

drinks; specifies the punishments for murder, arson, adultery, and theft; imposes the obligation of practicing some trade or profession; emphasizes the necessity of providing for the education of children and confers upon every person the duty of writing a testament and strictly obeying the government of the time. Bahaʿallah also exhorts his followers to embrace the adherents of all religions with amity and concord; warns them to guard against fanaticism, sedition, pride, dispute, and contention; and encourages cleanliness, truthfulness, chastity, trustworthiness, hospitality, fidelity, courtesy, forbearance, justice, and fairness. He dwells on the instability of human affairs and declares that true liberty consists in human submission to God’s commandments. Finally, the Aqdas contains a summons to the presidents of the republics of the American continent to champion the cause of justice; an injunction to the members of the parliaments throughout the world to an auxiliary universal language and script; warnings to Wilhelm I of Prussia, the conqueror of Napoleon III; reproofs to Franz Joseph, emperor of Austria; and the condemnation of the “throne of tyranny” established in Constantinople, while predicting the extinction of its splendor.

The general religious inspiration of the Aqdas is monotheistic. As the first verse clearly states, even good works, if separated from the channel of the positive Revelation, have a limited value: “The first duty prescribed by God for His servants is the recognition of Him who is the Dayspring of His Revelation and the Fountain of His laws, who represents the Godhead in both the kingdom of His cause and the world of creation. Whoso achieves this duty has attained unto all good; and whoso is deprived thereof has gone astray, though he be the author of every righteous deed.”

According to a general evolutionary principle that can be seen to underlie Bahaʿi teachings, the Aqdas constitutes an energetic impulse rather than a rigid canonical code. It foresees the future abrogation of its own dispensation, but “not before a thousand years.” Laws that are not specified in the Aqdas may be promulgated by the Universal House of Justice and changed, if necessary, in response to historical conditions. Subsidiary ordinances designed to supplement the provisions of the Aqdas appear in other works by Bahaʿallah, including the Persian Questions and Answers (Soʿal wa jawab), which constitutes an appendix to the Aqdas.

There is at present no complete authorized translation of the Aqdas in any European language [note: in 1992 an authorized translation was published in English. -J.W., 2010]. In 1973 the Universal House of Justice issued an annotated summary with an introduction and selected translations by Shoghi Effendi (d. 1957), the former Guardian of the Bahaʿi Cause (Bahaʿi World Centre, A Synopsis and Codification of the Kitab-i-Aqdas of Baháʾuʾlláh, Haifa). The English translation by the Christian missionaries E. E. Elder and W. M. Miller (Al-Kitab al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book, London, Royal Asiatic Society Oriental Translation Fund, N.S., 38, 1961) is complete but not always correct, especially in the notes. The older Russian version is more reliable (Arabic ed. and Russian tr. A. Tumanskii, Zapiski Imp. Akademii Nauk,

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