

Some Answered Questions History and Importance

It is of particular interest to know the details of Laura Clifford Barney's repeated and extended visits to the Holy Land, because it was during those months, stretched over several years, that a book unique in the entire range of the Writings of the Founders of the Faith took shape. The book was *Some Answered Questions*. Questions came from Laura Barney and 'Abdu'l-Bahá answered them. In her own words, taken from the introduction to the book:

... these answers were written down in Persian while 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke, not with a view to publication, but simply that I might have them for future study ... But I believe that what has been so valuable to me may be of use to others, since all men, notwithstanding their differences, are united in their search for reality; and I have therefore asked 'Abdu'l-Bahá's permission to publish these talks.

That permission was granted in the year 1906. The English edition appeared in 1908, and the Persian text was published in the same year. Hippolyte Dreyfus translated it into French under the title, *Les Lecons de Saint Jean-d' Acre*. By the generosity of the compiler herself, the original Persian manuscript containing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's occasional corrections and emendations is deposited and preserved in the International Archives of the Bahá'í Faith. (H.M. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Bahá - The Centre of the Covenant*, p. 82.)

Shoghi Effendi hopes that you will exert all your effort to deepen your knowledge of the literature of the movement, until you become fully acquainted with its spirit and tenets. Unless you do obtain such a firm hold you will never be able to teach others and render real service to the promulgation of the Faith. Of special importance is the *Book of the Íqán* which explains the attitude of the Cause towards the prophets of God and their mission in the history of society. Besides this there is *Some Answered Questions of the Master and the 'Dawn-Breakers'* of Nabil. Every Bahá'í should master these books and be able to explain their contents to others. Besides their importance, they are interesting and most absorbing. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 9 February 1932; cited in *Compilations, Lights of Guidance*, p. 559.)

He fully approves the idea of holding study classes, for the deeper the friends go in their understanding of their teachings the more firm and steadfast they will become and the more unwavering in their support of the institutions of the Faith. Books such as the "Íqán", "Some Answered Questions" and "The Dawn-Breakers" should be mastered by every Bahá'í. They should read these books over and over again. The first two books will reveal to them the significance of this divine revelation as well as the unity of all the Prophets of old. The last book will show you how the Faith was ushered into the world and how its early adherents heroically faced martyrdom and suffering in their desire to establish the Cause throughout the world. Knowing the life of those heroes will create in us the urge to follow their footsteps and achieve the same. (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, 1 October 1933, in the Bahá'í

International Archives; *cited in Compilations, The Compilation of Compilations vol. I, p. 216.*)

He feels that the urgent need now is to get out “Some Answered Questions”, which is one of the most important books for a proper study of the Faith. When this has been printed, the next publication of the Master’s Works can be considered.... (Shoghi Effendi, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahá’í Community*, p. 383.)