

Bahá'í Scriptures

Selections from the Utterances of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

by Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá

Edited by Horace Holley.
Bahá'í World Center

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NOTE: This is a collection of *older translations*, many of which have been superseded by newer translations

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Editorial note: Transliteration of words in Bahá'í Scriptures

For this digital version, the following were changed from an outdated form to one reflecting typical transliterations found in modern Bahá'í works:

- Akdas = Aqdas
- Beha = Bahá
- Bahá-El-Abhá! = Bahá'u'l-Abhá
- Beyan = Bayán
- El-Beyan = the Bayán
- El-Masjid-El-Aska = the Masjíd
- al-'Aqsá = the Further Mosque in Jerusalem
- Hosein = Husayn
- Irak = 'Iráq
- Ishrakat = 'Ishraqát
- Kitáb'l'Akdas or Kitáb El Akdas or KITAB-EL-Aqdas = Kitáb-i-Aqdas
- Kitáb-el-Ah'd = Kitáb-i-'Ahd
- Kitáb-el-Ighan = Kitáb-i-Íqán
- Koran = Qur'án
- Kurrat-el-Ayn = Qurratu'l-Ayn
- Muhammad = Muhammad
- Ra'is = Súriy-i-Ra'ís
- Rizwan = Ridván
- Sadrat-El-Muntaha = Sadratu'l-Muntahá
- Tajalliat = Tajalliyát
- Teheran = Tihrán

INTRODUCTION

Since the occasion when mention of the Bahá'í Cause was first made in this country - at the Congress of Religions held in the Columbian Exposition in 1893 - interest in the Bahá'í principles and teachings has steadily increased. Sufficient foundation had been laid by 1912, when 'Abdu'l-Bahá came to America, to prepare for His message a cordial, sympathetic and reverent reception in the liberal synagogues, churches, new thought centers, universities and societies organized for scientific, ethical, economic and political progress in numerous cities.

The succeeding years - so fateful for the destiny of civilization, so disturbing to

every social institution and so challenging to the noblest and most disinterested faculties of soul, mind and heart - have served to deepen and extend that preliminary interest and build upon that foundation a permanent spiritual structure in many lives. The years since 1912, in fact, have thrown an ever-clearer light upon the need, in the world's consciousness, for precisely those principles and teachings so perfectly embodied in 'Abdu'l-Bahá and so definitely associated with His life and work.

To one who has acquainted himself with the Bahá'í writings, evidences of the penetration of their fundamental influence are revealed in increasing measure from day to day and throughout the world. The leaders of religion, science and practical affairs are beginning to manifest an attitude of universality and a spirit of unity which seems a direct reflection of the light 'Abdu'l-Bahá cast upon the manifold problems of living and the fundamental problem of life. Day by day, the realization deepens in all conscious men and women that, in this age, new forces are seeking expression - forces so mighty that the difference between understanding and misunderstanding is the immediate crisis between the alternatives of a new, worldwide and spiritualized civilization and a further, even more disastrous undoing of the things that are.

It is upon the plane of understanding that the power of the Bahá'í writings operates, in that area of being which lies beyond the personal desire, the personal thought, the personal will. Their operation is to restore in the individual, whatever his race, class, creed, profession or temperament, that eternal vision of the oneness of God whose evolving expression is directly the development of the soul, and indirectly the harmonious organization of mankind. Compared to other writings of this age, the Bahá'í Scriptures are as light compared to the reflection of light from surfaces more or less luminous or opaque. This essential quality of illumination, as distinct from the subject illuminated, and of vision, as distinct from the subject visioned, reveals anew the very sources of man's spiritual being, and discloses, also, the predominant forces working to mold the character of the new day.

The purpose of the book is to bring together, in convenient form and helpful arrangement, that portion of the Bahá'í writings already available in various books, magazines and also manuscript translation, selecting from them sufficient material to supply the reader and student a larger perspective upon these principles and teachings than any single work has yet accomplished in the English language. While it is inevitable that most, if not all the Bahá'í writings will one day undergo re-translation, and be presented in a worthier and more permanent form than is possible at the present time, nevertheless the need of a suitable compilation now urgently exists, and it is hoped that the present work will at least serve as one link in

the chain of effort whereby the Bahá'í writings are carried from their source in the "most great prison" of 'Akká to the mind and heart of the self-imprisoned race.

In this country at least, the Bahá'í message of the unity of religions, the reconciliation of science and religion, and the promulgation of Universal Peace, is established upon a recognition of the fact that in 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a new spirit of universality had manifested its vital, penetrative essence. Not so well understood is the fact that the root and source of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's utterances, the foundation of His being, attested on every possible occasion by Him, was entire devotion to the utterances and the being of His father, Bahá'u'lláh. This inner and spiritual relationship, likened by Bahá'u'lláh to that of the root and the "greatest branch" or trunk of a tree, is brought out in the present volume through the method adopted to organize its contents, not only by chapters but also by parts or "books"; the first book containing the words of Bahá'u'lláh - the Bahá'í Scriptures in essence - the second book containing the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá - the authoritative interpretation of the Bahá'í Scriptures and their direct application to the fundamental problems of the age. By this method the utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá are established in clearest relationship to their source, and consequently their purpose; moreover the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh are established in relationship to all the Scriptures which have gone before: whose unfoldment, whose reinforcement they are.

While for the purpose of the student acquainting himself with the Bahá'í writings for the first time, an outline at least of the historical conditions under which they were successively revealed would seem highly desirable, even essential, to the fullest understanding of their significance and most intimate sympathy for their application, nevertheless it will be found that this need is met in the process of reading the Bahá'í message itself. Chapter Seven contains an address by 'Abdu'l-Bahá which had for its theme the history of the Bahá'í Cause; and numerous references to that history will also be found in other passages. Moreover, inspiring as the actual record of those events are, the principal matter is not to realize the Bahá'í Scriptures as a detail in history so much as a source of light whereby history itself is illumined.

"How wonderful that the Well Beloved is manifest as the sun, while strangers are in search of vanities and wealth! Yea, He is concealed by the intensity of manifestation, and He is hidden by the ardor of emanation!"

HORACE HOLLEY

New York City

February 12, 1923

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND SOURCES

The present compilation has not been made with any thought of establishing a text, nor of even securing a polished and adequate English translation. From the literary point of view, the text embodied in this volume must be considered as a king in rags, since the Arabic and Persian originals are declared by all who have had access to them to be of the most exalted beauty and the most moving force.

On that sea, the editor has no power to sail. His effort has been entirely confined to the intention of recreating, as fully as possible through the use of available texts, some sense of that organic unity from which all the Bahá'í writings came, and to place in the student's hands a more fully organized Bahá'í work than has yet been published. In its sequence alone does the present volume contain the results of any particular study and accumulated labor.

For the most part, the contents have been taken from the publications of the Bahá'í Publishing Society, to the efforts of which we are indebted to the spread of these writings in America. As yet, few original Bahá'í writings have reached the public through any other channel, notable exceptions to which are Abbas Effendi, *His Life and Teachings* by Myron Phelps, published by G. P. Putnam's Sons, and *A Traveller's Narrative, Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Báb* translated by Edward G. Browne, and published with the Persian original by the University Press, Cambridge, England. It is in this incomparable translation, in fact, that the English reader draws most closely to the spirit and power of the original utterance. The Tablet to the Sháh, contained in Chapter Two of the present compilation, shows on comparison with Professor Browne's translation to have been based in part at least upon his exquisite rendering.

Tablets contained in Bahá'í Scriptures hitherto unpublished (so far at least as the editor is aware) are found in Chapters Two, Five and Eight, and for this material acknowledgment is made to the kindness of many friends who contributed manuscripts, especially Mrs. I.D. Brittingham, Mary Hanford Ford, A.W. Randall, Miss Martha Root and Miss Juliet Thompson.

For the omission of many fundamental teachings (or rather interpretations) given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to American audiences during 1912, explanation might well be called for were it not for the fact that the complete text of those addresses has been published since this compilation came into being.