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Contents

(Click here to jump to a specific page (in a lightly formatted version).)

Preface

to 1937 Edition

vii

Preface

to 1950 Edition

ix

Preface

to 1970 Edition

xi

Introductionxiii

CHAPTER1

The

Glad Tidings

1

2

The

Bab: The Forerunner

11

3

Bahá'u'lláh:

The Glory of God

23

4

Abdu'l-Bahá:

The Servant of Bahá

51

5

What

Is a Bahá'í?

71

6

Prayer	88
7	
Health and Healing	101
8	
Religious Unity	116
9	
True Civilization	133
10	
The Way to Peace	156
11	
Various Ordinances and Teachings	175
12	
Religion and Science	197
13	
Prophecies Fulfilled by the Bahá'í Movement	211
14	
Prophecies of Bahá'u'lláh and Abdu'l-Bahá	234
15	
Retrospect and Prospect	252
Epilogue	283
Basic	

References on the Bahá'í Faith287

Index289

Click on any of the numbers below to jump to a specific page of Bahá'u'lláh
and the New Era:

0

0b

contents Preface:

1937

1950

1970

Introduction

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

11

12

13

14

15

16

17

18

19

20

21

22

23

24

25

26

27

28

29

30

31

32

33

34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47

48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60
61
62
63
64
65
66
67
68
69
70
71
72
73
74
75
76
77
78
79

80
81
82
83
84
85
86
87
88
89
90
91
92
93
94
95
96

97
98
99
100
101
102
103
104
105
106
107
108

109
110
111
112
113
114
115
116
117
118
119
120
121
122

123
124

125
126
127
128

129
130
131
132
133
134
135
136
137
138
139
140
141

142
143
144
145
146
147
148
149
150
151
152
153
154
155
156
157
158
159
160
161
162
163
164
165
166
167
168
169

170
171
172
173
174
175
176
177
178
179
180
181
182
183
184
185
186
187
188
189
190
191
192
193
194
195
196
197
198

199
200
201
202
203
204
205
206
207
208
209
210
211
212
213
214
215

216
217
218
219
220
221
222

223
224
225
226
227
228
229

230
231
232
233
234
235
236
237
238
239

240
241
242

243
244
245
246
247
248
249

250
251
252
253
254
255
256
257
258
259

260

261

262

263

264

265

266

267

268

269

270

271

272

273

274

275

276

277

278

279

280

281

282

283

284

285

286

Prefaces

to Baha'u'llah and the New Era

Preface

to 1937 Edition

With the publication of "Baha'u'llah and the New Era" more than ten years ago, the Bahá'í Faith was given its first well- conceived, thorough exposition by

a

student of the teachings. Recognizing its value as the most satisfactory introduction

to the Cause, Bahá'ís in both East and West have found Dr. Esslemont's book so

helpful that it has been translated into some thirty different languages. As Dr. Esslemont himself recognized, the Faith entered a new phase of its history after the ascension of Abdu'l-Baha. The result is that the author's views, some of them written prior to 1921, no longer, on certain aspects of the subject, correspond

to the evolutionary character of the Faith. His treatment of events and social

conditions then existing, moreover, no longer appears fully relevant. Unavoidably, a few errors of fact had entered his text, while his explanation of the stations of the Bab and of Abdu'l-Baha have been replaced in the minds of Bahá'ís by the authoritative interpretations since made by the first Guardian of the Faith, Shoghi Effendi. The present edition therefore represents a revision made by the American National Spiritual Assembly, acting under the advice and approval of Shoghi Effendi. These revisions in no respect alter the original plan of Dr. Esselmont's book, nor affect the major portion of his text. Their purpose has been to amplify the author's discussion in a few passages by the addition of material representing the fuller knowledge available since his lamented death, and newer translations of his quotations from Bahá'í Sacred Writings. Bahá'í Publishing Committee January, 1937

Preface
to 1950 Edition

With this edition the American Bahá'í Publishing Committee takes over copyright and other interests in "Baha'u'llah and the New Era" from Messrs. George Allen Unwin Ltd., of London, England, through whom the late Dr. J. E. Esslemont published his famous book more than twenty years ago. Under arrangement with the British publishers, the Committee has since 1928 brought out eleven printings, in addition to the first American edition imported by Brentano's of New York. This edition does not displace the text as it has appeared since major revision was made in the book under the direction of the Guardian of the Faith in 1937, as the time has not come for anything like a thorough recasting of the book to make its references to world conditions completely contemporaneous. Dr. Esslemont's work endures as a trustworthy introduction to the history and teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. Its translation into some thirty different languages attests its appeal to students in the East as well as the West. It should be added that any further revision of the text in the future is subject to approval by Shoghi Effendi. The Committee has no authority to pass upon revisions which may be desired by Bahá'ís of other countries for their particular need.

Bahá'í Publishing Committee December, 1950

Preface to 1970 Edition

Since 1937 no revision

has been made to the text of Dr. Esslemont's book, although in 1950 some minor corrections were introduced. On the other hand, the diffusion and development of the Bahá'í Faith since that time have been tremendous, and there has been added

to Bahá'í bibliography a rich legacy of incomparable expositions, translations

and historical accounts from the pen of Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Faith and the appointed interpreter of its Sacred Writings. It

has therefore been deemed necessary to bring the book up to date in order to maintain

its usefulness for modern readers. This has been done with a minimum of alteration

to the text, and chiefly by the use of footnotes and of an epilogue giving the current statistics and new developments in the organic unfoldment of the

Bahá'í

Faith. Dr. Esslemont's

book continues to be one of the most widely used introductory books on the Bahá'í

Faith, as evidenced by the fact that since 1937 the number of its translations has increased from thirty to fifty-eight.

Bahá'í Publishing Trust

Introduction

In

December 1914, through a conversation with friends who had met Abdu'l-Bahá, and

the loan of a few pamphlets, I first became acquainted with the Bahá'í teachings.

I was at once struck by their comprehensiveness, power and beauty. They impressed

me as meeting the great needs of the modern world more fully and satisfactorily than any other presentation of religion which I had come across -- an

impression

which subsequent study has only served to deepen and confirm.

In

seeking for fuller knowledge about the movement I found considerable difficulty in obtaining the literature I wanted, and soon conceived the idea of putting together

the gist of what I learned in the form of a book, so that it might be more easily

available for others. When communication with Palestine was reopened after the war, I wrote to Abdu'l-Bahá and enclosed a copy of the first nine chapters of

the book, which was then almost complete in rough draft. I received a very kind and encouraging reply, and a cordial invitation to visit Him in Haifa and bring the whole of my manuscript with me. The invitation was gladly accepted, and I had the great privilege of spending two and a half months as the guest of Abdu'l-Bahá

during the winter of 1919-1920. During this visit Abdu'l-Bahá discussed the book

with me on various occasions. He gave several valuable suggestions for its improvement

and proposed that, when I had revised the manuscript, He would have the whole of it translated into Persian so that He could read it through and amend or correct

it where necessary. The revisal and translation were carried out as suggested, and Abdu'l-Bahá found time, amid His busy life, to correct some three and a half

chapters (Chapters I, II, V and part of III) before He passed away. It is a matter

of profound regret to me that Abdu'l-Bahá was not able to complete the correction

of the manuscript, as the value of the book would thereby have been greatly enhanced.

The whole of the manuscript has been carefully revised, however, by a committee of the National Bahá'í Assembly of England¹, and its publication approved by that

Assembly.

I am greatly indebted to Miss E. J. Rosenberg, Mrs. Claudia S. Coles, Mirza Lutfu'llah S. Hakim, Messrs. Roy Wilhelm and Mountfort Mills and many other

kind friends for valuable help in the preparation of the work.

As regards the transliteration of Arabic and Persian names and words, the system adopted in this

book is that recently recommended by Shoghi Effendi for use throughout the Bahá'í

World.

J. E. ESSLEMONT

¹ The first publication of Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era was in 1923, and at that

time there was a National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of England; however,

the name of the institution was subsequently changed in 1930 to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the British Isles, and more recently to its present designation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom.

single page

chapter 1

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