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**Appreciations**

**of the**

**Bahá’í Faith**

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The Revelation proclaimed by Bahá’u’lláh, His followers believe, is

divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific

in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influ-

ence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men. The mission of the Founder

of their Faith, they conceive it to be to proclaim that religious truth is not

absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive,

that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential

aspects of their teachings, “abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same

heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim

the same Faith.” His Cause, they have already demonstrated, stands identi-

fied with, and revolves around, the principle of the organic unity of mankind

as representing the consummation of the whole process of human evolution.

This final stage in this stupendous evolution, they assert, is not only neces-

sary but inevitable, that it is gradually approaching, and that nothing short

of the celestial potency with which a divinely ordained Message can claim

to be endowed can succeed in establishing it.

The Bahá’í Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets,

upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all

forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the fundamental purpose

of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand-in-hand

with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful,

an ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal

opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory educa-

tion, abolishes extremes of poverty and wealth, exalts work performed in

the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an

auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for

the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace.

 Shoghi Effendi

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Appreciations of the
Bahá’í Faith

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By Dowager Queen Marie of Rumania

1.

I was deeply moved on reception of your letter.

Indeed a great light came to me with the message of

Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. It came as all great messages come

at an hour of dire grief and inner conflict and distress, so the seed

sank deeply.

My youngest daughter finds also great strength and comfort

in the teachings of the beloved masters.

We pass on the message from month to month and all those

we give it to see a light suddenly lighting before them and much

that was obscure and perplexing becomes simple, luminous and full

of hope as never before.

That my open letter was balm to those suffering for the cause,

is indeed a great happiness to me, and I take it as a sign that God

accepted my humble tribute.

The occasion given me to be able to express myself publicly,

was also His Work—for indeed it was a chain of circumstances of

which each link led me unwittingly one step further, till suddenly

all was clear before my eyes and I understood why it had been.

Thus does He lead us finally to our ultimate destiny.

Some of those of my caste wonder at and disapprove my cour-

age to step forward pronouncing words not habitual for Crowned

Heads to pronounce, but I advance by an inner urge I cannot resist.

With bowed head I recognize that I too am but an instrument in

greater Hands and rejoice in the knowledge.

Little by little the veil is lifting, grief tore it in two. And

grief was also a step leading me ever nearer truth, therefore do I

not cry out against grief!

May you and those beneath your guidance be blessed and up-

held by the sacred strength of those gone before you.

2.

A woman[[1]](#footnote-1) brought me the other day a Book. I spell it with

a capital letter because it is a glorious Book of love and goodness,

strength and beauty.

She gave it to me because she had learned I was in grief and

sadness and wanted to help. … She put it into my hands saying:

“You seem to live up to His teachings.” And when I opened the

Book I saw it was the word of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, prophet of love and

kindness, and of his father the great teacher of international good-

will and understanding—of a religion which links all creeds.

Their writings are a great cry toward peace, reaching beyond

all limits of frontiers, above all dissension about rites and dogmas.

It is a religion based upon the inner spirit of God, upon the great,

not-to-be-overcome verity that God is love, meaning just that. It

teaches that all hatreds, intrigues, suspicions, evil words, all aggres-

sive patriotism even, are outside the one essential law of God, and

that special beliefs are but surface things whereas the heart that

beats with divine love knows no tribe nor race.

It is a wondrous Message that Bahá’u’lláh and his son

‘Abdu’l-Bahá have given us. They have not set it up aggressively,

knowing that the germ of eternal truth which lies at its core can-

not but take root and spread.

There is only one great verity in it: Love, the mainspring of

every energy, tolerance toward each other, desire of understanding

each other, knowing each other, helping each other, forgiving each

other.

It is Christ’s Message taken up anew, in the same words almost,

but adapted to the thousand years and more difference that lies

between the year one and today. No man could fail to be better

because of this Book.

I commend it to you all. If ever the name of Bahá’u’lláh or

‘Abdu’l-Bahá comes to your attention, do not put their writings from

you. Search out their Books, and let their glorious, peace-bringing,

love-creating words and lessons sink into your hearts as they have

into mine.

One’s busy day may seem too full for religion. Or one may

have a religion that satisfies. But the teachings of these gentle,

wise and kindly men are compatible with all religion, and with no

religion.

Seek them, and be the happier.

 (From the *Toronto Daily Star*, May 4, 1926.)

3.

Of course, if you take the stand that creation has no aim, it is

easy to dismiss life and death with a shrug and a “that ends it all;

nothing comes after.”

But how difficult it is so to dismiss the universe, our world,

the animal and vegetable world, and man. How clearly one sees

a plan in everything. How unthinkable it is that the miraculous

development that has brought man’s body, brain and spirit to what

it is, should cease. Why should it cease? Why is it not logical

that it goes on? Not the body, which is only an instrument, but

the invisible spark or fire within the body which makes man one

with the wider plan of creation.

My words are lame, and why should I grope for meanings

when I can quote from one who has said it so much more plainly,

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whom I know would sanction the use of his words:

“The whole physical creation is perishable. Material bodies

are composed of atoms. When these atoms begin to separate, de-

composition sets in. Then comes what we call death.

“This composition of atoms which constitutes the body or mor-

tal element of any created being, is temporary. When the power

of attraction which holds these atoms together is withdrawn, the

body as such ceases to exist.

“With the soul it is different. The soul is not a combination

of elements, is not composed of many atoms, is of one indivisible

substance and therefore eternal.

“It is entirely out of the order of physical creation; it is im-

mortal! The soul, being an invisible, indivisible substance, can

suffer neither disintegration nor destruction. Therefore there is

no reason for its coming to an end.

“Consider the aim of creation: Is it possible that all is created

to evolve and develop through countless ages with merely this small

goal in view—a few years of man’s life on earth? Is it not unthink-

able that this should be the final aim of existence? Does a man

cease to exist when he leaves his body? If his life comes to an end,

then all previous evolution is useless. All has been for nothing.

All those eons of evolution for nothing! Can we imagine that crea-

tion had no greater aim than this?

“The very existence of man’s intelligence proves his immor-

tality. His intelligence is the intermediary between his body and

his spirit. When man allows his spirit, through his soul, to enlighten

his understanding, then does he contain all creation; because man

being the culmination of all that went before, and thus superior to

all previous evolutions, contains all the lower already-evolved world

within himself. Illumined by the spirit through the instrumentality

of the soul, man’s radiant intelligence makes him the crowning-

point of creation!”

Thus does ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explain to us the soul—the most con-

vincing elucidation I know.

 (From the *Toronto Daily Star*, September 28, 1926.)

4.

At first we all conceive of God as something or somebody apart

from ourselves. We think He is something or somebody definite,

outside of us, whose quality, meaning and so-to-say “personality”

we can grasp with our human, finite minds, and express in mere

words.

This is not so. We cannot, with our earthly faculties entirely

grasp His meaning—no more than we can really understand the

meaning of Eternity.

God is certainly not the old Fatherly gentleman with the long

beard that in our childhood we saw pictured sitting amongst clouds

on the throne of judgment, holding the lightning of vengeance in

His hand.

God is something simpler, happier, and yet infinitely more

tremendous. God is All, Everything. He is the power behind all

beginnings. He is the inexhaustible source of supply, of love, of

good, of progress, of achievement. God is therefore Happiness.

His is the voice within us that shows us good and evil.

But mostly we ignore or misunderstand this voice. There-

fore did He choose his Elect to come down amongst us upon earth

to make clear His word, His real meaning. Therefore the Prophets;

therefore Christ, Muḥammad, Bahá’u’lláh, for man needs from

time to time a voice upon earth to bring God to him, to sharpen the

realization of the existence of the true God. Those voices sent to

us had to become flesh, so that with our earthly ears we should be

able to hear and understand.

Those who read their Bible with “peeled eyes” will find in

almost every line some revelation. But it takes long life, suffering

or some sudden event to tear all at once the veil from our eyes, so

that we can truly see ….

Sorrow and suffering are the surest and also the most common

instructors, the straightest channel to God that—is to say, to that

inner something within each of us which is God.

Happiness beyond all understanding comes with this revelation

that God is within us, if we will but listen to His voice. We need

not seek Him in the clouds. He is the All-Father whence we came

and to whom we shall return when, having done with this earthly

body, we pass onward.

If I have repeated myself, forgive me. There are so many

ways of saying things, but what is important is the truth which lies

in all the many ways of expressing it.

 (From the *Philadelphia “Evening Bulletin*,” Monday, September 27, 1926.)

5.

“Lately a great hope has come to me from one, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

I have found in His and His Father, Bahá’u’lláh’s Message of Faith

all my yearning for real religion satisfied. If you ever hear of

Bahá’ís or of the Bahá’í Movement which is known in America, you

will know what that is. What I mean: these Books have strength-

ened me beyond belief and I am now ready to die any day full of

hope. But I pray God not to take me away yet for I still have a

lot of work to do.”

6.

“The Bahá’í teaching brings peace and understanding.

“It is like a wide embrace gathering together all those who

have long searched for words of hope.

“It accepts all great prophets gone before, it destroys no other

creeds and leaves all doors open.

“Saddened by the continual strife amongst believers of many

confessions and wearied of their intolerance towards each other, I

discovered in the Bahá’í teaching the real spirit of Christ so often

denied and misunderstood:

“Unity instead of strife, hope instead of condemnation, love

instead of hate, and a great reassurance for all men.”

7.

“The Bahá’í teaching brings peace to the soul and hope to

the heart.

“To those in search of assurance the words of the Father are

as a fountain in the desert after long wandering.” 1934.

8.

“More than ever today when the world is facing such a crisis

of bewilderment and unrest, must we stand firm in Faith seeking

that which binds together instead of tearing asunder.”

“To those searching for light, the Bahá’í Teachings offer a

star which will lead them to deeper understanding, to assurance,

peace and good will with all men.” 1936.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Professor E. G. Browne

1.

Introduction to Myron H. Phelps’ *‘Abbás Effendi*, pages xi–xx;

1903 rev. 1912

I have often heard wonder expressed by Christian ministers at

the extraordinary success of Bábí missionaries, as contrasted with the

almost complete failure of their own. “How is it,” they say, “that

the Christian doctrine, the highest and the noblest which the world

has ever known, though supported by all the resources of Western

civilization, can only count its converts in Muḥammadan lands by

twos and threes, while Bábíism can reckon them by thousands?”

The answer, to my mind, is plain as the sun at midday. Western

Christianity, save in the rarest cases, is more Western than Christian,

more racial than religious; and by dallying with doctrines plainly

incompatible with the obvious meaning of its Founder’s words, such

as the theories of “racial supremacy,” “imperial destiny,” “survival

of the fittest,” and the like, grows steadily more rather than less

material. Did Christ belong to a “dominant race,” or even to a

European or “white race”? … I am not arguing that the Christian

religion is true, but merely that it is in manifest conflict with sev-

eral other theories of life which practically regulate the conduct of

all States and most individuals in the Western world, a world which,

on the whole, judges all things, including religions, mainly by mate-

rial, or to use the more popular term, “practical,” standards ….

There is, of course, another factor in the success of the Bábí propa-

gandist, as compared with the Christian missionary, in the conversion

of Muḥammadans to his faith: namely, that the former admits,

while the latter rejects, the Divine inspiration of the Qur’án and

the prophetic function of Muḥammad. The Christian missionary

must begin by attacking, explicitly or by implication, both these be-

liefs; too often forgetting that if (as happens but rarely) he succeeds

in destroying them, he destroys with them that recognition of former

prophetic dispensations (including the Jewish and the Christian)

which Muḥammad and the Qur’án proclaim, and converts his Mus-

lim antagonist not to Christianity, but to Skepticism or Atheism.

What, indeed, could be more illogical on the part of Christian mis-

sionaries to Muḥammadan lands than to devote much time and labor

to the composition of controversial works which endeavor to prove,

in one and the same breath, first, that the Qur’án is a lying impos-

ture, and, secondly, that it bears witness to the truth of Christ’s

mission, as though any value attached to the testimony of one proved

a liar! The Bábí (or Bahá’í) propagandist, on the other hand,

admits that Muḥammad was the prophet of God and that the Qur’án

is the Word of God, denies nothing but their finality, and does not

discredit his own witness when he draws from that source arguments

to prove his faith. To the Western observer, however, it is the

complete sincerity of the Bábís, their fearless disregard of death and

torture undergone for the sake of their religion, their certain con-

viction as to the truth of their faith, their generally admirable con-

duct towards mankind and especially towards their fellow-believers,

which constitutes their strongest claim on his attention.

2.

Introduction to Myron H. Phelps’ *‘Abbás Effendi*, pages xii–xiv

It was under the influence of this enthusiasm that I penned

the introduction to my translation of the *Traveller’s Narrative* ….

This enthusiasm condoned, if not shared, by many kindly critics

and reviewers, exposed me to a somewhat savage attack in the

*Oxford Magazine*, an attack concluding with the assertion that my

Introduction displayed “a personal attitude almost inconceivable in

a rational European, and a style unpardonable in a university teach-

er.” (The review in question appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* of

May 25, 1892, page 394, “… the prominence given to the Báb in

this book is an absurd violation of historical perspective; and the

translations of the *Traveller’s Narrative* a waste of the powers and

opportunities of a Persian Scholar.”) Increasing age and experience

(more’s the pity!) are apt enough, even without the assistance of the

*Oxford Magazine*, to modify our enthusiasm; but in this case, at

least, time has so far vindicated my judgment against that of my

Oxford reviewer that he could scarcely now maintain, as he formerly

asserted, that the Bábí religion “had affected the least important

part of the Muslim World and that not deeply.” Every one who

is in the slightest degree conversant with the actual state of things

(September 27, 1903), in Persia now recognizes that the number

and influence of the Bábís in that country is immensely greater than

it was fifteen years ago.

3.

*A Traveller’s Narrative*, page 309

The appearance of such a woman as Qurratu’l-‘Ayn is in any

country and any age a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as

Persia it is a prodigy—nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her

marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence,

her fearless devotion and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth

incomparable and immortal amidst her country-women. Had the

Bábí religion no other claim to greatness, this were sufficient—that

it produced a heroine like Qurratu’l-‘Ayn.

4.

Introduction to *A Traveller’s Narrative*, pages ix, x

Though I dimly suspected whither I was going and whom I

was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me),

a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I

became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In

the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and vener-

able figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called táj by

dervishes (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which

was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed

I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes

seemed to read one’s very soul; power and authority sat on that

ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied

an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistin-

guishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need

to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who

is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and

emperors sigh for in vain.

A mild, dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued:

*“Praise be to God, that thou hast attained! … Thou hast come to*

*see a prisoner and an exile*. … *We desire but the good of the world*

*and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer-up of*

*strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment*. … *That all*

*nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the*

*bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be*

*strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differences*

*of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? … Yet so it shall*

*be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and*

*the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come*. … *Do not you in Europe need*

*this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? … Yet do we see*

*your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means*

*for the destruction of the human race than on that which would*

*conduce to the happiness of mankind*. … *These strifes and this*

*bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and*

*one family*. … *Let not a man glory in this that he loves his coun-*

*try; let him rather glory in this: that he loves his kind ….”*

Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides

many others, I heard from Bahá. Let those who read them consider

well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds,

and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their dif-

fusion.

5.

Introduction to *A Traveller’s Narrative*, pages xxxv, xxxvi

Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed me more.

A tall, strongly built man holding himself straight as an arrow, with

white turban and raiment, long black locks reaching almost to the

shoulder, broad powerful forehead, indicating a strong intellect,

combined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk’s, and strong-

ly marked but pleasing features—such was my first impression of

‘Abbás Effendi, “The Master” (‘Aghá) as he par excellence is called

by the Bábís. Subsequent conversation with him served only to

heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first

inspired me. One more eloquent of speech, more ready of argu-

ment, more apt of illustration, more intimately acquainted with the

sacred books of the Jews, the Christians and the Muḥammadans,

could, I should think, be scarcely found even amongst the eloquent,

ready and subtle race to which he belongs. These qualities, com-

bined with a bearing at once majestic and genial, made me cease to

wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond

the circle of his father’s followers. About the greatness of this man

and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter

Excerpts from *Comparative Religions*, pages 70, 71

From that subtle race issues the most remarkable movement

which modern Muḥammadanism has produced. … Disciples gath-

ered round him, and the movement was not checked by his arrest, his

imprisonment for nearly six years and his final execution in 1850.

… It, too, claims to be a universal teaching; it has already its

noble army of martyrs and its holy books; has Persia, in the midst

of her miseries, given birth to a religion which will go round the

world?

By the Rev. T. K. Cheyne, D.Litt., D.D.

Excerpts from *The Reconciliation of Races and Religions*, (1914)

There was living quite lately a human being[[2]](#footnote-2) of such consum-

mate excellence that many think it is both permissible and inevitable

even to identify him mystically with the invisible Godhead ….

His[[3]](#footnote-3) combination of mildness and power is so rare that we have to

place him in a line with super-normal men. … We learn that, at

great points in his career after he had been in an ecstasy, such radi-

ance of might and majesty streamed from his countenance that none

could bear to look upon the effulgence of his glory and beauty. Nor

was it an uncommon occurrence for unbelievers involuntarily to bow

down in lowly obeisance on beholding His Holiness.

The gentle spirit of the Báb is surely high up in the cycles of

eternity. Who can fail, as Professor Browne says, to be attracted

by him? “His sorrowful and persecuted life; his purity of conduct

and youth; his courage and uncomplaining patience under misfor-

tune; his complete self-negation; the dim ideal of a better state of

things which can be discerned through the obscure mystic utterances

of the *Bayán*; but most of all, his tragic death, all serve to enlist

our sympathies on behalf of the young prophet of Shíráz.”

“Il sentait le besoin d’une réforme profond à introduire dans

les mœurs publiques. … Il s’est sacrifié pour l’humanité; pour

elle il a donné son corps et son âme, pour elle il a subi les privations,

les affronts, les injures, la torture et le martyre.” (Mons. Nicolas.)

If there has been any prophet in recent times, it is to Bahá’u’lláh

that we must go. Character is the final judge. Bahá’u’lláh was a

man of the highest class—that of prophets. But he was free from

the last infirmity of noble minds, and would certainly not have

separated himself from others. He would have understood the

saying: “Would God all the Lord’s people were prophets!” What

he does say, however, is just as fine: “I do not desire lordship over

others; I desire all men to be even as I am.”

The day is not far off when the details of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s mis-

sionary journeys will be admitted to be of historical importance.

How gentle and wise he was, hundreds could testify from personal

knowledge, and I, too, could perhaps say something. … I will only,

however, give here the outward framework of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s life,

and of his apostolic journeys, with the help of my friend

Lutfulláh. …

During his stay in London he visited Oxford (where he and

his party—of Persians mainly—were the guests of Professor and

Mrs. Cheyne), Edinburgh, Clifton and Woking. It is fitting to

notice here that the audience at Oxford, though highly academic,

seemed to be deeply interested, and that Dr. Carpenter made an

admirable speech. …

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Professor Vambéry

Testimonial to the Religion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. (Published in *Egyptian Gazette*,

Sept. 24, 1913, by Mrs. J. Stannard.)

I forward this humble petition to the sanctified and holy pres-

ence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ‘Abbás, who is the center of knowledge,

famous throughout the world, and loved by all mankind. O thou

noble friend who art conferring guidance upon humanity—May my

life be a ransom to thee!

The loving epistle which you have condescended to write to

this servant, and the rug which you have forwarded, came safely

to hand. The time of the meeting with your Excellency, and the

memory of the benediction of your presence, recurred to the memory

of this servant, and I am longing for the time when I shall meet you

again. Although I have traveled through many countries and cities

of Islám, yet have I never met so lofty a character and so exalted

a personage as your Excellency, and I can bear witness that it is not

possible to find such another. On this account, I am hoping that

the ideals and accomplishments of your Excellency may be crowned

with success and yield results under all conditions; because behind

these ideals and deeds I easily discern the eternal welfare and pros-

perity of the world of humanity.

This servant, in order to gain first-hand information and experi-

ence, entered into the ranks of various religions, that is, outwardly,

I became a Jew, Christian, Muḥammadan and Zoroastrian. I dis-

covered that the devotees of these various religions do nothing else

but hate and anathematize each other, that all their religions have

become the instruments of tyranny and oppression in the hands of

rulers and governors, and that they are the causes of the destruction

of the world of humanity.

Considering those evil results, every person is forced by neces-

sity to enlist himself on the side of your Excellency, and accept with

joy the prospect of a fundamental basis for a universal religion of

God, being laid through your efforts.

I have seen the father of your Excellency from afar. I have

realized the self-sacrifice and noble courage of his son, and I am

lost in admiration.

For the principles and aims of your Excellency, I express the

utmost respect and devotion, and if God, the Most High, confers

long life, I will be able to serve you under all conditions. I pray

and supplicate this from the depths of my heart.

 Your servant,

 (Mamhenyn.)

 Vambéry.

By Harry Charles Lukach

Quotation from *The Fringe of the East*, (Macmillan & Co., London, 1913.)

Bahá’ísm is now estimated to count more than two million

adherents, mostly composed of Persian and Indian Shí’íhs, but in-

cluding also many Sunnís from the Turkish Empire and North

Africa, and not a few Brahmans, Buddhists, Taoists, Shintoists and

Jews. It possesses even European converts, and has made some

headway in the United States. Of all the religions which have been

encountered in the course of this journey—the stagnant pools of

Oriental Christianity, the strange survivals of sun-worship, and

idolatry tinged with Muḥammadanism, the immutable relic of the

Sumerians—it is the only one which is alive, which is aggressive,

which is extending its frontiers, instead of secluding itself within its

ancient haunts. It is a thing which may revivify Islám, and make

great changes on the face of the Asiatic world.

By Sir Valentine Chirol

Quotations from *The Middle Eastern Question or Some Political Problems of*

*Indian Defense*, chapter XI, page 116. (The Revival of Bábíism.)

When one has been like Sa‘di, a great personage, and then a

common soldier, and then a prisoner of a Christian feudal chief;

when one has worked as a navvy on the fortifications of the Count

of Antioch, and wandered back afoot to Shíráz after infinite pain

and labor, he may well be disposed to think that nothing that exists

is real, or, at least, has any substantial reality worth clinging to.

Today the public peace of Persia is no longer subject to such violent

perturbations. At least, as far as we are concerned, the appearances

of peace prevail, and few of us care or have occasion to look beyond

the appearances. But for the Persians themselves, have the condi-

tions very much changed? Do they not witness one day the sudden

rise of this or that favorite of fortune and the next day his sudden

fall? Have they not seen the Atábak-i-A‘zam twice hold sway as

the Sháh’s all-powerful Vazír, and twice hurled down from that

pinnacle by a bolt from the blue? How many other ministers and

governors have sat for a time on the seats of the mighty and been

swept away by some intrigue as sordid as that to which they owed

their own exaltation? And how many in humbler stations have been

in the meantime the recipients of their unworthy favors or the vic-

tims of their arbitrary oppression? A village which but yesterday

was fairly prosperous is beggared today by some neighboring land-

lord higher up the valley, who, having duly propitiated those in

authority, diverts for the benefit of his own estates the whole of its

slender supply of water. The progress of a governor or royal prince,

with all his customary retinue of ravenous hangers-on, eats out the

countryside through which it passes more effectually than a flight

of locusts. The visitation is as ruinous and as unaccountable. Is it

not the absence of all visible moral correlation of cause and effect

in these phenomena of daily life that has gone far to produce the

stolid fatalism of the masses, the scoffing skepticism of the more

educated classes, and from time to time the revolt of some nobler

minds? Of such the most recent and perhaps the noblest of all be-

came the founder of Bábíism.

Chapter XI, page 120—

The Báb was dead, but not Bábíism. He was not the first, and

still less the last, of a long line of martyrs who have testified that

even in a country gangrened with corruption and atrophied with

indifferentism like Persia, the soul of a nation survives, inarticulate,

perhaps, and in a way helpless, but still capable of sudden spasms

of vitality.

Chapter XI, page 124—

Socially one of the most interesting features of Bábíism is the

raising of woman to a much higher plane than she is usually ad-

mitted to in the East. The Báb himself had no more devoted a

disciple than the beautiful and gifted lady, known as Qurratu’l-‘Ayn,

the “Consolation of the Eyes,” who, having shared all the dangers

of the first apostolic missions in the north, challenged and suffered

death with virile fortitude, as one of the Seven Martyrs of Ṭihrán.

No memory is more deeply venerated or kindles greater enthusiasm

than hers, and the influence which she wielded in her lifetime still

inures to her sex.

By Professor Jowett of Oxford

Quotation from *Heroic Lives*, page 305

Prof. Jowett of Oxford, Master of Balliol, the translator of

Plato, studied the movement and was so impressed thereby that he

said: “The Bábite [Bahá’í] movement may not impossibly turn out

to have the promise of the future.” Dr. J. Estlin Carpenter quotes

Prof. Edward Caird, Prof. Jowett’s successor as Master of Balliol,

as saying, “He thought Bábíism (as the Bahá’í movement was then

called) might prove the most important religious movement since

the foundation of Christianity.” Prof. Carpenter himself gives a

sketch of the Bahá’í movement in his recent book on *Comparative*

*Religions* and asks, “Has Persia, in the midst of her miseries, given

birth to a religion that will go around the world?”

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By Alfred W. Martin

Excerpts from *Comparative Religion and the Religion of the Future*,

pages 81–91

Inasmuch as a fellowship of faiths is at once the dearest hope

and ultimate goal of the Bahá’í movement, it behooves us to take

cognizance of it and its mission. … Today this religious movement

has a million and more adherents, including people from all parts

of the globe and representing a remarkable variety of race, color,

class and creed. It has been given literary expression in a veritable

library of Asiatic, European, and American works to which additions

are annually made as the movement grows and grapples with the

great problems that grow out of its cardinal teachings. It has a long

roll of martyrs for the cause for which it stands, twenty thousand in

Persia alone, proving it to be a movement worth dying for as well

as worth living by.

From its inception it has been identified with Bahá’u’lláh, who

paid the price of prolonged exile, imprisonment, bodily suffering,

and mental anguish for the faith he cherished—a man of imposing

personality as revealed in his writings, characterized by intense moral

earnestness and profound spirituality, gifted with the selfsame

power so conspicuous in the character of Jesus, the power to appre-

ciate people ideally, that is, to see them at the level of their best

and to make even the lowest types think well of themselves because

of potentialities within them to which he pointed, but of which they

were wholly unaware; a prophet whose greatest contribution was

not any specific doctrine he proclaimed, but an informing spiritual

power breathed into the world through the example of his life and

thereby quickening souls into new spiritual activity. Surely a move-

ment of which all this can be said deserves—nay, compels—our

respectful recognition and sincere appreciation.

… Taking precedence over all else in its gospel is the message

of unity in religion. … It is the crowning glory of the Bahá’í move-

ment that, while deprecating sectarianism in its preaching, it has

faithfully practised what it preached by refraining from becoming

itself a sect. … Its representatives do not attempt to impose any

beliefs upon others, whether by argument or bribery; rather do they

seek to put beliefs that have illumined their own lives within the

reach of those who feel they need illumination. No, not a sect, not

a part of humanity cut off from all the rest, living for itself and

aiming to convert all the rest into material for its own growth; no,

not that, but a leaven, causing spiritual fermentation in all religions,

quickening them with the spirit of catholicity and fraternalism.

… Who shall say but that just as the little company of the

*Mayflower*, landing on Plymouth Rock, proved to be the small

beginning of a mighty nation, the ideal germ of a democracy which,

if true to its principles, shall yet overspread the habitable globe, so

the little company of Bahá’ís exiled from their Persian home may

yet prove to be the small beginning of the world-wide movement,

the ideal germ of democracy in religion, the Universal Church of

Mankind?

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Prof. James Darmesteter

Excerpt from *Art* in “Persia: A Historical and Literary Sketch” (translated by

G. K. Nariman), and incorporated in *Persia and Parsis*, Part I, edited by

G. K. Nariman. Published under patronage of the Írán League, Bombay,

1925. (The Marker Literary Series for Persia, No. 2.)

The political reprieve brought about by the Ṣúfís did not result

in the regeneration of thought. But the last century which marks

the end of Persia has had its revival and twofold revival, literary

and religious. The funeral ceremonies by which Persia celebrates

every year for centuries—the fatal day of the 10th of Muḥarram,

when the son of ‘Alí breathed his last at Karbilá—have developed

a popular theater and produced a sincere poetry, dramatic and

human, which is worth all the rhetoric of the poets. During the

same times an attempt at religious renovation was made, the religion

of Bábíism. Demoralized for centuries by ten foreign conquests,

by the yoke of a composite religion in which she believed just enough

to persecute, by the enervating influence of a mystical philosophy

which disabled men for action and divested life of all aim and

objects, Persia has been making unexpected efforts for the last fifty-

five years to re-make for herself a virile ideal. Bábíism has little

of originality in its dogmas and mythology. Its mystic doctrine

takes its rise from Ṣúfísm and the old sects of the ‘Alíides formed

around the dogma of divine incarnation. But the morality it incul-

cates is a revolution. It has the ethics of the West. It suppresses

lawful impurities which are a great barrier dividing Islám from

Christendom. It denounces polygamy, the fruitful source of Orien-

tal degeneration. It seeks to reconstitute the family and it elevates

man and in elevating him exalts woman up to his level. Bábíism,

which diffused itself in less than five years from one end of Persia

to another, which was bathed in 1852 in the blood of its martyrs, has

been silently progressing and propagating itself. If Persia is to be

at all regenerate it will be through this new faith.

By Charles Baudouin

Excerpts from *Contemporary Studies*, Part III, page 131. (Allen & Unwin,

London, 1924.)

We Westerners are too apt to imagine that the huge continent

of Asia is sleeping as soundly as a mummy. We smile at the vanity

of the ancient Hebrews, who believed themselves to be the chosen

people. We are amazed at the intolerance of the Greeks and the

Romans, who looked upon the members of all races as barbarians.

Nevertheless, we ourselves are like the Hebrews, the Greeks and

the Romans. As Europeans we believed Europe to be the only

world that matters, though from time to time we may turn a paternal

eye towards America, regarding our offspring in the New World

with mingled feelings of condescension and pride.

Nevertheless, the great cataclysm of 1914 is leading some of

us to undertake a critical examination of the inviolable dogma that

the European nations are the elect. Has there not been of late years

a demonstration of the nullity of modern civilization—the nullity

which had already been proclaimed by Rousseau, Carlyle, Ruskin,

Tolstoy, and Nietzsche? We are now inclined to listen more atten-

tively to whispers from the East. Our self-complacency has been

disturbed by such utterances as that of Rabindranath Tagore, who,

lecturing at the Imperial University of Tokyo on June 18, 1916,

foretold a great future for Asia. The political civilization of Europe

was “carnivorous and cannibalistic in its tendencies.” The East was

patient, and could afford to wait till the West, “hurry after the ex-

pedient,” had to halt for want of breath. “Europe, while busily

speeding to her engagements, disdainfully casts her glance from her

carriage window at the reaper reaping his harvest in the field, and in

her intoxication of speed, cannot but think him as slow and ever

receding backwards. But the speed comes to its end, the engagement

loses its meaning, and the hungry heart clamors for food, till at last

she comes to the lonely reaper reaping his harvest in the sun. For if

the office cannot wait, or the buying and selling, or the craving for

excitement—love waits, and beauty, and the wisdom of suffering

and the fruits of patient devotion and reverent meekness of simple

faith. And thus shall wait the East till her time comes.”

Being thus led to turn our eyes towards Asia, we are astonished

to find how much we have misunderstood it; and we blush when

we realize our previous ignorance of the fact that, towards the mid-

dle of the nineteenth century, Asia gave birth to a great religious

movement—a movement signalized for its spiritual purity, one

which has had thousands of martyrs, one which Tolstoy has de-

scribed. H. Dreyfus, the French historian of this movement, says

that it is not “a new religion,” but “religion renewed,” and that it

provides “the only possible basis for a mutual understanding between

religion and free thought.” Above all, we are impressed by the fact

that, in our own time, such a manifestation can occur, and that the

new faith should have undergone a development far more extensive

than that undergone in the same space of time nearly two thousand

years ago, by budding Christianity.

… At the present time, the majority of the inhabitants of

Persia have, to a varying extent, accepted the Bábíst faith. In the

great towns of Europe, America, and Asia, there are active centers

for the propaganda of the liberal ideas and the doctrine of human

community, which form the foundations of Bahá’íst teaching.

We shall not grasp the full significance of this tendency until

we pass from the description of Bahá’ísm as a theory to that of

Bahá’ísm as a practice, for the core of religion is not metaphysics,

but morality.

The Bahá’íst ethical code is dominated by the law of love

taught by Jesus and by all the prophets. In the thousand and one

details of practical life, this law is subject to manifold interpreta-

tions. That of Bahá’u’lláh is unquestionably one of the most com-

prehensive of these, one of the most exalted, one of the most satis-

factory to the modern mind. …

That is why Bahá’u’lláh is a severe critic of the patriotism

which plays so large a part in the national life of our day. Love of

our native land is legitimate, but this love must not be exclusive. A

man should love his country more than he loves his house (this is

the dogma held by every patriot); but Bahá’u’lláh adds that he

should love the divine world more than he loves his country. From

this standpoint, patriotism is seen to be an intermediate stage on the

road of renunciation, an incomplete and hybrid religion, something

we have to get beyond. Throughout his life Bahá’u’lláh regarded the

ideal universal peace as one of the most important of his aims. …

… Bahá’u’lláh is in this respect enunciating a novel and fruit-

ful idea. There is a better way of dealing with social evils than by

trying to cure them after they have come to pass. We should try to

prevent them by removing their causes, which act on the individual,

and especially on the child. Nothing can be more plastic than the

nature of the child. The government’s first duty must be to provide

for the careful and efficient education of children, remembering that

education is something more than instruction. This will be an

enormous step towards the solution of the social problem, and to take

such a step will be the first task of the Baytu’l-‘Ad’l (House of

Justice). “It is ordained upon every father to rear his son or his

daughter by means of the sciences, the arts, and all the command-

ments; and if any one should neglect to do so, then the members of

the council, should the offender be a wealthy man, must levy from

him the sum necessary for the education of his child. When the neg-

lectful parent is poor, the cost of the necessary education must be

borne by the council, which will provide a refuge for the unfortu-

nate.”

The Baytu’l-‘Ad’l, likewise, must prepare the way for the estab-

lishment of universal peace, doing this by organizing courts of arbi-

tration and by influencing the governments. Long before the Espe-

rantists had begun their campaign, and more than twenty years before

Nicholas II had summoned the first Hague congress, Bahá’u’lláh

was insisting on the need for a universal language and courts of arbi-

tration. He returns to these matters again and again: “Let all the

nations become one in faith, and let all men be brothers, in order

that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men may

be strengthened. … What harm can there be in that? … It is

going to happen. There will be an end to sterile conflicts, to ruinous

wars; and the Great Peace will come!” Such were the words of

Bahá’u’lláh in 1890, two years before his death.

While adopting and developing the Christian law of love,

Bahá’u’lláh rejected the Christian principle of asceticism. He dis-

countenanced the macerations which were a nightmare of the Middle

Ages, and, whose evil effects persist even in our own days. …

Bahá’ísm, then, is an ethical system, a system of social morality.

But it would be a mistake to regard Bahá’íst teaching as a collection

of abstract rules imposed from without. Bahá’ísm is permeated with

a sane and noble mysticism; nothing could be more firmly rooted in

the inner life, more benignly spiritual; nothing could speak more

intimately to the soul, in low tones, and as if from within. …

Such is the new voice that sounds to us from Asia; such is the

new dawn in the East. We should give them our close attention; we

should abandon our customary mood of disdainful superiority.

Doubtless, Bahá’u’lláh’s teaching is not definitive. The Persian

prophet does not offer it to us as such. Nor can we Europeans assimi-

late all of it; for modern science leads us to make certain claims in

matters of thought—claims we cannot relinquish, claims we should

not try to forego. But even though Bahá’u’lláh’s precepts (like those

of the Gospels) may not fully satisfy all these intellectual de-

mands, they are rarely in conflict with our scientific outlooks. If

they are to become our own spiritual food, they must be supple-

mented, they must be relived by the religious spirits of Europe, must

be rethought by minds schooled in the Western mode of thought.

But in its existing form, Bahá’íst teaching may serve, amid our pres-

ent chaos, to open for us a road leading to solace and to comfort;

may restore our confidence in the spiritual destiny of man. It reveals

to us how the human mind is in travail; it gives us an inkling of the

fact that the greatest happenings of the day are not the ones we were

inclined to regard as the most momentous, not the ones which are

making the loudest noise.

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Dr. Henry H. Jessup, D.D.

From the *World’s Parliament of Religion*; Volume II, 13th Day, under Criticism

and Discussion of Missionary Methods, page 1122. At the Columbian Ex-

position of 1893, at Chicago. Edited by the Rev. John Henry Barrows, D.D.

(The Parliament Publishing Company, Chicago, 1893.)

This, then, is our mission: that we who are made in the image

of God should remember that all men are made in God’s image. To

this divine knowledge we owe all we are, all we hope for. We are

rising gradually toward that image, and we owe to our fellowmen to

aid them in returning to it in the Glory of God and the Beauty of

Holiness. It is a celestial privilege and with it comes a high respon-

sibility, from which there is no escape.

In the Palace of Bahjí, or Delight, just outside the Fortress of

‘Akká, on the Syrian coast, there died a few months since, a famous

Persian sage, the Bábí Saint, named Bahá’u’lláh—the “Glory of

God”—the head of that vast reform party of Persian Muslims, who

accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the

Deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as

brothers. Three years ago he was visited by a Cambridge scholar and

gave utterance to sentiments so noble, so Christ-like, that we repeat

them as our closing words:

“That all nations should become one in faith and all men as

brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of

men should be strengthened; that diversity of religions should cease

and differences of race be annulled. What harm is there in this? Yet

so it shall be. These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass

away, and the ‘Most Great Peace’ shall come. Do not you in Europe

need this also? Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country:

let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind.”

By The Right Hon. The Earl Curzon

Excerpts from *Persia*, Vol. 1, pages 496-504. (Written in 1892.)

Beauty and the female sex also lent their consecration to the

new creed and the heroism of the lovely but ill-fated poetess of

Qaẓvín, Zarrín-Táj (Crown of Gold) or Quarratu’l-‘Ayn (Solace of

the Eyes), who, throwing off the veil, carried the missionary torch

far and wide, is one of the most affecting episodes in modern history.

… The lowest estimate places the present number of Bábís in Persia

at half a million. I am disposed to think, from conversations with

persons well qualified to judge, that the total is nearer one million.

They are to be found in every walk of life, from the ministers and

nobles of the Court to the scavenger or the groom, not the least

arena of their activity being the Mussulman priesthood itself. It

will have been noticed that the movement was initiated by Siyyids,

Ḥájís and Mullás, i.e., persons who, either by descent, from pious

inclination, or by profession, were intimately concerned with the

Muḥammadan creed; and it is among even the professed votaries of

the faith that they continue to make their converts. … Quite re-

cently the Bábís have had great success in the camp of another

enemy, having secured many proselytes among the Jewish popula-

tions of the Persian towns. I hear that during the past year (1891)

they are reported to have made 150 Jewish converts in Ṭihrán, 100

in Hamadán, 50 in Káshán, and 75 per cent of the Jews at Gul-

páygán. … The two victims, whose names were Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥasan

and Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥusayn, have been renamed by the Bábís: Sul-

ṭánu’sh-Shuhadá’, or King of Martyrs, and Maḥbúbu’sh-Shuhadá’,

or Beloved of Martyrs—and their naked graves in the cemetery have

become places of pilgrimage where many a tear is shed over the fate

of the “Martyrs of Iṣfahán.” … It is these little incidents, protrud-

ing from time to time their ugly features, that prove Persia to be

not as yet quite redeemed, and that somewhat staggers the tall-

talkers about Iranian civilization. If one conclusion more than an-

other has been forced upon our notice by the retrospect in which I

have indulged, it is that a sublime and unmurmuring devotion has

been inculcated by this new faith, whatever it be. There is, I believe,

but one instance of a Bábí having recanted under pressure of menace

of suffering, and he reverted to the faith and was executed within

two years. Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the bloodstained

pages of Bábí history. Ignorant and unlettered as many of its

votaries are, and have been, they are yet prepared to die for their

religion, and fires of Smithfield did not kindle a nobler courage than

has met and defied the more refined torture-mongers of Ṭihrán. Of

no small account, then, must be the tenets of a creed that can awaken

in its followers so rare and beautiful a spirit of self-sacrifice. From

the facts that Bábíism in its earliest years found itself in conflict

with the civil powers and that an attempt was made by Bábís upon

the life of the Sháh, it has been wrongly inferred that the movement

was political in origin and Nihilist in character. It does not appear

from a study of the writings either of the Báb or his successors, that

there is any foundation for such a suspicion. … The charge of im-

morality seems to have arisen partly from the malignant inventions

of opponents, partly from the much greater freedom claimed for

women by the Báb, which in the oriental mind is scarcely dissociable

from profligacy of conduct. … if Bábíism continues to grow at its

present rate of progression, a time may conceivably come when it

will oust Muḥammadanism from the field in Persia. … Since its

recruits are won from the best soldiers of the garrison whom it is

attacking, there is greater reason to believe that it may ultimately

prevail. … The pure and suffering life of the Báb, his ignominious

death, the heroism and martyrdom of his followers, will appeal to

many others who can find no similar phenomena in the contem-

poraneous records of Islám. …

By Sir Francis Younghusband
Excerpts from *The Gleam*. (1923.)

1.

The story of the Báb, as Mírzá ‘Alí-Muḥammad called him-

self, was the story of spiritual heroism unsurpassed in Svabhava’s

experience; and his own adventurous soul was fired by it. That a

youth of no social influence and no education should, by the simple

power of insight, be able to pierce into the heart of things and see

the real truth, and then hold on to it with such firmness of convic-

tion and present it with such suasion that he was able to convince men

that he was the Messiah and get them to follow him to death itself,

was one of those splendid facts in human history that Svabhava loved

to meditate on. This was a true hero whom he would wish to emulate

and whose experiences he would profit by. The Báb’s passionate sin-

cerity could not be doubted, for he had given his life for his faith.

And that there must be something in his message that appealed to

men and satisfied their souls, was witnessed to by the fact that thou-

sands gave their lives in his cause and millions now follow him.

If a young man could, in only six years of ministry, by the sin-

cerity of his purpose and the attraction of his personality, so inspire

rich and poor, cultured and illiterate, alike, with belief in himself

and his doctrines that they would remain staunch, though hunted

down and without trial sentenced to death, sawn asunder, strangled,

shot, blown from guns; and if men of high position and culture in

Persia, Turkey and Egypt in numbers to this day adhere to his doc-

trines, his life must be one of those events in the last hundred years

which is really worth study. And that study fortunately has been

made by the Frenchman Gobineau and by Professor E. G. Browne,

so that we are able to have a faithful representation of its main

features. … Thus, in only his thirtieth year, in the year 1850, ended

the heroic career of a true God-man. Of the sincerity of his convic-

tion that he was God-appointed, the manner of his death is the

amplest possible proof. In the belief that he would thereby save

others from the error of their present beliefs he willingly sacrificed

his life. And of his power of attaching men to him, the passionate

devotion of hundreds and even thousands of men who gave their

lives in his cause is convincing testimony. …

He himself was but “a letter out of that most mighty book, a

dewdrop from that limitless ocean.” The One to come would reveal

all mysteries and all riddles. This was the humility of true insight.

And it has had its effect. His movement has grown and expanded,

and it has yet a great future before it.

During his six years of ministry, four of which were spent in

captivity, he had permeated all Persia with his ideas. And since his

death the movement has spread to Turkey, Egypt, India and even

into Europe and America. His adherents are now numbered by mil-

lions. “The Spirit which pervades them,” says Professor Browne, “is

such that it cannot fail to affect most powerfully all subject to its

influence.”

2.

For many years I have been interested in the rise and progress

of the Bahá’í Movement. Its roots go deep down into the past and

yet it looks far forward into the future. It realizes and preaches

the oneness of mankind. And I have noticed how ardently its follow-

ers work for the furtherance of peace and for the general welfare

of mankind. God must be with them and their success therefore

assured.

Excerpts from *Modern Mystics*. (1935, p. 142.)

3.

The martyrdom of the Báb took place on July 9, 1850, thirty-

one years from the date of his birth.

His body was dead. His spirit lived on. Ḥusayn had been

slain in battle. Quddús had been done to death in captivity. But

Bahá’u’lláh lived. The One who shall be made manifest was alive.

And in him and in others had been engendered such love for the

Báb and what he stood for as, in the words of the chronicler, no eye

had ever beheld nor mortal heart conceived: if branches of every

tree were turned into pens, and all the seas into ink, and Earth and

Heaven rolled into one parchment, the immensity of that love

would still remain untold. This love for the Cause still survived.

And it was sufficient. Bahá’u’lláh was, indeed, despoiled of his pos-

sessions, deserted by his friends, driven into exile from his native

land and, even in exile, confined to his house. But in him the Cause

was still alive—and more than alive, purified and ennobled by the

fiery trials through which it had passed.

Under the wise control, and direction of Bahá’u’lláh from his

prison-house, first at Baghdád and then at ‘Akká in Syria, there

grew what is now known as the Bahá’í Movement which, silently

propagating itself, has now spread to Europe and America as well

as to India and Egypt, while the bodily remains of the Báb, long

secretly guarded, now find a resting-place on Mount Carmel in a

Tomb-shrine, which is a place of pilgrimage to visitors from all

over the world.

Excerpt from *The Christian Commonwealth*, January 22, 1913:
“‘Abdu’l-Bahá at Oxford”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed a large and deeply interested audience

at Manchester College, Oxford, on December 31. The Persian

leader spoke in his native tongue, Mírzá Aḥmad Sohrab interpreting.

Principal Estlin Carpenter presided, and introduced the speaker by

saying that they owed the honor and pleasure of meeting ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá to their revered friend, Dr. Cheyne, who was deeply inter-

ested in the Bahá’í teaching. The movement sprung up during the

middle of the last century in Persia, with the advent of a young

Muḥammadan who took to himself the title of the Báb (meaning

door or gate, through which men could arrive at the knowledge or

truth of God), and who commenced teaching in Persia in the year

1844. The purity of his character, the nobility of his words, aroused

great enthusiasm. He was, however, subjected to great hostility by

the authorities, who secured his arrest and imprisonment, and he

was finally executed in 1850. But the movement went on, and the

writings of the Báb, which had been copious, were widely read. The

movement has been brought into India, Europe, and the United

States. It does not seek to create a new sect, but to inspire all sects

with a deep fundamental love. The late Dr. Jowett once said to him

that he had been so deeply impressed with the teachings and charac-

ter of the Báb that he thought Bábíism, as the present movement was

then known, might become the greatest religious movement since

the birth of Christ.

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By Rev. J. Tyssul Davis, B.A.

Quotation from *A League of Religions*. Excerpts from Chapter X: “Bahá’ísm—

The Religion of Reconciliation.” (The Lindsey Press, London, England.)

The Bahá’í religion has made its way … because it meets the

needs of its day. It fits the larger outlook of our time better than

the rigid exclusive older faiths. A characteristic is its unexpected

liberality and toleration. It accepts all the great religions as true,

and their scriptures as inspired. The Bahá’ísts bid the followers of

these faiths disentangle from the windings of racial, particularist,

local prejudices, the vital, immortal thread, the pure gospel of

eternal worth, and to apply this essential element of life. Instances

are quoted of people being recommended to work within the older

faiths, to remain, vitalizing them upon the principles of the new

faith. They cannot fear new facts, new truths as the Creed-

defenders must. They believe in a progressive revelation. They

admit the cogency of modern criticism and allow that God is in His

nature incomprehensible, but is to be known through His Manifesta-

tions. Their ethical ideal is very high and is of the type we Western-

ers have learnt to designate “Christ-like.” “What does he do to his

enemies that he makes them his friends?” was asked concerning the

late leader. What astonishes the student is not anything in the ethics

or philosophy of this movement, but the extraordinary response its

ideal has awakened in such numbers of people, the powerful influence

this standard actually exerts on conduct. It is due to four things:

(1) It makes *a call on the Heroic Element in man*. It offers no

bribe. It bids men endure, give up, carry the cross. It calls them to

sacrifice, to bear torture, to suffer martyrdom, to brave death. (2)

It *offers liberty of thought*. Even upon such a vital question as

immortality it will not bind opinion. Its atmosphere is one of trust

and hope, not of dogmatic chill. (3) It is a *religion of love*. “Not-

withstanding the interminable catalogue of extreme and almost

incredible sufferings and privations which this heroic band of men

and women have endured—more terrible than many martyrdoms—

there is not a trace of resentment or bitterness to be observed among

them. One would suppose that they were the most fortunate of the

people among whom they live, as indeed they do certainly consider

themselves, in that they have been permitted to live near their

beloved Lord, beside which they count their sufferings as nothing”

(Phelps). Love for the Master, love for the brethren, love for the

neighbors, love for the alien, love for all humanity, love for all

life, love for God—the old, well-tried way trod once before in Syria,

trodden again. (4) It is a *religion in harmony with science*. It has

here the advantage of being thirteen centuries later than Islám. This

new dispensation has been tried in the furnace, and has not been

found wanting. It has been proved valid by the lives of those who

have endured all things on its behalf. Here is something more

appealing than its logic and rational philosophy. “To the Western

observer” (writes Prof. Browne), “it is the complete sincerity of the

Bábís, their fearless disregard of death and torture undergone for

the sake of their religion, their certain conviction as to the truth of

their faith, their generally admirable conduct toward mankind,

especially toward their fellow-believers, which constitute their

strongest claim on his attention.”

“By their fruits shall ye know them!” We cannot but address

to this youthful religion an All Hail! of welcome. We cannot fail

to see in its activity another proof of the living witness in our own

day of the working of the sleepless spirit of God in the hearts of

men, for He cannot rest, by the necessity of His nature, until He

hath made in conscious reality, as in power, the whole world His

own.

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By Herbert Putnam

*Librarian of Congress*

The dominant impression that survives in my memory of

‘Abdu’l-Bahá is that of an *extraordinary nobility*: physically, in the

head so massive yet so finely poised, and the modeling of the fea-

tures; but spiritually, in the serenity of expression, and the sug-

gestion of grave and responsible meditation in the deeper lines of

the face. But there was also, in his complexion, carriage, and ex-

pression, an assurance of the complete *health* which is a requisite of

a sane judgment. And when, as in a lighter mood, his features

relaxed into the playful, the assurance was added of a sense of

humor without which there is no true sense of proportion. I have

never met any one concerned with the philosophies of life whose

judgment might seem so reliable in matters of practical conduct.

My regret is that my meetings with him were so few and that

I could not benefit by a lengthier contact with a personality com-

bining a dignity so impressive with human traits so engaging.

I wish that he could be multiplied!

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By Leo Tolstoy

Translated from a letter to Mme. Isabel Grinevskaya, Oct. 22, 1903.

I am very glad that Mr. V. V. Stassov has told you of the

good impression which your book has made on me, and I thank

you for sending it.

I have known about the Bábís for a long time, and have always

been interested in their teachings. It seems to me that these teach-

ings, as well as all the rationalistic social religious teachings that

have arisen lately out of the original teachings of Brahmanism,

Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity and Islám distorted by the priests,

have a great future for this very reason that these teachings, dis-

carding all these distorting incrustations that cause division, aspire

to unite into one common religion of all mankind.

Therefore, the teachings of the Bábís, inasmuch as they have

rejected the old Muḥammadan superstitions and have not estab-

lished new superstitions which would divide them from other new

superstitions (unfortunately something of the kind is noticed in

the exposition of the Teachings of the Báb), and inasmuch as they

keep to the principal fundamental ideas of brotherhood, equality

and love, have a great future before them.

In the Muḥammadan religion there has been lately going on

an intensive spiritual movement. I know that one such movement

is centered in the French colonies in Africa, and has its name (I

do not remember it), and its prophet. Another movement exists

in India, Lahore, and also has its prophet and publishes its paper

“Review of Religions.”

Both these religious teachings contain nothing new, neither do

they have for their principal object a changing of the outlook of

the people and thus do not change the relationship between the

people, as is the case with Bábíism, though not so much in its theory

(Teachings of the Báb) as in the practice of life as far as I know

it. I therefore sympathize with Bábíism with all my heart inasmuch

as it teaches people brotherhood and equality and sacrifice of material

life for service to God.

Translated from a letter to Frid ul Khan Wadelbekow.

*(This communication is dated 1908 and is found among epistles written*

*to Caucasian Muḥammadans.)*

… In answer to your letter which questions how one should

understand the term God. I send you a collection of writings from

my literary and reading club, in which some thoughts upon the

nature of God are included. In my opinion if we were to free our-

selves from all false conception of God we should, whether as

Christians or Muḥammadans, free ourselves entirely from picturing

God as a personality. The conception which then seems to me to

be the best for meeting the requirements of reason and heart is

found in 4th chap. St. John, 7-12-15 that means God is love. It

therefore follows that God lives in us according to the measure or

capacity of each soul to express His nature. This thought is implicit

more or less clearly in all religions, and therefore in Muḥam-

madanism.

Concerning your second question upon what awaits us after

death I can only reply that on dying we return to God from whose

Life we came. God, however, being Love. we can on going over

expect God only.

Concerning your third question, I answer that so far as I under-

stand Islám, like all other religions, Brahmanism, Buddhism, Con-

fucianism, etc., it contains great basic truths but that these have be-

come corrupted by superstitions, and coarse interpretations and filled

with unnecessary legendic descriptions. I have had much help in

my researches to get clear upon Muḥammadanism by a splendid

little book “The sayings of Muḥammad.”

The teachings of the Bábís which come to us out of Islám

have through Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings been gradually developed

and now present us with the highest and purest form of religious

teaching.

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By Dr. Edmund Privat

1.

The practical and spiritual understanding between nations, the

realization of the unity of mankind above all barriers of language

and religion, the feeling of responsibility towards all who suffer

from grief or injustice, are only different branches of the same

central teaching which gives the Bahá’í Movement such a faithful

and active family of workers in so many countries.

2.

La superstition l’intolérance et l’alliance des prêtres avec la

tyrannie sévit en Islám comme ailleurs. La grande lumière s’assom-

brit dans la fumée ténébreuse des formes vides et des passions

fanatiques. Il y eut plusieurs fois des réveils et des retours à la

pureté du message.

Chez nous, en Perse, le Báb vécut en saint et mourut en martyr

a Tabríz, il y a près d’un siècle. Bahá’u’lláh lui succéda, exilé de

Perse, emprisonné par le sultan turc. Il proclamait que l’unité

divine exclut les rivalités. La soumission à Dieu doit rapprocher les

hommes. Si la religion les sépare, c’est qu’elle a perdu son principal

sens.

En plein milieu du dix-neuvième siècle, au temps des Lamar-

tine et des Victor Hugo, le grand saint musulman fixait aux Bahá’í,

ses disciples, un programme et des principes plus actuels que ja-

mais. …

L’Islám a toujours proclamé ce dogme avec majesté, mais

les religions luttent en brandissant le nom d’un prophète ou

d’un autre, au lieu d’insister sur leur enseignement, qui pourrait

les rapprocher. Bahá’u’lláh tâchait de faire tomber les parois, non

pas Mahométisme avant tout, mais vraiment *Islám*, c’est-à-dire

soumission commune à la volonté suprême.

On ne parlait alors ni d’un Wilson, ni d’un Zamenhof, mais

l’exilé de Bahjí montrait aux générations futures le chemin qu’elles

devaient prendre. Son fils ‘Abdu’l-Bahá répandit plus tard son

message en Europe et en Amérique. Même un libre penseur comme

Auguste Forel s’y rallia de grand cœur. Le cercle amical des Bahá’í

s’étend autour du monde.

En Perse, un million d’entre eux soutiennent des écoles,

fameuses dans le pays.

 (From *La Sagesse de l’Orient*, Chap. III)

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By Dr. Auguste Forel

… J’avais écrit les lignes que précèdent en 1912. Que

dois-je ajouter aujourd’hui en août 1921, après les horribles guerres

qui viennent de mettre l’humanité à feu et à sang, tout en dévoilant

plus que jamais la terrible férocité de nos passions haineuses? Rien,

sinon que nous devons demeurer d’autant plus fermes, d’autant plus

inébranlables dans notre lutte pour le Bien social. Nos enfants ne

doivent pas se décourager; ils doivent au contraire profiter du chaos

mondial actuel pour aider à la pénible organisation supérieure et

supranationale de l’humanité, à l’aide d’une fédération universelle

des peuples.

En 1920 seulement j’ai appris à connaître, à Karlsruhe, la

religion supra confessionnelle et mondiale des Bahá’ís fondée en

Orient par le personne Bahá’u’lláh il y a 70 ans. C’est la vraie religion

du Bien social humain, sans dogmes, ni prêtres, reliant entre eux

tous les hommes sur notre petit globe terrestre. *Je suis devenu*

*Bahá’í*. Que cette religion vive et prospère pour le bien de l’hu-

manité; c’est là mon vœu le plus ardent. … (Excerpt from Dr.

Auguste Forel’s Will)

By General Renato Piola Caselli

Having been engaged all of his life in the training of men, he

does this (i.e., write on the subject of religion) more as a “shepherd

of a flock” might do, in hope of persuading his friends and brothers

to turn spontaneously to the Illumined Path of the Great Revela-

tion.

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By Rev. Frederick W. Oakes

The Enlightener of human minds in respect to their religious

foundations and privileges is of such vital importance that no one

is safe who does not stop and listen for its quiet meaning, and is to

the mind of men, as the cooling breeze that unseen passes its breath

over the varying leaves of a tree. Watch it! And see how uniformly,

like an unseen hand passing caressingly over all its leaves: Full of

tender care and even in its gifts of love and greater life: Caresses

each leaf. Such it is to one who has seated himself amid the flowers

and fruit trees in the Garden Beautiful at ‘Akká, just within the

circle of that Holy and Blessed shrine where rests the Mortal part

of the Great Enlightener. His handiwork is there, you touch the

fruit and flowers his hand gave new life’s hopes to, and kneeling

as I did beside Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Marvelous Mani-

festation, felt the spirit’s immortal love of Him who rests there.

While I could not speak the words of the Litany, my soul knew

the wondrous meaning, for every word was a word of the soul’s

language that speaks of the Eternal love and care of the Eternal

Father. So softly and so living were the reflections from his beauti-

ful personality, that one needed not spoken words to be interpreted.

And this Pilgrim came away renewed and refreshed to such a

degree, that the hard bands of formalism were replaced by the

freedom of love and light that will ever make that sojourn there

the prize memory and the Door of revelation never to be closed

again, and never becloud the glorious Truth of Universal Brother-

hood. A calm, and glorious influence that claims the heart and

whispers to each of the pulsing leaves of the great family in all

experiences of life, “Be not afraid. It is I!”—And makes us *long*

to help all the world to know the meaning of those words spoken

by The Great Revealer, “Let us strive with heart and soul that unity

may dwell in the world.” And to catch the greatness of the word

“Strive,” in quietness and reflection.

By Renwick J. G. Millar

Editor of *John O’Groat Journal*, Wick, Scotland

I was in Chicago for only some ten days, yet it would take a

hundred chapters to describe all the splendid sights and institutions

I was privileged to see. No doubt Chicago has more than its fair

share of alien gangsters and gunmen, and the despicable doings of

this obnoxious class has badly vitiated its civic life and reputation.

But for all that it is a magnificent city—in many respects probably

the finest in America; a city of which its residents have innumerable

reasons to be proud ….

Every day indeed was filled up with sightseeing and the en-

joyment of lavish hospitality. One day, for example, I was enter-

tained to lunch at the Illinois Athletic Club as the guest of Mr.

Robert Black, a prosperous Scot belonging to Wigtonshire, who

is in the building trade. He is an ex-president of the St. Andrew’s

Society. Mr. Falconer and other Scots friends were present, and

they were all exceedingly kind and complimentary. I could not, in

short, have been treated with more distinction if I had been a prom-

inent Minister of State instead of a humble Scottish journalist out

on a mission of fraternity and good will.

On the same day I met by appointment Mr. Albert R. Windust

with whom I went out to see the Bahá’í Temple which is in course

of being erected at Wilmette, a suburb of Chicago on the shore of

Lake Michigan. It is about an hour’s ride out on the elevated rail-

way. Only the foundation and basement have so far been con-

structed, and the work was meanwhile stopped, but, we understand,

is now shortly to be resumed. I have no hesitation in saying that

when completed this Temple will be one of the most beautiful pieces

of architecture in the world. I had the privilege of an introduction

to the architect, a Frenchman, M. Bourgeois, who speaks English

fluently. We spent a considerable time with him in his beautiful

studio overlooking the Lake, and he did me the honour of showing

me the plans of the Temple, drawings which cost him years of toil,

and they are far beyond anything I could have imagined in beauty

and spiritual significance. M. Bourgeois, who is well advanced in

years, is a genius and mystic—a gentleman of charming personality.

In all that I had the pleasure of seeing in his studio I had a priv-

ilege that is given to few. My signature is in his personal book,

which contains the names of some of the great ones of the earth!

Mr. Windust, who is a leading Bahá’í in the city, is a quiet and

humble man, but full of fine ideas and ideals. He treated me with

the utmost brotherly courtesy. How is it, I kept asking myself,

that it should be mine to have all this privilege and honour? There

was no reason save that they told me I had touched the chords of

truth and sincerity in referring to and reviewing the Bahá’í writings

and principles in a few short articles in this *Journal*. The Temple

is designed to represent these principles—universal religion, uni-

versal brotherhood, universal education, and the union of science

and religion. Meantime the Chicagoans are seemingly indifferent to

all its spiritual significance; but some day they will wake up to a

realisation of the fact that its symbolism will mark the city as one

of destiny in the world.

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By Charles H. Prisk

Editor, *Pasadena Star News*

Humanity is the better, the nobler, for the Bahá’í Faith. It is

a Faith that enriches the soul; that takes from life its dross.

I am prompted thus to express myself because of what I have

seen, what I have heard, what I have read of the results of the

Movement founded by the Reverend Bahá’u’lláh. Embodied with-

in that Movement is the spirit of world brotherhood; that brother-

hood that makes for unity of thought and action.

Though not a member of the Bahá’í Faith, I sense its tre-

mendous potency for good. Ever is it helping to usher in the dawn

of the day of “Peace on Earth Good Will to Men.” By the spread

of its teachings, the Bahá’í cause is slowly, yet steadily, making the

Golden Rule a practical reality.

With the high idealism of Bahá’u’lláh as its guide, the Bahá’í

Faith is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the

perfect day. Countless are its good works. For example, to the

pressing economic problems it gives a new interpretation, a new

solution. But above all else it is causing peoples everywhere to

realize they are as one, by heart and spirit divinely united.

And so I find joy in paying this little tribute to a cause that is

adding to the sweetness, the happiness, the cleanness of life.

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By Prof. Hari Prasad Shastri, D.Litt.

My contact with the Bahá’í Movement and my acquaintance

with its teachings, given by Hadrat-i-Bahá’u’lláh, have filled me

with real joy, as I see that this Movement, so cosmopolitan in its

appeal, and so spiritual in its advocacy of Truth, is sure to bring

peace and joy to the hearts of millions.

Free from metaphysical subtleties, practical in its outlook,

above all sectarianism, and based on God, the substratum of the

human soul and the phenomenal world, the Bahá’í Movement

carries peace and illumination with it.

As long as it is kept free from orthodoxy and church-spirit,

and above personalities, it will continue to be a blessing to its fol-

lowers.

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By Shri Purohit Swami

I am in entire sympathy with all of the principles that the

Bahá’í Movement stands for; there is nothing which is contrary

to what I am preaching. I think at this stage of the world such

teachings are needed more than anything else. I find the keynote

of the Teachings is the spiritual regeneration of the world. The

world is getting more and more spiritually bankrupt every day, and

if it requires anything it requires spiritual life. The Bahá’í Move-

ment stands above all caste, creed and color and is based on pure

spiritual unity.

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By Prof. Herbert A. Miller

In *World Unity Magazine*

The central drive of the Bahá’í Movement is for human unity.

It would secure this through unprejudiced search for truth, making

religion conform to scientific discovery and insisting that funda-

mentally all religions are alike. For the coming of universal peace,

there is great foresight and wisdom as to details. Among other

things there should be a universal language; so the Bahá’ís take a

great interest in Esperanto though they do not insist on it as the

ultimate language. No other religious movement has put so much

emphasis on the emancipation and education of women. Everyone

should work whether rich or poor and poverty should be abolished.

… What will be the course of the Bahá’í Movement no one can

prophesy, but I think it is no exaggeration to claim that the program

is the finest fruit of the religious contribution of Asia.

… Shoghi Effendi’s statement cannot be improved upon.

The Bahá’ís have had the soundest position on the race question of

any religion. They not only accept the scientific conclusions but

they also implement them with spiritual force. This latter is neces-

sary because there is no other way to overcome the emotional element

which is basic in the race problem. …

I have not said enough perhaps in the first paragraph. Please

add the following: The task of learning to live together, though

different, is the most difficult and the most imperative that the

world faces. The economic problem will be relatively easy in com-

parison. There are differences in the qualities of cultures but there

are no differences in qualities of races that correspond. This being

recognized by minorities leads them to resist methods of force to

keep them in subordination. There is no solution except cooperation

and the granting of self-respect.

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By Viscount Samuel, G.C.B., M.P.

In *John O’London’s Weekly*, March 25th, 1933.

1.

It is possible indeed to pick out points of fundamental agree-

ment among all creeds. That is the essential purpose of the Bahá’í

Religion, the foundation and growth of which is one of the most

striking movements that have proceeded from the East in recent

generations.

2.

If one were compelled to choose which of the many religious

communities of the world was closest to the aim and purpose of this

Congress, I think one would be obliged to say that it was the com-

paratively little known Bahá’í Community. Other faiths and creeds

have to consider, at a Congress like this, in what way they can con-

tribute to the idea of world fellowship. But the Bahá’í Faith exists

almost for the sole purpose of contributing to the fellowship and the

unity of mankind.

Other communities may consider how far a particular element

of their respective faith may be regarded as similar to those of other

communities, but the Bahá’í Faith exists for the purpose of com-

bining in one synthesis all those elements in the various faiths which

are held in common. And that is why I suggest that this Bahá’í

community is really more in agreement with the main idea which

has led to the summoning of the Congress than any particular one

of the great religious communities of the world.

Its origin was in Persia where a mystic prophet, who took the

name of the Báb, the “Gate,” began a mission among the Persians

in the earlier part of the nineteenth century. He collected a con-

siderable number of adherents. His activities were regarded with

 apprehension by the Government of Persia of that day. Finally,

he and his leading disciples were seized by the forces of the Persian

Government and were shot in the year 1850. In spite of the persecu-

tion, the movement spread in Persia and in many countries of Islám.

He was followed as the head of the Community by the one who has

been its principal prophet and exponent, Bahá’u’lláh. He was most

active and despite persecution and imprisonment made it his life’s

mission to spread the creed which he claimed to have received by

direct divine revelation. He died in 1892 and was succeeded as

the head of the Community by his son, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who was born

in 1844. He was living in Haifa, in a simple house, when I went

there as High Commissioner in 1920, and I had the privilege of

one or two most interesting conversations with him on the principles

and methods of the Bahá’í Faith. He died in 1921 and his obsequies

were attended by a great concourse of people. I had the honour

of representing His Majesty the King on that occasion.

Since that time, the Bahá’í Faith has secured the support of

a very large number of communities throughout the world. At the

present time it is estimated that there are about eight hundred Bahá’í

communities in various countries. In the United States, near Chi-

cago, a great Temple, now approaching completion, has been erected

by American adherents of the Faith, with assistance from elsewhere.

Shoghi Effendi, the grandson of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, is now the head of

the community. He came to England and was educated at Balliol

College, Oxford, but now lives in Haifa, and is the center of a com-

munity which has spread throughout the world.

(Introductory address delivered at the Bahá’í session of the World Congress of

Faiths, held in London, July, 1936.)

3.

Letter from Lord Samuel of Carmel.—G.C.B., C.B.E.

In 1920 I was appointed as the first High Commissioner for

Palestine under the British Mandate, and took an early opportunity

of paying a visit to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Effendi at his home in Haifa.

I had for some time been interested in the Bahá’í Movement,

and felt privileged by the opportunity of making the acquaintance

of its head. I had also an official reason as well as a personal one.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá had been persecuted by the Turks.

A British regime had now been substituted in Palestine for the

Turkish. Toleration and respect for all religions had long been a

principle of British rule wherever it extended; and the visit of the High Commissioner was intended to be a sign to the population that

the adherents of every creed would be able to feel henceforth that

they enjoyed the respect and could count upon the good will of the

new Government of the land.

I was impressed, as was every visitor, by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s dig-

nity, grace and charm. Of moderate stature, his strong features

and lofty expression lent to His personality an appearance of majesty.

In our conversation he readily explained and discussed the principal

tenets of Bahá’í, answered my inquiries and listened to my com-

ments. I remember vividly that friendly interview of sixteen years

ago, in the simple room of the villa, surrounded by gardens, on the

sunny hillside of Mount Carmel.

I was glad I had paid my visit so soon, for in 1921 ‘Abdu’l-

Bahá died. I was only able to express my respect for his creed and

my regard for His person by coming from the capital to attend his

funeral. A great throng had gathered together, sorrowing for his

death, but rejoicing also for His life.

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By Rev. K. T. Chung

Last summer upon my return from a visit to Japan, I had the

pleasure of meeting Mrs. Keith Ransom-Kehler on the boat. It

was learnt that this lady is a teacher of the Bahá’í Cause, so we con-

versed upon various subjects of human life very thoroughly. It

was soon found that what the lady imparted to me came from the

source of Truth as I have felt inwardly all along, so I at once

realized that the Bahá’í Faith can offer numerous and profound

benefits to mankind.

My senior, Mr. Y. S. Tsao, is a well-read man. His mental

capacity and deep experience are far above the average man. He

often said that during this period of our country when old beliefs

have lost their hold upon the people, it is absolutely necessary to

seek a religion of all-embracing Truth which may exert its powerful

influence in saving the situation. For the last ten years, he has in-

vestigated indefatigably into the teachings of the Bahá’í Cause.

Recently, he has completed his translations of the book on the New

Era and showed me a copy of the proof. After carefully reading it,

I came to the full realization that the Truth as imparted to me by

Mrs. Ransom-Kehler is veritable and unshakeable. This Truth of

great value to mankind has been eminently translated by Mr. Tsao

and now the Chinese people have the opportunity of reading it,

and I cannot but express my profound appreciation for the same.

… Should the Truth of the Bahá’í Faith be widely disseminated

among the Chinese people, it will naturally lead to the coming of

the Kingdom of Heaven. Should everybody again exert his efforts

towards the extension of this beneficent influence throughout the

world, it will then bring about world peace and the general welfare

of humanity.

(From Rev. K. T. Chung’s Preface to the Chinese version of Dr. Esslemont’s Book.)

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By Prof. Dimitry Kazarov

University, Sofia, Bulgaria

Une des causes principales de la situation actuelle du monde

c’est que l’humanité est trop en arrière encore dans son développe-

ment spirituel. Voilà pourquoi tout enseignement qui a pour but à

éveiller et fortifier la conscience morale et religieuse des hommes

est d’une importance capitale pour l’avenir de notre race. Le

Bahá’ísme est un de ces enseignements. Il a ce mérite qu’en portant

des principes qui sont communs de toutes les grandes religions (et

spécialement du christianisme) cherche à les adapter aux conditions

de la vie actuelle et à la psychologie de l’homme moderne. En outre

il travail pour l’union des hommes de toute nationalité et race dans

une conscience morale et religieuse commune. Il n’a pas la préten-

tion d’être autant une religion nouvelle qu’un trait d’union entre

les grandes religions existantes: ce sur quoi il insiste surtout ce n’est

pas d’abandonner la religion à laquelle nous appartenons déjà pour

en chercher une autre, mais à faire un effort pour trouver dans cette

même religion l’élément qui nous unit aux autres et d’en faire la

force déterminante de notre conduite toute entière. Cet élément

(commun à toutes les grandes religions) c’est la conscience que nous

sommes avant tout des êtres spirituels, unis dans une même entité

spirituelle dont nous ne sommes que des parties-unies entre elles par

l’attribut fondamental de cette entité spirituelle—à savoir *l’amour*.

Manifester, réaliser, développer chez nous et chez les autres (sur-

tout chez les enfants) cette conscience de notre nature spirituelle et

l’amour comme son attribut fondamental c’est la chose principale

que nous devons poursuivre avant tout et par toutes les manifesta-

tions de notre activité. C’est en même temps le seul moyen par

lequel nous pouvons espérer de réaliser une union toujours gran-

dissant parmi les hommes.

Le Bahá’ísme est un des enseignements qui cherche à éveiller

chez nous—n’importe à quelle religion nous appartenons—juste-

ment cette conscience de notre nature spirituelle.

Il y a plus de 20 ans un groupe d’hommes et femmes de dif-

férentes nationalités et religions, animés par le désir de travailler

pour l’union des peuples, ont commencé à publier un journal en

esperanto sous le titre “Universala Unigo.” Le premier article du

premier numéro de ce journal était consacré au Bahá’ísme et à son

fondateur. Il me semble que ce fait est une preuve éclatante de ce

que je viens de dire sur le Bahá’ísme.

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By Rev. Griffith J. Sparham

Highgate Hill Unitarian Christian Church, London, England

In his book “A League of Religions,” the Rev. J. Tyssul Davis,

formerly minister of the Theistic Church in London, and at present

minister of a Unitarian Church in Bristol, England, the writer sets

out to demonstrate that each great religious movement in the world

has contributed something of peculiar importance to the spiritual

life of man. Thus, he says, the great contribution of Zoroastrianism

has been the thought of Purity; of Brahmanism that of Justice; of

Muḥammadanism that of Submission; of Christianity that of Serv-

ice; and so on. In each instance he lays his finger on the one thing

*par excellence* for which the particular religious culture seemed to

him to stand, and tries to catch its special contribution in an epigram-

matic phrase. Coming, in this way, to Bahá’ísm, he names it “the

Religion of Reconciliation.” In his chapter on Bahá’ísm he says:

“The Bahá’í religion has made its way because it meets the

need of the day. It fits the larger outlook of our time, better than

the rigid older faiths. A characteristic is its unexpected liberality

and toleration. It accepts all the great religions as true and their

scriptures as inspired.”

These, then, as he sees Bahá’ísm, are its essential features:

liberality, toleration, the spirit of reconciliation; and that, not in

the sense, as Mr. H. G. ‘Wells has it in his “Soul of a Bishop,” of

making a “collection” of approved portions of the world’s varied

and differing creeds, but in the sense, as he also puts it in the same

book, of achieving a great “simplification.”

“Bahá’ísts,” says Dr. Davis, “bid the followers of these (that

is, the world’s) faiths disentangle from the windings of racial, par-

ticularist, local prejudices, the vital, immortal thread of the pure

gospel of eternal worth, and to apply this essential element to life.”

That is Dr. Davis’ interpretation of the genius of Bahá’ísm,

and that it is a true one, no one who has studied Bahá’ísm, even

superficially, can question, least of all the outsider. Indeed one

may go further and assert that no one who has studied Bahá’ísm,

whether superficially or otherwise, would wish to question it; par-

ticularly if he approaches the subject from a liberal and unprejudiced

point of view. In the last act of his “Wandering Jew,” Mr. Temple

Thurston puts into the mouth of Matteos, the Wandering Jew him-

self, the splendid line, “All men are Christians—all are Jews.” He

might equally well have written, “All men are Christians—all are

Bahá’ís.” For, if the sense of the Unity of Truth is a predomi-

nant characteristic of liberally-minded people, whatever may be

their religious tradition, it is predominantly a characteristic of

Bahá’ísm; since here is a religious system based, fundamentally,

on the one, simple, profound, comprehensive doctrine of the unity

of God, which carries with it, as its necessary corollary and conse-

quence, the parallel doctrine of the unity of Man.

This, at all events, is the conviction of the present writer; and

it is why, as a Unitarian, building his own faith on the same basic

principles of divine and human unity, he has long felt sympathy

with and good will toward a religious culture which stands on a

foundation identical with that of the faith he holds. And a religion

that affirms the unity of things must of necessity be a religion of

reconciliation; the truth of which in the case of Bahá’ísm is clear.

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By Ernest Renan

Passage tiré de Renan “Les Apôtres, P.” Edition Lévy, Paris, 1866

Notre siècle a vu des mouvements religieux tout aussi extra-

ordinaires que ceux d’autrefois, mouvements qui ont provoqué

autant d’enthousiasme, qui ont eu déjà, proportion gardée, plus de

martyrs, et dont l’avenir est encore incertain.

Je ne parle pas des Mormons, secte à quelques égards si sotte

et si abjecte que l’on hésite à la prendre au sérieux.

Il est instructif, cependant, de voir en plein 19ème siècle des

milliers d’hommes de notre race vivant dans le miracle, croyant

avec une foi aveugle des merveilles qu’ils disent avoir vues et

touchées. Il y a déjà toute une littérature pour montrer l’accord

du mormonisme et de la science; ce qui vaut mieux, cette religion,

fondée sur de niaises impostures, a su accomplir des prodiges de

patience et d’abnégation; dans cinq cents ans des docteurs prouveront

sa divinité par les merveilles de son établissement.

Le Bábisme, en Perse, a été un phénomène autrement con-

sidérable. Un homme doux et sans aucune prétention, une sorte

de Spinoza modeste et pieux, s’est vu, presque malgré lui,

élevé au rang de thaumaturge d’incarnation divine, et est devenu

le chef d’une secte nombreuse, ardente et fanatique, qui a failli

amener une révolution comparable à celle de l’Islám. Des milliers

de martyrs sont accourus pour lui avec l’allégresse au-devant de la

mort. Un jour sans pareil peut-être dans l’histoire du monde fut

celui de la grande boucherie qui se fit des Bábís, à Téhéran. “On

vit ce jour-là dans les rues et les bazars de Téhéran,” dit un narra-

teur qui a tout su d’original, “un spectacle que la population semble

devoir n’oublier jamais. Quand la conversation encore aujourd’hui

se met sur cette matière, on peut juger l’admiration mêlée d’horreur

que la foule éprouve et que les années n’ont pas diminuée. On

vit s’avancer entre les bourreaux des enfants et des femmes les

chairs ouvertes sur tout le corps, avec des mèches allumées, flam-

bantes, fichées dans les blessures. On traînait les victimes par des

cordes et on les faisait marcher à coups de fouet. Enfants et femmes

s’avançaient en chantant un verset qui dit: En vérité nous venons

de Dieu et nous retournons à Lui. Leurs voix s’élevaient, éclatantes,

au-dessus du silence profond de la foule. Quand un des suppliciés

tombait et qu’on le faisait relever à coups de fouet ou de baïonnette,

pour peu que la perte de son sang qui ruisselait sur tous ses membres

lui laissât encore un peu de force, il se mettait à danser et criait

avec un surcroît d’enthousiasme: “En vérité nous sommes à Dieu

et nous retournons à Lui.” Quelques-uns des enfants expirèrent

pendant le trajet; les bourreaux jetèrent leurs corps sous les pieds

de leurs pères et de leurs sœurs, qui marchèrent fièrement dessus et

ne leur donnèrent pas deux regards. Quand on arriva au lieu d’exécu-

tion, on proposa encore aux victimes la vie pour leur abjuration. Un

bourreau imagina de dire à un père que, s’il ne cédait pas, il couperait

la gorge à ses deux fils sur sa poitrine. C’étaient deux petits garçons

dont l’aîné avait 14 ans et qui, rouges de leur sang, les chairs cal-

cinées, écoutaient froidement le dialogue; le père répondit, en

se couchant par terre, qu’il était prêt et l’aîné des enfants, réclam-

ant avec emportement son droit d’aînesse, demanda à être égorgé

le premier.[[4]](#footnote-4) Enfin tout fut achevé. La nuit tomba sur un amas

de chairs informes; les têtes étaient attachées en paquets au poteau

justicier et les chiens des faubourgs se dirigeaient par troupes de

ce côté.

Cela se passait en 1852. Le secte de Mazdak sous Chosroès

Nousch fut étouffée dans un pareil bain de sang. Le dévouement

absolu est pour les nations naïves la plus exquise des jouissances et

une sorte de besoin. Dans l’affaire des Bábís, on vit des gens qui

étaient à peine de la secte, venir se dénoncer eux-mêmes afin qu’on

les adjoignit aux patients. Il est si doux à l’homme de souffrir

pour quelque chose, que dans bien des cas l’appât du martyre suffit

pour faire croire.

Un disciple qui fut le compagnon de supplice du Báb, suspendu

à côté de lui aux remparts de Tabríz et attendant le mort, n’avait

qu’un mot à la bouche: “Es-tu content de moi, maître?”

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By Hon. Lilian Helen Montague, J.P., D.H.L.

As a Jewess I am interested in the Bahá’í Community. The

teaching lays particular stress on the Unity of God and the Unity

of Man, and incorporates the doctrine of the Hebrew Prophets that

the Unity of God is revealed in the Unity of men. Also, we seem

to share the conception of God’s messengers as being those people

who in their deep reverence for the attributes of God, His beauty,

His truth, His righteousness and His justice, seek to imitate Him

in their imperfect human way. The light of God is reflected in

the soul of him who seeks to be receptive. Like the members of

the Bahá’í community, we Jews are scattered all over the world,

but united in a spiritual brotherhood. The Peace ideal enumerated

by the Hebrew Prophets is founded on faith in the ultimate triumph

of God’s justice and righteousness.

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By Norman Bentwich

“Palestine may indeed be now regarded as the land not of three

but of four faiths, because the Bahá’í creed, which has its center of

faith and pilgrimage in Acre and Haifa, is attaining to the charac-

ter of a world-religion. So far as its influence goes in the land, it

is a factor making for international and interreligious understand-

ing.”

(From “Palestine,” by Norman Bentwich, p. 235.)

By Émile Schreiber

1.

Trois prophètes

Alors que le marxisme soviétique proclame le matérialisme

historique, alors que les jeunes générations sionistes sont également

de plus en plus indifférentes aux croyances établies, une nouvelle

religion est née en Orient, et sa doctrine prend, dans les circon-

stances actuelles, un intérêt d’autant plus grand que, s’écartant du

domaine purement philosophique, elle préconise en économie poli-

tique des solutions qui coïncident curieusement avec les préoccupa-

tions de notre époque.

Cette religion, de plus, est par essence antiraciste. Elle est

née en Perse, vers 1840, et les trois prophètes successifs qui l’ont

prêchée sont des Persans, c’est-à-dire des musulmans de naissance.

Le premier, le créateur, s’appelait le Báb. Il prêcha vers 1850,

et préconisa, outre la réconciliation des différents cultes qui divi-

sent l’humanité, la libération de la femme, réduite aujourd’hui en-

core à un quasi esclavage dans tout l’Islám.

Une Persane d’une rare beauté, et qui, chose rare chez les

musulmanes, était douée d’un grand talent oratoire, répondant au

nom difficile à prononcer de Qourratou-’l-‘Aïn, l’accompagna dans

ses réunions, n’hésitant pas, en donnant elle-même l’exemple, à

préconiser la suppression du voile pour les femmes.

Le Báb et elle réussirent à convaincre, à l’époque, des dizaines

de milliers de Persans et le shah de Perse les emprisonna l’un et

l’autre, ainsi que la plupart de leurs partisans. Le Báb fut pendu.

Sa belle collaboratrice fut étranglée dans sa prison. Leurs disciples

furent exilés à Saint-Jean-d’Acre, devenue temple du “Bahá’ísme.”

C’est ainsi que j’ai visité la maison du successeur du Báb, Bahá’u’lláh,

transformée aujourd’hui en temple du “Bahá’ísme.” C’est ainsi

que s’intitule cette religion, qui est plutôt une doctrine philoso-

phique, car elle ne comporte ni culte défini, ni surtout de clergé.

Les prêtres, disent les Bahá’ístes, sont tentés de fausser, dans un

but de lucre, l’idéalisme désintéressé des créateurs de religions.

Bahá’u’lláh, le principal des trois prophètes, répandit sa doc-

trine non seulement en Orient, mais dans beaucoup de pays d’Eu-

rope, et surtout aux États-Unis où son influence fut telle que le

nombre des Bahá’ístes attient aujourd’hui plusieurs millions. Il

fut persécuté par les Perses et mourut en exil.

Son fils, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, lui succéda et formula, d’après les

principes de son père, la doctrine économique du Bahá’ísme; elle

indique une prescience étonnante des événements qui se sont dé-

roulés depuis: la guerre d’abord, la crise ensuite. Il mourut peu

après la guerre, ayant vu la réalisation de la première partie de ses

prophéties.

L’originalité du Bahá’ísme est de chercher à faire passer dans

le domaine pratique, et plus particulièrement dans le domaine social,

les principes essentiels du judaïsme, du catholicisme et de l’islamisme,

en les combinant et en les adaptant aux besoins de notre époque.

Le Bahá’ísme proclame que les rapports sociaux deviennent

fatalement impossibles dans une société où l’idéalisme individ-

uel ne donne pas une base certaine aux engagements qui lient les

hommes entre eux.

L’individu se sent de plus en plus isolé au milieu d’une jungle

sociale qui menace, à beaucoup d’égards, son bien-être et sa sé-

curité. La bonne volonté et l’honnêteté, ne produisant plus dans

sa vie et dans son travail le résultat qu’il attend, tendent à perdre

pour lui toute valeur pratique. De là naissent, selon les caractères,

l’indifférence et le découragement, ou l’audace, le manque de

scrupules qui tendent à se procurer par tous les moyens, même les

plus répréhensibles, les bénéfices matériels nécessaires à l’exist-

ence.

La société, n’étant plus soumise à aucun contrôle, ni politique

ni moral, devient un vaisseau sans gouvernail où personne ne peut

plus rien prévoir et qui est sujet à des crises de plus en plus fré-

quentes et de plus en plus violentes. L’époque actuelle, déclarent les

prophètes persans, marque la fin d’une civilisation qui ne sert plus les

intérêts de l’humanité.

Elle aboutit à la faillite complète des institutions morales et

matérielles destinées à assurer le bien-être et la sécurité des hommes,

c’est-à-dire l’État, l’Église, le Commerce et l’Industrie. Le principe

fondamental d’où peut venir le salut de la civilisation engagée dans

des voies qui conduisent à sa destruction est la solidarité des nations

et des races. Car l’interpénétration des peuples est devenue telle

qu’il leur est impossible de trouver isolément la voie de la pros-

périté.

Ces prophéties, qui pouvaient paraître excessives et quelque peu

pessimistes à l’époque où elles ont été faites, vers 1890, ne sont

pas, les événements l’ont prouvé, de simples jérémiades. Il reste

à examiner comment, partant de ces données, qui ne sont que trop

exactes, le Bahá’ísme, conçu dans la Perse lointaine et si arriérée à

l’époque, aboutit aux mêmes conclusions que la plupart des écono-

mistes modernes qui, dans les différents pays de civilisation occiden-

tale, proclament qu’en dehors d’une collaboration internationale il

n’y a pas d’issue possible á la crise actuelle entraînant tous les peuples

à une misère toujours plus grande.

(From *Les Échos*, Paris, France, September 27, 1933.)

2.

Une religion “économique”

Les principes du Bahá’ísme, formulés par son principal pro-

phète, Bahá’u’lláh, peuvent paraître sérieusement compromis en un

temps où la frénésie nationaliste, récemment aggravée de racisme,

semble en éloigner de plus en plus l’application.

Toute la question est de savoir si ceux qui sont en faveur

aujourd’hui, dans tant de pays, sont susceptibles de résoudre le pro-

blème non pas de la prospérité, mais simplement du logement et de

la faim, dans les différentes nations qui nient par leurs théories et

tous leurs actes la solidarité des peuples et des races.

Une nouvelle guerre mondiale sera sans doute nécessaire pour

que l’humanité, qui n’a pas encore compris la leçon de 1914, se

rende enfin compte que les solutions de violence et de conquête ne

peuvent engendrer que la ruine générale, sans profit pour aucun des

belligérants.

Quoi qu’il en soit, les principales pensées économiques de

Bahá’u’lláh, telles qu’elles ont été formulées il y a un demi-siècle,

prouvent que la sagesse et le simple bon sens ont cela de commun

avec les écrevisses, c’est qu’il leur arrive fréquemment de marcher

à reculons.

Voici les principaux préceptes de ce moderne Marc-Aurèle:

“L’évolution humaine se divise en cycles organiques, corres-

pondant à la durée d’une religion, laquelle est d’environ un millier

d’années. Un cycle social nouveau commence toutes les fois qu’ap-

paraît un prophète dont l’influence et les enseignements renouvellent

la vie intérieure de l’homme et font déferler à travers le monde une

nouvelle vague de progrès.

“Chaque nouveau cycle détruit les croyances et les institutions

usées du cycle précédent et fonde sur d’autres croyances, en étroite

conformité, celles-là, avec les besoins actuels de l’humanité, une

civilisation nouvelle.

“L’influence de chaque prophète s’est, dans le passé, limitée

à une race ou à une religion, en raison de l’isolement géographique

des régions et des races, mais le siècle dans lequel nous entrons néces-

site la création d’un ordre organique s’étendant au monde entier. Si

le vieil esprit de tribu persiste, la science détruira le monde, ses forces

destructrices ne pouvant être contrôlées que par une humanité unie

travaillant pour la prospérité et le bien commun.

“La loi de la lutte pour la vie n’existe plus pour l’homme dès

qu’il devient conscient de ses pouvoirs spirituels et moraux. Elle est

alors remplacée par la loi plus haute de la coopération. Sous cette

loi, l’individu jouira d’un statut beaucoup plus large que celui qui

est accordé aux citoyens passifs du corps politique actuel. L’adminis-

tration publique passera des mains de partisans politiques qui trahis-

sent la cause du peuple aux mains d’hommes capables de considérer

une charge publique comme une mission sacrée.

“La stabilité économique ne dépend pas de l’application de tel

plan socialiste ou communiste plus ou moins théorique, mais du senti-

ment de la solidarité morale qui unit tous les hommes et de cette

conception que les richesses ne sont pas la fin de la vie, mais seule-

ment un moyen de vivre.

“L’important n’est pas en une aveugle soumission générale à

tel système politique, à tel règlement, qui ont pour effet de sup-

primer chez l’individu tout sentiment de responsabilité morale, mais

en un esprit d’entraide et de coopération. Ni le principe démocra-

tique, ni le principe aristocratique ne peuvent fournir séparément à

la société une base solide. La démocratie est impuissante contre les

querelles intestines et l’aristocratie ne subsiste que par la guerre. Une

combinaison des deux principes est donc nécessaire.

“En cette période de transition entre le vieil âge de la concur-

rence et l’ère nouvelle de la coopération, la vie même de l’humanité

est en péril. Les ambitions nationalistes, la lutte des classes, la peur

et les convoitises économiques sont autant de forces qui poussent à

une nouvelle guerre internationale. Tous les Gouvernements du

monde doivent soutenir et organiser une assemblée dont les membres

soient élus par l’élite des nations. Ceux-ci devront mettre au point,

au-dessus des égoïsmes particuliers, le nouveau statut économique

du monde en dehors duquel tous les pays, mais surtout l’Europe,

seront conduits aux pires catastrophes.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, son successeur, reprenant la doctrine de son père,

concluait dans un discours prononcé à New-York en 1912:

“La civilisation matérielle a atteint, en Occident, le plus haut

degré de son développement. Mais c’est en Orient qu’a pris naissance

et que s’est développée la civilisation spirituelle. Un lien s’établira

entre ces deux forces, et leur union est la condition de l’immense

progrès qui doit être accompli.

“Hors de là, la sécurité et la confiance feront de plus en plus

défaut, les luttes et les dissensions s’accroîtront de jour en jour et

les divergences entre nations s’accentueront davantage. Les pays

augmenteront constamment leurs armements; la guerre, puis la

certitude d’une autre guerre mondiale angoisseront de plus en plus

les esprits. L’unité du genre humain est le premier fondement de

toutes les vertus.”

Ainsi parla ‘Abdu’l-Bahá en 1912, et tout se passa comme il

l’avait prédit.

Mais ces paroles n’ont pas vieilli; elles pourraient, sans le

moindre changement, être répétées en 1933. Aujourd’hui, comme

il y a vingt ans, la menace de la guerre est de nouveau suspendue au-

dessus de nos têtes et les causes de haines et de conflits s’accumulent

à tel point que, s’il existe vraiment un flux et un reflux des idées, on

peut presque conclure, avec une certaine dose d’optimisme, que nous

n’avons jamais été si près de venir aux idées de coopération qui,

seules, peuvent nous sauver.

(From *Les Échos*, Paris, France, September 28, 1933.)

3.

Malgré les tristesses de notre époque et peut-être même à

cause d’elles, je reste convaincue que les idées à la fois divines

et humaines qui sont l’essence du Bahá’ísme finiront par

triompher, pourvu que chacun de ceux qui en comprennent l’im-

mense intérêt continue quoi qu’il advienne à les défendre et à les

propager.

(Excerpt from a letter dated October, 29, 1934.)

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By Dr. Rokuichiro Masujima

“The Japanese race is of rational mind. No superstition can play

with it. Japan is the only country in the world where religious toler-

ance has always existed. The Japanese Emperor is the patron of all

religious teachings. The Bahá’í publications now form part of His

Majesty’s Library as accepted by the Imperial House. …

“The search for truth and universal education inculcated by the

Bahá’í Teachings, if soundly conducted, cannot fail to interest the

Japanese mind. Bahá’ísm is bound to permeate the Japanese race

in a short time.”

By Miss Helen Keller

The philosophy of Bahá’u’lláh deserves the best thought we

can give it. I am returning the book so that other blind people who

have more leisure than myself may be “shown a ray of Divinity”

and their hearts be “bathed in an inundation of eternal love.”

I take this opportunity to thank you for your kind thought of

me, and for the inspiration which even the most cursory reading of

Bahá’u’lláh’s life cannot fail to impart. What nobler theme than the

“good of the world and the happiness of the nations” can occupy

our lives? The message of universal peace will surely prevail. It

is useless to combine or conspire against an idea which has in it

potency to create a new earth and a new heaven and to quicken

human beings with a holy passion of service.

(In a personal letter written to an American Bahá’í after having read something

from the Braille edition of “Bahá’u’lláh and the New Era.”)

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By Sir Flinders Petrie

The Bahá’í Movement of Persia should be a welcome adjunct

to true Christianity; we must always remember how artificial the

growth of Latin Christian ideas has been as compared with the wide

and less defined beliefs native to early Christian faith.

(In a letter to the “Daily Sketch,” London, England, December 16, 1932.)

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By Former President Masaryk of Czechoslovakia

Continue to do what you are doing, spread these principles of

humanity and do not wait for the diplomats. Diplomats alone can-

not bring the peace, but it is a great thing that official people begin

to speak about these universal peace principles. Take these principles

to the diplomats, to the universities and colleges and other schools,

and also write about them. It is the people who will bring the uni-

versal peace.

(In an audience with an American Bahá’í journalist in Praha, in 1928.)

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By Archduchess Anton of Austria

Archduchess Anton of Austria, who before her marriage was

Her Royal Highness Princess Ileana of Rumania, in an audience with

Martha L. Root, June 19, 1934, in Vienna, gave the following

statement for *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. V: “I like the Bahá’í Move-

ment, because it reconciles all Faiths, and teaches that science is from

God as well as religion, and its ideal is peace.”

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By Dr. Herbert Adams Gibbons

American Historian

I have had on my desk, and have read several times, the three

extracts from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Message of Social Regeneration.

Taken together, they form an unanswerable argument and plea for

the only way that the world can be made over. If we could put into

effect this program, we should indeed have a new world order.

“The morals of humanity must undergo change. New remedy

and solution for human problems must be adopted. Human intel-

lects themselves must change and be subject to the universal re-

formation.” In these three sentences we really have it all.

(Excerpt from personal letter dated May 18, 1934.)

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By H.R.H. Princess Olga of Jugoslavia

H.R.H. Princess Olga, wife of H.R.H. Prince Regent Paul

of Jugoslavia, daughter of H.R.H. Prince Nicholas of Greece and

cousin of His Majesty George II of Greece, is deeply interested in

religion and in education, and her wonderful kindnesses to every one

have been commented upon beautifully in several English books

and magazines as well as by the Balkan press.

“I like the Bahá’í Teachings for universal education and uni-

versal peace,” said this gracious Princess in her charming villa on

the Hill of Topčidor, Belgrade, on January 16, 1936; “I like the

Bahá’í Movement and the Young Men’s Christian Association, for

both are programs to unite religions. Without unity no man can live

in happiness.” Princess though she is, she stressed the important

truth that every man must do his job! “We are all sent into this

world for a purpose and people are too apt to forget the Presence

of God and true religion. I wish the Bahá’í Movement every suc-

cess in the accomplishment of its high ideals.”

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Eugen Relgis

Excerpt from *Cosmométapolis*, 1935, pp. 108-109.

Nous avons tracé ces pages seulement la signification du Ba-

há’ísme, sans examiner tous ses principes et son programme pratique

dans lequel sont harmonisées avec l’idéal religieux “les aspirations

et les objectifs de la science sociale.” Mais on doit attirer l’attention

de tous les esprits libres sur ce mouvement, dont les promoteurs ont

le mérite d’avoir contribué à la clarification de l’ancienne controverse

entre la religion et la science—et d’avoir donné à maint homme un

peu de leur tolérance et de leur optimisme: « L’humanité était

jusqu’ici restée dans le stade de l’enfance; elle approche maintenant

de la maturité” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Washington, 1912).

Qui osera répéter aujourd’hui, dans la mêlée des haines na-

tionales et sociales, cette sentence de progrès? C’est un Oriental qui

nous a dit cela, à nous, orgueilleux ou sceptiques Occidentaux. Nous

voudrions voir aujourd’hui, dans l’Allemagne hitlérisme, dans les

pays terrorisés par le fascisme, paralysés par la dictature politique,

—un spectacle décrit par le suisse Auguste Forel d’après l’anglais

Sprague qui a vue en Birmanie et en Inde, des bouddhistes, des

maḥométans, des Chrétiens et des juifs, qui allaient bras-dessus bras-

dessous, comme des frères, “au grand étonnement de la population

qui n’a jamais vu une chose pareille!”

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By Arthur Henderson

Excerpt from a letter dated January 26, 1935

I have read the pamphlet on the “New World Order” by

Shoghi Effendi. It is an eloquent expression of the doctrines which

I have always associated with the Bahá’í Movement and I would

like to express my greatest sympathy with the aspirations towards

world unity which underlie his teaching.

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By Prof. Dr. V. Lesny

1.

The conditions are so changed now, since the technique of the

present time has destroyed the barriers between nations, that the

world needs a uniting force, a kind of super-religion. I think Ba-

há’ísm could develop to such a kind of religion. I am quite con-

vinced of it, so far as I know the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. …

There are modern saviors and Bahá’u’lláh is a Savior of the twen-

tieth century. Everything must be done on a democratic basis, there

must be international brotherhood. We must learn to have confi-

dence in ourselves and then in others. One way to learn this is

through inner spiritual education, and a way to attain such an educa-

tion may be through Bahá’ísm.

2.

I am still of the opinion that I had four years ago that the

Bahá’í Movement can form the best basis for international good-

will, and that Bahá’u’lláh Himself is the Creator of an eternal bond

between the East and the West. … The Bahá’í Teaching is a living

religion, a living philosophy ….

I do not blame Christianity, it has done a good work for cul-

ture in Europe, but there are too many dogmas in Christianity at the

present time. … Buddhism was very good for India from the sixth

century B.C. and the Teachings of Christ have been good for the

whole world; but as there is a progress of mind there must be no

stopping and in the Bahá’í Faith one sees the continued progress

of religion.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Princess Marie Antoinette de Broglie Aussenac

À cette époque où l’humanité semble sortie d’un long som-

meil pour revivre à l’Esprit, consciemment ou inconsciemment,

l’homme cherche et s’élance à la poursuite de l’invisible et de

sciences qui nous y conduisent.

L’angoisse religieuse aussi n’a jamais été plus intense.

Par sa grande évolution l’homme actuel est prêt à recevoir le

grand message de Bahá’u’lláh dans son mouvement synthétique

qui nous fait passer de l’ancienne compréhension des divisions á la

compréhension moderne où nous cherchons à suivre les ondes qui

se propagent traversant toute limitation humaine et de la création.

Chaque combat que nous livrons à nos penchants nous dégage

des voiles qui séparent le monde visible du monde invisible et

augmente en nous cette capacité de perception et de s’accorder aux

longueurs d’ondes les plus variées, de vibrer au contact des rythmes

les plus divers de la création.

Tout ce qui nous vient directement de la nature est toujours

harmonie absolue. Le tout est de capter l’équilibre de toute chose et

lui donner la voix au moyen d’un instrument capable d’émettre les

mêmes harmonies que notre âme, ce qui nous fait vibrer et devenir

le lien entre le passé et l’avenir en atteignant une nouvelle étape

correspondant à l’évolution du monde.

En religion, la Cause de Bahá’u’lláh, qui est la grande révéla-

tion de notre époque, est la même que celle du Christ, son temple

et son fondement les mêmes mis en harmonie avec le degré de ma-

turité moderne.

By David Starr Jordan

Late President of Stanford University

‘Abdu’l-Bahá will surely unite the East and the West: for He

treads the mystic way with practical feet.

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By Prof. Bogdan Popovitch

The Bahá’í Teaching carries in its Message a fine optimism—

we must always in spite of everything be optimists; we must be

optimists even when events seem to prove the contrary! And Bahá’ís

can be hopeful, for there is a power in these Teachings to bring to

humanity tranquillity, peace and a higher spirituality.

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By Ex-Governor William Sulzer

While sectarians squabble over creeds, the Bahá’í Movement

goes on apace. It is growing by leaps and bounds. It is hope and

progress. It is a world movement and it is destined to spread its

effulgent rays of enlightenment throughout the earth until every

mind is free and every fear is banished. The friends of the Bahá’í

Cause believe they see the dawn of the new day—the better day—

the day of Truth, of Justice, of Liberty, of Magnanimity, of Uni-

versal Peace, and of International Brotherhood, the day when one

shall work for all, and all shall work for one.

(Excerpt from the *Roycroft Magazine*)

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By Luther Burbank

I am heartily in accord with the Bahá’í Movement, in which

I have been interested for several years. The religion of peace is

the religion we need and always have needed, and in this Bahá’í

is more truly the religion of peace than any other.

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By Prof. Yone Noguchi

I have heard so much about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whom people call

an idealist, but I should like to call Him a realist, because no ideal-

ism, when it is strong and true, exists without the endorsement of

realism. There is nothing more real than His words on truth. His

words are as simple as the sunlight; again like the sunlight, they

are universal. … No Teacher, I think, is more important today than

‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Professor Raymond Frank Piper

These writings (Bahá’í) are a stirring fusion of poetic beauty

and religious insight. I, like another, have been “struck by their

comprehensiveness.” I find they have extraordinary power to pull

aside the veils that darken my mind and to open new visions of

verity and life.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Angela Morgan

One reason I hail with thanksgiving the interpretation of reli-

gion known as the Bahá’í Faith and feel so deep a kinship with its

followers is that I recognize in its Revelation an outreach of the

Divine to stumbling humanity; a veritable thrust from the radiant

Center of Life.

Every follower of this faith that I have ever met impressed

me as a living witness to the glory at the heart of this universe. Each

one seemed filled with a splendor of spirit so great that it overflowed

all boundaries and poured itself out upon the world here in this

moment of time, by some concentrated act of love toward another

human being.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

By Arthur Moore

The lovely peace of Carmel, which still attracts mystics of

different faiths, dominates Haifa. On its summit are the Druses

in their two villages; at its feet the German Templars, whose ave-

nue leads up to the now large and beautiful terraced property of the

Persian Bahá’ís on the mountainside. Here the tombs of the Báb and

of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, set in a fair garden, are a place of international pil-

grimage. On Sundays and holidays the citizens of Haifa of all

faiths come for rest and recreation where lie the bones of that young

prophet of Shíráz who nearly a hundred years ago preached that

all men are one and all the great religions true, and foretold the

coming equality of men and women and the birth of the first League

of Nations.

By Prof. Dr. Jan Rypka

The Bahá’ís of Írán are resolutely firm in their religion. Their

firmness does not have its roots in ignorance. The Íránian inborn

character causes them to see things somewhat too great, slightly ex-

aggerated, and their dissensions with the ruling Islám make them a

little bitter towards it. Everything else in their characters is ac-

counted for as due to their Teachings; they are wonderfully ready

to help and happy to sacrifice. Faithfully they fulfill their office

and professional duties. Long ago they already solved the problem

of the Eastern woman; their children are carefully educated. They

are sometimes reproached for their lack of patriotism. Certainly,

as specifically Íránian as the Shí‘ih Faith, the Bahá’í Faith can never

become; but the Bahá’í Religion like Christianity does not preclude

the love of one’s fatherland. … Are the Europeans not sufficiently

patriotic! According to my experiences, the Bahá’ís in that respect,

are very unjustly criticized by their Muḥammadan brothers. During

the centuries the Shí‘ih Religion has developed a deep national tra-

dition; with this the universal Bahá’í Faith will have a hard battle.

Nevertheless, the lack of so great numbers is richly recompensed

by the fervor and the inner spirit of the Íránian Bahá’í Community.

The Bahá’í world community will educate characters which will ap-

pear well worthy of emulation by people of other Faiths, yes, even

by the world of those now enemies of the Bahá’í Cause.

The experience acquired in the West, for me was fully verified

also in the Íránian Orient. The Bahá’í Faith is undoubtedly an

immense cultural value. Could all those men whose high morality

I admired and still admire have reached the same heights only in

another way, without it? No, never! Is it based only on the novelty

of the Teachings, and in the freshness of its closest followers?

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By A. L. M. Nicolas

Je ne sais comment vous remercier ni comment vous exprimer

la joie qui inonde mon cœur. Ainsi donc, il faut non seulement ad-

mettre mais aimer et admirer le Báb. Pauvre grand Prophète né

au fin fond de la Perse sans aucun moyen d’instruction et qui seul

au monde, entouré d’ennemis, arrive par la force de son génie à

créer une religion universelle et sage. Que Bahá’u’lláh lui ait, par

la suite, succédé, soit, mais je veux qu’on admire la sublimité du Báb,

qui a d’ailleurs payé de sa vie, de son sang la réforme qu’il a

prêchée. Citez-moi un autre exemple, semblable. Enfin, je puis

mourir tranquille. Gloire à Shoghi Effendi qui a calmé mon tour-

ment et mes inquiétudes, gloire à lui qui reconnais la valeur de Siyyid

‘Alí-Muḥammad dit le Báb.

Je suis si content que je baise vos mains qui ont tracé mon

adresse sur l’enveloppe qui m’apporte le message de Shoghi. Merci,

Mademoiselle. Merci du fond du cœur.

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By President Eduard Beneš

1.

I have followed it (the Bahá’í Cause) with deep interest ever

since my trip to London to the First Races Congress in July, 1911,

when I heard for the first time of the Bahá’í Movement and its

summary of the principles for peace. I followed it during the war

and after the war. The Bahá’í Teaching is one of the spiritual

forces now absolutely necessary to put the spirit first in this battle

against material forces. … The Bahá’í Teaching is one of the great

instruments for the final victory of the spirit and of humanity.

2.

The Bahá’í Cause is one of the great moral and social forces

in all the world today. I am more convinced than ever, with the

increasing moral and political crises in the world, we must have

greater international co-ordination. Such a movement as the Bahá’í

Cause which paves the way for universal organization of peace is

necessary.

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By Sir Ronald Storrs, V.C., M.G., C.B.E.

I met ‘Abdu’l-Bahá first in 1900, on my way out from England

and Constantinople through Syria to succeed Harry Boyle as Ori-

ental Secretary to the British Agency in Cairo. (The episode is

fully treated in my “Orientations” published by Ivor Nicholson

and Watson.) I drove along the beach in a cab from Haifa to ‘Akká

and spent a very pleasant hour with the patient but unsubdued pris-

oner and exile.

When, a few years later, he was released and visited Egypt

I had the honour of looking after Him and of presenting Him to

Lord Kitchener who was deeply impressed by His personality, as

who could fail to be? The war separated us again until Lord Allen-

by, after his triumphant drive through Syria, sent me to establish

the government at Haifa and throughout that district. I called upon

‘Abbás Effendi on the day I arrived and was delighted to find Him

unchanged.

I never failed to visit Him whenever I went to Haifa. His

conversation was indeed a remarkable planning, like that of an

ancient prophet, far above the perplexities and pettiness of Palestine

politics, and elevating all problems into first principles.

He was kind enough to give me one or two beautiful speci-

mens of His own handwriting, together with that of Mishkín-Qalam,

all of which, together with His large signed photograph, were un-

fortunately burned in the Cyprus fire.

I rendered my last sad tribute of affectionate homage when in

1921 I accompanied Sir Herbert Samuel to the funeral of ‘Abbás

Effendi. We walked at the head of a train of all religions up the

slope of Mount Carmel, and I have never known a more united

expression of regret and respect than was called forth by the utter

simplicity of the ceremony.

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By Col. Raja Jai Prithvi Bahadur Singh,
Raja of Bajang (Nepal)

Even as early as 1929 or perhaps even a little earlier, I used

to hear the names of Bahá’u’lláh and Bahá’ísm; and in 1929 when

I undertook a lecturing tour in Europe on the humanistic methods

of promoting peace and unity among races, nations and individuals,

my attention was once again drawn to Bahá’u’lláh and his teachings

by my friend Lady Blomfield, who gave me some books, too, on

the subject. But my eyes were then too weak to permit any reading,

and the need and urgency of some expert treatment for my eyes was

in fact an additional reason for my leaving for Europe. Besides, I

was then too full of my own philosophy of “Humanism,” and was

too busy with my own programme of lectures for Europe, and did

not acquaint myself with any full details about the Bahá’ís and

their tenets and principles. Perhaps, I imagined that the Bahá’ís

were some sort of religious or philosophical mystics, and I was not

particularly interested in any mere mysticism or in any merely

theoretical creed, however much its conclusions might be logical

and satisfying to the intellect.

When afterwards, in 1933, the Second Parliament of Religions

or the World Fellowship of Faiths was held in Chicago, a confer-

ence inspired by the high ideals of mutual understanding, good-will,

co-operation and peace and progress, and I went there to attend

and participate in the conference, my attention was again drawn to

the Bahá’í Faith by some of its followers there, who took me to

their temple at Wilmette, Illinois, which was then under construc-

tion but was nearly finished, and showed me the nine gates and

chambers of worship for the nine principal religions of the world.

Naturally enough, I took it that Bahá’ísm was something like theos-

ophy, which is interested in studying and comparing the respective

merits of religions and in recognising their respective greatness,

and which can therefore appeal only to the intellectual section of

mankind and hardly appeal to the masses.

Later, in 1936, however, while I was in Rangoon, I had an

opportunity—rather, the opportunity was thrust upon me—to ac-

quaint myself more fully with the tenets and teachings of Bahá’ísm.

Mr. S. Schopflocher, a Bahá’í from Canada, who was on a lecturing

tour, was then in Rangoon, and I was asked to introduce him to the

public and to preside over a lecture of his. Therefore I secured a

few books on the subject, and on reading them, I was struck with the

remarkable fact that Bahá’ísm is a faith, which not merely recog-

nises the respective merits of the world religions, but goes a step

further and teaches that all religions are One, all the religious seers,

saints and prophets are the religious seers, saints and prophets of One

religion only, that all mankind is One, and that we must think and

feel and act in terms of brotherhood. “We must realise,” as a

Bahá’í very beautifully puts it, “that, as the aeroplane, radio and

other instruments have crossed the frontiers drawn upon the map, so

*our sympathy and spirit of one-ness should rise above the influences*

*that have separated race from race, class from class, nation from*

*nation and creed from creed.* One destiny now controls all human

affairs. The fact of world-unity stands out above all other interests

and considerations.”

Sometime back, in this year, Mr. N. R. Vakil, a Bahá’í gentle-

man of Surat, gave me a copy of the book, “The Bahá’í World:

1936-1938.” Though I have not been able to read the whole book

through, I find it is a mine of information, a regular cyclopædia on

the subject. It is interesting to read that the origin of the faith was

in Persia, where a mystic prophet who took the name of “Báb”

(which means “gate”) began the mission among the Persians in the

early part of the nineteenth century, that he and his disciples were

persecuted by the Persian Government and were finally shot in 1850,

that, notwithstanding the persecution, the movement spread under

the able and inspiring leadership of Bahá’u’lláh, its principal prophet

and exponent, that on his death in 1892 he was succeeded by his son,

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, who continued the work till 1921, when, on his death,

his grandson, Shoghi Effendi, became the head of the community—

a community now numbering nearly a million and spread in all the

five continents of the world.

Though the traditionally orthodox Hindus, Muslims, Chris-

tians, etc., may not agree to call themselves Bahá’ís or even to sub-

scribe to its main tenet, viz., that all religions are One, I think that

the really enlightened among them can have no conscientious ob-

jection and will indeed wholeheartedly subscribe to it.

Another important aspect of the Bahá’í Faith is its absolutely

non-political nature. In the “Golden Age of the Cause of Bahá-

’u’lláh” Shoghi Effendi categorically rules out any participation by

adherents of the Faith, either individually or collectively, in any

form of activity which might be interpreted as an interference in the

political affairs of any particular government. So that, no govern-

ment need apprehend any sort of danger or trouble from Bahá’ísm.

On the whole, the perusal of the book “The Bahá’í World:

1936-1938” has deeply impressed me with the belief that the prin-

ciples of Bahá’ísm, laying stress as they do on the One-ness of man-

kind, and being directed as they are towards the maintenance of

peace, unity and co-operation among the different classes, creeds

and races of people, will go a long way in producing a healthy at-

mosphere in the world for the growth of Fellowship and Brother-

hood of Man. Further, I see no harm in the followers of other

faiths accepting these main principles of Bahá’ísm, wherein, I think,

they can find nothing against the teachings of their own prophets,

saints and seers. I rather think that by accepting these main princi-

ples of Bahá’ísm they will help in hastening the establishment of

a New World Order, an idea perhaps first clearly conceived by

Bahá’u’lláh and which every thinking man will now endorse as a

“consummation to be devoutly wished for.”

An article in the January (1922) number of the Journal of the Royal Asiatic
Society of Great Britain and Ireland

The death of ‘Abbás Effendi, better known since he succeeded

his father, Bahá’u’lláh, thirty years ago as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, deprives

Persia of one of the most notable of her children and the East of a

remarkable personality, who has probably exercised a greater influ-

ence not only in the Orient but in the Occident, than any Asiatic

thinker and teacher of recent times. The best account of him in

English is that published in 1903 by G. P. Putnam’s Sons under

the title of the “Life and Teachings of ‘Abbás Effendi” compiled

by Myron H. Phelps chiefly from information supplied by Bahíyyih

Khánum. She states that her brother’s birth almost coincided with

the “manifestation” of Mírzá ‘Alí Muḥammad the Báb (24th May,

1844), and that she was his junior by three years. Both dates are

put three years earlier by another reputable authority, but in any

case both brother and sister were mere children when, after the

great persecution of the Bábís in 1852 their father Bahá’u’lláh and

his family were exiled from Persia, first to Baghdád (1852-63)

then to Adrianople (1863-8), and lastly to ‘Akká (St. Jean d’Acre)

in Syria, where Bahá’u’lláh died on 28th May, 1892, and which

his son ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was only permitted to leave at will after the

Turkish Revolution in 1908. Subsequently to that date he under-

took several extensive journeys in Europe and America, visiting

London and Paris in 1911, America in 1912, Budapest in 1913, and

Paris, Stuttgart, Vienna, and Budapest in the early summer of 1914.

In all these countries he had followers, but chiefly in America, where

an active propaganda had been carried on since 1893 with very con-

siderable success, resulting in the formation of important Bahá’í

Centers in New York, Chicago, San Francisco and other cities. One

of the most notable practical results of the Bahá’í ethical teaching

in the United States has been, according to the recent testimony of

an impartial and qualified observer, the establishment in Bahá’í

circles in New York of a real fraternity between black and white,

and an unprecedented lifting of the “color bar,” described by the

said observer as “almost miraculous.”

Ample materials exist even in English for the study of the

remarkable personality who has now passed from our midst and of

the doctrines he taught; and especially authoritative are the works

of M. Hippolyte Dreyfus and his wife (formerly Miss Laura Clif-

ford Barney), who combine intimacy and sympathy with their hero

with sound knowledge and wide experience. In their works and

in that of Mr. Myron H. Phelps must be sought those particulars

which it is impossible to include in this brief obituary notice.

An appreciation of the Bahá’í Faith

By Rt. Hon. M. R. Jayakar, Privy Councillor, London

Bahá’ísm insists on points which constitute the essentials of

the several creeds and faiths which have divided and still divide the

human family. It seeks thereby to establish human unity. It inculcates

pursuit of truth through the miasma of superstitions old and new.

These features ought to secure for Bahá’ísm an enduring place in the

religions of the world. It is one of the noblest contributions which

Asia has made to human civilisation. The history of its martyrdom in

Teheran is a glorious chapter, indicating how much suffering the

awakened human spirit can endure for the sake of its convictions.

In the world as one sees it to-day, divided and torn asunder by war-

ring ambitions, Bahá’ísm has undoubtedly a great part to play.

1. Miss Martha L. Root. Editor. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Bahá’u’lláh. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Báb. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Un autre détail que je tiens de source première est celui-ci: Quelques sectaires, qu’on voulait

 amener à rétractation, furent attachés à la gueule de canons amorcés d’une mèche longue et

 brûlant lentement. On leur proposait de couper la mèche, s’ils reniaient le Báb. Eux, les bras

 tendus vers le feu, le suppliaient de se hâter et de venir bien vite consommer leur bonheur. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)