



vividly describes his adventures, including his encounters with the Bahá'ís and Azalis (q.v.).

3. Browne's Babi publications. On his return to Britain, Browne set about organizing the material that he had collected. He gave a number of lectures on the new religion: at the Essay Society in Newcastle-upon-Tyne in March 1889; at the South Place Institute in London on 15 February 1891 (this may count as the first public lecture on the Bahá'í Faith in the West); and at the Pembroke College Literary Society (the "Martlets") in Cambridge on 23 February 1891. He presented two papers to the Royal Asiatic Society in April and June 1889 on the new religion, which he persisted in referring to as the Babi movement, even though he was aware that the majority now regarded themselves as Bahá'ís.

Browne had been so overwhelmingly impressed by Gobineau's book that he was somewhat disconcerted to find that in the period between the publication of the book and his arrival in Iran, there had been a vast change in the affairs of the new religion. Mirza Yahya Azal (q.v.), who at the end of Gobineau's account was the head of the Babi movement, had been completely superseded by Bahá'u'lláh. The latter claimed to be the Messianic figure "He Whom God shall manifest" (q.v.) who was frequently referred to in the writings of the Bab. Indeed, the Babis were now calling themselves Bahá'ís. Browne could never quite reconcile himself to this change. While he acknowledged that, according to the specific text of the Bab's writings, Bahá'u'lláh's claims and authority were almost irrefutable (see *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* xxxiii) and also bore personal witness to the enormous personal magnetism and authority of Bahá'u'lláh (TN xxxix-xl), Browne could nevertheless not bring himself to recognize the legitimacy of the new state of affairs. When he found a small number in Kirman who rejected Bahá'u'lláh and still looked to Azal, he enthusiastically entered their company and sought to extend his contacts among them. They, for their part, proved to be eager correspondents and a prolific source of material.

In 1890 Browne traveled to Cyprus and Akka. That his sympathies were already tending towards the Azali view can be surmised by the fact that he chose to spend some two weeks in Cyprus with Mirza Yahya and only one week in Akka. While in Akka, Browne had four interviews with Bahá'u'lláh, the first being the famous one at which Bahá'u'lláh spoke of the advent of world peace.

Browne went on to write several more works of importance on the Bahá'í Faith. He translated and extensively annotated a history by `Abdu'l-Bahá, which was published in 1891 under the title *A Traveller's Narrative* written to illustrate the Episode of the Bab (q.v.). He translated Mirza Husayn Hamadani's *The Tarikh-i-Jadid* or *New History of Mirza `Ali Muhammad the Bab* (1893). He also wrote a number of papers on this subject. In 1896 Browne visited Cyprus again to spend more time with Azal. In 1903 he visited Egypt and met some of the Bahá'ís there.

In about 1893 Browne's scholarly interests moved to other areas, such as Persian literature and later to the Constitutional movement. It may be that

criticism of his concentration on what was considered an obscure Iranian sect was at least partially responsible for this change, as well as his disappointment at the non-partisan attitude that the Bahá'ís took in the Constitutional Revolution. In 1910 he did return to the Babi-Bahá'í religions when he published the text of the *Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*. This was, however, work that he had done at an earlier date. It was published at the instigation of Mirza Muhammad Qazvini, a well-known Iranian literary critic and Azali sympathizer, who wrote the Persian Introduction to this volume. After the publication of this work, `Abdu'l-Bahá wrote to a number of Iranian Bahá'ís, urging them to compile material to refute its contents. In 1918 Browne published *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*. Again the book represented no great amount of original work on Browne's part since it was mainly documents that he had collected.

4. Browne's later life and scholarship. In 1902 Browne became the Sir Thomas Adams's Professor of Arabic at Cambridge University. In 1906 he married Alice Blackburn-Daniell and moved from his rooms in Pembroke College to Firwood, a house on the outskirts of Cambridge. He had two sons, both of whom distinguished themselves in legal careers.

Browne's scholarly reputation is largely based on his books and articles on Persian literature and related topics, particularly his four-volume *Literary History of Persia* (1902-24). His other works included several books and tracts on the Persian Constitutional Revolution, of which Browne was an ardent supporter.

In 1912-13, while `Abdu'l-Bahá was in Europe, Browne visited him in London and Paris. These visits were supplemented by some correspondence between the two. Other Bahá'ís, including Montford Mills, also visited and corresponded with Browne from time to time. When `Abdu'l-Bahá passed away in 1921, Browne penned a sympathetic obituary.

In November 1924 Browne suffered a heart attack from which he never fully recovered. In June 1925 his wife died, and his own health continued to deteriorate until his passing on 25 January 1926. He was buried at Elswick Cemetery in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England.

Browne's scholarly reputation has endured until the present. His mastery of Iranian culture and thought has been equaled by few Westerners before or since, and his scholarship, as well as the eloquence and grace of his literary style, have given his works permanent value, even after great changes in scholarly methodology. The Iranians, despite their early suspicion about his interest in the Babis, accepted him as a loyal friend for his scholarship, his political support, and his sympathetic understanding of their culture and literature.

5. Browne's contribution to Bahá'í studies. Any assessment of Browne's contribution to Babi and Bahá'í studies must include both positive and negative elements. On the negative side, one must mention the partisan attitude that Browne adopted in the split between Bahá'u'lláh and Azal. With each successive publication, he appeared less and less sympathetic to the Bahá'í

position. In *A Traveller's Narrative*, for example, he repeats numerous Azali accusations against Bahá'u'lláh (despite acknowledging that there was no evidence for them, pp. 356-64), while in the *Introduction to New History*, he accuses the Bahá'ís of fabricating historical accounts (pp. xxvi- xxxii). All of this material came to him from the Azalis who were in constant correspondence with him.

In all, Browne launched what amounted to a campaign to resurrect the claims of Azal. To this end, he elevated Azal's position beyond what it had, in fact, been (by claiming that he had been the fourth Letter of the Living, q.v.); he claimed that Azal's leadership had at first been undisputed (when all the histories recorded numerous alternative claimants); he published unsubstantiated allegations about Bahá'u'lláh and `Abdu'l-Bahá; and he raised to prominence the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, claiming it to be the most important history of the Babis despite the obvious deficiencies of the text (see "Azal.2").

Although Browne acknowledged that Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be "He Whom God shall manifest" meant that the Babi dispensation was abrogated and Azal's position superseded (*New History* xxii-xxiii), he nevertheless continued to write as though the split that occurred was over the leadership of the Babi community. Further, although he frankly admitted that without the changes introduced by Bahá'u'lláh, the Babi movement could not have survived (*New History* xxiv-xxvi), Browne nevertheless allowed himself to become in effect the spokesperson for the party that the overwhelming majority of Babis had already rejected. (Some of the possible reasons for Browne's partisan attitude are discussed in BBR 33-36.)

On the positive side, we must note that Browne took the trouble to search out and record much detailed information about the new religion, some of which would undoubtedly otherwise have been lost. His are some of the few independent reports extant of the state and ambiance of the Bahá'í community in Iran in the late nineteenth century. His observations are a rich storehouse of information about the history of the religion. Finally, his record of his interview with Bahá'u'lláh remains one of the few pen-portraits ever made (TN xxxix-xl).

**Bibliography.** For a general account of Browne's life and career, see Elr "Browne, Edward Granville." On the relationship between Browne and the Bahá'í Faith, see H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith*, Oxford: George Ronald, 1970; BBR 29-36; SEB 1-12. The latter two works also contain a full bibliography of the writings of Browne on the Babi and Bahá'í Faiths. A bibliography of all of his books and major articles is found in E. G. Browne, *A Descriptive Catalogue of the Oriental MSS. Belonging to the Late E. G. Browne* (ed. R. A. Nicholson), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1932, pp. xii-xiii.

Browne's main works on the Babi and Bahá'í Faiths are listed in section 3 above (details in the General Bibliography). Hajji Mirza Jani Kashani,

Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910. Additional materials are collected in Momen, Selections from the Writings of E. G. Browne, including a catalog of his Babi MSS, a previously unpublished abridged translation of the Persian Bayan, and annotated passages that relate to the Bahá'ís from A Year amongst the Persians. See also Derek Cockshut, "On retrieving our spiritual heritage," Bahá'í Journal Apr. 1993, 10/1:12.

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