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Compiled by E. G. Browne

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MATERIALS  
FOR THE STUDY OF  
THE BÁBÍ RELIGION

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**'Abbás Efendi 'Abdu'l-Bahá, eldest son of Bahá'u'lláh, entitled  
*Al-Ghuşnu'l-A'zam* ("the Most Mighty Branch").**

*Frontispiece*

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COMPILED BY

E. G. BROWNE

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## INTRODUCTION

NEARLY thirty years have elapsed since I first established direct relations with the Bábís in Persia, having already become deeply interested in their history and doctrines through the lively and graphic narrative of the Comte de Gobineau in his classical work *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. Subsequently (in the spring of 1890) I visited Mírzá Yahyá *Ṣubḥ-i-Azal* ("the Dawn of Eternity") and Mírzá Husayn 'Alí *Bahá'u'lláh* ("the Splendour of God"), the respective heads of the two rival parties into which the original community had split, at Famagusta in Cyprus and at 'Akká (St Jean d'Acre) in Syria; and from that time until now I have maintained more or less continuous relations with both parties through various channels. Fresh and fuller materials for the study of Bábí history and doctrine have continued to flow into my hands through these channels, until, apart from what I had utilized fully or in part in previous publications<sup>1</sup>, a considerable

<sup>1</sup> The more important of these publications, arranged in chronological order, are as follows. (1) *The Bábís of Persia*: i. Sketch of their History and Personal Experiences amongst them; ii. Their Literature and Doctrines (*J.R.A.S.*, Vol. xxi, 1889). (2) *A Traveller's Narrative etc.*, Persian text and English translation, 2 vols. (Camb. Univ. Press, 1891). (3) *Some Remarks on the Bábí Text edited by Baron V. Rosen* (*J.R.A.S.*, Vol. xxiv, 1892). (4) *Catalogue and Description of 27 Bábí Manuscripts* (*J.R.A.S.*, Vol. xxiv, 1892). (5) *A Year amongst*

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amount of new and unpublished matter had accumulated in my hands. Much of this matter, consisting of manuscript and printed documents in various Eastern and Western languages, could only be interpreted in connection with the correspondence relating to it, and would inevitably, I felt, be lost if I did not myself endeavour to record it in an intelligible form, capable of being used by future students of this subject. Hence the origin of this book, which, if somewhat lacking in coherence and uniformity, will, I believe, be of value to anyone who shall in the future desire to study more profoundly a movement which, even if its practical and political importance should prove to be less than I had once thought, will always be profoundly interesting to students of Comparative Religion and the history of Religious Evolution.

The book, in the form which it has finally assumed, comprises eleven more or less independent sections, about each of which something must be said.

*Section I* (pp. 3—112) is a translation into English of a short historical and biographical sketch of the Bábí movement, of the life of Bahá'u'lláh, of the further schism which succeeded his death, and of the Bahá'í propaganda in America, written in Arabic by Mirzá Muḥammad Jawád of Qazwín, by whom the original, and, I believe, unpublished manuscript was transmitted to me. I was not personally

*the Persians* (A. and C. Black, 1893). (6) *The Ta'rikh-i-Jadíd or New History of...the Báb*, translation (Camb. Univ. Press, 1893). (7) *Personal Reminiscences of the Bábí Insurrection at Zanján in 1850*, translated from the Persian (*J.R.A.S.*, Vol. xxix, 1897). (8) *The Kitáb-i-Nuqtatu'l-Káf*, being the earliest history of the Bábís, compiled by Hájji Mirzá Jání of Káshán: Persian text with Introduction in English (*E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*, Vol. xv, 1910). Also articles on Bábís in the Supplement to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* and *Hastings' Dictionary of Religions*.



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acquainted with the author, but his son, Mírzá Ghulámu'lláh, paid me a visit of several days at Cambridge in January, 1901, on his way to the United States. Both belong to that section of the Bahá'ís, called by themselves "Unitarians" (*Ahlu't-Tawhíd, Muwáhhidún*) and by their opponents "Covenant-breakers" (*Náqizún*), who reject the claims of 'Abbás Efendi 'Abdu'l-Bahá (whom the majority of the Bahá'ís recognize as their head) and follow his half-brother, Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí. From incidental remarks in the narrative we learn that the author, Mírza Muḥammad Jawád, was at Baghdád (p. 15) about 1862 or a little earlier, shortly before the removal of the leading Bábís thence to Adrianople; that he was with them at Adrianople (pp. 25, 27, 28) for rather more than a year before Bahá'u'lláh was transferred thence to 'Akká in August, 1868; that he was Bahá'u'lláh's fellow-passenger on the steamer which conveyed him from Gallipoli to Ḥayfá (p. 32); that he was at 'Akká in January, 1872 when Sayyid Muḥammad of Iṣfahán and the other Azalís were assassinated (pp. 54-5) and also at the time of, or soon after, Bahá'u'lláh's death on May 28, 1892, when he was one of the nine Companions chosen by 'Abbás Efendi to hear the reading of the "Testament" or "Covenant," (p. 75). We also learn (pp. 35-6) that he was one of several Bábís arrested at Tabríz about the end of 1866 or beginning of 1867, when, more fortunate than some of his companions, he escaped with a fine. This is the only mention he makes of being in Persia, and it is probable that from this date onwards he was always with Bahá'u'lláh, first at Adrianople and then at 'Akká, where, so far as I know, he is still living, and where his son Mírzá Ghulámu'lláh was born and brought up. Since the entry of Turkey into the European War in November, 1914, it has, of course, been impossible to communicate with 'Akká, or to obtain news from thence.

B. B.

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Mírzá Jawád's narrative is valuable on account of the numerous dates which it gives, and because it comes down to so late a date as March, 1908 (p. 90), while Nabil's chronological poem (see p. 357) stops short at the end of 1869. The value of his account of the propaganda carried on in the United States of America by Dr I. G. Khayru'lláh has been somewhat discounted by this gentleman's recent publication of his autobiography in his book *O Christians! why do ye believe not in Christ?* (p. 181), which reached me only after this portion of my book was already in type.

*Section II* (pp. 115—171) deals more fully with the Bahá'í propaganda carried on in America since 1893 by Dr I. G. Khayru'lláh and his converts with remarkable success. Of the methods employed an illuminating account (pp. 116—142) is given by an American lady of enquiring mind who attended the classes of instruction in a sympathetic but critical spirit. Her notes show very clearly the adaptation of the Bahá'í doctrine to its new environment in a manner which can hardly fail to remind the Orientalist of the old Isma'ílí propaganda, still further recalled by the form of allegiance (p. 121) which the neophyte is obliged to sign before he is fully initiated into the details of the new doctrine. Extracts from the American Press in the years 1902—4 are cited to show how much attention, and even in some quarters alarm, was aroused by the success of the new doctrines. Khayru'lláh's narrative (pp. 154—5) of the threats addressed to him on account of his apostasy from 'Abbás Efendi 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Mírzá Hasan-i-Khurásání, and the history of the sad fate of Mírzá Yahyá at Jedda (pp. 156—167) read like extracts from the history of the Assassins of Alamút and "the Old Man of the Mountain."

*Section III* (pp. 175—243) contains a bibliography of

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everything written by or about the Bábís and Bahá'ís in eastern or western languages which has come under my notice since the publication of the bibliography in Vol. II of my *Traveller's Narrative* in 1891, and of my *Catalogue and Description of 27 Bábí Manuscripts* in the *J.R.A.S.* for 1892. This supplementary bibliography contains descriptions of 49 printed works in European languages (English, French, German and Russian), 18 printed and lithographed works in Arabic and Persian, and between 30 and 40 Bábí, Azalí and Bahá'í books which exist only in manuscript. Nearly all of these are in my own library, and in many cases were presented to me by their authors or by kind friends who knew of the interest I felt in the subject, but in the case of the manuscripts I have included brief descriptions of a number of books (mostly obtained from Cyprus through the late Mr Claude Delaval Cobham, for whom they were copied by Şubḥ-i-Azal's son Riẓwán 'Alí, *alias* "Constantine the Persian") belonging to the British Museum, which were examined and described for me by my friend and former colleague Dr Aḥmad Khán. For several rare manuscript works I am indebted to an old Bábí scribe of Işfahán, resident at Ṭihrán, with whom I was put in communication by Dr Sa'íd Khán of Hamadán, who, though coming of a family of *mullás*, is a fervent Christian, while preserving in true Persian fashion a keen interest in other religious beliefs. This old scribe, a follower of Şubḥ-i-Azal, seems to have been in close touch with many Bábís in all parts of Persia, and on several occasions when persecutions threatened or broke out to have been entrusted by them with the custody of books which they feared to keep in their own houses, and which in some cases they failed to reclaim, so that he had access to a large number of rare Bábí works, any of which he was willing to copy for me at a very moderate charge.

*Section IV* (pp. 247—264) contains the text and translation, with photographic *fac-similes*, of three original Persian documents connected with the examination and condemnation of the Báb for heresy, one of which appears to show that he formally abjured all his claims, and begged for mercy and forgiveness. These are followed by two English documents penned by the late Dr Cormick of Tabriz, one of which gives the impression produced on him by the Báb, whom he was called in to see professionally. I do not know of any other European who saw and conversed with the Báb, or, if such there were, who has recorded his impressions.

*Section V* (pp. 267—271) contains a moving account by an Austrian officer, Captain von Goumoens, who was in the service of Náşiru'd-Din Sháh in the summer of 1852, of the horrible cruelties inflicted on the Bábís in the great persecution of that period which resulted from the attempt by three Bábís on the Sháh's life; cruelties so revolting that he felt himself unable to continue any longer in the service of a ruler who sanctioned them.

*Section VI* (pp. 275—287) contains the *fac-similes*, texts and translations of two Persian State papers bearing on the negotiations between the Persian and Turkish Governments as to the removal of the Bábí leaders from Baghdád to a part of the Ottoman Empire more remote from the Persian frontier. These documents were kindly communicated to me by M. A.-L.-M. Nicolas, a French diplomatist who has devoted much attention to the history and doctrine of the Bábís, and whose father is well known to Persian students as the first to introduce to Europe the now celebrated quatrains of 'Umar-i-Khayyám.

*Section VII* (pp. 291—308) contains accounts received at the time from various correspondents as to the persecutions of Bábís at Işfahán and the neighbouring villages of Si-dih

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and Najafábád in 1888—9, and at Yazd in May, 1891. For these accounts I am indebted to the late Dr Robert Bruce, Mr Sidney Churchill, Mr (now Sir) Walter Townley, ‘Abbás Efendi ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his brother Mírzá Badí‘u’lláh, and two other Bahá’ís, one actually resident at Yazd at the time of the persecution. To another horrible persecution of Bábís in the same town in the summer of 1903 some references will be found in the Rev. Napier Malcolm’s illuminating work *Five Years in a Persian Town* (pp. 155—6, 186 etc.).

*Section VIII* (pp. 311—315) contains the translation of an account of the death and burial of Mírzá Yahyá Şubḥ-i-Azal on Monday, April 29, 1912, written in Persian by his son Riżwán ‘Alí *alias* “Constantine the Persian,” and also some further information on matters connected with the succession kindly furnished to me by Mr H. C. Lukach, to whom I am further indebted for permission to reproduce here two photographs of the funeral which he published in his book *The Fringe of the East*; for which permission I desire to express my sincere gratitude both to him and his publishers, Messrs Macmillan.

*Section IX* (pp. 319—322) contains a list of the descendants of Mírzá Buzurg of Núr in Mázandarán, the father of both Bahá’u’lláh and Şubḥ-i-Azal, of which the original Persian, drawn up by a younger member of the family, was sent to me by the Bábí scribe already mentioned (p. xi *supra*). This is followed by lists of the children of Bahá’u’lláh and Şubḥ-i-Azal compiled from other trustworthy sources.

*Section X* (pp. 325—339) contains a condensed summary in English of a portion of the polemical work *Inḩáqu’l-ḩaqq* dealing with the principal doctrines of the Bábís and Bahá’ís deemed heretical by the Shí‘a Muḩammadans. I have sometimes been reproached with having written so much more about the history of the Bábís than about their doctrines,

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though I hope that the Introduction to my edition of Hájji Mírzá Jání's *Nuqtatu'l-Káf*<sup>1</sup> has in some degree removed this reproach. But the fact is that, though the synthesis may be original, almost every single doctrine held by the Bábís and Bahá'ís (and their doctrine, even on such important matters as the Future Life, is by no means fixed and uniform) was previously held and elaborated by one or another of the earlier cognate sects grouped together under the general title of *Ghulát*, whereof the Isma'ílís are the most notable representative. The *Ihqáqu'l-Haqq*, which shows a much better knowledge of the opinions which it aspires to refute than most polemical works directed against the Bábís, summarizes in a convenient form the most salient points of doctrine in which the Bábís differ from the Shí'á Muḥammadans.

*Section XI* (pp. 343—358), which concludes the volume, contains the texts, accompanied in some cases by translations, of one unpublished and two already published poems by Qurratu'l-'Ayn and of two poems by Nábíl of Zarand. I should like to have enlarged this section by the addition of other Bábí poems in my possession, especially of the *Qaṣída-i-Alifyya* of Mírzá Aslam of Núr (see pp. 228—9), but the book had already considerably exceeded the limits which I had assigned to it, and I regretfully postponed their publication to some future occasion.

As regards the illustrations, the originals from which they are taken have in several cases been in my possession for many years, but I desire here to express my thanks to Dr Ignaz Goldziher for the two American newspapers partly reproduced on the plates facing pp. 151 and 152; to M. Hippolyte Dreyfus for the three documents (*A.*, *B.*, and *B*<sup>1</sup>.) bearing on the

<sup>1</sup> Vol. xv of the *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series*.

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examination of the Báb; to M. A.-L.-M. Nicolas for the two Persian State papers dealing with the expulsion of the Bábís from Baghdád; to Mr H. C. Lukach and his publishers Messrs Macmillan for their kind permission to reproduce the two illustrations mentioned above (p. xiii), and to my old friend and colleague Mr Ellis H. Minns, who has given me valuable help in connection with the Russian books mentioned in the bibliography.

In conclusion I desire to add a few words as to what I conceive to be the special interest and importance of the study of the Bábí and Bahá'í movements. This interest is in the main threefold, to wit, political, ethical and historical, and I shall arrange what I have to say under these three headings.

I. *Political interest.*

The original Bábís who fought so desperately against the Persian Government at Shaykh Ṭabarsi, Zanján, Nayríz and elsewhere in 1848—50 aimed at a Bábí theocracy and a reign of the saints on earth; they were irreconcilably hostile to the existing government and Royal Family, and were only interested for the most part in the triumph of their faith, not in any projects of social or political reform.

Of their attitude during the Baghdád and Adrianople periods (1852—63 and 1863—68) we know little, and the anxiety of the Persian Foreign Office as to their activities in the former place is sufficiently explained by fear of the propaganda which they were so easily able to carry on amongst the innumerable Persians who passed through it on their way to and from the Holy Shrines of Najaf and Karbalá.

After the schism and the banishment of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal to Famagusta in Cyprus, and of Bahá'u'lláh to 'Akká in Syria,

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we have to distinguish between the activities of the two rival parties. The Azalís, from the first a minority, were much more cut off from external activity than the Bahá'ís. They represented what may be called the conservative party, and experience shows that with such religious bodies as the Bábís fresh manifestations of activity and developments of doctrine are essential to maintain and increase their vitality. The same phenomenon was witnessed again in the further schism which took place after the death of Bahá'u'lláh in 1892; the conservative tendencies represented by Muḥammad 'Alí could not hold their own against the innovations of his more able and energetic half-brother 'Abbas Effendí 'Abdu'l-Bahá, who since the beginning of this century commands the allegiance of the vast majority of the Bahá'ís both in the East and in the West.

That the Bahá'ís constituted a great potential political force in Persia when I was there in 1887—8 was to me self-evident. Their actual numbers were considerable (Lord Curzon estimated them at the time he wrote<sup>1</sup> at nearer a million than half a million souls), their intelligence and social position were above the average, they were particularly well represented in the postal and telegraph services, they were well disciplined and accustomed to yield a ready devotion and obedience to their spiritual leaders, and their attitude towards the secular and ecclesiastical rulers of Persia was hostile or at least indifferent. Any Power which, by conciliating their Supreme Pontiff at 'Akká, could have made use of this organization in Persia might have established an enormous influence in that country, and though the valuable researches of the late Baron Victor Rosen and Captain Tumanskiy were no doubt chiefly inspired by scientific curiosity, there may have been, at any rate in the

<sup>1</sup> *Persia* (London, 1892), Vol. i, p. 499.



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case of the latter gentleman, some *arrière-pensée* of a political character. At any rate the Russian Government showed a good deal of civility to the Bahá'ís<sup>1</sup> of 'Ishqábád (Askabad), where they allowed or encouraged them to build a *Mashri-qu'l-Adhkár*, or place of worship, which was, I believe, the first of its kind ever erected; and when a leading Bahá'í was murdered there by fanatics from Mashhad, the Russian authorities condemned the assassins to death, though subsequently, at the intercession of the Bahá'ís, their sentence was commuted to hard labour in the Siberian mines. That Bahá'u'lláh was not insensible to these amenities is clearly apparent from two letters filled with praises of the Russian Government which he addressed to his followers shortly afterwards, and which were published by Baron Rosen, together with an account of the circumstances above referred to, in Vol. vi of the *Collections Scientifiques*<sup>2</sup>. If the statement (on p. 11 *infra*) that Colonel (afterwards Sir) Arnold Burrows Kemball, when British Consul-General at Baghdád about 1859, offered British protection to Bahá'u'lláh be true, this would account for the laudatory tone adopted by him in the epistle which he addressed to Queen Victoria. None of the other rulers addressed in the "Epistles to the Kings" come off so well, and for Napoleon III in particular disaster is clearly foretold. Germany fares no better than France, being thus apostrophized in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:

*"O banks of the river Rhine, We have seen you drenched in gore for that the swords of the foes are drawn against you;*

<sup>1</sup> Already in 1852 the Russian Minister at Tíhrán had intervened in Bahá'u'lláh's favour (see pp. 6–7 *infra*), for which intervention Bahá'u'lláh expresses his gratitude in the Epistle to the Tsar of Russia (*J.R.A.S.* for 1889, p. 969).

<sup>2</sup> See also my *Remarks* on these texts in the *J.R.A.S.* for 1892, pp. 318–321.

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*and you shall have another turn! And we hear the wail of Berlin, although it be to-day in conspicuous glory!*<sup>1</sup>

The occasion of this outburst, according to Roemer<sup>2</sup>, was the omission of the then Crown-Prince of Prussia Friedrich Wilhelm to pay his respects to Bahá'u'lláh when he visited Palestine in the autumn of 1869. In the main, however, Bahá'u'lláh wisely avoided any political entanglements, and indeed sought rather to conciliate the Sháh and the Persian government, and to represent such persecutions of his followers as took place in Persia as the work of fanatical theologians whom the government were unable to restrain. The Azalís, on the other hand, preserved the old Bábí tradition of unconquerable hostility to the Persian throne and government.

In the Persian Constitutional or National Movement dating from the end of 1905 the Azalís and Bahá'ís were, as usual, in opposite camps. Officially 'Abbás Efendi 'Abdu'l-Bahá commanded his followers to abstain entirely from politics, while in private he compared the demand of the Persians for parliamentary government to that of unweaned babes for strong meat. Some of the leading Bahá'ís in Tíhrán, however, were accused, whether justly or not, of actually favouring the reaction<sup>3</sup>. In any case their theocratic and international tendencies can hardly have inspired them with any very active sympathy with the Persian Revolution. The Azalís, on the other hand, though they cannot be said to have any collective policy, as individuals took a very prominent part in the National Movement even before the Revolution, and such men as Hájji Shaykh Aḥmad

<sup>1</sup> See *J.R.A.S.* for 1889, p. 977.

<sup>2</sup> *Die Bābī-Beḥā'ī* (Potsdam, 1911), p. 108.

<sup>3</sup> See Roemer, *op. cit.* pp. 153—8, and my *Persian Revolution*, pp. 424—9.

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“Rúhí” of Kirmán, son-in law to Şubḥ-i-Azal, and his friend and fellow-townsmen Mírzá Áqá Khán, both of whom suffered death at Tabríz in 1896, were the fore-runners of Mírzá Jahángír Khán and the Maliku'l-Mutakallimín, who were victims of the reactionary *coup d'état* of June, 1908. Indeed, as one of the most prominent and cultivated Azalís admitted to me some six or seven years ago, the ideal of a democratic Persia developing on purely national lines seems to have inspired in the minds of no few leading Azalís the same fiery enthusiasm as did the idea of a reign of the saints on earth in the case of the early Bábís.

The political ideals of the Bahá'ís have undergone considerable evolution since their propaganda achieved such success in America, where they have come into more or less close connection with various international, pacifist and feminist movements. These tendencies were, however, implicit in Bahá'u'lláh's teachings at a much earlier date, as shown by the recommendation of a universal language and script in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, the exaltation of humanitarianism over patriotism, the insistence on the brotherhood of all believers, irrespective of race or colour, and the ever-present idea of “the Most Great Peace” (*Şulḥ-i-Akbar*). In connection with the last it is interesting to note that Dr I. G. Khayru'lláh, “the second Columbus” and “Bahá's Peter” as he was entitled after his successes in America, definitely stated in his book *Behá'u'lláh*, originally published at Chicago in 1899 (Vol. ii, pp. 480—1), that “the Most Great Peace” would come in the year 1335 of the *Hijra*, which began on October 28, 1916, and ended on October 17, 1917. This forecast, based on Daniel xii, 12, “*Blessed is he that waiteth and cometh to the end of the thousand three hundred and five and thirty days,*” has, unfortunately, not been realized, but the paragraph in which Khayru'lláh speaks of the frightful

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war which must precede “the Most Great Peace” is so remarkable, when one remembers that it was written fifteen years before the outbreak of the Great War, that I cannot refrain from quoting it.

“In testimony of the fulfilment of His Word, the Spirit of God is impelling mankind toward that outcome with mighty speed. As the prophet indicated, the final condition in which peace shall be established must be brought about by unparalleled violence of war and bloodshed, which any observer of European affairs at the present day can see rapidly approaching. History is being written at tremendous speed, human independence is precipitating the final scenes in the drama of blood which is shortly destined to drench Europe and Asia, after which the world will witness the dawn of millennial peace, the natural, logical and prophetic outcome of present human conditions.”

And again two pages further on (p. 483) he says:

“Although the thousand years began with the departure of the Manifestation<sup>1</sup> in 1892, the commencement of the ‘Great Peace’ will be in 1917.”

He also quotes Guinness as having written (in 1886)<sup>2</sup>: “The secret things belong to God. It is not for us to say. But there can be no question that those who live to see this year 1917 will have reached one of the most important, perhaps the most momentous, of these terminal years of crisis.”

2. *Ethical interest.*

While ethical teaching occupies a very subordinate place in the writings of the Báb and his disciples, it constitutes the chief part of the Bahá'í teachings. Sir Cecil Spring-Rice,

<sup>1</sup> *i.e.* the death of Bahá'u'lláh.

<sup>2</sup> *Light for the Last Days* (London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1886), pp. 345—6. The reference (p. 224) given by Khayru'lláh is evidently to a different edition.

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formerly British Minister at Tīhrán, who had the most extraordinary insight into the Persian mind, made one of the most illuminating remarks I ever heard in this connection. He pointed out most truly that the problem which Bahá'u'lláh had to solve was a far greater one than any mere question of claims of succession, and was essentially the same as that which confronted St Paul, *viz.* whether the new religion which he represented was to become a world religion addressed to all mankind, or whether it was to remain a more or less obscure sect of the religion from which it sprang. *Mutatis mutandis* the strife between Bahá'u'lláh and Şubḥ-i-Azal was essentially identical with the strife between St Paul and St Peter, though in the former case the resulting separation was even greater, and the Bahá'ís regard the Báb as a mere fore-runner and harbinger of the greater Manifestation, and his writings and teachings as practically abrogated, for which reason they no longer willingly suffer themselves to be called Bábís, a name which was still almost universally applied to them in Persia by those who were not members of their body at any rate when I was there in 1887—8.

Of the ethical teaching of Bahá'u'lláh numerous specimens are given in this volume (pp. 64—73 *infra*) and many more have been published in English by the American “Bahá'í Publishing Society<sup>1</sup>” and elsewhere. These teachings are in themselves admirable, though inferior, in my opinion, both in beauty and simplicity to the teachings of Christ. Moreover, as it seems to me, ethics is only the application to everyday life of religion and metaphysics, and to be effective must be supported by some spiritual sanction; and in the case of Bahá'ism, with its rather vague doctrines as to

<sup>1</sup> Address: 84, Adams Street, Chicago; or, Charles E. Sprague, Publishing Agent for the Bahá'ís' Board of Counsel, 191, Williams Street, New York.

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the nature and destiny of the soul of man, it is a little difficult to see whence the driving-power to enforce the ethical maxims can be derived. I once heard Mr G. Bernard Shaw deliver an address to a branch of the Fabian Society on "The Religion of the Future." In this lecture he said that he was unwilling that the West should any longer be content to clothe itself in what he called "the rags of Oriental systems of religion"; that he wanted a good, healthy Western religion, recognizing the highest type of humanity as the Superman, or, if the term was preferred, as God; and that, according to this conception, man was ever engaged in "creating God." As I listened I was greatly struck by the similarity of his language to that employed by the Bahá'ís<sup>1</sup>, and was diverted by the reflection that, strive as he would, this brilliant modern thinker of the West could not evolve a religion which the East had not already formulated. Yet it would be an error to regard Bahá'ism merely as an ethical system, as is already shown by the opening verse of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*:—"The first thing which God hath prescribed unto His servants is the recognition of the Dawning-place of His Revelation and the Day-spring of His Dispensation. Whosoever attaineth unto Him hath attained unto all good, and whosoever is hindered therefrom is in truth of the people of error, even though he bring forth all good works."

### 3. *Historical interest.*

But the chief interest of the study of the Bábí and Bahá'í movements is, as it seems to me, neither political nor ethical, but historical, because of the light it throws on the genesis and evolution of other religions. Renan emphasized this in

<sup>1</sup> Cf. p. 346 *infra*, n. 1 *ad calc.*; and p. 211 of my *Year amongst the Persians*.

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his work *Les Apôtres*, and it was he, I think, who said that to understand the genesis and growth of a new religion one must go to the East where religions still grow. And this holds good particularly of Persia, which has ever been the fertile breeding-ground of new creeds and philosophies from the time of Zoroaster, Manes and Mazdak to the present day. It would be interesting to compute how many of the “seventy-two sects” into which Islám is supposed to be divided owe their existence wholly or in part to the theological activity of the Persian mind.

The phenomena actually presented by Bábíism are often such as one would not *primâ facie* expect. In spite of the official denial of the necessity, importance or evidential value of miracles in the ordinary sense, numerous miracles are recorded in Bábí histories like the *Nuqtatu'l-Káf* and the *Ta'rikh-i-Jadíd*, and many more are related by adherents of the faith. The most extraordinary diversity of opinion exists as to doctrines which one would be inclined to regard as fundamental, such as those connected with the future life. A similar diversity of opinion prevails as to the authorship of various Bábí books and poems, though the beginnings of Bábí literature only go back to 1844 or 1845. The earliest, fullest and most interesting history of the Báb and his immediate disciples (that of Hájji Mírzá Jání of Káshán<sup>1</sup>) was almost completely suppressed because it reflected the opinion which prevailed immediately after the Báb's martyrdom that his successor was Mírzá Yahyá Şubḥ-i-Azal, and thus came into conflict with the Bahá'í contention which arose ten or fifteen years later, and a recension of it was prepared (known as “the New History,” *Ta'rikh-i-Jadíd*) in

<sup>1</sup> The *Nuqtatu'l-Káf*, edited by me in the *E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series* (Vol. xv) from the Paris ms., the only complete one extant in Europe.

which all references to Ṣubḥ-i-Azal were eliminated or altered, and other features regarded as undesirable were suppressed or modified. Later a third official history, “The Traveller’s Narrative,” *Maqála-i-Shakhṣi Sayyáh*<sup>1</sup>, in which the Báb was represented as a mere forerunner of Bahá’u’lláh, was issued from ‘Akká, and subsequently lithographed to secure its wider diffusion, while the *Ta’rikh-i-Jadíd*, of which not more than three or four copies exist in Europe, was suffered to remain in manuscript. Certain critical Christian theologians have seen in Hájji Mirzá Ján’s history in its relation to the later narratives a close parallel to the Gospel of St Mark in its relation to the synoptic gospels.

Of the future of Bahá’ism it is difficult to hazard a conjecture, especially at the present time, when we are more cut off from any trustworthy knowledge of what is happening in the world than at any previous period for many centuries. Less than a month ago the centenary of Bahá’u’lláh’s birth was celebrated in America, whither his teachings have spread only within the last twenty years, but what influence they have attained or may in the future attain there or elsewhere it is impossible to conjecture.

EDWARD G. BROWNE.

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<sup>1</sup> Edited by me with English translation and notes in 1891.



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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

The Bahai Assembly  
of Chicago  
cordially invites you to participate  
in the celebration of the  
One Hundredth Anniversary  
of the birth of  
Baha' u' llah  
to be held at the  
Auditorium Hotel  
from November the tenth to  
the twelfth inclusive  
Nineteen Hundred Seventeen

Fac-simile of Invitation to the Centenary of Bahá'u'lláh's birth  
on Nov. 10—12, 1917.

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1817      Baha'u'llah      1917

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IN this age, BAHÁ'O'LLAH has breathed the Holy Spirit into the dead body of the world. Consequently, every weak soul is strengthened by those divine outbreathings. Every poor man will become rich, every darkened soul will become illumined, every ignorant one will become wise, because the confirmations of the Holy Spirit are descending like unto torrents. A new era of divine consciousness is upon us. The world of humanity is going through a process of transformation. A new race is being developed. The thoughts of human brotherhood are permeating the depths of hearts and a new spirit of universal consciousness is being profoundly felt by all men.

From the Utterances of  
ABDUL-BAHA

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1817      **Baha'ollah**      1917

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*PROGRAM*

CENTENNIAL FESTIVAL

Saturday evening, at six o'clock

CINEMATOGRAPH EXHIBITION

Abdul-Baha in America  
 (Castle Theater, State and Madison Streets)  
 Sunday morning, at nine o'clock

BAHA'O'LLAH'S CONTRIBUTION TO WORLD  
 CIVILIZATION

Sunday afternoon, at half past three o'clock

SERVICE ON THE MASHRAK-EL-AZKAR  
 GROUNDS AT WILMETTE

Monday morning, at half past ten o'clock  
 (weather permitting)

CONVENTION OF TEACHING

Monday afternoon, at three o'clock

THE MASHRAK-EL-AZKAR IN AMERICA

Monday evening, at eight o'clock