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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 England<sup>1</sup>, 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

<sup>1</sup> 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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History

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