible to all, and so delivering the diverse sects from evils and foolish prejudices
- practical and beneficial step for the security of the country would be the construction of roads everywhere in the mountainous province



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen



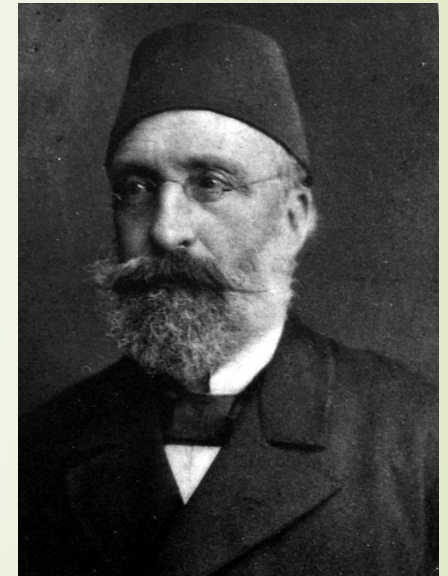
Bedri Pasha

اشفردرده مرتب قول اوردر ارکانه حربيه هبيني
L'état-major du corps d'armée en Scutari d'Albanie.

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

'Abdu'l-Baha's contacts with Ottoman statesmen

- Midhat Pasha (governor of Syria) met 'Abdu'l-Baha in Akka/Ridvan Garden in May 1880
- 'For years I have longed to meet Him. I have seen His utterances in Turkish that are beyond like or equal and eloquently testify to His vast knowledge. I have often heard many of the learned highly praising and extolling Him.'
- Later Midhat invited Him to Beirut
- Shoghi Effendi: 'It was through the extraordinarily warm reception accorded Him during His visit to Beirut, through His contact with Midhat Pasha, a former Grand Vizir of Turkey [sic], ... and through His constant association with officials, notables and leading ecclesiastics who, in increasing number had besought His presence, ... that He had succeeded in raising the prestige of the Cause He had championed to a level it had never previously attained.'



Midhat Pasha (d. 1884)

مختلدر. شمعدی به قدر لوندردہ اکک و پارس قادیں مودہ لری
 چیقار یورلر ایدی . بوحالک تبدیلی قابل اولمازی ؟
 آلمان مملکتک ، آلمان قومک تنزیل اعتبارینه دائر و علمینه
 اجرای تحریکات ایچون سنه لردنیری چالشمقده اولان انگلیز
 مطبوعاتک یالانلری تکذیبیدن ارتق اوصانقدق . بزم شو
 دشمنلرمز قرق سنه دنبری برر صورت ایله زنکین اولدیله . یالکز
 آلمانیاصلح و مسالمتک ادامهنه چالشدی واورو پاصالح و مسالمتی ده
 بالخاصه آلمانیاک مؤثر سوزی و قونی سایه سنده بوکونه قدر
 پایدار اوله بیلیمشدر . دشمنلرمز نه بیدیلر ؟ یایدق لرینگ یالکز
 اسملری تعداد اجمک کافی کله جکدر .

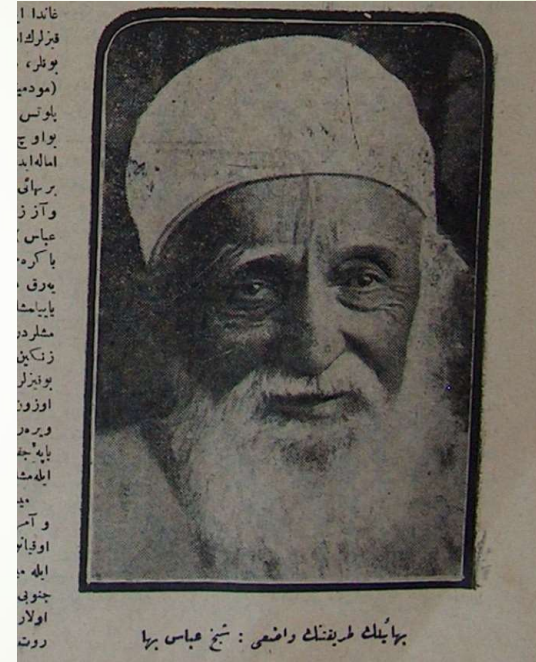


بر حکیم شرق

محترم عبدالبا عباس افندی

[« غره میدان او قویان بر حکیم شرق » مقاله سنه صراحت بیرریله]

انگلتره : قورس ، بتون آفریقای جنوبی ، شیرو وزامه زوی
 نه ری آده سنده کی پورتنکی اراضینک بر قسمی ، مصر ، بلوچستان ،
 عربستانک بعض قسمعلری ، بودما ، اوچ مالانی قراللی ،



غاندا
 قزلرک
 بونلر ،
 (موده)
 بلوتس
 بو اوج
 اناله اید
 بر سائی
 و آرز
 عباس
 باکره
 یوق
 یاییست
 مشلدر
 زتنکین
 بو نزلر
 اوزون
 و بره
 پایله
 الهمت
 و
 و آس
 او قویان
 ایله
 جنوبی
 اولار
 روت

بها ینک لرینگ راضعی : شیخ عباس بها

ایس الفخر لمن عبد الوطن بل لمن عبد العالم
 « بهاء الله »
 بهائی حرکتده اخلاقیات یک مهم بر موقطو مقدمه در .
 ذنبه بیایرکه : بهائیک استهداف ابتدکی علوی غایه
 اجتماعی به وصول ایچون ، فردک تربیه و تذکة نفسی
 باشلیجه برعامل تالی اتمکده در . کرک بهاء الله و کرک
 عبدالباک هان هان بوتون الواح
 و آثاری ، اک بوکسک و تزیه اخلاقی
 مفکوره لک تحلیل و تلقینیه طولودر .
 بهائیکک خالق ایله مخلوق آرمهنده کی
 مناسبات لاهوتیه به متعلق مبادی
 اخلاقیه سندن بحث اقیجه جکم . مع هذا
 بو بایده حاکم اولان روح شئونین
 عبارتدر :
 « بر آرز دوشون ، بر قلبه یار
 و اغیارک ، عینی زمانده کنجایشیدر
 ولدیغی ایشیتکی ؟ او حالده اغیاری
 قوه ، که جانان کندی منزله کیره -
 بیلسون [۸] »
 ناسونی اساسات اخلاقیه به کلنجه :
 اناکله اخلاقیات ...

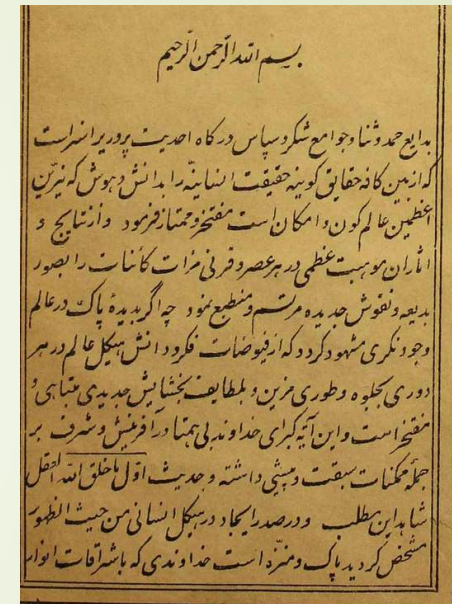
دیر و « موم » استک زردر . طامه طامله جوهر حیای
 آفتیر . تاکه : بودو کدیکی باشلاره نشر نور ایتسون .
 ایشته بو ، سترک ایچون بر مثال اولمایدر [۳] نصیحتی
 و بربر .
 شورایی ده شایان قیددرکه : بهائیک قولدن زیاده
 فعله ، گفتاردن فضله کرداره باقار : « ای بنده بزدار ،
 روز کردار آمد وقت گفتار نیست »
 بهائیکده بلا استثنا حرکت و هر
 شئی بی پایان بر محبت ، قیدسز بر محبت
 شرطدر : « لیس الفضل حب انفسکم
 بل حب انبای جنسکم » [۴] « نه موطلو
 او کیمسه به که : قارده شتی نفسنه ترجیح
 ایدر . » [۵] « فلأ خاطر دزالق
 ذک [۶] » « بد کولق بیله بر تقیصه
 اخلاقیه در . « لسان ، ذکر خیر
 ایچوندر . اونی فضا سوزله
 کیرلیکیز . » [۷]
 « ای حزب الله ! اولیه که : بر خاطر
 [۲] کات فردوسی (بهاء الله)
 Ernest Leroux, Paris 1906
 [۳] عبدالباک بر مکتوبندن .
 [۴] ...
 [۵] ...
 [۶] ...
 [۷] ...
 عبدالبا عباس مصوم

'Abdu'l-Baha in Ottoman Journals

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization/SDC (Risalih-yi Madaniyyih), 1875

- First English title: *The Mysterious Forces of Civilization* (1918)
- Second Engl. Translation: Marzieh Gail, 1957
- Shoghi Effendi: 'The Secret of Divine Civilization ..., 'Abdu'l-Bahá's outstanding contribution to the future reorganization of the world' (WOB)
- written & published anonymously
- second Baha'i book printed; first edition publ. in Bombay in 1882
- illustrates the importance it was given
- addressed to a non-Baha'i audience
- at a time when modernization and reform were important contemporary issues in Iran (influenced by Ottoman reforms)
- Suggests that He was writing as a 'concerned citizen' offering constructive ideas pertinent to the ultimate well-being of His native land



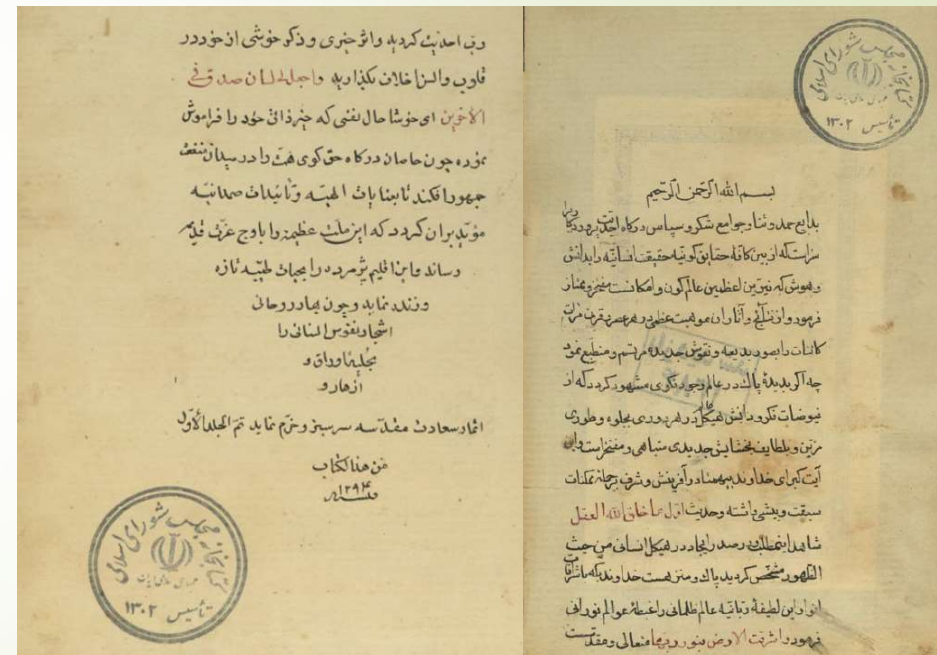
First page of
Bombay edition

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization/SDC (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

Moojan Momen:

'when 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Risala-yi Madaniyyat* (*Secret of Divine Civilisation*) was written in 1875, it was distributed anonymously and is said to have achieved a wide readership among the Iranian intelligentsia, particularly after its printing in 1882. But later when its authorship became known, no one would admit to having read it... mainly because of the fact that those so influenced would never admit to this since any degree of association with what was regarded as a heretical and religiously-obnoxious sect would be a bar to one's advancement in public life or the acceptance of one's views.'



First & last page of SDC (1877 ms. at the Majlis Library in Tehran)



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

Baha'u'llah instructed 'Abdu'l-Baha to write it:

'O Most Mighty Branch! It would be commendable if some pages were written on the causes of the world's destruction and the means for its reconstruction, in such wise that it would humble the prejudiced to a degree, that this may prepare them to listen to the rustling of the Lote-Tree of utterance [Baha'u'llah] which can be heard in this day. Other themes of this sort were also heard from the Ancient Tongue, and consequently, that Branch of God composed *The Secret of Divine Civilization*.'

(Provisional translation: Adib Masumian)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

- 'Abdu'l-Baha calls the *Risalih-yi Madaniyyih* 'a tribute' to the 'high endeavor' of Nasiru'd-Din Shah (r. 1848–96), the incumbent Qajar ruler, to improving the conditions in Iranian society; 'a brief statement on certain urgent questions'.
- SDC response to the reformist policies of Mirza Husayn Khan (d. 1881), Iranian ambassador in Istanbul (1858-1870) and then Iranian prime minister in 1871
- Emulated the Ottoman Tanzimat reforms, initiated administrative and political reforms
- met opposition of conservative religious and political establishment
- 'Abdu'l-Baha expresses explicit support for Husayn Khan's reforms

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

- 'Abdu'l-Baha also engages in a more general discourse on the relationship between Islam and modernity
- Secular and atheist intellectuals blamed Islam for the backwardness of Muslim people
- Ulama/clerics saw the solution for their country's problems in the return to original Islam
- both parties saw an inherent enmity between Islam and modernity
- 'Abdu'l-Baha argues against such a dichotomy, intends to demonstrate the compatibility of Islam with modern reforms

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

- 'Abdu'l-Baha deplures the backwardness and decadence of Iran
- Specific reforms:
 - 1) Extension of education throughout the country.
 - 2) Systematisation of court procedure and in particular a definite limit to the appeal procedure for litigation.
 - 3) Development of useful arts and sciences.
 - 4) Promotion of industry and technology,
 - 5) Extension of foreign relations and expansion of trade.

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

- ▶ Specific reforms:
- ▶ 6) Guaranteeing of individual rights such as security of property and equality before the law.
- ▶ 7) Restriction of the absolute authority of provincial governors and review of their sentences by the Shah and higher courts in the capital.
- ▶ 8) Elimination of bribery and corruption.
- ▶ 9) Reform of the Army with proper provisions, armaments and training.
- ▶ 10) The setting up of councils and assemblies of consultation.

BUT: if members of society & assemblies are not ,righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible' then reforms are useless!

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

➤ Importance of religion:

- Reform & progress only possible if people are high-minded & just
- progress and civilization dependent on unity and agreement between the members of society
 - Religion can ensure this: most powerful instrument

➤ Importance of education:

- Lack of education prevents society to be just
- Curriculum important: avoid useless subjects
- Schools in every village & city to read & write

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

The Secret of Divine Civilization (*Risalih-yi Madaniyyih*), 1875

- Many Middle Eastern reformers pro-European in all respects
- 'Abdu'l-Baha: East should get useful things, science, social administration etc.
- Not European morals: European civilization superficial & morally bankrupt
- Men of learning should be examples:
 - Acquire spiritual & material perfections
 - Religious, scientific & cultural knowledge
 - Be defenders & promoters of the Faith
 - Avoid fanaticism

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Treatise on Politics/the Art of Governance (*Risalih-yi Siyasiyyih*), ca. 1892

- as a response to the events during the Tobacco Revolt/Protest in Iran (1890–92)
- Discussion of politics and society
- Man-made laws are not enough to enable human progress
- Divine law or religion is indispensable to educate the people
- interference of religious leaders ('*ulama*), especially ignorant ones, in political affairs is dangerous



First page of 1896 edition

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

A Turkish Tablet about Ottoman & Iranian Reform

- probably his only known direct reference to the *Tanzimat* / Ottoman reforms
- Iran's worsening conditions caused by ignorant '*ulama*
- Iran's need for reform after the model of the Ottomans
- emphasis is on secular reforms
- clerics should only be concerned with spiritual and ethical matters
 - should educate the people and guide their conduct

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

A Turkish Tablet about Ottoman & Iranian Reform

- probably his only known direct reference to the *Tanzimat* / Ottoman reforms
- Iran's worsening conditions caused by ignorant *'ulama*
- Iran's need for reform after the model of the Ottomans
- emphasis is on secular reforms
- clerics should only be concerned with spiritual and ethical matters
 - should educate the people and guide their conduct



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

A Persian Tablet to the Young Turks

- Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)
- Freed 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1908
- similarity between the ideals and goals of the CUP those of the Baha'is
- Both seek freedom, love liberty, hope for equality, well-wishers of humanity and ready to sacrifice their lives to unite humanity
- But CUP goals concerned with physical world & only OE
- Baha'i goals broader, all of humanity



CUP members after 1908

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

A Persian Tablet to the Young Turks

- ▶ cautions CUP not to rely on conventional politics
- ▶ however much human politics shows progress, nothing compared to divine politics
- ▶ 'divine politics is the light of the physical world and an immeasurable mercy that encompasses all peoples and nations. [...] Therefore we need to follow divine politics, especially in this glorious century and this age of the progress of humanity in which nothing but divine politics leads to success.'
- ▶ 'Now all the peoples of the East must be content and happy with this politics, and delighted in the pervading influence of the teachings of Baha'u'llah in Europe and America.'



CUP members after 1908



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Material & Divine Civilization:

'Had material civilization been combined with Divine civilization, these fiery weapons would never have been invented. Nay, rather, human energy would have been wholly devoted to useful inventions and would have been concentrated on praiseworthy discoveries. Material civilization is like a lamp-glass. Divine civilization is the lamp itself and the glass without the light is dark. Material civilization is like the body. No matter how infinitely graceful, elegant and beautiful it may be, it is dead. Divine civilization is like the spirit, and the body gets its life from the spirit, otherwise it becomes a corpse. It has thus been made evident that the world of mankind is in need of the breaths of the Holy Spirit.' (Selections, p. 303)



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

Material & Divine Civilization:

'In the western world material civilization has attained the highest point of development, but divine civilization was founded in the land of the East. The East must acquire material civilization from the West, and the West must receive spiritual civilization from the East. This will establish a mutual bond. When these two come together, the world of humanity will present a glorious aspect, and extraordinary progress will be achieved. This is clear and evident; no proof is needed. The degree of material civilization in the Occident cannot be denied; nor can anyone fail to confirm the spiritual civilization of the Orient, for all the divine foundations of human uplift have appeared in the East. This, likewise, is clear and evident. Therefore, you must assist the East in order that it may attain material progress. The East must, likewise, promulgate the principles of spiritual civilization in the western world. By this commingling and union the human race will attain the highest degree of prosperity and development.'

(Promulgation, pp. 165-166)



'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

- ▶ 'A ruler must consider himself the real father of all the people. Just as the father is solicitous about the education of his sons, so a ruler must think about the progress of the inhabitants of the country over which he rules either by the law of heredity or by the choice of the nation. He must devise new plans of reforms. He must encourage the building of national highways, bridges, schools, railroads, expand the limits of commerce and insure the safety and security of the public. If he on the other hand devotes his time to luxury, self gratification, indulgence in personal likes and dislike, favors favoritism and laps in the lap of debauchery, he is not a ruler but a hydra-headed public enemy. ... A country in this age cannot be ruled by the sword. It needs the magic touch of progress. ... expend the income of the state on those sources which would advance the civilization, open the eyes of the people and let them avail themselves of all technical knowledge and practical accomplishments. Then the people will be happy and contented and the country shall prosper by leaps and bounds.'

- ▶ (Diary of Ahmad Sohrab, https://bahai-library.com/pdf/s/sohrab_diary_letters_1913-1914_05.pdf#page=105)

'Abdu'l-Baha on Social Transformation

► FURTHER READINGS:

- [https://www.academia.edu/1899383/Ottoman Reform Movements and the Bahai Faith 1860s 1920s](https://www.academia.edu/1899383/Ottoman_Reform_Movements_and_the_Bahai_Faith_1860s_1920s)
- [https://www.academia.edu/218954/Midhat Pasha and Abdu I Baha in Akka](https://www.academia.edu/218954/Midhat_Pasha_and_Abdu_I_Baha_in_Akka)
- [https://www.academia.edu/241723/ The Young Turks and the Bahais in Palestine](https://www.academia.edu/241723/The_Young_Turks_and_the_Bahais_in_Palestine)
- [https://www.academia.edu/24786346/Filistin de J%C3%B6n T%C3%BCrkler ve Bahailer](https://www.academia.edu/24786346/Filistin_de_J%C3%B6n_T%C3%BCrkler_ve_Bahailer)

► SEE ALSO:

- [https://www.academia.edu/1496180/ By the Fig and the Olive Abdu I Bah%C3%A1 s Co mmentary in Ottoman Turkish on the Qur %C3%A1nic Sura 95 notes and provisional translation](https://www.academia.edu/1496180/By_the_Fig_and_the_Olive_Abdu_I_Bah%C3%A1_s_Commentary_in_Ottoman_Turkish_on_the_Qur_%C3%A1nic_Sura_95_notes_and_provisional_translation)
- [https://www.academia.edu/1496185/ Abdu I Baha s commentary on the Islamic tradition _God doth give victory to this religion by means of a wicked man a provisional translation and notes](https://www.academia.edu/1496185/Abdu_I_Baha_s_commentary_on_the_Islamic_tradition_God_doth_give_victory_to_this_religion_by_means_of_a_wicked_man_a_provisional_translation_and_notes)
- [https://www.academia.edu/216793/ The eternal enemy of Islam Abdullah Cevdet and the Baha i religion](https://www.academia.edu/216793/The_eternal_enemy_of_Islam_Abdullah_Cevdet_and_the_Baha_i_religion)