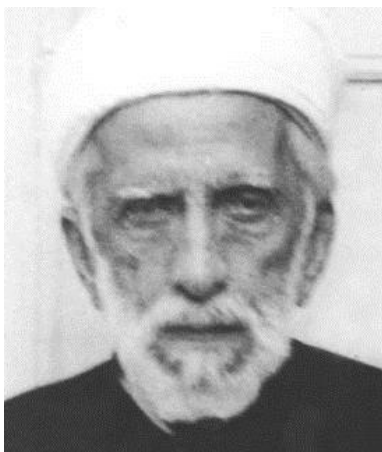


**The Burke Library Archives, Columbia University Libraries,
Union Theological Seminary, New York**

Missionary Research Library Archives: Section 2

Finding Aid for

Badi'u'lláh and Muhammad Ali Baha'i Papers, 1901 – 1944



Mirza Badi'u'lláh, "The Memoirs of Badiulla,"
<http://www.bayanic.com/notes/memoirs/memoirs.html>.

Finding Aid prepared by: Kristen Leigh Southworth, February 2012
With financial support from the Henry Luce Foundation

Summary Information

Creator: Missionary Research Library
Title: Badi'u'lláh and Muhammad Ali Baha'i Papers
Inclusive dates: 1901 – 1944
Bulk dates: 1901
Abstract: Collection contains English translations of two letters written by Badi'u'lláh and Muhammed Ali to the newly-established House of Justice in the United States, as well as correspondence from 1944 between Ruth White, Grace Provost Bestedo, and Union Theological Seminary regarding controversies about Mrs. Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler's branch of Baha'i.
Size: 1 boxes, 0.25 linear feet
Storage: Onsite storage
Repository: The Burke Library
Union Theological Seminary
3041 Broadway
New York, NY 10027
Email: burkearchives@library.columbia.edu

Administrative Information

- Provenance: Originally part of the independent Missionary Research Library, these records were moved with the MRL to the Brown Memorial Tower of Union Theological Seminary in 1929. In 1976 the records were accessioned to the Burke Library archives with the closure of the MRL.
- Access: Archival papers are available to registered readers for consultation by appointment only. Please contact archives staff by email to burkearchives@library.columbia.edu, or by postal mail to The Burke Library address on page 1, as far in advance as possible. Burke Library staff is available for inquiries or to request a consultation on archival or special collections research.
- Access Restrictions: The collection is unrestricted to readers. Certain materials, however, are in a fragile condition, and this may necessitate restriction in handling and copying.
- Preferred Citation: Item description, MRL 2: Badi'u'lláh and Muhammad Ali Baha'i Papers, box #, and folder #, The Burke Library at Union Theological Seminary, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Biography

Baha'i was established in the nineteenth century and came out of the Shi'a Islamic tradition. Baha'i stresses unity of God, religion, and humanity, and teaches that a progressive revelation of God is manifest in all religions. Bahá'u'lláh, the founder of Baha'i, is believed to be a Divine messenger much like Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. Although Baha'i strives for religious unity, it is not syncretic but is its own distinct religion with doctrines, traditions, moral laws, and organized establishment of leadership and authority.

Badi'u'lláh (1867-1950) was the youngest son of Bahá'u'lláh. Early on, he was a supporter of the campaign led by his half-brother, Muhammad Ali (1853-1937), to undermine their oldest brother Abdu'l-Bahá's claim to succession. However, in 1903 Badi'u'lláh rejected Ali's claims and denounced him in a widely circulated letter, *Badi'u'lláh's Epistle*. Ali became known by those who remained loyal to Abdu'l-Bahá as the "Arch-Breaker of Bahá'u'lláh's Covenant."

Devotees of Baha'i that follow the tradition as it was handed down to Bahá'u'lláh's successors support the institution of a unified administrative order that they believe to be divinely ordained, with the House of Justice in Israel currently serving as the supreme governing body. The Baha'i faith was brought to the United States in 1893 by Dr. Ibrahim George Kheiralla, who initially set up classes in Chicago. In 1900, a school was established and a board of councils was elected. In 1901 it was organized into the "House of Justice of Baha'is of Chicago, IL," which later became the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States.

Mrs. Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler (Julia Lynch Owen, 1882-1961) supported the efforts of Muhammad Ali, and in 1925 co-founded the "New History Society," a reform Baha'i movement in New York City that supported a more broad and universal interpretation of the Baha'i religion, apart from the religious institution of The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is. She was expelled from the religion in 1939 by Abdu'l-Bahá's successor, Shoghi Effendi. Ruth White

authored a number of books on behalf of this new movement, and was a vocal defender of Mrs. Lewis Chanler. She argued that Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament, which identified Shoghi Effendi as the successor and established the Baha'i administrative order, was a forgery.

Sources:

- Bahai Library Online. "Badi'u'lláh's Epistle to the Baha'i World." <http://bahai-library.com/histories/badiullah.html> (Accessed 23 February 2012).
- Balyuzi, H.M. *Eminent Baha'is in the Time of Bahá'u'lláh*. Oxford: George Ronald, 1985.
- Miller, William McElwee. *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings*. Pasadena, CA: William Carey Library Press, 1974.
- Smith, Peter. *A concise encyclopædia of the Bahá'í Faith*. Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2000.
- Smith, Peter. *Baha'i Religion: A Short Introduction to its History and Teachings*. Oxford: G. Ronald, 1988.
- Stockmann, Robert. *The Baha'i Faith in America*. Wilmette, IL: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1985.
- The Religion of Bayan. "The Memoirs of Bahi'u'lláh [The Most Luminous Branch]: Baha's Youngest Son." <http://www.bayanic.com/notes/memoirs/memoirs.html> (Accessed 23 February 2012).
- White, Ruth. *Is the Bahai Organization the Enemy of the Bahai Religion?*. New York: JJ Little and Ives Company, 1929. http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/diglib/books/U-Z/W/White_Ruth/RWAPP.htm (Accessed 23 February 2012).
- White, Ruth. *Bahai Leads Out of the Labyrinth*. New York: Universal Publishing Company, 1944. <http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=uc1.b109269> (Accessed 23 February 2012).

Collection Scope and Content Note

This collection contains five letters that relate to the establishment of the Baha'i faith in the United States.

Folder 1 contains the English translations of two letters co-signed by Badi'u'lláh and Muhammad Ali on March 31, 1901, approximately two years prior to the falling out between the two brothers. One is addressed generally to the newly organized Baha'i House of Justice in the United States and contains encouragement for the community. The second is addressed more specifically to the House of Justice president, and praises Dr. Ibrahim George Kheiralla for bringing the "true knowledge" of Bahai to the United States and for setting up an organization there. The authors also respond to queries about the nature of religious divisions in the world.

Folder 2 contains three letters: the first from Ruth White to Union Theological Seminary regarding her complaint that the Burke Library had incorrectly categorized her books as being against Baha'i; the second from the librarian in response to Ruth; and a third letter to the librarian, written by Grace Provost Bastedo, which offers an alternative analysis of the various positions put forth in Ruth's letter regarding the Baha'i faith.

Processing

Metal clips and staples were removed from materials and folded items were flattened. Materials were placed in new acid-free folders and boxes. Acidic items were separated from one another

by interleaving with acid-free paper as needed. Any items in an advanced state of deterioration were placed in Mylar envelopes.

Collection was originally called the Ali, Mohammad and Badiallah Papers by MRL.

Contents List

Box	Folder	Contents
1	1	Badi'u'llah and Muhammad Ali Letters [31 March 1901]
1	2	Ruth White Correspondence [1944]