

The First Recorded Bahá'í Fireside

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ABSTRACT

This article presents an episode recounted by Cambridge orientalist, Edward Granville Browne (7 February 1862–5 January 1926), as narrated in his travel classic, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, first published in 1893 (second edition published by Cambridge in 1926), in what may be characterized, with some poetic license, as the first recorded “fireside” in Bahá'í history, i.e. the firsthand account given in the course of his historic contacts with the Bahá'ís in Persia (present-day Iran), during his stay in Shíráz, from Thursday, 22 March 1888 to Saturday, 6 April 1888—at which time Browne, at long last, succeeded in his quest to discover further information on the Bábí religion which, by this time, had evolved into what is today known as the “Bahá'í Faith,” now an independent world religion established in all countries except for North Korea and the Vatican. Special focus is devoted to a meeting that took place in Shiraz on “Friday, March 30th,” 1888—and which here is characterized as “the first recorded Bahá'í fireside.” Browne’s account—closely compared, in the present study, to his original diary entries, digital scans of which are now made available by at Pembroke as part of the “Browne Archive Project”—is energized by his intense curiosity, which may fairly be described as a “passion” for his research interest as a scholar. To ascertain the degree to which Browne’s narrative is a composite, reworked account—and not strictly sequential and chronological—it makes sense to draw some correspondences between Browne’s diary entries, and the Shíráz narrative in Chapter XI in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, as to both topics and dates. Browne’s corresponding diary entries, where “SHÍRÁZ” appears as the heading at the top of each page. Briefly, the present article highlights Browne’s diary entries, folio by folio (page by page), from Vols. II and III of Browne’s diary, and offers some observations on corresponding passages in *A Year Amongst the Persians*.

Keywords: Edward Granville Browne; Persians; Shiraz; diary; Baha'i; Bábí; fireside.

This article presents an episode that took place in Shiraz, Persia (present-day Iran) on "Friday, March 30th," 1888, as recounted by Cambridge orientalist, Edward Granville Browne (7 February 1862–5 January 1926), as narrated in his travel classic, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, first published in 1893 (second edition published by Cambridge in 1926), in what may be characterized, with some poetic license, as the first recorded "fireside" in Bahá'í history,¹ i.e. as part of Browne's firsthand account of his contacts with the Bahá'ís in Persia (present-day Iran), during his stay in Shíráz, from Thursday, 22 March 1888 to Saturday, 6 April 1888—at which time Browne, at long last, succeeded in his quest to discover further information on the Bábí religion which, by this time, had evolved into what is today known as the "Bahá'í Faith," now an independent world religion established in all countries except for North Korea and the Vatican. Of course, Browne already had extensive knowledge of the Bábí and Baha'í religions, which he acquired during the course of his research. During the 1880s, moreover, Browne was a personal friend of an Iranian Baha'í in London.² Throughout the present article, Browne's account is compared to his original diary entries, digital scans of which are now made available by at Pembroke as part of the "Browne Archive Project." Browne's record of this event is energized by his intense curiosity, which may fairly be described as a "passion" for his research interest as a scholar. A sense of discovery pervades the narrative, which recreates and memorializes Browne's encounters with the Bahá'ís of Shíráz, during a time in which they had to carry on a rather subterranean, secretive existence, in order to avoid further acts of violent persecution perpetrated by state and clerical authorities which, although abated, continues to this day.

Here, by "recorded" is meant a published, historical narrative—to the extent that an autobiographical account may function as history. "History" is largely, if not primarily, based on such primary sources as eyewitness accounts, personal memoirs, diaries, contemporaneous notes, autobiographies, documents of various kinds, and so forth. To the extent that an autobiography may function as a primary source of history, the narrative of interest here is Edward Granville Browne's autobiographical *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia*

Received During Twelve Months' Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–8,³ acclaimed as one of the most notable travel classics set in the Middle East, and which Bahá'í historian, Hasan M. Balyuzi (1908–1980, and appointed a "Hand of the Cause of God" by Shoghi Effendi) praised as an "imperishable book."⁴

In the present article, reference will also be made to Browne's travel diary (on which *A Year Amongst the Persians* is based). The Cambridge Shahnama Centre for Persian Studies, established in 2010 at Pembroke, launched the Browne Archive Project. Thanks to this project, Browne's diary is now available online, courtesy of Pembroke College, Cambridge University, which has uploaded high-resolution, digital scans. The scans of interest here are contained in Vols. II⁵ and III.⁶ Of particular interest, as previously stated, is Browne's account of his meetings with various "Bábís" (i.e. Bahá'ís) in the city of Shíráz, Persia (present-day Iran), as Moojan Momen notes: "Browne relates the story of his stay in Shíráz in two chapters. In the tenth chapter of the book, Browne gives a general account of what happened to him in Shíráz while he devotes the whole of the eleventh chapter to describing his contacts with the Bahá'ís of Shíráz."⁷

As previously noted, the term "fireside"—here used in a specifically Bahá'í context—is for purely descriptive purposes only, since this term is admittedly anachronistic, having gained currency considerably later in Bahá'í history—in Montreal, not Persia, as William Hatcher and Douglas Martin note.⁸ A Bahá'í "fireside" is an informal informational meeting in which the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith are introduced to one or more interested individuals. The term "fireside" "originated with the early Bahá'í group in Montreal, Canada" and "describes small study groups held at regular intervals in private homes, to which friends and acquaintances are invited." This "informal activity" has been "a prolific source of new members," as it "allows inquirers to explore the Bahá'í concepts, laws, and teachings at their own pace" and "free from the concern that their private spiritual search may be 'on display,' as might be the case in an open meeting."⁹ This venerable Bahá'í teaching activity was much vaunted and valorized by Shoghi Effendi, Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith from 1921–1957.¹⁰

As applied to Professor Browne, his encounters with the Bahá'ís in Shíráz had the advantage of remaining personal and private, so as to not attract attention, which would otherwise have placed Browne, and his Bahá'í contacts, in some peril, if not in mortal danger, given the volatile situation at that time. In a sense, therefore, Browne, in furtherance of his original research, was engaged in a risky pursuit, fraught with potential, although not imminent danger. As to his diary, which Browne paginated in red ink, Browne notes (also in red ink), at the top of p. 338:

This is the 3rd volume of my journal. The first contains from Trebizonde to Teherán (p. 1–128): The second from Teherán to Shíráz (p. 129–337). This volume, the 3rd, contains Shíráz, Yezd, & part of Kermán: & the fourth & last vol. the rest of Kirmán, & the return thence to Teherán and Mázandarán,—thence home.¹¹

A Year Amongst the Persians does not fit neatly into any single category. Browne's narrative is a tapestry, a woven, colorful and rich account of his experiences throughout his year in Persia, documenting his journey by way of a chronological travel narrative, recording, at every step of the way, his sundry impressions of Persia itself (with an emphasis on the Persians as a people), providing scenic details about Persian flora¹² and fauna, with close attention to the surrounding landscapes through which he traversed, interspersing, if not spicing his narrative with quotations from Persian poetry (with English translations followed by transliterations of the original Persian), setting down observations that read like an incipient anthropology notes of his field-work, all the while memorializing autobiographical accounts of his experiences in impressive detail, replete with extended conversations—given *verbatim* (whether real or imagined, or a mix of both)—to which Browne superadds amusing anecdotes, offers occasional social critique, muses by way of personal and philosophical reflections, while offering an abundance of information on the history, literature and beliefs of the Bahá'í Faith, consistently referred to as the "Bábí" religion, acquired firsthand—all of which is based on his diary accounts.

To ascertain the degree to which Browne's narrative is a composite, reworked account—and not strictly sequential and chronological—it makes sense to draw some correspondences between Browne's diary entries, and the Shíráz narrative in Chapter XI in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, as to both topics and dates. Browne's corresponding diary entries, where "SHÍRÁZ" appears as the heading at the top of each page, runs from Vol. II, p. 302 (referring to the handwritten page number marked in red ink at the top of each page and corresponding to p. 212 of the online pagination¹³—to p. 329 (p. 247 of the online) inclusive,¹⁴ and, in Vol. III, from p. 338 to p. 349, inclusive.¹⁵ Briefly, the present article highlights Browne's diary entries, folio by folio (page by page), from Vols. II and III of Browne's diary, and offers some observations on corresponding passages in *A Year Amongst the Persians*.

A natural place to begin is Wednesday, March 21, 1888, when Browne caught his first glimpse of Shíráz, and, with a sudden surge of surprise and delight, exclaimed:

Rode on full of expectancy, till after a sudden turn to the right, I suddenly came in view of Shíráz, lying green & beautiful almost at my feet. I shall never as long as I live forget the thrill of ecstasy which I experienced as at last the long expected sight burst upon me. Yes, after so many weary miles march, there at last was beautiful Shíráz, the goal of my long pilgrimage—I almost wept for joy. No illusion—no disappointment here—: more beautiful than I had dreamed of or hoped for—smiling fair amidst its lovely gardens of cypresses & plane trees—its green domes standing in the pure air—was Shíráz, the darling city of [p. 213] Hafiz and Sa'di.¹⁶

Here, the corresponding passage in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, expands this episode in the following narrative, offering a fuller account of Browne's experience in seeing Shíráz for the very first time:

We were, I gathered, quite close to it now, and I was so full of expectancy that I had but little inclination to talk. Suddenly we turned a corner, and in that moment—a moment of which the recollection will never fade from my mind—there burst upon my delighted gaze a view the like of which (in its way) I never saw.

We were now at that point, known to all students of Ḥáfiz, called *Tang-i-Alláhu Akbar*, because whoever first beholds Shíráz hence is constrained by the exceeding beauty of the sight to cry out in admiration "*Alláhu Akbar*"—"God is most great!" At our very feet, in a grassy, fertile plain girt with purple hills (on the loftier summits of which the snow still lingered), and half concealed amidst gardens of dark stately cypresses, wherein the rose and the judas-tree in luxuriant abundance struggled with a host of other flowers for the mastery of colour, sweet and beautiful in its garb of spring verdure which clothed the very roofs of the bazaars, studded with many a slender minaret, and many a turquoise-hued dome, lay the home of Persian culture, the mother of Persian genius, the sanctuary of poetry and philosophy, Shíráz.

Riveted on this, and this alone, with an awe such as that wherewith the pilgrim approaches the shrine, with a delight such as that wherewith the exile again beholds his native land, my eyes scarcely marked the remoter beauties of the scene—the glittering azure of Lake Mahálú to the east, the interminable gardens of Masjid-Bardí to the west. Words cannot describe the rapture which overcame me as, after many a weary march, I gazed at length on the reality of that whereof I had so long dreamed, and found the reality not merely equal to, but far surpassing, the ideal which I had conceived. It is seldom enough in one's life that this occurs. When it does, one's innermost being is stirred with an emotion which baffles description, and which the most eloquent words can but dimly shadow forth.¹⁷

Here, British orientalist, Arthur John Arberry (better known as "A. J. Arberry), comments: "This brief extract may be taken as a fair illustration of how the printed record differs from the written journal."¹⁸ To be fair, one would expect an author to expand upon incomplete, sketchy diary entries to render a complete, full-fledged narrative. In the process, some poetic license may be permitted to enhance and vivify the retelling, which is in evidence here. The authenticity of this experience is not in question. It is a dramatic moment which Browne brings alive with narrative skill.

In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, Chapter XI, "Shíráz (continued)," from a purely literary perspective, represents a significant departure from Browne's preceding narrative, as he explains in the opening of this chapter:

In attempting to convey a correct impression of past events, it is often difficult to decide how far their true sequence may be disregarded for the sake of grouping together things naturally related. To set down all occurrences day by day, as they actually took place, is undoubtedly the easiest, and, in some ways, the most natural plan. On the other hand, it often necessitates the separation of matters intimately connected with one another, while the mind is distracted rather than refreshed by the continual succession of topics presented to it. For this reason I have thought it best to include in a separate chapter all that I have to say concerning my intercourse with the Bábís in Shíráz. . . . As it was, it was a thing apart; a separate life in a different sphere; a drama, complete in itself, with its own scenes and its own actors.¹⁹

Browne's first few diary entries in Shíráz have no significant mention of anything related to Bahá'í topics or personal encounters.²⁰ The situation soon changes. The very first "Bábí" (i.e. Bahá'í) whom Browne recounts in this chapter is "Mírzá Muḥammad":

Those who have followed me thus far on my journey will remember how, after long and fruitless search, a fortunate chance at length brought me into contact with the Bábís at Işfahán. They will remember also that the Bábí apostle to whom I was introduced promised to notify my desire for fuller instruction to his

fellow-believers at Shíráz, and that he further communicated to me the name of one whose house formed one of their principal resorts. I had no sooner reached Shíráz than I began to consider how I should, without attracting attention or arousing comment, put myself in communication with the person so designated, who occupied a post of some importance in the public service which I will not more clearly specify. His name, too, I suppress for obvious reasons. Whenever I have occasion to allude to him, I shall speak of him as Mírzá Muḥammad.²¹

Momen identifies this individual, to wit: "Mírzá Muḥammad-i-Báqir-i-Dihqán, son of Ḥájí Abu'l-Ḥasan-i-Bazzáz, and head of the Post Office in Shiraz, was one of the mainstays of the Shíráz Bahá'í community."²² Nothing specific is said about him at this point in the narrative.

In his entry for "Sunday, March 25th," 1888, a certain "Mírzá 'Alí Áqá" paid Browne a visit, promised to obtain for Browne a copy of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, and "agreed to collaborate in translating their book called *Lawḥ-i-Akḍas*" (*sic*, i.e. the *Kitáb-i-Akḍas*, i.e. the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* in Bahá'í transliteration).²³ This agrees with Momen's brief note to the same effect, and who discloses his identity as follows:

Mírzá 'Alí Áqá, later known as 'Alí-Muḥammad Khán, Muvaqqaru'd-Dawlih father of the Hand of the Cause Mr. Hasan M. Balyuzi. Mírzá 'Alí Áqá had met Browne while studying in England. The date of this first meeting of theirs in Shíráz was Saturday, 24 March. Some of what Browne attributes to him was, however, said on 5 April. Mr. Balyuzi has kindly allowed me to publish some extracts from his father's diary which describe Browne's stay in Shíráz. Concerning this first meeting, Mírzá 'Alí Áqá writes: 'I stayed about two hours. We talked a great deal. He had stopped in Teheran [Tehran] for some months. His purpose is touring the country.' Mírzá 'Alí Áqá was an Afnán (family of the Báb on the maternal side) on his mother's side, and was in later years to become Governor of the Gulf Ports and Minister for Public Works before his death in 1921.²⁴

So "Mírzá 'Alí" (i.e. Mírzá 'Alí Áqá, later known as 'Alí-Muḥammad Khán, Muvaqqaru'd-Dawlih, and also known as Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad Afnán Shírází) was the father of Bahá'í historian, Hasan M. Balyuzi (1908–1980, and appointed a "Hand of the Cause of God" by Shoghi Effendi). Balyuzi writes that his "father knew Edward Browne intimately in London in the eighties of the last century, was featured as Mírzá 'Alí in Browne's *A Year Amongst the Persians*, corresponded with him for some years, and more significant, he was instrumental in facilitating Browne's visit to 'Akká and to Bahá'u'lláh."²⁵ Of his Sunday, 25 March 1888, meeting with Mírzá 'Alí Áqá, Browne recounts:

I withdrew my eyes from the tablet and turned them on Mírzá 'Alí, who had been attentively watching my scrutiny. Our glances met, and I knew at once that my conjecture was right.

"Do you know Mírzá Muḥammad?" I asked presently.

"I know him well", he replied; "it was he who informed me that you were coming. You have not seen him yet? Then I will take you there one day soon, and you shall meet other friends. I must find out when he will be disengaged, and arrange a time."

"I did not know", said I, "that you. . . . Tell me what you really think . . ."

"I confess I am puzzled", he answered. "Such eloquence, such conviction, such lofty, soul-stirring words, such devotion and enthusiasm! If I could believe any religion it would be that."

Before I left he had shown me some of the books which he possessed. One of these was a small work called *Muduniyyat* [sic] ("Civilisation"), lithographed in Bombay, one of the few secular writings of the Bábís. Another was the *Kitáb-i-Aḳdas* [sic] ("Most Holy Book"), which contains the codified prescriptions of the sect in a brief compass. The latter my friend particularly commended to my attention.

"You must study this carefully if you desire to understand the matter", he said; "I will get a copy made for you by our scribe, whom you will also see at Mírzá Muḥammad's. You should read it while you are here, so that any difficulties which arise may be explained. I am acquainted with a young Siyyid well versed in philosophy, who would perhaps come regularly to you while you are here. This would excite no suspicion, for it is known that you have come here to study."²⁶

Of this Sunday, 25 March 1888, episode, Momen comments:

In Browne's diary, there is none of the excitement of discovering that his friend is a 'Bábí' that is evident in this passage. The diary states, however, that the two of them agreed to collaborate in translating the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. In Mírzá 'Alí Áqá's diary there is the following entry: 'In the afternoon Dr. Browne came as promised . . . [He] was here for as much as three hours. We were sitting in my room.'²⁷

At this juncture, Browne came to a sudden realization—a moment of truth—that the religion of the Báb had undergone a fairly sudden and decisive development, i.e. the ascendancy of Bahá'u'lláh ('Glory of God,' a spiritual title by which Mírzá Ḥusayn-'Alí Núrí Mázandarání was known) and the decline of his meantime rival, Mírzá Yaḥyá (Şubḥ-i-Azal, 'Morn of Eternity'):

Rejoiced as I was at the unexpected facilities which appeared to be opening out to me, there was one thing which somewhat distressed me. It was the Báb whom I had learned to regard as a hero, and whose works I desired to obtain and peruse, yet of him no account appeared to be taken. I questioned my friend about this, and learned (what I had already begun to suspect at Işfahán) that much had taken place amongst the Bábís since those events of which Gobineau's vivid and sympathetic record had so strangely moved me. . . . Of Mírzá Yaḥyá, whom I had expected to find in the place of authority, I could learn little. He lived, he was in Cyprus, he wrote nothing, he had hardly any followers At any rate I had found the Bábís, and I should be able to talk with those who bore

the name and revered the memory of one [the Báb] whom I had hitherto admired in silence—one whose name had been, since I entered Persia, a word almost forbidden. For the rest, I should soon learn about Behá, and understand the reasons which had led to his recognition as the inaugurator of a new dispensation.²⁸

Browne's entry for "Wednesday, March 28th," 1888 states, in part: "In the morning, I went & saw Mírzá 'Alí Áqá. I had a long talk with him. He promised to take me to see Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir, & others of the proscribed sect, and to bring a Seyyid of the same to read the to me, so that I might translate it into English."²⁹ This agrees with Momen's note:

Browne called again on Wednesday, 28 March and it was on this occasion that Mírzá 'Alí Áqá promised to bring along a young Sayyid who would assist Browne in his study of the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. The young Sayyid's name, which Browne never discovered, was Áqá Sayyid Muḥammad-'Alí. He was a theological student at this time, and in later years he taught logic and philosophy in Shíráz.³⁰

The entry for "Thursday, March 29th," 1888, documents this significant event:

Woke about 8 [8:00 a.m.]. Ar [Around] 10 [10:00 a.m.] Mírzá 'Alí Áqá came, accompanied by the Seyyid he spoke of yesterday, a young but sharp-looking man. They stayed till 11:30, & the Seyyid talked much, and asked endless questions about Natural Sciences—Anatomy, Physiology, Chemistry, etc. He talked little of his peculiar ideas till the end—then he promised to come repeatedly [?], & read the *Lawḥ-i-Aqdas* to me. It was arranged that we should go tomorrow afternoon to see Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir, as he is busy this afternoon at the post office. The scribe of the Law is to be there: & one of 'Alí Áqá's uncles, a great man³¹

Bearing in mind that *A Year Amongst the Persians* spans 650 pages, the present article simply cannot do justice to the entire work itself, but seeks to give a fair impression of Browne's masterful narrative by focusing on what is characterized here (with poetic license) as "the first recorded Bahá'í fireside," which is the focus to the next section.

The First Recorded Bahá'í Fireside: Friday, 30 March 1888

At the Home of Mírzá Muḥammad-i-Báqir

Whoever is familiar with Browne's life and work knows that he had a deep and abiding interest in the Báb and his religion. It was his passion. Driven by the desire to know more, Browne's journey throughout Persia took on the added dimension of a spiritual quest which ultimately led, in April 1890, to Browne's several audiences with Bahá'u'lláh himself, in Acre (‘Akká) in Ottoman Palestine, now Israel.³²

During his year-long (1887–1888) sojourn, little did Browne suspect the degree to which the Bábí had undergone profound changes and irreversible developments in the course of its evolution into what is now known as the Bahá'í Faith—information regarding which Browne documents in considerable detail—with an accuracy actuated by curiosity and the passion with which pursued his investigation into all things "Bábí"—yet with a certain begrudging air of disappointment in discovering that the Báb was no longer the sole, or even central, focus of the "Bábí" religion, with primary attention having shifted to Bahá'u'lláh, whose writings eclipsed those of the Báb. In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, Browne resumes his narrative as follows:

On the following afternoon I sallied forth to the house of Mírzá ‘Alí, accompanied by my servant, Ḥájí Şafar, whom I would rather have left behind had I been able to find the way by myself. I met Mírzá ‘Alí at the door of his house, and we proceeded at once to the abode of Mírzá Muḥammad. He was not in when we arrived, but appeared shortly, and welcomed me very cordially. After a brief interval we were joined by another guest, whose open countenance and frank greeting greatly predisposed me in his favour. This was the scribe and

missionary, Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan, to whose inopportune meeting with Murshid in my room I have already alluded. He was shortly followed by the young Siyyid who had visited me on the previous day, and another much older Seyyid of very quiet, gentle appearance, who, as I afterwards learned, was related to the Báb, and was therefore one of the Afnán ("Branches")—a title given by the Bábís to all related, within certain degrees of affinity, to the founder of their faith. One or two of my host's colleagues completed the assembly.³³

Momen reveals the identity of a a "Bábí" (Bahá'í) who is given the pseudonym, "Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan," to protect this individual's identity, whose life might be placed in danger if his true identity were publicly disclosed:

This was Hájí Mírzá Ḥusayn of Shíráz known as Khartúmí on account of his having been exiled to Khartoum with Hájí Mírzá Haydar-'Alí. . . . He was one of the leading Bahá'ís of Shíráz and the fine calligrapher. . . . After the passing of Bahá'u'lláh, however, he sided with the supporters of Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí and was expelled from the Bahá'í community.³⁴

Hasan M. Balyuzi adds that "Muḥammad-Ḥusayn Khartúmí" joined two other Bahá'í calligraphers in Bombay, where "the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh were printed for the first time."³⁵ As for the "much older Siyyid," Momen identifies this gentleman so: "This was Áqá Sayyid Ḥusayn Afnán, a merchant resident in Shíráz and Mírzá 'Alí Áqá's maternal uncle. He was the son of Hájí Mírzá Abu'l-Qásim and grandfather of Shoghi Effendi. He died about 1929."

This particular meeting appears to have taken place on "Friday, March 30th," 1888, in which Browne, in his diary, writes: "Woke at 2.15 [p.m.], but again slept till 3.15 [p.m.], When I hastily had tea, & set off with Hájí Safar to Mírzá 'Alí Áqá's. We met him at the door, & went . . . on to Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir's."³⁶ And further: "He was out when we arrived, but came soon. The scribe & propagandist, Hájí Mírzá Ḥuseyn, was the first to arrive: a nice genuine looking man: my friend the Seyyid who came yesterday, & another very quiet-looking Seyyid, an uncle of Mírzá 'Alí Áqá's, were there, & later on another employe of the post-office came."³⁷

As to the extended discussion on Bahá'í theophany, however, that took place in the afternoon and early evening of "Friday, March 30th," 1888, Browne's narration is somewhat of a variation on, and elaboration of, the corresponding diary account found on pages 213–214 of the diary. In *A Year amongst the Persians*, the heart of this discussion begins so: "Then began a discussion between myself on the one hand, and the young Seyyid and Hájí Mírzá Hasan on the other, of which I can only attempt to give a general outline."³⁸ This is somewhat of an understatement, as Browne's narration extends over the next several pages, ending on page 345, which ends so:

It was now past sunset, and dusk was drawing on, so I was reluctantly compelled to depart homewards. On the whole, I was well satisfied with my first meeting with the Bábís of Shíráz, and looked forward to many similar conferences during my stay in Persia. They had talked freely and without restraint, had received me with every kindness, and appeared desirous of affording me every facility for comprehending their doctrines; and although some of my enquiries had not met with answers as clear as I could have desired, I was agreeably impressed with the fairness, courtesy, and freedom from prejudice of my new acquaintances. Especially it struck me that their knowledge of Christ's teaching and the gospels was much greater than that commonly possessed by the Musulmans, and I observed with pleasure that they regarded the Christians with a friendliness very gratifying to behold.³⁹

Since this "first recorded Bahá'í fireside" (as the present writer has characterized it) is easily accessible on the Internet (and easily readable, since it is printed, rather than handwritten, considering that Browne's cursive, though fairly clear in its own way, is not always easily decipherable), the reader may appreciate an extended citation of Browne's original diary account of the discussion surrounding the relationship of Bahá'u'lláh to Christ especially as to their respective claims to divinity and as to Bahá'u'lláh's claims to prophecy fulfillment:

At first the conversation was very fitful—I not being sure whether it would do to talk before the servants, but on my telling 'Alí Aqá this, he spoke to Mírzá Báqir, who dismissed them. Then we began talking on religious matters, my conversation being chiefly with the scribe, Hájí Mírzá Huseyn, & the Seyyid, who however became very silent towards the end, I having rather worsened him in an argument about the *nufús-i-sayf* [in Persian script, i.e. "influence of the sword"] in Islám. I found it very difficult to get satisfactory answers out of them, as they shifted their ground continually. For instance they began arguing with me on the basis of their religion using the perfecting of the law of Christ, & likened the *ahkám* ["precepts"] to his commands – e.g. "prefer rather that you should be killed than that you should kill." They said Behá was Christ come back "as a thief in the night" according to his promise—nay, even "the Father" himself. I asked them what they meant by this: whether they meant that Behá was God.

They asked me what I understood by Christ's divinity, & they said—"As if in the present company, there were one present much more learned than all the rest, he might be said spiritually speaking, to be the Father of the rest, so might Behá be said to be the Father of Christ." I then asked them, if their religion were the perfecting of Christ's Law, what they thought of Islám, which would then appear an interpolation. This they would not admit, but avoiding discussing the question, saying it would take up too much time. The Seyyid & I then differed as to the right any "prophet" had to use force to propagate his religion. He talked about *qahr* [wrath] & *luṭf* [grace] [in Persian script], but I declined to admit the latter as [p. 228] an attribute of God. All along I was more & more struck with the insight which Gobineau had obtained with the matter.⁴⁰

In the corresponding passage in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, this very same conversation is amplified and elaborated, in nearly ten full pages (from the last two words on p. 343, through to the middle of p. 343) and quoted, in full, below, in order to demonstrate the degree to which Browne expanded the narrative from the diary notes provided above, with a few comments by the present writer interspersed throughout:

[Browne] "Secondly, though I admit that your religion possesses these proofs in a remarkable degree (at least so far as regards the rapidity with which it spread in spite of all opposition), I cannot altogether agree that the triumph of Islám was an instance of the influence of the prophetic word only. The influence of the sword was certainly a factor in its wide diffusion. If the Arabs had not invaded Persia, slaying, plundering, and compelling, do you think that the religion of Muḥammad would have displaced the religion of Zoroaster? To us the great proof of the truth of Christ's teaching is that it steadily advanced in spite of the sword, not by the sword: the great reproach on Islám, that its diffusion was in so large a measure due to the force of arms rather than the force of argument. I sympathise with your religion, and desire to know more of it, chiefly because the history of its origin, the cruel fate of its founder, the tortures joyfully endured with heroic fortitude by its votaries, all remind me of the triumph of Christ, rather than the triumph of Muḥammad."⁴¹

[Comment] Browne's criticism of Islam being spread by the "influence of the sword" rather than by the "influence of the prophetic word only" is a common objection raised by Westerners who are asked to accept the divine origin and nature of the Qur'an, the holy book of Islam—or of the *sui generis* (i.e. unique) nature of Islam itself as a divine religion—whatever that means, whether in terms of Islamic origins, or the rise of Islamic civilization itself, and or of Islam in its totality in the grand scheme of things. Browne's reference to "slaying, plundering, and compelling" is fair objection based on history, rather than scripture *per se*. Objectively speaking, the Qur'an is arguably the most influential book in history, next to the Bible.⁴² "Spiritual literacy"—one of the justifications for teaching world religions at public universities—naturally

includes (or should include) a kind of "music appreciation" of the Qur'an as revelation.⁴³ But the Qur'an is not even mentioned in Browne's account of this intense—and very tense—dialogue, in which Browne reiterates his objection—actually, his rejection—of the claim that Islam is a divine religion:

"As to your first observation," rejoined the Bábí spokesman, "it is true, and we do recognise Zoroaster, and others whom the Musulmans reject, as prophets. For though falsehood may appear to flourish for a while, it cannot do so for long. God will not permit an utterly false religion to be the sole guide of thousands. The question for you is whether another prophet has come since Christ: for us, whether another has come since Muḥammad."⁴⁴

[*Comment*] Here, the Bahá'í teacher tries his best to shift the focus away from Muḥammad to to refocus on Bahá'u'lláh, as the discussion, in Browne's words, was getting rather "fitful." While persuading Browne of the divine origin of Islam—including the divine mission of the prophet Muḥammad and the status of the Quran as divine revelation—was a worthy goal, it was not the primary goal of the discussion. But Browne does not relent, which is why he interrupts and raises his objection once again:

"Well," I interrupted, "what about the propagation of Islám by the sword? For you cannot deny that in many countries it was so propagated. What right had Muḥammad—what right has any prophet—to slay where he cannot convince? Can such a thing be acceptable to God, who is Absolute Good?"⁴⁵

[*Comment*] At this point, the discussion is going around in circles, with Browne now confounding the actions of Muḥammad with later Islamic history, such as the invasion and conquest of Persia. The "young Seyyid" then gives an answer that, although cogent and well-made in its own way, fails to persuade Browne:

"A prophet has the right to slay if he knows that it is necessary," answered the young Seyyid, "for he knows what is hidden from us; and if he sees that the slaughter of a few will prevent many from going astray, he is justified in commanding such slaughter. The prophet is the spiritual physician, and as no

one would blame a physician for sacrificing a limb to save the body, so no one can question the right of a prophet to destroy the bodies of a few, that the souls of many may live. As to what you say, that God is Absolute Good, it is undeniably true; yet God has not only Attributes of Grace but also Attributes of Wrath—He is *Al-Qāhhār* (the Compeller) as well as *Al-Laṭīf* (the Kind); *Al-Muntaqīm* (the Avenger) as well as *Al-Ghafūr* (the Pardoner). And these Attributes as well as those must be manifested in the prophet who is the God-revealing mirror."⁴⁶

Comment: At this point, the Bahá'í teacher offers more of an Islamic perspective rather than a Bahá'í position on the so-called "wrath" of God. In the Qur'an—and in the most widely known version of the list of ninety-nine "most beautiful names of God"—among God's names are: "the Subduer" (*al-Qāhhār*) (Q. 12:39; 13:16; 14:48; 38:65; 39:4); "the Compeller" (*al-Jabbār*) (Q. 59:23); "the Avenger" (*al-Muntaqīm*) (see Q. 44:16, although derived from the active participle, *muntaqimúna*); "the Humiliator" (*al-Mudhill*) (Q. 3:26, although derived from the imperfect verb, *watudhillu*), such that some of the various names that appear in the most popular list of ninety-nine are not taken *verbatim* from the Quran.⁴⁷ Browne takes issue with this argument which, in any case, is predicated on a classical Islamic perspective, and does not do justice to the Bahá'í understanding of God's "wrath" as an experiential metaphor for the natural and foreseeable (and sometimes unforeseeable) consequences and ramifications of unjust acts and omissions.

Both Browne and Áqá Sayyid Muḥammad-'Alí ("the young Seyyid"), moreover, failed to distinguish between "defensive *jihād*" (*jihād al-daf'*, as instanced by Muḥammad's defensive and preemptive military actions)⁴⁸ and "offensive *jihād*" (*jihād al-ṭalab*, i.e. militarized missionary campaigns, as in the Arab invasion and conquest of Persia). Either way, Browne cannot accept defensive *jihād* as a "just war":

"I do not agree with you there," I answered. "I know very well that men have often attributed, and do attribute, such qualities as these to God, and it appears to me that in so doing they have been led into all manner of evil and cruelty, whereby they have brought shame on the name of their religion. I believe what one of your own poets has said:

'Az Khayr-i-Mahz juz nikú'í náýad,'

'Naught but good comes from Absolute Good,'

and we cannot falsify the meaning of words in such wise as to say that qualities which we universally condemn in man are good in God. To say that revenge in man is bad, while revenge in God is good, is to confound reason, stultify speech, and juggle with paradoxes. But, passing by this question altogether, you can hardly imagine that a prophet in whom the 'Attributes of Wrath' were manifested could attract to himself such as have believed in a prophet in whom were reflected the 'Attributes of Grace.' Admitting even that a prophet sent to a very rude, ignorant, or froward people may be justified in using coercion to prepare the way for a better state of things, and admitting that Muḥammad was so justified by the circumstances under which he was placed, still you cannot expect those who have learned the gentle teaching of Christ to revert to the harsher doctrines of Muḥammad, for though the latter was subsequent as regards time, his religion was certainly not a higher development of the religion of Christ. I do not say that Muḥammad was not a prophet; I do not even assert that he could or should have dealt otherwise with his people; but, granting all this, it is still impossible for anyone who has understood the teaching of Christ to prefer the teaching of Muḥammad."⁴⁹

Comment: In the Bahá'í conception of this expression, God's "wrath" is metaphorical, refers to the "justice" of God, as Shoghi Effendi explains: "As regards the passages in the sacred writings indicating the wrath of God, . . . [t]he wrath of God is in the administration of His justice, both in this world and in the world to come."⁵⁰ Otherwise—as Browne reasonably points out—wrath and anger are primal and base

emotions that are unworthy of human beings, how much more so of God. So this Islamic argument simply does not work, since Browne does not share these classical Islamic assumptions about the nature of God. So Áqá Sayyid Muḥammad-‘Alí missed this golden opportunity to distinguish between the classical Islamic and the later Bahá'í conceptions of the so-called "Attributes of Wrath." This exchange may be characterized as a reflection of the religious understanding that one Baha'i had at the time of his encounter with Browne. Browne continues his lengthy and substantive objections:

You have said that the God-given message is addressed to the people of each epoch of time in such language as they can comprehend, in such measure as they can receive. Should we consider time only, and not place? May it not be that since the stages of development at which different peoples living at the same time have arrived are diverse, they may require different prophets and different religions? The child, as you have said, must be taught differently as he grows older, and the teacher accordingly employs different methods of instruction as his pupil waxes in years and understanding, though the knowledge he strives to impart remains always the same. But in the same school are to be found at one time pupils of many different ages and capacities. What is suitable to one class is not suitable to another. May it not be the same in the spiritual world?"⁵¹

Comment: Here, Browne offers a sophisticated and perhaps more realistic proposal that the Bahá'í doctrine of "Progressive Revelation" might recognize what may be described as uneven and asynchronous "stages of development" in various parts of the world, that simply do not, phenomenologically and historically speaking, neatly and uniformly "progress" in as sequential and straightforward a way as "the young Seyyid" had abstractly articulated. Browne continues:

At this point there was some dissension in the assembly; the young Seyyid shook his head, and relapsed into silence; Mírzá 'Alí signified approval of what I had said; Ḥájí Mírzá Ḥasan strove to avoid the point at issue, and proceeded thus:

"I have already said that what is incumbent on every man is that he should believe in the 'manifestation' of his own age. It is not required of him that he should discuss and compare all previous 'manifestations.' You have been brought up a follower of Christ. We have believed in this 'manifestation' which has taken place in these days. Let us not waste time in disputing about intermediate 'manifestations.' We do not desire to make you believe in Muḥammad but in Behá. If you should be convinced of the truth of Behá's teaching you have passed over the stage of Islám altogether. The last 'manifestation' includes and sums up all preceding ones. You say that you could not accept Islám because its laws and ordinances are harsher, and, in your eyes, less perfect than those laid down by Christ. Very well, we do not ask you to accept Islám; we ask you to consider whether you should not accept Behá. To do so you need not go back from a gentle to a severe dispensation."⁵²

Comment: Browne had confounded Áqá Sayyid Muḥammad-‘Alí ("the young Seyyid"), who "shook his head, and relapsed into silence." Mírzá ‘Alí Áqá ("Mírzá ‘Alí") actually took sides with Browne in this argument (i.e. "signified approval of what I had said"), at which point, Hájí Mírzá Ḥusayn Shírází, "Kharṭúmí" ("Hájí Mírzá Ḥasan") diverted and presented some Bahá'í "proofs" that Bahá'u'lláh was foretold by Christ:

"Behá has come for the perfecting of the law of Christ, and his injunctions are in all respects similar; for instance, we are commanded to *prefer rather that we should be killed than that we should kill*. It is the same throughout, and, indeed, could not be otherwise, for Behá is Christ returned again, even as He promised, to perfect that which He had begun. Your own books tell you that Christ shall come '*like a thief in the night,*' at a time when you are not expecting Him."

"True," I replied, "but those same books tell us also that His coming shall be '*as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven and shineth unto the other part under heaven.*'"⁵³

Comment: Here, in stating that “we are commanded to *prefer rather that we should be killed than that we should kill*,” Khartúmí is referring to this well known passage by Bahá'u'lláh:

It followeth, therefore, that rendering assistance unto God, in this day, doth not and shall never consist in contending or disputing with any soul; nay rather, what is preferable in the sight of God is that the cities of men's hearts, which are ruled by the hosts of self and passion, should be subdued by the sword of utterance, of wisdom and of understanding. Thus, whoso seeketh to assist God must, before all else, conquer, with the sword of inner meaning and explanation, the city of his own heart and guard it from the remembrance of all save God, and only then set out to subdue the cities of the hearts of others.

Such is the true meaning of rendering assistance unto God. Sedition hath never been pleasing unto God, nor were the acts committed in the past by certain foolish ones acceptable in His sight. *Know ye that to be killed in the path of His good pleasure is better for you than to kill.* The beloved of the Lord must, in this day, behave in such wise amidst His servants that they may by their very deeds and actions guide all men unto the paradise of the All-Glorious.⁵⁴

Khartúmí adroitly shifts his focus from arguing that Bahá'u'lláh has perfected the laws of Christ to the argument that Bahá'u'lláh fulfills the prophecies of Christ (under the rationale that “Behá has come for the perfecting of the law of Christ, . . . for Behá is Christ returned again”), and goes on to explain that these predictions must be understood figuratively, not literally:

[Khartúmí] “There can be no contradiction between these two similes,” answered the Bábí; “and since the phrase ‘*like a thief in the night*’ evidently signifies that when Christ returns it will be in a place where you do not expect Him, and at a time when you do not expect Him—that is, suddenly and secretly—it is clear that the comparison in the other passage which you quoted is to the suddenness and swiftness of the lightning, not to its universal vividness. If, as the Christians for the most part expect, Christ should come riding upon the

clouds surrounded by angels, how could He be said in any sense to come 'like a thief in the night'? Everyone would see him, and, seeing, would be compelled to believe."⁵⁵

Comment: Kharṭúmí's response to Browne's questions about Christ's well-known prophecies is a classic "appeal to absurdity," i.e. demonstrating that their literal occurrence is highly unlikely, if not impossible. Moreover, such predictions demand consistency, when read together. So two hermeneutical principles are advanced here: (1) such prophecies must be read figuratively; and (2) such prophecies must be read together consistently. Such views are grounded in Bahá'u'lláh's most important doctrinal work, the *Kitáb-i Íqán* ("The Book of Certitude," revealed in January, 1861). Browne does not reject Kharṭúmí's argument, as stated.⁵⁶

Kharṭúmí then goes on to explain that, as a general rule, popular messianic expectations are typically at variance with the way that the prophetic claimant actually fulfills (or is said to fulfill) the prophecies at issue. Such "realized eschatology" (as academics would say) is proclaimed by the messianic claimant (and understood by followers) as spiritual in nature—and therefore figurative as to discourse itself—inviting metaphorical and symbolic interpretations, which can be consistent with the natural laws of the universe, while allowing for a major spiritual event in the course of history to occur, but without the literal fulfillment of prophecies that would contravene the laws of nature:

[Kharṭúmí] It has always been through such considerations as these that men have rejected the prophet whose advent they professed to be expecting, because He did not come in some unnatural and impossible manner which they had vainly imagined. Christ was indeed the promised Messiah, yet the Jews, who had waited, and prayed, and longed for the coming of the Messiah, rejected Him when He did come for just such reasons. Ask a Jew now why he does not believe in Christ, and he will tell you that the signs whereby the Messiah was to be known were not manifest at His coming. Yet, had he understood what was intended by those signs, instead of being led away by vain traditions, he would

know that the promised Messiah had come and gone and come again. So with the Christians. On a mountain* [*Mount Carmel] close by Acre is a monastery peopled by Christian priests and monks, assembled there to await the arrival of Christ on that spot as foretold. And they continue to gaze upwards into heaven, whence they suppose that He will descend, while only a few miles off in Acre He *has* returned, and is dwelling amongst men as before.⁵⁷

Comment: Khartúmi refers to the Templers (also spelled "Templars") to whose leader, Georg David Hardegg (1812–1879), Bahá'u'lláh addressed a special "Tablet" (epistle), which proclaimed Bahá'u'lláh's eschatological advent, albeit in a very oblique and opaque way.⁵⁸ Khartúmi resumes his discourse, as follows:

O be not blinded by those very misapprehensions which you condemn so strongly in the Jews! The Jews would not believe in Christ because He was not accompanied by a host of angels; you blame the Jews for their obstinacy and frowardness, and you do rightly. But beware lest you condemn yourselves by alleging the very same reason as an excuse for rejecting this 'manifestation.' Christ came to the Jews accompanied by angels—angels none the less because they were in the guise of fishermen. Christ returns to you as Behá with angels, with clouds, with the sound of trumpets. His angels are His messengers; the clouds are the doubts which prevent you from recognising Him; the sound of trumpets is the sound of the proclamation which you now hear, announcing that He has come once more from heaven, even as He came before, not as a human form descending visibly from the sky, but as the Spirit of God entering into a man, and abiding there."⁵⁹

Comment: Here, Khartúmi defines heavenly "angels" as human "messengers," who proclaim, with the metaphorical "sound of trumpets," the very "proclamation which you now hear"—which implies, of course, that Browne is in the presence of these very angels, with Khartúmi being among them. Browne rejoins that to assert is not to prove, and demands more evidence that Bahá'u'lláh is indeed the return of Christ:

"Well," I replied, "your arguments are strong, and certainly deserve consideration. But, even supposing that you are right in principle, it does not follow that they hold good in this particular case. If I grant that the return of Christ may be in such wise as you indicate, nevertheless mere assertion will not prove that Behá is Christ. Indeed, we are told by Christ Himself that many will arise in His name, saying, 'See here,' or 'See there,' and are warned not to follow them."

"Many have arisen falsely claiming to be Christ," he answered, "but the injunction laid on you to beware of these does not mean that you are to refuse to accept Christ when He does return. The very fact that there are pretenders is a proof that there is a reality. You demand proofs, and you are right to do so. What proofs would suffice for you?"⁶⁰

Comment: Inviting Browne to be more specific (by asking, "What proofs would suffice for you?") is a sign of a skilled Bahá'í teacher (at this time in history, since Khartúmi, after Bahá'u'lláh's death on 29 May 1892, became a schismatic "Covenant-breaker"). Browne readily offers "three signs" for consideration:

"The chief proofs which occur to me at this moment," I replied, "are as follows:—You admit, so far as I understand, that in each 'manifestation' a promise has been given of a succeeding 'manifestation,' and that certain signs have always been laid down whereby that 'manifestation' may be recognised. It is therefore incumbent on you to show that the signs foretold by Christ as heralding His return have been accomplished in the coming of Behá. Furthermore, since each 'manifestation' must be fuller, completer, and more perfect than the last, you must prove that the doctrines taught by Behá are superior to the teaching of Christ—a thing which I confess seems to me almost impossible, for I cannot imagine a doctrine purer or more elevated than that of Christ. Lastly, quite apart from miracles in the ordinary sense, there is one sign which we regard as the especial characteristic of a prophet, to wit, that he should have knowledge of events which have not yet come to pass. No sign can be more appropriate or

more convincing than this. For a prophet claims to be inspired by God, and to speak of the mysteries of the Unseen. If he has knowledge of the Unseen he may well be expected to have knowledge of the Future. That we may know that what he tells us about other matters beyond our ken is true, we must be convinced that he has knowledge surpassing ours in some matter which we can verify. This is afforded most readily by the foretelling of events which have not yet happened, and which we cannot foresee. These three signs appear to me both sufficient and requisite to establish such a claim as that which you advance for Behá.”⁶¹

Comment: Here, Browne sets forth “three signs” which, if conclusively substantiated, may demonstrably prove Bahá’u’lláh’s theophanic claims: (1) specific “signs foretold by Christ as heralding His return” that Bahá’u’lláh has fulfilled; (2) such “doctrines taught” by Bahá’u’lláh that “are superior to the teaching of Christ”; and (3) “the foretelling of events which have not yet happened” that Bahá’u’lláh has foretold and which in fact, came true. Since the first two signs were previously discussed, Khartúmi (“Hájí Mírzá Hasan”) addresses the third sign for Browne’s consideration:

“As regards knowledge of the future,” replied Hájí Mírzá Hasan, “I could tell you of many occasions on which Behá has given proof of such. Not only I myself, but almost all who have been at Acre, and stood in his presence, have received warnings of impending dangers, or information concerning forthcoming events. Some of these I will, if it please God, relate to you at some future time. As regards the superiority of Behá’s doctrines to those of Christ, you can judge for yourself if you will read his words. As regards the news of this ‘manifestation’ given to you by Christ, is it not the case that He promised to return? Did He not declare that one should come to comfort His followers, and perfect what He had begun? Did He not signify that after the Son should come the Father?”⁶²

Comment: At this juncture, Browne is taken aback—astounded by the sheer audacity what sounded like an incredible and perhaps heretical claim—that Bahá'u'lláh is somehow to be understood as having the station of “the Father”:

“Do you mean,” I demanded in astonishment, “that you regard Behá as the Father? What do you intend by this expression? You cannot surely mean that you consider Behá to be God Himself?”

“What do you mean by the expression ‘Son of God?’” returned the Bábí.

“Our learned men explain it in different ways,” I answered; “but let us take the explanation which Christ Himself gave in answer to the same question—‘As many as do the will of God are the sons of God.’ Christ perfectly fulfilled the will of God; He had—as I understand it—reached the stage which your Śúfís call ‘annihilation in God’ (*fená fi'lláh*); He had become merged in God in thought, in will, in being, and could say truly, ‘I am God.’ Higher than this can no one pass; how then can you call Behá ‘the Father,’ since ‘the Father’ is Infinite, Invisible, Omnipresent, Omnipotent?”⁶³

Comment: It was now Khartúmi’s turn to respond, who answers:

“Suppose that in this assembly,” replied the other, “there were one wiser than all the rest, and containing in himself all, and more than all, the knowledge which the others possessed collectively. That one would be, in knowledge, the Father of all the others. So may Behá be called ‘the Father’ of Christ and of all preceding prophets.”

“Well,” I answered, by no means satisfied with this explanation, “apart from this, which I will pass by for the present, it appears to me that you confuse and confound different things. The coming of the Comforter is not the same thing, as we understand it, as the return of Christ, yet both of these you declare to be fulfilled in the coming of Behá. And whereas you spoke of Behá a little while ago as Christ returned, you now call him ‘the Father’.”⁶⁴

Comment: Khartúmi's answer fails to persuade Browne, who might have considered the Khartúmi's response on the issue of "the Father" to be somewhat evasive—and perhaps far-fetched as to its reasoning. In any case, Khartúmi's explanation also fails to distinguish between what appear to be two distinctive uses of the term "Father" in the Bahá'í Writings: (1) God, "the Father," as a transcendent and unmanifest; and (2) God, "the Father," as imminent and manifest, Who eschatologically and theophanically "appears" in a "God-revealing mirror" (what Bahá'ís refer to as the "Manifestation of God") as Khartúmi has previously indicated.

As for the first meaning (i.e. God as "the Father"), the following Bahá'í text discusses "God, the Father" in the received, traditional Christian understanding—and what therefore informed Browne's own conception of what is meant by "the Father":

Remind them of these words and say unto them: 'Verily did the Pharisees rise up against Messiah, despite the bright beauty of His face and all His comeliness, and they cried out that He was not Messiah [Masíh] but a monster [Masíkh], because He had claimed to be Almighty God, the sovereign Lord of all, and told them, 'I am God's Son, and verily in the inmost being of His only Son, His mighty Ward, *clearly revealed with all His attributes, all His perfections, standeth the Father.*' This, they said, was open blasphemy and slander against the Lord according to the clear and irrefutable texts of the Old Testament. Therefore they passed the sentence upon Him, decreeing that His blood be shed, and they hanged Him on the cross. . . .⁶⁵

Comment: As for the second meaning (i.e. Bahá'u'lláh as "the Father"), this harks back to the so-called "Yuletide prophecy" of Isaiah 9:6, in which the advent of the "Everlasting Father" is foretold, which Bahá'u'lláh claimed to fulfill: "*This is the Father foretold by Isaiah, and the Comforter [Jesus] concerning Whom the Spirit had covenanted with you. Open your eyes, O concourse of bishops, that ye may behold your Lord seated upon the Throne of might and glory.*"⁶⁶

Khartúmí, moreover, also fell short in failing to disambiguate between ("Behá . . . as Christ returned" and as ". . . 'the Father.'") Browne was confused by the claims that Bahá'u'lláh was, at one and the same time, "Christ returned" and as "The Father." One can easily understand why Browne was perplexed and strenuously objected to these dual claims, for if God is the "the Father," and Christ is "the Son" (which, after all, is the traditional Christian understanding), then how could Bahá'u'lláh be the eschatological advent of both "the Father" and "the Son"? Such a claim must have struck Browne as every bit as untenable (i.e. contradictory) as improbable (i.e. against the received Christian expectations of the signs that would herald Christ's return). On the issue of "the Comforter," Browne states:

"As regards the Comforter, we believe that he entered as the Holy Spirit into the hearts of the disciples soon after the Jews had put Christ to death. I know that the Muḥammadans assert that the prophecies which we apply to this descent of the Holy Spirit were intended to refer to Muḥammad; that for the word παράκλητος [*parāklētos*] they would substitute περικλητος [*pariklutos*] which is in meaning nearly equivalent to Aḥmad or Muḥammad, signifying one 'praised,' or 'illustrious.' But if you, as I suppose, follow the Muḥammadans in this, you cannot apply the same prophecy to Behá. If the promise concerning the advent of the Comforter was fulfilled in the coming of Muḥammad, then it clearly cannot apply to the coming of Behá."⁶⁷

Comment: At this point in the dialogue, Browne explains to Khartúmí the traditional Christian understanding (i.e. "we believe") that the Comforter was the Holy Spirit. That said, Browne, of course, is equally aware of the traditional Muslim understanding of Muḥammad as the "Comforter" as well. So one can appreciate Browne's objection here, when he remonstrates: "If the promise concerning the advent of the Comforter was fulfilled in the coming of Muḥammad, then it clearly cannot apply to the coming of Behá." Stephen Lambden has provided the most extensive discussion and analysis of Bahá'u'lláh's eschatological claim to be the Christ-promised "Comforter."⁶⁸ Browne goes on to say:

"And, indeed, I still fail to understand in what light you regard Islám, and must return once more to the question concerning its relation to Christianity and to your religion which I put some time ago, and which I do not think you answered clearly. If news of the succeeding 'manifestation' is given by every messenger of God, surely it is confined to the 'manifestation' immediately succeeding that wherein it is given, and does not extend to others which lie beyond it. Assuming that you are right in regarding Islám as the completion and fulfilment of Christianity, your religion must be regarded as the completion and fulfilment of Islám, and the prophecies concerning it must then be sought in the Qur'án and Traditions rather than in the Gospel. It is therefore incumbent on you, if you desire to convince me, first of all to prove that Muḥammad was the promised Comforter, and that his religion was the fulfilment of Christianity; then to prove that the coming of the Báb was foretold and signified by Muḥammad; and only after this has been done, to prove that Behá is he whom the Báb foretold. For it is possible to believe in Muḥammad and not to believe in the Báb, or to believe in the Báb and not to believe in Behá, while the converse is impossible. If a Jew becomes a Muḥammadan he must necessarily accept Christ; so if a Muḥammadan becomes a believer in Behá he must necessarily believe in the Báb."⁶⁹

Comment: Browne's further demand for demonstrable proofs of Bahá'í claims is formidable. Browne was highly intelligent, and could readily perceive inconsistencies (whether actual or not) in Kharṭúmí's discourse. This, of course, puts Kharṭúmí on the spot, and so he rejoins by deftly pointing out prophetic patterns, in the grand scheme of salvation history, by which repeated or recurring eschatological motifs may be appreciated as consistent, rather than contradictory:

[Kharṭúmí] "To explain the relations of Islám to Christianity on the one hand, and to this manifestation on the other, would require a longer time than we have at our disposal at present," replied the Bábí apologist; "but, in brief, know that the signs laid down by each prophet as characteristic of the next manifestation apply also to all future manifestations. In the books of each prophet whose followers still exist are recorded signs sufficient to convince them of the truth of the manifestation of their own age. There is no necessity for them to follow the chain link by link."⁷⁰

Comment: Kharṭúmí's assertion that there is "no necessity for them to follow the chain link by link" is perhaps somewhat disingenuous, but clearly was intended to concede to one of Browne's objections, and to then argue around it. Kharṭúmí resumes:

"Each prophet is complete in himself, and his evidence is conclusive unto all men. God does not suffer His proof to be incomplete, or make it dependent on knowledge and erudition, for it has been seen in all manifestations that those who have believed were men whom the world accounted ignorant, while those who were held learned in religion were the most violent and bitter opponents and persecutors. Thus it was in the time of Christ, when fishermen believed in Him and became His disciples, while the Jewish doctors mocked Him, persecuted Him, and slew Him. Thus it was also in the time of Muḥammad, when the mighty and learned among his people did most furiously revile and reproach him. And although in this manifestation—the last and the most complete—many learned men have believed, because the proofs were such as no fair-minded man could resist, still, as you know, the Muḥammadan doctors have ever shown themselves our most irreconcilable enemies, and our most strenuous opposers and persecutors."⁷¹

Comment: Here, Kharṭúmí skillfully sketches out a pattern of rejection and persecution that occurs each time a new messenger of God appears. The implication is that the converse may also hold true, i.e. that the followers of each succeeding prophet have believed, notwithstanding the objections of contemporary detractors. In other

words, Kharrúmí succeeds in demonstrating that an historical and paradigmatic pattern can be seen when each prophet, in a series of prophets, is rejected (by opponents), yet accepted (by proponents). Kharrúmí concludes his argument so:

“But those who are pure in heart and free from prejudice will not fail to recognise the manifestation of God, whenever and wherever it appears, even as Mawlaná Jalálu'd-Dín Rúmí says in the *Masnáví*—

*‘Díde’í báyad ki báshad sháh-shinás
Tá shinásad Sháh-rá dar har libás.’*

‘One needs an eye which is king recognising
To recognise the King under every disguise.’”⁷²

Comment: This is an exquisite climax in his presentation, whereby Kharrúmí quotes Rúmí, just as Browne earlier quoted Persian poetry to register one of his points. The foregoing dialogue between Browne and Kharrúmí is poignant, erudite, and sophisticated—albeit inconclusive. Although Browne was not persuaded, he must have been impressed. For his part, Browne’s intellect and curiosity were checked by his religious assumptions and intellectual obstinacy. In several profound ways, Browne was a captive of his own biases—although, to be fair, Browne went on to gain several audiences with Bahá’u’lláh in Acre, Palestine (now Israel) in April, 1890, of which Browne left a memorable account.⁷³ In retrospect, Browne would have done well to pay far greater attention to the scholarship of his contemporaries, Russian orientalists, Baron Viktor Rosen (1849–1908)⁷⁴ and Aleksandr Grigor’evich Tumanski (1861–1920).⁷⁵

While Browne took some liberties in expanding the discussion above in his retelling in *A Year amongst the Persians*, the next part of the discussion—which shifted to the writings of the Báb and Bahá’u’lláh—adheres more faithfully (i.e. more literally) to the actual diary entry itself:

Finally, abandoning discussion, I asked them about their books. . . . They told me that Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad [i.e. the Báb] had written 100, all called "*Biyán*" [i.e. *Bayán*], that translated by Gobineau being the *Kitábu'l-Ahkám*. The present "Masdar" [sic: *maṣḍar*, "source"] has also produced the like number, so that the literature of the sect is very extensive. . . . The most well-known (those that look on all which have emanated from the "*maṣḍar*" as of equal value) they mentioned the following: (1) The *Lawḥ-i-Aḳdas*: (2) The *Íḳán* (which I have). . . .⁷⁶

Comment: This entry perfectly corresponds to Browne's narrative in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, in this particular account:

As it was growing late, and I desired to make use of the present occasion to learn further particulars about the literature of the Bábís, I allowed the discussion to stand at this point, and proceeded to make enquiries about the books which they prized most highly. In reply to these enquiries they informed me that Mírzá 'Alí-Muḥammad the Báb had composed in all about a hundred separate treatises of different sizes; that the name *Beyán* was applied generally to all of them; and that the book which I described as having been translated into French by Gobineau must be that specially designated as the *Kitábu'l-Ahkám* ("Book of Precepts"). Behá, they added, had composed about the same number of separate books and letters. . . .

"If that be so," I remarked, "I suppose that some few works of greater value than the others are to be found in every community of believers; and I should be glad to know which these are, so that I may endeavour to obtain them."

"All that emanates from the Source (*maṣḍar*) is equal in importance," they answered, "but some books are more systematic, more easily understood, and therefore more widely read than others. Of these the chief are:—(1) The *Kitáb-i-Aḳdas* ('Most Holy Book'), which sums up all the commands and ordinances

enjoined on us; (2) The *Íkán* ('Assurance'), which sets forth the proofs of our religion;"77

After the meeting, Browne writes: "I left about 6:30 [p.m.] with Mírzá 'Alí Áká"78 So ends this historic evening, which has been documented both by way of Browne's original diary notes, followed by his polished published account in *A Year amongst the Persians*. A lengthy work (650 pages) in the Cambridge (i.e. second) edition, *A Year amongst the Persians*, is based on an even longer, and far more detailed, diary account. If the present study stimulates further research into Browne's 1887–1888 Persia diary, then one of its objectives will have been achieved.

Aftermath and Epilogue

Browne's remaining stay in Shiraz lasted until "Sunday, April 13th" [*sic*: read "Sunday, April 14th"], 1888, when it was cut short by a medical emergency, whereupon Browne was called upon to render his services as a trained medical physician, obliging him to leave Shiraz, never to return again.⁷⁹ One of his great disappointments was not being able to visit the house of the Báb, which had previously been arranged, and which, for Browne personally, would have served as a spiritual pilgrimage, as it were. As stated earlier, Browne did go on to make another spiritual pilgrimage, by way of attaining several audiences with Bahá'u'lláh himself, a fuller account of which has been made possible by Browne's diary notes of his visit to Acre ('Akká) in Ottoman Palestine, now Israel.⁸⁰ Given the limitations of space, an account of the rest of Edward Granville Browne's remaining stay in Shiraz cannot be recounted at length here, but remains for a subsequent article, if invited.

For the rest of Browne's memorable visit to Shiraz—particularly as it relates to his further remarkable encounters with illustrious "Bábís" (i.e. Bahá'ís)—the reader is referred to the remainder of Chapter XI of Browne's *A Year amongst the Persians*. To give a preview of some of the interesting encounters in Shiraz that Browne documents in his diary, however, mention may be made of one of Browne's diary entries for "Saturday, April 6th," 1888, in which the Bahá'í interpretation of the Prophet Muḥammad's

designation as the "Seal of the Prophets" (Q. 33:40) was discussed, and in which the Bahá'í teacher, this time, was not Khartúmí, but rather Mullá 'Abdu'lláh, known as Fáḍil-i-Zarqání (d. circa 1915), and described by Momen as "a scholar, Particularly in the fields of logic and philosophy." In *A Year Amongst the Persians*, however, Browne discretely protects Fáḍil's identity by calling him "Kámil."⁸¹ Browne goes one to say:

I finally asked him a question which I thought would puzzle him: I said "if the references to Christ's coming in the Gospel refer to this manifestation, then they cannot be applied (as the Muslims will) to Muḥammad & Islám is thus false: & vice versa?" To this he replied that in each manifestation news was given of future manifestations in general, & that what Christ saw was both to Muḥammad & this zuhúr.

He also explained the expression *Khátam al-Anbiyá'* [in Arabic script, i.e. "Seal of the Prophets"; see Qur'an 33:40] as meaning the perfection of the prophets who had come up to that time" (emphasis in the original), not as the last of the prophets, & quoted in demonstration thereof a prayer used at Kerbala & Nejed, where Muḥammad is called 'the seal of the prophets who have come before, & the key of those to come'."

I asked him as to their opinion and Zoroaster, & he said they regarded him as a prophet, for he said all religions which had obtained currency & permanence must have been in a measure true, however corrupted they may have become now.⁸²

Comment: Browne's published account of this conversation closely tracks with his diary entry:

[Browne] I now put to Kámil the following question, which I had already propounded in my first meeting with the Bábís of Shíráz:—"If the references to Christ's coming which occur in the Gospel refer to this manifestation, then they cannot be applied, as they are by the Muslims, to Muḥammad; in which case Muḥammad's coming was not foretold by Christ, and Islam loses a proof which,

as I understand, you regard as essential to every dispensation, viz. that it shall have been foreshadowed by the bearer of the last dispensation."

To this he [Kámil] replied that in each dispensation announcement was made of future manifestations in general, and that what Christ said concerning His return applied equally to the advent of Muḥammad, and of the Bab, and of Beha. Muḥammad's title, *Khátamu'l-Anbiyá* ("Seal of the Prophets"), did not, he explained, signify, as the Muḥammadans generally suppose, "the last of the Prophets," as is proved by a passage occurring in one of the prayers used by pilgrims to Kerbela and Nejef, wherein Muḥammad is called "the Seal of the prophets who have gone before, and the Key of those who are to come."⁸³

Comment: The passage referred to here invites further comment: In the Sura of Patience (*Súriy-i-Şabr*)—revealed on April 22, 1863 in Baghdad on Riḍván, the first day of the Bahá'í Festival of Paradise—Bahá'u'lláh wrote:

Recite then unto them that which the celestial Dove of the Spirit hath warbled in the holy Riḍván of the Beloved, that perchance they may examine that which hath been elucidated concerning "sealing" by the tongue of him he who is well-grounded in knowledge in the prayer of visitation for the name of God, 'Alí [Imám 'Alí]. He hath said—and his word is the truth!—:

"[He (Muḥammad) is] the seal of what came before Him and the harbinger of what will appear after Him."

In such wise hath the meaning of "sealing" been mentioned by the tongue of inaccessible holiness. Thus hath God designated His Friend [Muḥammad] to be a seal for the Prophets who preceded Him and a harbinger of the Messengers who will appear after Him (*limá ya'tí mina'l-mursalín min ba'du*).⁸⁴

Comment: Here, Bahá'u'lláh quotes from a "visitation" prayer to be recited in commemoration of Imám 'Alí, Muḥammad's first male follower. This prayer is universally recognized and used by Shia Muslims, and is variously ascribed to the Sixth and Tenth Imáms. In his book entitled, in Persian, *Sayrî dar Bústán-i Madínatu's-Şabr*—a

monograph on Bahá'u'lláh's Sura of Patience—Dr. Foad Seddigh has located and validated this visitation prayer in several authoritative sources.⁸⁵

This exchange between Browne and Fáḍil-i-Zarqání ("Kámil") includes a brief discussion of Zoroaster as well:

[Browne] "Do you," I asked, "regard Zoroaster as a true prophet?"

[Kámil] "Assuredly," he replied, "inasmuch as every religion which has become current in the world, and has endured the test of time, must have contained at least some measure of truth, however much it may have been subsequently corrupted. Only a Divine Word can strongly affect and continuously control men's hearts: spurious coin will not pass, and the uninterrupted currency of a coin is the proof of its genuineness."⁸⁶

Concluding Observations

In the present study, special focus has been devoted to an historic meeting that took place in Shiraz on "Friday, March 30th," 1888—here characterized as "the first recorded Bahá'í fireside." Browne's account, as set forth in both his original diary entries (of March–April, 1888) and in his published (and polished) account in *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1893)—is energized by Browne's intense curiosity, which may fairly be described as a "passion" for his research interest as a scholar. To ascertain the degree to which Browne's narrative is a composite, reworked account—and not strictly sequential and chronological—it made sense to draw some correspondences between Browne's diary entries, and the Shíráz narrative in Chapter XI in *A Year Amongst the Persians*, as to both topics and dates.

Whether or not this episode may be regarded—poetically albeit anachronistically—as "the first recorded Bahá'í fireside"—is up to the reader to judge. Howsoever characterized, this episode is historic in nature, to the extent that it offers an eyewitness account—in which the observer [Browne] is also a participant—of a meeting in which information was sought—and therefore gladly given by Browne's

Bahá'í informants—on what Browne consistently (although anachronistically) refers to as the “Bábí” religion.

When read Browne’s conversations in the present tense, the discourse is dynamic. The exchanges are sometimes tense—and suspenseful. Yet the tone remains respectful and cordial throughout. The Bahá'í proofs offered—cogent in their own way, given their faith-based presuppositions—ultimately fail to persuade Browne, who, as a Westerner and Christian, comes to the discussion with his own assumptions and biases. Curiosity, driven by both the personal as well as professional interest, animates the exchanges throughout, energized still further by the enthusiasm of Browne’s Bahá'í teachers themselves. Browne’s accounts are generally faithful to his original diary entries, with some embellishments (extensive, at times), in the published narrative in *A Year Amongst the Persians*.

The present study has also demonstrates that Browne’s Persia diary is a valuable primary source for a study of the origins of the Bahá'í religion in its native land of Persia (present-day Iran). Browne’s contemporaneous notes also provide insights as to Browne’s own intellectual odyssey. As a well-meaning and sympathetic Orientalist, Browne’s interest in the Bábí/Bahá'í religion became as much a personal, spiritual quest as it was a professional, scholarly enterprise quest, which Browne pursued with extraordinary verve and vigor, passion and perseverance. Browne’s Persia diary therefore invites further research, insofar as it offers a treasure trove of fascinating details and insights into the life and thought of nineteenth-century Persians—especially those of the “Bábí” religion. Fruitful investigation may be undertaken in further exploring corresponding accounts in Browne’s enduring *A Year Amongst the Persians*, and the Persia diary entries upon which the entire narrative is based—brought alive and vivified by Professor Browne’s masterful account of his yearlong sojourn, as he draws the reader into the heart and soul of Persian life, culture, and spirituality.

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- ¹ By way of a disclaimer and caveat, this conceit, i.e. the “first recorded Baha’i fireside,” although patently an anachronism, has conceptual value, considering that most, if not all, Baha’i readers will quickly understand and appreciate the analogy being drawn here. Baha’i firesides are informal meetings wherein teachings of the Baha’i Faith are introduced to interested individuals. Here, by the term “recorded” is meant “recorded in detail,” i.e. a descriptive and full account of the encounter. As one peer reviewer has pointed out during the manuscript stage of this publication, there was at least one prior encounter between a Westerner and a Baha’i, during which information on the Baha’i Faith was given. See Charles James Wills, *In the Land of the Lion and Sun; Or, Modern Persia: Being Experiences of Life in Persia from 1866 to 1881* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1891). Dr. Wills, a physician who lived and worked in Persia for several years (as a Medical Officer for Her Britannic Majesty’s Telegraph Staff in Persia), describes becoming the intimate friend of Ḥájí Siyyid Muḥammad Ḥasan and Ḥájí Sayyid Muḥammad-Ḥusayn (the “King of Martyrs” and “Beloved of Martyrs,” respectively), in which “they discoursed much on the subject of religion, and were very eloquent on the injustices perpetrated in Persia” (p. 153). (Qtd. in Moojan Momen (ed.), *The Bábi and Bahá’í Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 274–277. However, the details of their discourse are sketchy at best.
- ² “Mírzá ‘Alí” (i.e. Mírzá ‘Alí Áqá, later known as ‘Alí-Muḥammad Khán, Muvaqqaru’d-Dawlih, and also known as Mírzá ‘Alí-Muḥammad Afnán Shírází). See Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá’í Faith* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1979), p. 6.
- ³ Edward Granville Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia Received During Twelve Months’ Residence in That Country in the Years 1887–8* (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1893; Second Edition: Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926; Third edition: With a memoir by E. D. Ross and foreword by E. H. Minns, London: A. and C. Black, 1950; New Edition, with introduction by Denis MacEoin, London: Century, 1984). For some interesting comments and valuable sights regarding this work, see: C. Edmund Bosworth, ‘E. G. Browne and his A Year Amongst the Persians,’ *Iran* (British Institute of Persian Studies) 33 (1995): 115–122. See also: Geoffrey P. Nash, “Edward Granville Browne and the Persian ‘Awakening,’” *From Empire to Orient: Travellers to the Middle East, 1830–1926* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Christopher Buck, “Edward Granville Browne,” *British Writers, Supplement XXI*, edited by Jay Parini (Farmington Hills, MI: Charles Scribner’s Sons/The Gale Group, 2014), pp. 17–33. Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/12314852/_Edward_Granville_Browne._British_Writers._Supplement_XXI_2015_.
- ⁴ Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá’ís in the Time of Bahá’u’lláh* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1985), p. 42.

- 5 Description: "E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74). This second volume consists of Edward Granville Browne's diary written on his journey from Teheran to Shiraz 25 November 1887–6 April 1888, being a continuation of Vol. 1. The volume also contains letters, notes, drawings, telegraphs, etc. and samples of plants which he collected locally and pressed between pages. . . . Foliation: Red ink pagination in upper corner of every page." Available online at <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/1>. (Click on the hamburger menu, i.e. the icon with three horizontal lines, on the right.) (Accessed 26 November 2019.)
- 6 Description: "E.G. Browne's diaries 3 & 4 (MS LC.II.75). The third and fourth volumes of Edward Granville Browne's travel journal written on his journey from Shiraz on 6 April 1888 to Yazd and Kirman and back to England on 10 October 1888. In addition to letters, notes, drawings, travel documents, etc., the volume also contains a number of indices." Available online at <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00075/1>. (Click on the hamburger menu, i.e. the icon with three horizontal lines, on the right.) (Accessed 26 November 2019.)
- 7 Moojan Momen, ed., *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1987), p. 37 (headnote).
- 8 In a footnote, Hatcher and Martin credit their source of information: "The authors are indebted for this information to Mrs. Rúhíyyih Rabbaní, widow of the late Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, whose mother organized the original firesides in Montreal. The widespread use of the term no doubt owes much to its incorporation in the Guardian's correspondence." William S. Hatcher and J. Douglas Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion* (New York: Harper & Row, 1985), p. 179 (footnote #256). Thanks to Omid Ghaemmaghami for this information. (Tarjuman listserv post, 25 August 2018.)
- 9 Hatcher and Martin, *The Bahá'í Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*, p. 179.
- 10 Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, states: "I would like to comment that it has been found over the entire world that the most effective method of teaching the Faith is the fireside meeting in the home." From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian to the Bahá'í Group of Key West, Florida, 31 March 1955, *Bahá'í News*, No. 292, pp. 9–10. Qtd. in Helen Bassett Hornby, compiler, *Lights of Guidance: A Bahá'í Reference File* (New Delhi: Bahá'í Publishing Trust India, 1994), No. 828 ("Firesides More Effective Than Publicity.") http://bahai-library.com/hornby_lights_guidance_2.html&chapter=1#n828. (Accessed 26 November 2019.)
- 11 E.G. Browne's diaries 3 & 4 (MS LC.II.75), p. 338 (online: p. 7 of 392), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00075/7>.

- ¹² Among Browne's samples of plants which he collected locally and pressed between pages in his diary, see, the image of a pressed plant from Shiraz, with violet flowers (Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 217)), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/217>; and another image of a pressed, flowering plant from Shiraz (Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 218)), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/218>. See also this plant specimen that Browne collected and pressed: <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/259>.
- ¹³ The header on this page reads "ZARGÁN – SHÍRÁZ," apparently as a transitional header. E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 302 (online: p. 212), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/212>.
- ¹⁴ E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 329 (online: p. 247 of 266), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/247>.
- ¹⁵ E.G. Browne's diaries 3 & 4 (MS LC.II.75), p. 349 (online: p. 26 of 392), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00075/26>, where the header on this page reads, transitionally: "SHÍRÁZ – ZARGÁN."
- ¹⁶ E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), pp. 302–303 (online: pp. 212–213), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/212> and <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/213>.
- ¹⁷ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, Second Edition (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1926; Reprinted 1927), pp. 283–284 (Chapter IX, "From Işfahán to Shíráz").
- ¹⁸ A. J. Arberry, "Edward Granville Browne," *Asian Review*, New Series, Vol. LVIII, No. 215 (July 1962): 168–181 (p. 173). Also separately published as: A. J. Arberry, "Edward Granville Browne 1862–1962: A Centenary Address," *The Iran Society Occasional Papers*, Vol. 6 (London: Iran Society, 1962). (Citation to original paper courtesy of Steven Kolins, 26 August 2018.)
- ¹⁹ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 326.
- ²⁰ Brief notes on the next few digital images: Vol. II, p. 303 (online: p. 213): The entry for "Thursday, March 22nd," 1888. Nothing related to Bahá'í topics or encounters. Vol. II, p. 304 (online: p. 214): The entry for "Friday, March 23rd," 1888. Nothing related to Bahá'í topics or encounters. Vol. II, p. 305 (online: p. 215): The entry for "Saturday, March 24th," 1888. Nothing related to Bahá'í topics or encounters. Vol. II, p. 306 (online: p. 216): A continuation of the same diary entry. Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 217): Image of a pressed plant from Shiraz, with violet flowers. Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 218): Another image of a pressed, flowering plant from Shiraz. Vol. II, p. 307 (online: p. 219): A continuation of the same diary entry. Nothing related to Bahá'í topics or encounters.
- ²¹ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 326–327.

- 22 Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, p. 38 (footnote).
- 23 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 308 (online: p. 220), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/220>. No mention of Bahá'í topics or encounters is found in the entry for "Monday, March 26th," 1888 entry. Same for entry for "Tuesday, March 27th," 1888.
- 24 Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*, p. 38 (footnote).
- 25 Hasan M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1979), p. 6.
- 26 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 327–328.
- 27 Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*, p. 39 (footnote).
- 28 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 328–329.
- 29 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 309 (online: p. 221), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/221>.
- 30 Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*, p. 39 (footnote).
- 31 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 310 (online: p. 222), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/222>. The next three scans have no Bahá'í content: Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 223): A document, in Persian. Vol. II, p. [no page] (online: p. 224): Reverse image of the same document. Vol. II, p. 311 (online: p. 225): The entry for "Friday, March 30th," 1888. Nothing related to Bahá'í topics or encounters until Vol. II, p. 312.
- 32 Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, "Scholar Meets Prophet: Edward Granville Browne and Bahá'u'lláh (Acre, 1890)," *Baha'i Studies Review* 20 (2014 [2018]): 21–38. (Published online: January 11, 2018.) Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/36015012/Scholar_Meets_Prophet_Edward_Granville_Browne_and_Baha_u_llah_Acre_1890_2018.
- 33 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 329–330.
- 34 Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*, p. 41 (footnote).
- 35 Balyuzi, *Eminent Bahá'ís in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 121. See also Farzin Vejdani, "Transnational Baha'i Print Culture: Community Formation and Religious Authority, 1890–1921," *Journal of Religious History* (Special Issue: *Baha'i History*) 36.4 (December 2012): 499–515.

- 36 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 312 (online: p. 226), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/226>.
- 37 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 313 (online: p. 227), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/227>.
- 38 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 330.
- 39 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 345.
- 40 E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), pp. 313–314 (online: pp. 227–228), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/227> and <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/228>.
- 41 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 333–334.
- 42 See, e.g., Christopher Buck, "Discovering" [the Qur'an], *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to the Qur'an*, second edition, edited by Andrew Rippin and Jawid Mojaddedi (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2017), pp. 23–42. Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/36108628/Discovering_the_Qur%CA%BE%C4%81n_The_Wiley_Blackwell_Companion_to_the_Qur%CA%BE%C4%81n_Second_Edition_2017_.
- 43 See, e.g., Todd Lawson, *The Quran: Epic and Apocalypse* (London: Oneworld Academic, 2017).
- 44 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 334.
- 45 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 334.
- 46 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 334–335.
- 47 Mohammad Hassan Khalil, "Is Hell Truly Everlasting?: An Introduction to Medieval Islamic Universalism," *Locating Hell in Islamic Traditions*, edited by Christian Lange (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2016), pp. 165–174 [171–172].
- 48 See Q. 2:190 (i.e. the general nature of *jihád* is defensive, to be waged in response to military attacks on the Muslim community); Q. 9:5 (a later verse, justifying offensive preemptive strikes, i.e. preventive war, as a strategy against credible threats, but only after the enemy is first given advance warning); and Q. 5:33 (specifying punishments for "those who wage war against Allah and His Messenger," Mohsin Khan's translation).
- 49 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 335–336.
- 50 Shoghi Effendi, Letter, dated 29 April 1933, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer, *Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand* (Suva, Fiji Islands: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1982), pp. 32–33.

- 51 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 336.
- 52 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 336–337.
- 53 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 337.
- 54 Bahá'u'lláh, [Tablet to] "Násiri'd-Dín Sháh," *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2002), pp. 109–110 (emphasis added).
- 55 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 337.
- 56 Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán: The Book of Certitude*, translated by Shoghi Effendi (). See also: Sholeh Quinn and Stephen N. Lambden, "Ketáb-e Iqán," *Encyclopaedia Iranica* (2010, published online at <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ketab-iqan>) (accessed 26 November 2019); Christopher Buck, *Symbol and Secret: Qur'an Commentary in Bahá'u'lláh's Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1995/2004), available online at: https://www.academia.edu/4333603/Symbol_and_Secret_Qur_an_Commentary_in_Baha_u_llah_s_Kitab-i_Iqan_1995_2004_; Buck, "Beyond the 'Seal of the Prophets': Bahá'u'lláh's Book of Certitude (*Ketáb-e Iqán*)." *Religious Texts in Iranian Languages*, edited by Clause Pedersen & Fereyduun Vahman (København (Copenhagen): Det Kongelige Danske Videnskabernes Selskab, 2007), pp. 369–378. Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/20339629/Beyond_the_Seal_of_the_Prophets_Baha_u_llah_s_Book_of_Certitude_Ketab-e_Iqan_2007_.
- 57 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 337–338.
- 58 This recondite epistle has been translated, in full, by sStephen Lambden, "The Tablet to Hardegg (*Lawḥ-i-Hirtík*): A Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh to the Templar Leader Georg David Hardegg." *Lights of 'Irfán: Papers Presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars, Book IV* (Evanston, IL: 'Irfán Colloquia, 2003), pp. 97–110. Online at http://irfancoolloquia.org/pdf/lights4_lambden_ekbal.pdf. (Accessed 26 November 2019.)
- 59 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 338.
- 60 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 338–339.
- 61 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 339–340.
- 62 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 340.
- 63 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 340.
- 64 Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 340–341.
- 65 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá* (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 1982), p. 40 (emphasis added).

- ⁶⁶ Bahá'u'lláh, [Tablet to] "Pope Pius IX," *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 63 (emphasis added).
- ⁶⁷ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 341.
- ⁶⁸ Stephen Lambden, "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Ahmad and the Comforter (*Mu'azzi*)," in *Scripture and Revelation*, ed. Moojan Momen (Oxford: George Ronald, 1997), pp. 69–124.
- ⁶⁹ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 341–342.
- ⁷⁰ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 342.
- ⁷¹ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 342–343.
- ⁷² Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 333–343.
- ⁷³ See, e.g., Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, "Scholar Meets Prophet: Edward Granville Browne and Bahá'u'lláh (Acre, 1890)," *Baha'i Studies Review* 20 (2014 [2018]): 21–38. (Edited by Steve Cooney.) (Published online: January 11, 2018.) Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/36015012/_Scholar_Meets_Prophet_Edward_Granville_Browne_and_Baha_u_llah_Acre_1890_2018_.
- ⁷⁴ See, e.g., Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, "Bahá'u'lláh's *Bishárát* (Glad-Tidings): A Proclamation to Scholars and Statesmen," *Baha'i Studies Review* 16 (2010): 3–28. (Edited by Moojan Momen.) Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/4332824/_Baha_u_llah_s_Bishar%C4%81r%C4%81t_Glad-Tidings_A_Proclamation_to_Scholars_and_Statesmen_2010_.
- ⁷⁵ See, e.g., Christopher Buck and Youli A. Ioannesyan, "The 1893 Russian Publication of Bahá'u'lláh's Last Will and Testament: An Academic Attestation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Successorship." *Baha'i Studies Review* 19 (2013): 3–44. (Edited by Steve Cooney.) (Published May 2017.) Available online at: https://www.academia.edu/34197434/_The_1893_Russian_Publication_of_Baha_u_llah_s_Last_Will_and_Testament_An_Academic_Attestation_of_Abdu_l-Baha_s_Successorship_2013_published_in_June_2017_.
- ⁷⁶ E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 314 (online: p. 228), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/228>.
- ⁷⁷ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 343–344.
- ⁷⁸ E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), pp. 347–348 (online: pp. 228), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/228>.
- ⁷⁹ E.G. Browne's diaries 3 & 4 (MS LC.II.75), p. 348 (online: p. 26), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00075/26>.

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- ⁸¹ Momen, *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*, p. 68 (footnote).
- ⁸² E.G. Browne's diaries 2 (MS LC.II.74), p. 329 (online: p. 247), <https://cudl.lib.cam.ac.uk/view/MS-LC-II-00074/247>.
- ⁸³ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), pp. 357–358.
- ⁸⁴ Bahá'u'lláh, Sura of Patience (*Súriy-i-Şabr*), provisional translation by Omid Ghaemmaghami. Qtd. in Christopher Buck, "Muḥammad: the Last Prophet?" (May 15, 2017), <http://bahaiteachings.org/last-prophet-muhammad>. (Accessed 26 November 2019.) 9 September 2018.)
- ⁸⁵ Dr. Seddigh states that this visitation prayer in commemoration of Imám 'Alí is found in a book called *Kámilu'z-Ziyárát*, a well-known Muslim collection of prayers of visitation (i.e. prayers meant to be read at the graves of the Prophet Muḥammad, the Shia Imáms, and other Shia figures). The collection of commemorative prayers was probably compiled by the Shia scholar, Ibn Qúlúya (d. 978 or 979 CE). The visitation prayer for Imám 'Alí's shrine, has the exact words Bahá'u'lláh revealed—verbatim. The eleventh chapter—entitled: "Visiting the grave of the Commander of the Faithful [Imám 'Alí], how the grave should be visited, and what to pray at the grave"—begins on page 92, and the statement to which Bahá'u'lláh refers is found on p. 97 (and is the second "*ḥadīth*" (tradition) cited). This very same statement is also found in prayers of visitation for the shrine of Imám Ḥusayn and in a prayer to be said at the shrines of all of the Imáms. (References courtesy of Omid Ghaemmaghami and Dr. Foad Seddigh.)
- ⁸⁶ Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (1927), p. 358.