

From the favourable reception of the original German edition, it would appear that readers have appreciated the primary purpose of this study. That is, this is not really a treatise about smoking as such. Instead, the emotionally charged subject of smoking was simply chosen as a focus of this first attempt to define certain aspects of Bahá'í ethics.

The revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is marbled rather than systematic. In this it resembles the Qur'án. Its moral goals, values, commandments, and prohibitions, as well as its multitudinous appeals and admonitions to a virtuous life, and its warnings against a life of lust, passion, and vice are diffused throughout the entirety of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. This moral direction serves to redeem the individual as well as society as a whole. Its aim is the methodical development of an entire way of life rather than the mere uplifting of an individual believer. In the end the transformation of norms of behaviour into concrete action requires an analytic, systematic, and methodic presentation of this new hierarchy of values. This is because only a systematic perspective can reveal the defining characteristics of this hierarchy and show how each particular value relates to, and is limited by, the tension within the hierarchy. Similarly, only a systematic perspective of the hierarchy of values can reveal the relative importance of each value within that hierarchy.

Questions about the foundations of this moral system, the clarification of its fundamental ideas, the discussion of the cognizability of moral norms and the role of reason, as well as the search for underlying principles to concrete moral values are all matters for the normative science of ethics. Until now Bahá'í ethics have only rarely been the subject of academic research and presentation. While writing the first German edition of this treatise, I had no idea that it would be a type of preparatory exercise for the introduction to the fundamentals of Bahá'í ethics which I wrote originally for an encyclopaedia, now in preparation as a monograph to be published by George Ronald. I would refer those with a deeper interest in the subject to that book.

I am very much indebted to Michael H. Machado and Dr. Craig Volker, without whose translation this English edition could not have been presented to the public. I wish also to express my sincerest thanks to Mrs. Hildegard Becker for reviewing Michael Machado's raw translation, to Mrs. Lynda Adamson for polishing the text, to my editor Bonian Golmohammadi for his suggestions, and to my wife Sigrun for her time-consuming work in looking up authoritative English quotations for this translation and in preparing a camera-ready version of the text on computer.

In quotations from the Writings of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the numbers which appear refer to the paragraph in the English-language edition unless a page number is given.

U. S.

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