

BIBLIOGRAPHY OF ENGLISH-LANGUAGE WORKS ON THE BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í FAITHS 1844–1985

Author: William P. Collins

Published: George Ronald, Oxford, 1990, 521 pages

A bibliography is a list of writings on a specific subject or by a particular author. Thus, it is not the type of work one picks up for light reading. Instead it is a reference work that one delves into to research titles or topics.

This book has two great values. First, it is the most extensive listing of Bahá'í literature in English now available. Thus, it will replace earlier bibliographies (including those in the volumes of *Bahá'í World* and the 1985 work by Joel Bjorling, *The Bahá'í Faith: A Historical Bibliography*), which were incomplete and sometimes inaccurate. Second, it provides an informative explanation of the history and nature of Bahá'í publishing, as well as a list of Bahá'í publishers. William Collins's bibliography starts with a detailed article about the types and history of Bahá'í literature. In the article, he discusses the different types of sacred writings and authorized interpretations of the Bahá'í Faith, as well as the legislation and elucidation of the Universal House of Justice. This is followed by the other types of Bahá'í literature in English, such as introductory, scholarly, historical, biographical, literary, inspirational, reference and oppositional works; periodicals; and children's literature. Mr. Collins, for reasons of time, has chosen to exclude some categories of Bahá'í publications, including audio-visual materials, correspondence courses, maps, newspaper articles, official documents, posters, and ephemera. These may be included in future volumes. The bibliography is structured to allow for expansion, and Mr. Collins is at work on a supplement for the years 1986–1990.

It takes a few minutes of careful study to understand the organization of the bibliography, but once done it is easy to find specific items. Collins breaks down the titles into thirteen sections, starting with the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Báb, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and Shoghi Effendi, plus the works and messages of the Universal House of Justice. Then he covers works directly on or containing references to the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths—including are Braille material, periodicals, articles in non-Bahá'í periodicals, works by Covenant-Breakers, and theses. The usual bibliographical information is given—title, author, publisher, place and date of publication, page information—with the format based on major American style manuals. Most sections start with a brief article giving background information, and significant items in the section are annotated. There are three indexes, by name, title, and subject. The name index covers all personal, corporate, and conference names associated with any of the covered published works.

The bibliography, with its listings covering 310 pages, indicates how extensive the literature on the Bábí and Bahá'í Faiths has become. So, as a good

librarian, Mr. Collins stresses the need for more Bahá'í libraries, as few people will be able to afford to develop a comprehensive personal Bahá'í library. One criticism of the volume is that there is no indication whether the book is published on acid-free paper. Acid-free paper is a necessity for any book that a library or individual will want to keep permanently. This volume is a handsomely published, well-designed bibliography. It will be very useful to the researcher, academic scholar, and book collector and should be in every major library collecting Bahá'í books.

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