



who put me in touch with the followers of the sect.

Nicolas, in the same statement, goes on to describe how his interest in the subject grew:

I was helped in my work by a young Persian, and each day we would go in the afternoon for a walk outside the town, leaving by the Shimran gate. The purity of the air, the serenity, the mildness of the temperature, and in certain seasons, the perfume of the acacias, predisposed my soul to peace and gentleness. My reflections on the strange book [The Seven Proofs by the Báb] that I had translated, filled me with a kind of intoxication and I became, little by little, profoundly and uniquely a Bábí. The more I immersed myself in these reflections, the more I admired the greatness of the genius of him who, born in Shíraz, had dreamt of uplifting the Muslim world...

In his early works, Nicolas steered clear of the barren ground over which Browne was wandering - the claims of Mírzá Yahyá Subh-i-Azál. In a letter to Browne in March 1902, he wrote concerning the documents which he had collected:

Only those which are directly related to the Báb interest me at this time; whether they concern the history or the dogma. I consider that task sufficient for the moment, and I will concern myself later with the Imamate of Subh-i-Azál and the second divine Manifestation in the person of Bahá.

This first phase of Nicolas's work may be considered to have been completed in 1914 by the publication of the last volume of *Le Beyan Persan*.

After this there is a hiatus, and when Nicolas began writing again on this subject, in 1933, his articles were very obviously hostile and bitter towards the Bahá'ís and, although not strongly advocating the claims of Mírzá Yahyá in the way that Browne did, Nicolas was obviously not unfavourable to them.

The main reason for Nicolas's hostility to the Bahá'ís at this time appears to have been twofold. Firstly he seems to have acquired a profound dislike for 'Abdu'l-Bahá's historical work *A Traveller's Narrative*, and he loses no opportunity to attack this. But secondly, and much more importantly, Nicolas was deeply hurt at the disparagement and neglect that he felt the Bahá'ís showed towards the Báb. Nicolas considered that in *A Traveller's Narrative* and other Bahá'í works, the Báb's station and importance had been belittled, making him but the insignificant forerunner, the John the Baptist, of Bahá'u'lláh.

Towards the end of Nicolas' life, however, he was sent copies

of two important works by Shoghi Effendi: a translation of Nabil's Narrative of the life of the Báb, and The Dispensation of Bahá'u'lláh, in which the Báb's station as an independent Messenger of God, equal in essence to Bahá'u'lláh is stated emphatically. Nicolas was, of course, overjoyed. To the lady who sent him these books, Miss Edith Sanderson, he wrote:

I do not know how to thank you nor how to express the joy that floods my heart. So it is necessary not only to admit but to love and admire the Báb. Poor great Prophet, born in the heart of Persia, without any means of instruction, and who, alone in the world, encircled by enemies, succeeds by the force of his genius in creating a universal and wise religion. That Bahá'u'lláh succeeded Him eventually may be, but I want people to admire the sublimity of the Báb, who has, moreover, paid with his life, with his blood, for the reforms he preached. Cite me another similar example. At last, I can die in peace. Glory be to Shoghi Effendi who has calmed my torment and my anxieties, glory be to him who recognizes the worth of Siyyid 'Alí-Muhammad, the Báb. I am so happy that I kiss your hands that have written my address on the envelope which carried Shoghi's message. Thank you, Mademoiselle; thank you from the depths of my heart.

It is difficult to be certain that the following list represents the entirety of Nicolas's writing on the subject of the Bábí and Bahá'í religions, as he makes reference to a few works which the present author has been unable to trace and therefore assumes were never printed.[4]

Works by A.L.M. Nicolas

#### HISTORIES[5]

Seyyed Alí Mohammed dit le Báb, Paris 1905. 458 pp.

A history of the Bábí movement up to 1852. Nicolas gives a list of sources for this book on pp. 48-53. It is interesting to note that among his oral sources are four of the leading Bahá'ís of that period, who had been designated by Bahá'u'lláh as 'Hands of the Cause': Mírzá 'Alí-Muhammad, 'Ibn-i-Asdaq; Mullá 'Al-Akbar-i-Sháhmírzádí, Hají Akhund; Mírzá Muhammad-Táqíy-i-Abharí, 'Ibn-i-Abhar; and Mírzá Hasan-i-Adíb.

The other two oral sources named are Siyyid 'Ismu'lláh, who was presumably Siyyid Mihdíy-i-Dihají, and Mírzá Yahyá, Subh-i-Azál.

#### TRANSLATIONS OF THE WRITINGS OF THE BÁB[6]

1. Le Livre des Sept Preuves, Paris 1902. 68 pp. A translation of the Báb's Dalá'il-i-Sab'ih

2. Le Beyan Arabe, Paris 1905. 235 pp. A translation of the Arabic Bayán.

3. Le Beyan Persan, 4 vols., Paris 1911-14. A translation of the Persian Bayán.

#### MONOGRAPHS[7]

1. Qui est le successeur du Báb?, Paris 1933.  
16 pp. Written to demonstrate that Mírzá Yahyá was the true successor of the Báb.

2. Massacres de Bábís en Perse, Paris 1936. 42 pp. Accounts of several of the most important persecutions and martyrdoms of the Bábís and Bahá'ís.

#### ARTICLES[8]

1. "A propos de deux manuscrits 'Bábís' de la Bibliotheque Nationale" Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, Vol. 47, Paris 1903, pp. 58-73. Concerning the controversial manuscripts of Nuqtatu'l-Kaf.

2. "Sur la Volonte Primitive et l'Essence Divine d'apres le Báb" Revue de l'Histoire des Religions, Vol. 55, Paris 1907, pp. 208-12. Abridged version of a lengthy note by Nicolas explaining some of the terms in the Bábí writings.

3. "Le Club de la fraternite" Revue du Monde Musulman, Vol. 13, Paris 1911, pp. 180-184. Translation of an article by Atrpet in the Armenian periodical Sourhandag refuting the suggestion that the Bahá'ís played an important part in the constitutional upheavals.

4. "Le Dossier russo-anglais de Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Báb" Revue du Monde Musulman, Vol. 14, Paris: 1911, pp. 357-63. Documents found in the British and Russian Consulates in Tabríz relating to the episode of the Báb: frequently quoted in the present work.

5. "Abdoul-Beha et la situation" Revue du Monde Musulman Vol. 21, Paris 1912, pp. 261-7. Translation of an article in the Persian periodical Fikr that contained an alleged exchange of letters between 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Mírzáá Ghaffar Zanuzí. Published under pseudonym 'Ghilan'.

6. "Le Behahis et le Báb"; Journal Asiatique, Vol. 222, Paris 1933, pp. 257-64.

7. "Quelque Documents relatifs au Bábisme". Journal Asiatique, Vol. 224, Paris 1934, pp. 107-42. Some extracts from the works of the Báb, as well as some Persian Government correspondence.

8. "Le Báb astronome" Revue de l'Histoire des Religions,  
Vol. 114, Paris 1936, pp. 99-101.

#### NOTES

[1] Taken  
from The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: Some Contemporary  
Western Accounts. Edited by Moojan Momen (Oxford : George Ronald, 1981),  
pages 36-40. Captured from the International Bahá'í Library site  
(<http://library.bahai.org/sc/nic1.htm> - [nic4.htm](http://library.bahai.org/sc/nic4.htm)) on Thursday, December 7,  
2000.  
(MW's Note)

[2] Gobineau  
describes J. B. Nicolas as 'un drole' - a rascal (letter to his sister,  
see Hytier, Les Depeches Diplomatiques p. 148n) (Momen's Note).

[3] Presumably  
at the French Legation (Momen's Note).

[4] Nicolas  
apparently published an article entitled  
"Une Causerie sur le Báb", which the editor has been  
unable to trace. There is also a reference in "Quelque Documents relatif  
au Bábisme" (see the following list) to a work that Nicolas  
had prepared for publication entitled "La voie douloureuse de Seyyed  
'Alí Mohammad, dit le Báb, which he describes as 'crammed with  
numerous unedited documents', but which no editor had accepted. The article  
"Quelque  
Documents" therefore consists of some extracts from this longer work,  
which presumably was never published (Momen's Note).

[5] Taken  
from The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: Some Contemporary  
Western Accounts. Edited by Moojan Momen (Oxford : George Ronald, 1981),  
pages 36-40. Captured from the International Bahá'í Library site  
(<http://library.bahai.org/sc/nichis.html>) on Thursday, December 7, 2000. (MW's  
Note)

[6] Ibid.  
(MW's Note)

[7] Ibid.  
(MW's Note)

[8] Ibid.  
(MW's Note)

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