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THREE STUDIES ON BAHÁ'Í HISTORY

BABYZM.

Spoleczno-religijny ruch w Persyi.

KOŁO STANOWISKO KOBIECY

przez

A. J.

Podrót moja po muzułmańskim Wschodzie, odbyta w r. 1870, zaprowadziła mię w kolei i w świąt wiekiście mistyczny prastarej Chaldei. Poznałem świątyni niegdys Bagdad potężnych Chalifów; pozostałem i święta dla Persów Kerkub. Mniej miałe wankże zabytki przeszłości obchodzić. Zabawa nie może wygląda, ale ja i w Chaldei o życie obecne najbardziej pytałem, pytałem o postęp.

Lecz przyszedł mi szczęście, że zdumienia memu nie było miary, gdy na bazarze bagdadzkim spotkałem naprawde przedstawicieli nowych nęszed, powstałych niedawnymi czasy na Wschodzie, przedktórci bez sroma, moglibyśmy i sami czołem udziżyć. Bo właśnie dotknął m to faktów, które o ile upokarzają nieco damę europejską, o tyle wadymają piero naszemu ludzi.

Na bazarze tedy bagdadzkim, za stosami pysznych kobierców chorasafskich, przy uprzejmem posadnictwie m oich ludzi, wszędy gotowych z postąg, poznałem wyższość nowej nauki, co blyskawicą była przebiegła zamocrony islamizacji. Byli to percy Babyci.

Wypowiadali się oni swobodnie przed nami, mimo grozy przeflowania; nauczem się też cześcić ich już wtedy. Po powrocie zmocniła mię jeszcze więcej w serd erzanem dla nich użecnia grutowna praca p. Gobineau: „Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie centrale” p. M. le Comte de Gobineau, Ministre de France a Athènes. Paris, 1865. Wspomniałem też już o nich nieco w artykuł moim „obecnego stanowiska kobiety na muzułmańskim

Wschodzie” w „Bliźniach” 1871 r., a dziś pobudzony przez nieśmiałe zapoznanie, jakiemu uległa w naszym piśmiennictwie ten przedmiot, chcę obszerniej o przed cayıtelniem roztoczyć, trzymając się ściśle poważnych wskazówek.

Prąd postępowego społeczeństwa ludzkości niepowstrzymany; wzbiera on w naszych oczach coraz potężniej, rozszerza swe łotyaka, wyrwa stawiane tamy, tworząc sobie coraz to nowe koryta. utylnia szerze przestwoy. Wiemy dobrze, iż społeczeństwo rozwija się wszędy niemal i na wszystkich drogach.—przewodniczy rozwojowi tems Europa, lecz myliliibyśmy się mocno przypuszczając, że tylko cywilizacja europejska jedynie posiada niezbędne warunki postępu, że tylko pod jej bezpośrednim wpływem postęp ten jest możebnym. Wpływ europowy w ostatnich czasach swym wyniku są wprawdzie wszędzie ożywcze, wszędzie dobroczynne, wazń jej jedynie jako gwiazda przewodnia postępu powszechnego; jednak niezależnie od tego, pewne stare społeczeństwa zawierają warunki żywego postępu i w łonie własnem. Prarodzica nasza sądziwa Azya nie myśli wcale zdawać się li na okruszki wymyślonych naukarz; ma ona jeszcze zawsze swe niezależne zasoby ukryte. Ten ród aryjski, co dźwiga na swych barkach cywilizację Europy, co ją nascaupit i wybiegował w tak bujny rozrost za niewianych przestrzeniach Ameryki, — ten sam, jak widzimy, zasiada jeszcze dotąd i przedwiecznych ognisk swych w zachodniej Azyi. W przebiegającej części ujęty on dziś w spłot cędnego religijnego społeczeństwa, stanowi z dwoma obcymi narodami, Semitów i Farańów, jednottę muzułmańskich świat; ale w głębi istoty swej wiele od nich różny, i przy nieuchronnym rozkładzie życiowym tego świata, bardziej od nich zdolny podążyć za pobratymcami chrześcijańskiej Europy.

W obec zasadniczych warunków powoznego postępu, niezaprzeczenie prawa etologicznego niepozierną odegrają rolę. Ród aryjski, jakby przeznaczony dziś a gęty na główną dźwignię cywilizacji; to zadanie wytknie, udaje się, ma on sobie przysługę i w swym zarytycznym odłamie. Świście ruchy na pola religijny i społeczny, w jego łonie samotnie powstałe, dostatecznie tems przyświadcza.

Obok tego w szerokiej rodzinie etnicznej, podługowych praw nieślomnych, każdy szczep, każdy naród ma swój odrębny tór samostnego rozwoju, swe własne zadania i zasoby. Nadto posiada swą indywidualność, co we wszelkich możliwych warunkach rozwoju nie przestaje nigdy być samą sobą. Na mocy tychże praw, zdrowy indywidualny organizm narodu, nawet poddając się z konieczności najrozszerzającemu wpływem obcego ród i cywilizacji, zwykłe przybrao obce pierwiastki przywaja i przetwarza na własny pokarm potrawy, i żyje wciąż odrębnem, samostnem życiem.

Wśród ród aryjskiego w Azyi, najwybitniejszy tego objaw widzimy między szczepem Zendów, u Persów Iranu, przedewszystkiem w ich religijnej cywilizacji.

Wiadomo, że w prastarej Azyi (aż dotąd) wszelkie objawy ducha, wszelki postęp w zakresie społeczeństwa nawet, nieuniknienie przyjmują wyraz i postać religij; jestto bowiem wiekiście krajina wyobraźni, cadowości i mistycyzmu. Lecz za to w niej też, bardziej niż gdzieindziej, każdy ruch religijny jest zarazem i ruchem społecznym do głębi.

Duch starożytnych Persów, w zasadniczej swej treści wypowiedział się we wspólności dla wszystkich ludzkich łudów, panteistycznym w osnowie swej, Mazdeizmem. Dwa pierwiastki świata w wiekiści z sobą walce—oto wyraz istoty onego, oto z czem szły się umysł Persa na wicki. Upadek państwa Cyrusa, przewaga politeizmu greckiego od czasów Aleksandra, wladanie Partów przeciętło—wszystko to niewiele umysł ten warzyło. Sassanidowie wreszcie przywołali część ognia do dawnej świątyni, przywrócili władzę Magów do dawnej siły. Lecz potęga ich jednak runęła pod ciosami Arabów; część ognia musiała ustąpić nowej nauce semityckiego proroka, mazdeizm—islamowi. Nie długo przecie obca nauka (Mahometa) utrzymała się adolawa w Persyi w pierwotnym swym charakterze.

Jak szaleło się spodziewać, mahometanizm perski spotkał wprędce łone sam los, jaki nieco pierwej dotknął chrześcijaństwo Iranu. W zstąpieniu się z mazdeizmem Zoroastri, nauka Chrystusa przybrała byt, wzięty i szczyt, formy manicheizmu, który to następnie Bogomilem u nas rozniecił; białe zaś odzyskał ten szczyt w szytyzmie, nim następn

dalej większym przeobrażeniem nie uległ. Duch narodu bowiem musi przeobrazić wszystko, stosownie do formy potrzeb wewnętrznych—wszystko, nie tylko do swych religii, nawet treści onej niejednokrotnie. Przykłady tego wybitne przedstawia nam nie tylko sam daleki świat pogański jedynie; znane są one dobrze i w chrystyanizmie: nie wychodząc z Azyi, niech nam wolno tu będzie wskazać na Ormazd i Szyrytyków w narodowej ich antagonii z Grekami. Taż sama narodowa antagonia Persów ku Arabom i Turkom wczęście musiała wywołać i religijne między nimi wyróżnienie, z biegiem czasu, pod postacią szczytowego dacha, coraz to żywiej potężniące.

Sama nauka zwistuna Koranu, opierająca się na znanym symbolu, „niema Boga jedno Bóg i Mahomet jego prorok”—przedstawia przez swą prostotę, niezmiernie obzerne pole ku nieskończonemu urozmaiceniu w onej zakresie. Zjad też, natychmiast po śmierci Mahometa, zwolennicy jego już podzielił się na dwa obozy: Sunnitiów, wyznawców tradycji Sunny, i Szajitów, przysnających moc rozstrzygającą stanowienia w wpatliwościach religijnych ródów Mahometa—Alemu i „imamom” jego krwi. Ze Arabi przeważniej, a następnie Turcy przyjęli Sunnizm; w naturalniejszy więc sposób Persowie stanęli po stronie szczyteli Alego. Lecz szytyzm zostawzył takim ortodoksalno-urzędowym wyznaniem Persów, nie uniknął jednak konfessacji i dalszego przeobrażenia się w swych pierwotnych podstawach. Po większej części, jak to łatwo zrozumieć, przeobrażenia te powstały pod wielowianym wpływem niespotykiego ducha narodu i jego dawnych religijnych postąg. Starożytna nauka Magów i organizacja monarchiczna przenikały coraz żywiej do nowej religii, i nie prezentując na stawieniu jej milczącego oporu, zmuszwały ją do bardziej stanowczych ustępstw. Nakoniec, musiała przyjąć do tego, że mazdeizm ocucił się wzakreślozonym, co do istoty swej, w szytyzmie, a razem z tem i unarodowił go znakomicie.

Rzeczywiście, przypatrujemy się bliżej dzisiejszemu szytyzmowi, jak to aluznie uważa p. Gobineau, widzimy że Mahomet, a raczej Ali z pierwowianymi imamami, następując w nim tylko Ormazd i Andraspandów; nie są to ludzie bowiem w pełni naj.

"A.J." AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH INTO POLAND

by Jan T. Jasion

On the 26th of September, 1875, readers of the foremost Polish newspaper *Gazeta Polska*, found on the front page an article entitled "Babyzm"; a social religious movement in Persia—a new position for women". Written by "A.J."¹, the article was the first of a four-part series which occupied the entire bottom third of the first and second pages for four issues. This may have been the first time that a European newspaper had given such prominence to this new faith.

In reading the article, however, one discovers that this was not the first mention of the Báb in the Polish press. The author states that his article was written in defense of the Bábí Faith which he felt had been unfairly treated in earlier Polish publications.² For the earliest-known Polish reference to the Bábí or Bahá'í Faith one must look further back to an article entitled "Present progress in the station of women in the Muslim East", which appeared in the popular women's maga-

zine *Bluszcz* in 1871 and was also signed "A.J."³

The "A.J." of these two articles was Aleksander Walerian Jablonowski (pronounced yaw-bwo-nov-skee), a well-known Polish historian, ethnographer and linguist. Jablonowski was born into a family of scholars in the Podlaski region of north-east Poland in 1829. He studied at the universities of Kijow and Dorpat and later at Berlin, Paris (Sorbonne), Vienna and London. Throughout his career, Jablonowski travelled a great deal and reported on his trips in numerous articles and publications. He travelled primarily in Poland and the Balkans, but made several trips into Russia as well, and, at one time, was a political exile there. Following this period of exile, he returned to Poland in 1870 and then undertook a trip to the Near East, visiting Palestine, Syria, what is now Iraq, Kurdistan, Egypt and Tunis. He was always greatly interested in the different peoples that he met and in their customs and habits. His interest was not so much that of a scientist, but of one human being who felt a close kinship with many people.

Jablonowski's feelings are reflected in his writings, which were published in both popular and learned journals in the fields of ethnography, linguistics and history. His work was respected by many societies in Poland and he received an honorary doctorate from the

1. Aleksander Jablonowski, "Babyzm: społeczno-religijny ruch w Persyi. Nowe stanowisko kobiety", *Gazeta Polska*, nos. 222, 223, 225 and 226 (Warszawa: Sept. 26, 27, 30 and Oct. 1, 1875)

2. As of the date of publication, these articles have not been located by the author.

3. Aleksander Jablonowski, "Obecny postęp w stanowisko kobiety na muzułmańskim wschodzie" *Bluszcz*, vol. 7, Nos. 12, 13 and 15, (Warszawa: March 10, 17 and 31, 1871).

university of Lwow in 1912, as well as an honorary membership in The Royal Historical Society of London in 1913. It was during that year, while on one of his numerous expeditions, that he died near Odessa in the Ukraine.⁴

A visit to Baghdad in 1870 provided the incentive and much of the material for Jablonowski's two articles on the Bábí Faith. There he met two followers of the Báb and he was later to write of this encounter:

"I have to honestly admit that my astonishment knew no bounds, when at the Baghdád bazaar, I met genuine representatives of a new teaching, not long established in the East, which we ourselves could give praise to without shame. I came across facts which, as much as they humble the proud European, proudly swell our chests as people."⁵

THE 1871 ARTICLE in *Bluszcz* was the briefer of the two and not as prominently positioned as that of 1875. The former, however, was serialized in three parts which appeared on the 10th, 17th, and 31st of March. In the first installment, Jablonowski sharply criticized Asia, particularly the Near East, and the way women were treated there. The Muslim customs concerning the treatment of women; the institutions of the harem, the practice of polygamy and the wearing of the veil came in for

particular censure. Jablonowski was an advocate of the emancipation of women and the article began with the following quotation from the Báb:

"There should not be a veil between you and your women, even though she be more delicate than a leaflet on a young tree, for there should be no cause of sadness for women."⁶

Jablonowski then briefly reviewed the practices of the Christianized Arabs of Syria and Mosul, the Bedouins, and the Turks with regard to women. Almost the entire last half of the essay is taken up with the Báb's teachings and the reactions to them in Persia. The article outlines the early history of the Bábí/Bahá'í movement, including the life and teachings of the Báb, the reaction of the Muslim clergy, the barbaric repressions of the new faith and the banishment of the believers to Baghdád. The teachings of the Báb dealing with the equality of men and women and the liberation of women from oppression are the subjects of a large part of the essay. This focus is illustrated in a quote embodying Jablonowski's perspective of the future of women in the East:

"...we must observe that presently, in this eternal and apparently immovable East, even in the context of the sanctuary of the harem, an important transformation has taken place whereby something progressive is occurring (with regard) to the position of women and that cannot be taken lightly."⁷

One of the Báb's early disciples, and the foremost suffragette of the East was a woman named Qurratu'l-'Ayn (also known as Zarin-Taj and more particularly as Táhirih). Jablonowski was especially interested in the role of Qurratu'l-'Ayn in the women's

4 Biographical material obtained from Wieslaw Bienkowski, "Jablonowski, Aleksander Walerian. . ." *Polski Słownik Biograficzny* vol. 10, (Wrocław: PAN, 1964), pp. 216-218.

5. Aleksander Jablonowski, *Pisma Aleksandra Jablonowskiego*, vol. 6, (Warszawa: E. Wende, 1912), p.332

6. *Ibid.*, p. 362

7. *Ibid.*, p. 363

movement and he glowingly and romantically described her life. The following passage depicts the scene as she listens in while her father and father-in-law, both well-known in the field of Islamic jurisprudence, condemn the new religion which is sweeping across Irán.

"...Overhearing this, within the completely closed-in harem, was a young woman of charming beauty and of an education uncommon in the East—a highly esteemed poetess of courageous intellect. This was, of course, Zerryn (Zarin-Taj). Interested in this intrigue, she hesitates, listens attentively, and recognizes the name of the unusual youth (the Báb), together with His main teachings. The very idea of the independent station of women excites, enraptures, and delights her. The removal of the disgraceful bondage of the harem is, for her, neither a horror nor scandalous as the older people claim; rather, it is a knowledge revealed from heaven. While condemned by her elders, Mirza 'Alī Muhammed (the Báb) is not an imposter to her, but the inspired Prophet of the Lord and the Revealer of His commands. Having therefore recognized Him, she began to correspond with Him..."⁸

Near the end of the article Jablonowski wrote an eulogy for Qurratu'l-'Ayn:

"She is one of those few who belong to that chosen company, which stands proudly and adorns the human race; to those few women who, after centuries (have passed), will (still) radiate in the world and in the history of ideals. We will

keep her name in the memories of our hearts because she, with her beautiful life and martyr's death, redeemed, in her own self, the whole of her sex from Eastern bondage and raised up and brought recognition to Asian women.(Our reverence is due her.)"⁹

Jablonowski was smitten by the lofty ideal of the station of women in the Báb's teachings but, ironically, it may have been the brightness of such singular teachings that made it difficult for him to focus, in 1871, on the broad vision implicit within the Revelation of the Báb. While Jablonowski readily perceived that the ideals of the Bábí Faith were an improvement on current Islamic thought, his then relatively vague conceptualization of the spiritual, as distinguished from the social, teachings of the Báb is reflected in another quote from his article in *Bluszcz*:

"His (the Báb's) teaching did not actually present anything original. It was, of a certainty, an outpouring known for ages from Eastern mysticism and pantheism, and animated by the messianic idea. But his ethical teachings could decimate Islam. They are a source of life, and worthy of exaltation."¹⁰

IN HIS 1875 ARTICLE—"Babyzm"—in *Gazeta Polska*, Jablonowski dealt more deeply, and at greater length than in his earlier piece, with the history and, in particular, with the teachings of the Bábí Faith. Of the four parts, the first is concerned almost entirely with a summary of the religious history of Persia. The Iranian racial affiliation with Europeans is mentioned and it is argued that Islám is a foreign element which never really permeated the depths of Persian culture. Jablonowski next provided some detail about the back-

8. *Ibid.*, p. 373-374

9. *Ibid.*, p. 375-376

10. *Ibid.*, p. 370

ground of the Báb and expounded upon His spiritual teachings. The article continues with a thorough description, within the limits of Jablonowski's understanding, of the spiritual station of the Báb, as both the "...highest expression and the very essence of humanity..." as well as the humble precursor of "...Him Whom God shall make manifest..."

The strong antagonism of the mullás (Islamic ecclesiastics) to the new religion is touched on several times during Jablonowski's review of Bábí history. While concentrating on the historical events associated with the Báb, he again gave a good deal of attention to Qurratu'l-'Ayn, Mullá Husayn-i-Bushrú'í and Quddús as central figures in the narrative. These leading disciples of the Báb were called, by the Báb, "Letters of the Living"—a title held by eighteen apostles in all. Jablonowski described their exploits in carrying the message of the Báb to all corners of Persia; the reactions of the people, the clergy and the rulers to these new teachings; the heroic defense, by the Bábís, of the fort of Shaykh Tabarsí and their redoubt at Zanján; and the massacre and persecutions of many of those who believed in the Báb. The reader is taken through the forced exile of some of these believers to Baghdád and on to Adrianople in Turkey.

An expanded appreciation of the Báb and His station may account for some of the extended coverage given the Báb in Jablonowski's later article. Here is the author's description of the Báb as it was relayed to him:

11. *Ibid.*, p. 341

12. *Ibid.*, p. 342

13. *Ibid.*, p. 344

14. *Ibid.*, p. 343

"...He was a young man, who united in Himself, all the characteristics necessary for limitless intellectual authority; an outer beauty, speech sweet manners, strong character, an enthusiastic spirit balanced by wisdom and a knowledge that even amazed the learned."¹¹

The station of the Báb is presented as the reality of One Who claims to be "...the mystical 'gate', which leads to the true faith and accords admittance to the recognition of God—a gate of truth and salvation..."¹²

The Báb is viewed as part of a mystical chain.

"The chain stands for the Prophets. Unrest follows the Revelation brought by them. They are the "breath of God"—His living words. Each one of them is an illustration of the Divine Thought in the degree and form appropriate to the current society. The idea of one higher than another cannot exist among them because they all, on the same occasion, undertake one task; that of illustrating one everlasting thought. In this mystical chain Moses prepared the way for Christ, and He for Mohammed, whereas Mohammed and the apostles who came after Him, the twelve Imáms of Persia, prepared for the new Revelator."¹³

Jablonowski recorded that the Báb: "...speaks of God, the Creator because creation for Him is a synonym of life. God, according to Him, is the well-spring of life, which pours forth without limitation from His bosom..."¹⁴

The ethical teachings of the Báb are also examined:

"The moral system of the Báb depends on the following laws:

love for others and consideration for yourself. The main focus of love is good deeds; (such action) is commanded as an unavoidable duty. All gifts to beggars are forbidden, however, because begging is a sin. According to the Prophet's (the Báb's) thinking, a society organized through His Spirit would be able to eliminate poverty and deal fairly with all misfortune. Hospitality is not a lesser duty than good deeds. It should be practised at least once a week for the benefit of a poor person or a stranger, even if a glass of water is all that can be offered. The rich should invite numerous guests to their table, according to their means."¹⁵

Jablonowski seems to have had little sympathy for the opposing ecclesiastics. He thought that:

"...He (the Báb), like other great reformers, announced a hard-fought war with clerics—the mullás—fighting them everywhere, even in the temple depths, by demonstrating contradictions between their actions and the teachings of Islám. Of course the mullás did not remain silent, and the most talented among them rose up against Him, but in these public battles the victory always went to the reformer."¹⁶

15. *Ibid.*, p. 357-358

16. *Ibid.*, p. 342

17. *Ibid.*, p. 361

18. Comte de Gobineau, *Les religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie centrale* (Paris: 1865).

Adolphe Franck, *Philosophie et religion* (Paris: 1867), chapter entitled "Une nouvelle religion en Perse. Les bâbys"

Albert Dumont, "Souvenirs de la Roumélie. II. Adrianople", *Revue des deux Mondes*, vol. 98, 1871), pp. 834-835.

WITH INSIGHT into the impact of the Báb's teachings on the rest of the world, Jablonowski concluded that:

"Europe cannot but greet with recognition this independent society, around which revolve the highest themes of civilization. Any society, even the most degenerate, will be reborn as soon as it recognizes, in the real as well as the ideal world, the place rightly belonging to women."¹⁷

It is only in this article, "Babyzm", as published in *Gazeta Polska* in 1875, that Jablonowski mentions the sources of his information. These are the Persian Bábís he met in Baghdád and the writings of Gobineau, Franck and Dumont.¹⁸ In Russia (whose empire incorporated Poland at that time), studies on the Báb and the early history of the Bábí/Bahá'í movement had already begun. The first book in Russian on the subject, written by Mirzá Kázim Bek, had appeared in 1865 (with a French translation in 1866) and articles had also been published by B. Dorn in St. Petersburg in 1865 and 1866. Yet Jablonowski, perhaps unaware of or distrusting these, turned to French sources for his information. It is uncertain whom Jablonowski met in Baghdád in 1870. Apparently they did not mention the name Bahá'u'lláh (the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith) to him. Bahá'u'lláh, who was then being detained in the Holy Land by Ottoman authorities, had declared Himself as "He Whom God shall make manifest" in that very city of Baghdád in 1863, in acknowledged fulfilment of the Báb's prophecies concerning the Promised One for all mankind. It is doubtful that Jablonowski's informers were followers of Subhi-i-Azal (Bahá'u'lláh's half-brother) because the passing reference

to the latter is restricted to the Baghdád period of exile. It is possible that the informants were, in fact, not Bábís but Bahá'ís who, because of the persecution under which they lived, were reluctant to go into any detail about the current situation of the Bahá'í Faith.

The 1844 declaration of the Báb is mentioned in both of Jablonowski's articles. In both, the association of the nearly simultaneous European revolutionary movements of 1848 with the inauguration of the Báb's Revelation implies a spiritual kinship between these two great upheavals.¹⁹ Perhaps Jablonowski felt that the spirit of the times transcended those differences dependent on place and culture and motivated all peoples imbued with a consciousness of the age toward a new point of common action.

Jablonowski's perspectives of the Báb and His Faith were of sufficient public and scholarly interest to warrant

reprinting. Both the article in *Bluszcz* as well as the article published in *Gazeta Polska* were reproduced in the sixth volume, *The Muslim East*, (title translated) of Jablonowski's collected writings published in Warsaw in 1912.²⁰ Beside these two articles on the Faith of the Báb, Jablonowski also contributed articles for *The Great Universal Illustrated Encyclopedia* in 1891.²¹

These articles were not the only turn-of-the-century Polish-language sources of information on the Báb and the early history of the Bábí/Bahá'í movement. At least three other encyclopedias published similar articles during this time.²² There were others, too, like Jablonowski, who travelled to the Near East and made reference to the new faith in their commentaries. These include Marya Ratuld-Rakowska and Józef Kruszynski. The former accompanied her husband on a trip to Írán and the result was a book published in 1904 under the title *A trip by a Polish lady to Persia* (title translated)²³, in which the Bábís and their teachings are briefly but sympathetically mentioned. Józef Kruszynski, a Roman Catholic priest, who later became the president of the Catholic University of Lublin, visited 'Abdu'l-Bahá in 1914 while in the Holy Land. In that same year he wrote an article about his visit in the newspaper *Słowa Kujawskie*, published in the small provincial town of Włocławek. In a recorded interview with an American writer in 1932, he commented relatively favourably on 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the Bahá'í Faith.²⁴ 1915 had seen the publication of the first Polish-language book on the Bahá'í Faith. It was 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *Paris Talks* translated from German and published by the Silesian Spiritualist Society under the title of *The Gospel of Love and Peace*

19. Aleksander Jablonowski, *Pisma...*, vol. 6, pp. 340-341 and 370.

20. See note 5.

21. *Wielka Encyklopedia Powszechna Ilustrowana*, (Warszawa: S. Sikorskiego, 1891), article "Bab", vol. 6, pp. 622-624; article "Babiści", vol. 7, pp. 650-651.

22. *Encyklopedyja Powszechna S. Orgelbranda* (Warszawa, 1883), article "Babiści", vol. 1, pp. 419-420.

Podreczna Encyklopedia Powszechna (Warszawa, 1894), article "Babiści", vol. 1, p. 281.

S. Orgelbranda Encyklopedja Powszechna (Warszawa, 1898), article "Babiści", vol. 2, pp. 13-14.

23. Marya Ratuld-Rukowska, *Podroz polki do Persyi*, (Warszawa: Aleksandra Tod, Jezierskiego, 1904, part II), article "Sekty: babiści", pp. 34-36.

24. Martha L. Root, "The Bahá'í Movement; the greatness of its power", *Bahá'í World* vol. 5 (1932-34), (New York: Bahá'í Publishing Committee, 1936), pp. 563-569.

for our Times (title translated).²⁵

THE PIONEER CONTRIBUTION of Jablonowski, however, in bringing the story of the Báb and the early history of the Bahá'í Revelation to the attention of the Polish public, cannot be underestimated. Considering

25. Abdul Baha Abbas, *Ewangelia pokoju i miłości dla czasów naszych*. Z angielskiego na niemieckie przelozył Wilhelm Herrigel. Zhiemieckiego na polskie Zwiasek Slaskich spirytystow. (Laki: Zwiasku Slaskich Spirytystow, 1915).

26. One error, repeated in both articles, that should not be overlooked, is the story about the martyrdom of Qurratu'l-'Ayn. Jablonowski stated that she was burned at the stake. See his *Pisma...*, vol. 6, pp. 354 and 375. However, according to an eyewitness account, she was strangled and her body placed in a well. See Nabíl-i-A'zam, *The Dawn-Breakers; Nabíl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahá'í Revelation*, (Wilmette, Illinois: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1962), pp. 626-627.

the information and the material that he had to work from, his articles are the more remarkable. While there are errors in the narration of Bábí history, these are completely overshadowed by the surprising degree of accuracy with which he seems to have ultimately grasped the main thrust of the spiritual and moral teachings of the Báb.²⁶ It is important to note that Jablonowski, already a well-known and highly respected scholar, placed the information that he had about the Faith of the Báb, along with his own personal appreciations, not just before a select group of scholars, but before the general public. He was not only one of the first, if not the first, to write about the Báb in Poland and in Polish, but he was the author of the earliest-known article of significant length to introduce Bábí/Bahá'í history on the front pages of any European daily newspaper.