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Article

Some of the Earliest References to Bahá'u'lláh in the West

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Abstract

This study outlines the first mention of Bahá'u'lláh in popular media in the West in 1871. Using digital newspaper archives, it traces how letters by Georg David Hardegg and Dr. Thomas Chaplin introduced Bahá'u'lláh's name, under various transliterations, to readers across Europe, North America, and the Pacific. Chaplin's letter in *The Times* proved especially influential, being reprinted in more than forty newspapers as well as several religious journals and encyclopaedias. Where available, information about the editors who were responsible for these publications is shared. These findings show the extent to which an unintended international network helped spread Bahá'u'lláh's name during His lifetime.

Introduction

It is commonly believed that the first reference in the West to Bahá'u'lláh occurred at the World's Parliament of Religions, which was held at the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition in 1893. There Rev. George Alfred Ford (1851-1928) read a paper written by Rev. Henry Harris Jessup (1832-1910)[1], entitled, "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations."[2] In this paper, filled with Christian missionary zeal, he spends a few words on the Bahá'í Faith and mentions the name of Bahá'u'lláh[3]. This event became an important element in Bahá'í historiography, and Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Faith, mentions it in his *God Passes By*[4]. However, lesser known to many scholars is that the first reference to the name of Bahá'u'lláh occurred twenty-two years earlier, as will be shown here.

Thanks to modern technology, a significant portion of the world's newspapers are now available through digital sources. Many leading national libraries have provided access to their newspaper collection on an unprecedented scale. It is no longer necessary to travel from city to city in order to bury oneself in heaps of fragile and crumbling pages, or to squint at barely legible microfilms. Today the results are studies such as this one which peel back the pages of time and reveal the knowledge of events, events that most thought were hidden away in long lost archives. One such event was the imprisonment and exile of Bahá'u'lláh.

Before proceeding a brief note on the methodology is needed. The research was limited to available digital newspaper databases, which are outlined in Appendix 2. It was not universal in scope. Many private and a few state newspaper databases, such as Retronews (France), British Newspaper Archive and the Irish Newspaper Archives, are behind pay walls. Furthermore, there are others, mainly from the Global South, which are not accessible to independent scholars and scholars outside of America, since they are restricted to institutional subscriptions. Not all national or regional library agencies have the ability to digitize their newspaper collection, mainly due to lack of funds and dedicated staff.

[1] Both Ford and Jessup were American Presbyterian missionaries serving in the region of Lebanon and Syria.

[2] Jessup, Henry H., "The Religious Mission of the English Speaking Nations," in John Henry Barrows, ed., *The World's Parliament of Religions: An Illustrated and Popular Story of the World's First Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago in Connection with the Columbian Exposition of 1893.* Volume II (Chicago: The Parliament Publishing Co., 1893), pp. 1122-1126.

[3] Here the name is given as 'Beha Allah.'

[4] Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2012), pp. 404-405.

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Early Mentions

One of the first writers to come upon the first mentions of Bahá'u'lláh's name was Moojan Momen. In 1981 in his The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944 he mentions the earliest references to Bahá'u'lláh in the Western press by Thomas Chaplin and Georg Hardegg. Later other writers such as Kurt Asplund[5] expand the number of newspaper references to Chaplin's letter.

The story begins in the mid- and late 1800s the Persian and Ottoman authorities conspired to obliterate the Bahá'í Faith. Through barbaric pogroms, imprisonment, and exile they tried to remove the Faith from the face of the earth. By exiling Bahá'u'lláh to a remote corner of the Empire, and by harsh and strict control over the movement of people in and out of that prison-city, they attempted to suffocate the news of His very existence.

In 1871 when Bahá'u'lláh was still confined to the city of Acre, the Persian and Ottoman authorities must have felt confident that they had crushed the new Faith. They thought that if they pushed it to the far margins of history the last Remnant of God's newest Faith would disappear. However, these despots and their minions were thwarted in their designs by what some would call a divinely-led plot to ferment an unconscious and uncoordinated conspiracy. First led by two notable Christian missionaries and then put into play by over thirty men and women working diligently and professionally in what are today the following nations: Great Britain, Ireland, Belgium, Sweden, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, United States, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada. These publishers, editors and newspaper proprietors, through the columns of their newspapers, proclaimed the name of Bahá'u'lláh to their readership in thirty-three cities on three continents.

On more than one occasion Bahá'u'lláh indicated His high esteem for these "men of the pen," as in this highly memorable passage from the Lawḥ-i-Salmán[6]:

> "If any man were to arise to defend, in his writings, the Cause of God against its assailants, such a man, however inconsiderable his share, shall be so honored in the world to come that the Concourse on high would envy his glory. No pen can depict the loftiness of his station, neither can any tongue describe its splendor."

This quotation with the phrase of "any man" extends well beyond the handful of writers found amongst the ranks of his followers, beyond the numerous well-wishers, scholars, and diplomats, to include newspaper owners, publishers and editors. Even those opposed to His teachings and His detractors could be included, for they also assisted in spreading His name, and thus keeping Him out of the shadows.

The articles of 1871 were translated into French, English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Swedish. Though the name of Bahá'u'lláh was given as '*Beheyah Allah*' and '*Behaon Allah*', there is no doubt to whom it refers. These were published in two waves during the life of Bahá'u'lláh, in 1871-1874 and in 1883-1884.

The first of the two chief protagonists in this drama were Georg David Hardegg (1812 Ludwigsburg, Württemberg – 1879 Haifa). He was a German radical and later a mystic, who with Christoph Hoffmann had co-founded the German Templer Society [Tempelgesellschaft]. This was a pietist reform movement that sought to renew Christianity through moral living. From 1868 it established model agricultural colonies in Palestine. In Palestine, there were interchanges between Bahá'ís and Templers. In fact, Bahá'u'lláh wrote a Tablet (letter) to Georg Hardegg around 1872-1873, called *Lawḥ-i-Hartík*[7].

A letter by Georg Hardegg was published in *Süddeutsche Warte* (Stuttgart) on 20 July 1871, pp. 113-114[8]. It was translated into English and published anonymously in the section, "Masonic Matters" edited by

[5] Kurt Asplund, comp., "The Babs of Persia," *Bahá'í Library Online*, 2000. (Accessed 14 Nov 2025).

[6] Bahá'u'lláh*, Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1971), CLIV, pp. 330.

[7]See: Bahá'u'lláh, "Tablet to Hardegg (*Lawḥ-i-Hartík*);" Introduced and translated by Stephen Lambden and Kamran Ekbal, *Lights of Irfan* (Wilmette) vol. 4 (2003), pp. 97-111.

[8] See a modern translation in Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), p. 237. It was reprinted in Carolyn Sparey Fox, *Seeking a State of Heaven: The German Templers* (Oxford: George Ronald, 2018), pp. 91-92. The German original version is not available.

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John W. Simons in the *New York Dispatch* on 13 October 1872.[9] In his letter he states that he met with Abbás Effendi ['Abdu'l-Bahá] on 8 June 1871 in Haifa. In this article Hardegg gives Bahá'u'lláh's name as '*Behaon Allah'*. It is not known what the connection is between the German Templers and Freemasonry, a quasi-religious movement. This is the letter as it appeared in the *New York Dispatch,* with scans of passages shown in Figure 1 below the text:

> "Notice of the History of a Sect Among the Mohammedans in Persia. – (From a letter from a friend at Caifa[10], Syria, to Brother Rob Morris.) – In the city of Caifa, there live certain Persians who support themselves as workmen in metal and wood. They attract attention by their intelligent and open expression of countenance and their Persian garb. They form part of Persian sect whose chief and membership, including women, children and domestics, to the number of about eighty persons, live, confined by the Turkish government at Acre, to the distance of three leagues from Caifa.
>
> An acquaintance having sprung up between me and the Persians, I had formed the impression through these interviews that these people, despite all the obscurity of their spiritual condition, were seekers after truth.
>
> To inform myself more thoroughly, I sought an interview with the chief, *Behaon Allah* (the name being interpreted, signifies "Lightened, or Illuminated by God"), whose family name is *Nouri*, a grand proprietary in Persia. This interview took place June 8, 1871, with the son of Behaon Allah, by name Abbas Effendi, a young man of twenty-seven years, and was brought about by means of a well-informed native of Acre, who acted as interpreter.
>
> I opened the conference by saying to the Effendi that if this interview was calculated to subject him to any inconvenience on the part of the authorities, I would submit the matter to his judgment and renounce it. Upon which he replied that in Persia there is a proverb, "After dark all things are of a color;" that is to say, after so much suffering, his condition could not be made worse. The following is their history, as he stated it to me:
>
> About twenty-three years ago there appeared in Persia a common merchant named *Hadrat el Babe*, who by the perusal of the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, displayed all at once an illumination and superior gifts of manner the most striking. He awaited the coming of the Messiah, and soon secured disciples.
>
> The King of Persia demanded of him what were his purpose, Hadrat replied that the king had permitted a discussion between his wise men and himself (Hadrat). This was done, and the wise men could not refute him. Then the king being compelled to engage in war, demanded that Hadrat should be imprisoned. The war being over, the king, after victim, died, and his son mounted the throne.
>
> Under these circumstances the sect, having increased in Persia, the new king, to stop its further propagation, put Hadrat to death. In the three days before his death Hadrat predicted this event in the presence of several disciples, one of whom wishing to die with him also suffered death.
>
> But in spite of this, the propagation of the system made progress. Then the king ordered a persecution and a general extermination, in which, in the course of time, 18,000 people were killed by many and most cruel forms of death.
>
> Hadrat el Babe had designated Behaon Allah to continue his work.
>
> About that time it happened that an attempt to assassinate the king was made by means of a pistol shot. The weapon being only charged with soft lead (*plomb leger*), the king was not even wounded, but he believed that Behaon to have been engaged in the matter. Being called before the king he declared that such was not the case, but if he or his friends had desired to kill the king he would find surer means to effect it.
>
> Seeing this state of things, the European ambassadors, especially the Russian, interposed their authority. Behaon was restored to liberty, the ambassadors, however advising him to go to Bagdad under protection of the Sublime Porte.

[9] "Notice of the History of a Sect Among the Mohammedans in Persia," *New York Dispatch* (New York City) vol. 27 no. 50 (Oct. 13, 1872), pp. 3. Editor-in-chief: Francis Shubael Smith I (1819 Norwich, Conn. – 1887 Brooklyn, N.Y.).
[10] Currently Haifa, Israel [ed.]

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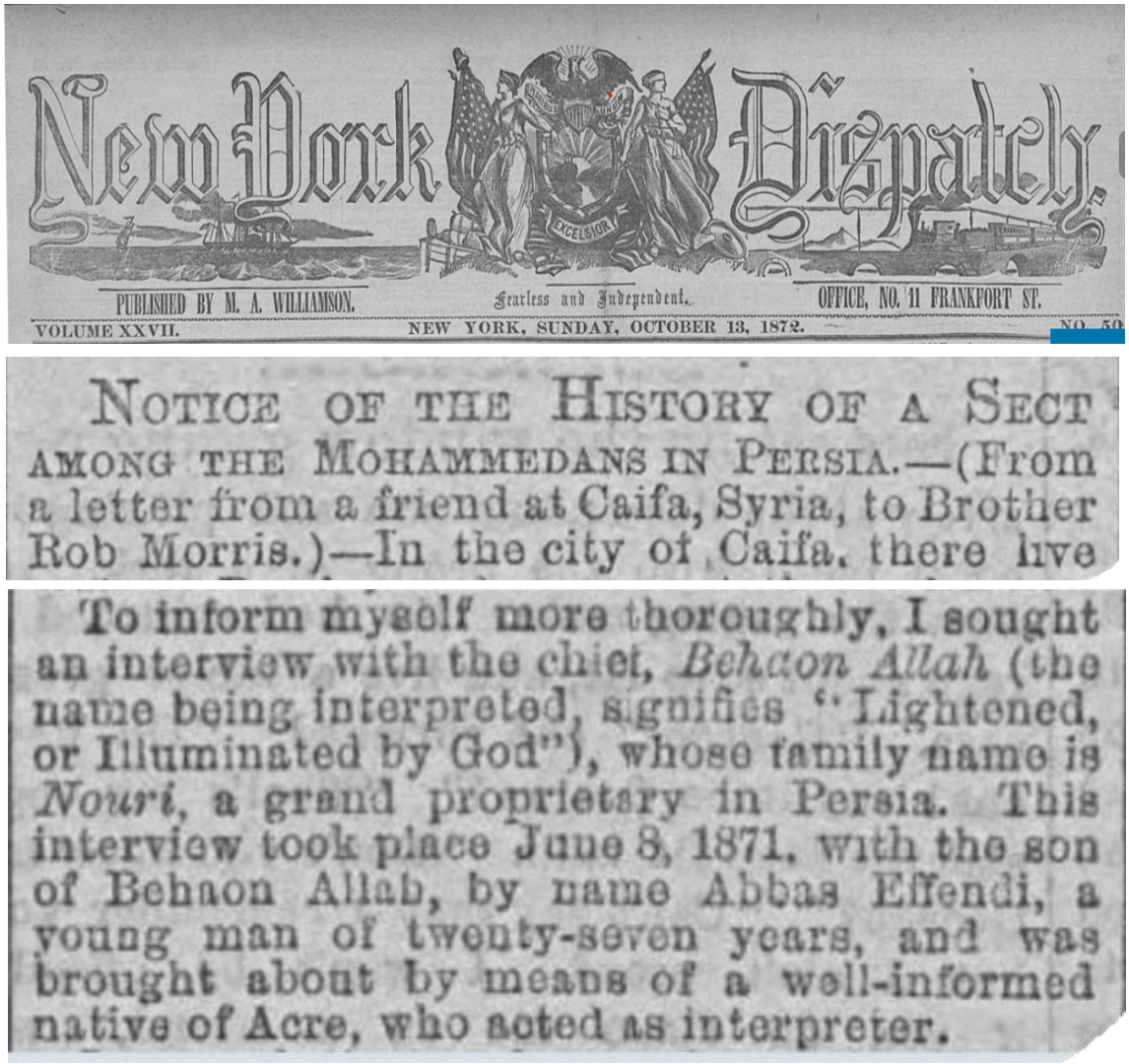
He did so; but from that time the new light spread also throughout Bagdad. At that time "Pilate and Herod became friends." The Turkish and Persian governments jointly persecuted the sect. The wealth of Behaon at Bagdad was confiscated, and he was sent, together with his friends to Constantinople, then it was thought best to confine them to Adrianople – Romelia or European Turkey seeming to offer better security against the contagion. But in the meantime, also at Adrianople they gained friends by their conduct. Then it was resolved to send them to Acre. The European consuls at Adrianople offered to stop this, but Behaon declared to them that if they thought good to make efforts in his favor they might do so without his solicitation, and independently of him, but for his part he had resolved to follow the will of God. Then he was sent to Acre, while the sect in Persia was left in repose. At the time of my arrival at Caifa, in November, 1868, I found them there.

I hope and believe that the German Emperor, the heir to Charlemagne and of Frederick the Great, will extend and make practical his power in the East in favor of justice and liberty of conscience. The Sublime Porte can refuse him nothing, it appears to me, when it is considered that the new German Empire and its subjects are not hostile to this country."


New York Dispatch.

PUBLISHED BY M. A. WILLIAMSON. Fearless and Independent. OFFICE, NO. 11 FRANKFORT ST.

VOLUME XXVII. NEW YORK, SUNDAY, OCTOBER 13, 1872. NO. 50

NOTICE OF THE HISTORY OF A SECT AMONG THE MOHAMMEDANS IN PERSIA.—(From a letter from a friend at Caifa, Syria, to Brother Rob Morris.)—In the city of Caifa, there live

To inform myself more thoroughly, I sought an interview with the chief, *Behaon Allah* (the name being interpreted, signifies "Lightened, or Illuminated by God"), whose family name is *Nouri*, a grand proprietary in Persia. This interview took place June 8, 1871, with the son of Behaon Allah, by name Abbas Effendi, a young man of twenty-seven years, and was brought about by means of a well-informed native of Acre, who acted as interpreter.

Figure 1. Scans of sections of a letter by Georg Hardegg, originally published in Süddeutsche Warte (Stuttgart) on 20 July 1871, here translated into English and published anonymously in the section, "Masonic Matters" edited by John W. Simons in the New York Dispatch on 13 October 1872. Source: [1] "Notice of the History of a Sect Among the Mohammedans in Persia," New York Dispatch (New York City) vol. 27 no. 50 (13 Oct 1872), p. 3.

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The Letter of Dr Thomas Chaplin

Dr Thomas Chaplin, is our second hero. Dr Thomas Chaplin (1830 – 20 Sept 1904, St. Leonards-on-Sea) was chief medical missionary at the Jerusalem Hospital of the London Jews' Society from 1860 to 1885. He was also closely involved with establishing the well-known archaeological society, the Palestine Exploration Fund. He visited Haifa and had a long interview with 'Abdu'l-Bahá and other Bahá'ís.

Dr Chaplin's letter was sent to *The Times* of London, where it was published on 5 October 1871, on page 8 as "The Babs of Persia, by Dr. Thomas Chaplin." *The Times* was considered the most prestigious and reliable newspaper in the world at this time. Its editor was John Thadeus Delane (11 Oct 1817, London – 22 Nov, 1879, Ascot). Though not a major article, and tucked away on page eight, it still made ripples through the consciousness of many editors. This seems to be a metaphysical response to Bahá'u'lláh's apostrophe to the clergy:

> "O concourse of priests! . . . It behoveth you, in this day, to proclaim aloud the Most Great Name among the nations."[11]

The full text of Chaplin's remarkable letter is attached at the end of this essay.

The next day, October 6, the article appeared in newspapers in London, Liverpool and Birmingham. This was the first wave of some forty-three newspapers world-wide that carried either the entire letter or at least the portion mentioning the name of Bahá'u'lláh.

These editors in England published the letter by Thomas Chaplin under a variety of titles. Each entry is a story unique unto itself. At first it was published in secular newspapers in England, such as in *The Birmingham Daily Gazette*, which was published and printed by Ralph Harrison under the title "The Babs of Persia."[12] The *Supplement to the Daily Post*, a high quality paper which served not only Liverpool, but also the area of Merseyside and North Wales, placed Chaplin's letter in the supplement.[13] It was edited by its founder, the former Chief Constable of Liverpool, Michael James Witty (1795-1873). That same day the popular London daily, *The Mail* published the same article.[14] It was published and printed by the well-known printer Francis Goodlake.

The Irish press was quick to follow, with Dublin's *The Daily Express* being the first Irish newspaper to introduce Bahá'u'lláh to the Emerald Isle.[15] This Unionist aligned paper was published and printed by Edward Cosby. The following Saturday, October 7, saw the first headline trying to correlate the new teachings with Christianity in *Bell's Weekly Messenger*, under editorship of Douglas Cox.[16] This theme "A New Quasi Christian Sect in Persia," would feature prominently in several newspapers in Britain and abroad. A second Liverpool paper, *The Liverpool Mercury* also reprinted the article from *The Times*.[17] The *Mercury* was printed and published by Anne Elisa Egerton Smith (d. 1877) and John Maitland.

A few days later more Irish newspapers began to feature Rev. Chaplin's letter. On the 10th it was the well-known *Belfast News-Letter* printed by James Alexander Henderson (1823-1883) that printed the letter.[18] Henderson besides being a well-known newspaperman was an active member of the Presbyterian Church. In the nearby town of Armagh, the article as reprinted the next day, the 11th of October.[19] The proprietor was one J. Heatley. There was one more Irish publication during October and, that was in *The Wexford Independent*, printed and published by John Greene on the 14th.[20] Of some interest is that this is the first paper to place the article on its front page.

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[11]Bahá'u'lláh, "Lawḥ-i-Aqdas," *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), pp. 13.
[12]"The Babs of Persia," *The Birmingham Daily Gazette* (Birmingham) no. 2449 (Oct. 6, 1871), pp. 6.
[13]"The Babs of Persia," *Supplement to the Daily Post* (Liverpool) (Oct. 6, 1871), pp. 2.
[14]"The Babs of Persia," *The Mail* (London) no. 1718 (Oct. 6, 1871), pp. 2.
[15]"The Babs of Persia," *The Daily Express* (Dublin, Ireland) no. 6422 (Oct. 6, 1871), pp. 3.
[16]"A New Quasi Christian Sect in Persia," *Bell's Weekly Messenger* (London) no. 3904 (Oct. 7, 1871), pp. 2.
[17]"The Babs of Persia," *The Liverpool Mercury* (Liverpool) no. 7397 (Oct. 7, 1871), pp. 7.
[18]"A New Christian Sect," *Belfast News-Letter* (Belfast) no. 55,144 (Oct. 10, 1871), pp. 2.
[19]"A New Christian Sect," *The Ulster Gazette* (Armagh) no. 1417 (Oct. 11, 1871), pp. 3.
[20]"The Babs of Persia," *The Wexford Independent* (Wexford) vol. 42 no. 4369 (Oct. 14, 1871), pp. 1.

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It took a week before the first religious newspaper reprinted Rev. Chaplin's letter. This was *The English Independent*, a Nonconformist Congregationalist weekly newspaper published by John B. Howatt.[21] This was a socially and intellectually influential Protestant movement.

Scotland received the news through the *Banffshire Reporter* out of the small town of Portsoy on Scotland's north-east coast on October 13th. It was printed and published by Thomas Anderson.[22]

The English provincial press continued to be active in this endeavour, with two more echoes of this article. In the county of Cornwall on October 13th it appeared in the *The Redruth Times and Camborne Advertiser,*[23] which was printed and published by James Jenkin. Redruth is just 32 miles from Land's End, making it the southernmost publication of Chaplin's letter. In Lancashire, the printer and publisher George Christopher Clark placed the article on page 3 of his *The Lancaster Gazette* on October 21st.[24]

Even though the British and Irish press dominated the publishing of this news, and would continue to do so, they were not, however exclusive. The first country outside the British Isles to receive the news of the name of Bahá'u'lláh was Spain. The Spanish Catholic publisher Don Luis María de Llauder y de Dalmases (1837-1871), had the article translated and published in his paper *La Conviccion*[25] only nine days after it appeared in *The Times.*

The month of October concludes with the news crossing the Atlantic. First appearing in Quebec City in *The Quebec Gazette*[26] on the 18th, and then on the 23rd in Hamilton, Ontario in the *Daily Spectator.*[27] Three days later it was published in two newspapers in the United States, *Newark Daily Advertiser* in Newark, New Jersey[28] and in the *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette.*[29]

It should be noted that not all the editors who quoted from Dr Chaplin's letter, mentioned the name of Bahá'u'lláh in their summary. A case in point is an article in *The Belfast Weekly News* of 14 Oct. 1871.[30]

In November four London-based religious magazines published the Chaplin letter. One of which was *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*[31], published by the Church Missionary Society of the Church of England catering to a readership which would have been mostly clergy and lay supporters of the Church. The Church of England also published the letter in their *The Church of England Magazine*[32].

The official organ of the Primitive Methodist Church, *The Primitive Methodist Magazine*, under the guidance of its publisher Rev. George Lamb (1809 – 1886)[33] also published the letter in November[34], as did *The Missing Link Magazine: Bible Work at Home and Abroad*, edited by Ellen Henriette Raynard (1809-1879). This journal was dedicated to spreading the Bible among the working poor women of London[35].

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[21]"A letter from Dr. Chaplin," *The English Independent* (London) vol. 5 no. 250 (Oct. 12, 1871), p. 995.
[22]"The Babs of Persia–A New Christian Sect," *Banffshire Reporter* (Portsoy, Scotland) vol. 14 no. 811 (Oct. 13, 1871), p. 4.
[23]"The Babs of Persia," *The Redruth Times and Camborne Advertiser* (Redruth, Cornwall) no. 441 (Oct. 13, 1871), p. 3.
[24]"Spread of Christianity," *The Lancaster Gazette* (Lancaster, England) no. 4410 (Oct. 21, 1871), p. 3.
[25]"Correspondencias Particulares de La Conviccion," *La Conviccion* (Barcelona) no. 464 (14 Oct. 1871), p. 6358.
[26]"A New Christian Sect in Persia," *The Quebec Gazette* (Quebec City) vol. 109 no. 10,845 (Oct. 18, 1871), p. 2.
[27]"Bab El Huk," *The Daily Spectator* (Hamilton, Ontario) vol. 24 no. 252 (Oct. 23, 1871), p. 2. This paper was edited by David McCulloch.
[28]"Who the Babs Are?" *Newark Daily Advertiser* (Newark, New Jersey) vol. 40 no. 251 (Oct. 26, 1871), p. 1. Editor: Thomas Talmadge Kinney (1821 – 1900), newspaperman and civic leader.
[29]"Christian Mussulmen," *Pittsburgh Weekly Gazette* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania) vol. 87 no. 244 (Oct. 26, 1871), p. 1. The proprietors and editors were: Josiah King; M. P. Reed; Thomas P. Houston; and Henry M. Long.
[30]"A New Christian Sect," *The Belfast Weekly News* (Belfast, Ireland) no. 841 (Oct. 14, 1871), p. 6.
[31]"The Famine in Persia," *The Church Missionary Intelligencer* (London) vol. 7, n.s. (Nov. 1871), pp. 327-332.
[32]"Persia – The Babs," *The Church of England Magazine* (London) (Nov. 11, 1871), pp. 316-318. No one person can be identified with this journal. On the title page it is noted that this was issued "under the superintendence of clergymen of the English Church." In the imprint it states that it was "Published for the Proprietors by S. D. Ewins."
[33] Lamb was also involved in social movements for the betterment of society. He was a member of the Hull School Board and Hull Charity Organisation Committee. He was also President of the Hull Gospel Temperance Society.
[34]"The Babs of Persia," *The Primitive Methodist Magazine* (London) vol. 9 (Nov. 1871), pp. 702-703.
[35]"The Babs of Persia," *The Missing Link Magazine: Bible Work at Home and Abroad* (London) vol. 7 (Nov. 1,1871), pp. 342-346. Ellen Raynard, besides being an exponent of Bible teaching, was also a pioneer in the field of home nursing. She trained over eighty 'Bible women' in home nursing for work among the poor.

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In Ireland it appeared in *The Irish Church Advocate and Achill Missionary Herald* (Dublin) on 1 November[36]. This was the official organ of the Achill Missionary Settlement, which aimed to promote Protestant education among the Catholic population of Achill, an island off the west coast of Ireland. On the same day a newspaper in Cavan, a town north of Dublin, *The Cavan Weekly News and General Advertiser*, under the editorship of John Fegan, placed the article on page 4[37].

In the United States three Christian newspapers reprinted the letter, two affiliated with the Methodist Episcopal Church and one with the Congregational Church. The two Methodist papers were *The Buffalo Christian Advocate*[38], under editorship of John E. Robie and Allen R. Ripley and *The Christian Advocate*[39] from New Orleans published by Robert J. Harp (1829-1914) for the Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana Conferences Methodist Episcopal Church South. The Congregationalist paper was *The Christian Mirror*[40] from Portland, Maine. It was published by Arthur Shirley (1822-1899) and was affiliated with the Maine Missionary Society. Other newspapers published articles based on Chaplin's letter such as the *North Georgian Citizen* from Dalton, Georgia[41], and *The Appleton Post*[42] from the small town of Appleton, Wisconsin, with a population then of only 4500.

The name of Bahá'u'lláh continued to be spread in Europe. The official gazette of the Kingdom of Belgium, *Le Moniteur Belge, Journal officiel*[43] published a French translation of Chaplin's letter on 21 November. A German translation was published in the *Süddeutsche Warte*[44] in Stuttgart Württemberg on 30 November. On 4 December, only a few months after the terrible fratricide known as the Paris Commune, the French government's official journal, the *Journal officiel de la République Française,* published an article based on Chaplin's letter and proclaiming the name of Bahá'u'lláh[45]. Official journals in Italy also published articles based on Chaplin's letter. First was the official journal of the Kingdom of Italy, the *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* on 11 December[46], and then it was the provincial journal from Friuli, the *Giornale di Udine* on 15 December[47]. The editor was Pacifico Valussi (1866-?). Other Italian papers have not yet been located. Back in London, the official journal of the Society for the Promulgation of the Gospel, *The Colonial Church Chronicle, and Missionary Journal* published it in their December issue[48]. The last known article published in 1871 came from a paper called *Idaho World* published in Idaho City, Territory of Idaho, in the American Far West. At this time this mining town had a population of about 1500. The editor was George Ainslie (1839-1913)[49].

Early in 1872, the London-based monthly journal, *The Sunday Magazine* published the letter. The editor was Thomas Guthrie (1803 Brechin, Scotland – 1873 St Leonards-on-the-Sea, England), a well-known

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[36]"Missionary Enterprise," *The Irish Church Advocate and Achill Missionary Herald* (Dublin) vol. 37 no. 412 (Nov. 1, 1871), pp. 171. It was edited by Rev. Edward Nangle (1799 Athboy, Ireland – 1883 Dublin), Irish missionary to the island of Achill.

[37]"Missionary Enterprise," *The Cavan Weekly News and General Advertiser* (Cavan) vol. 7 no. 48 (Nov. 10, 1871), pp. 4.

[38]"Remarkable Movements Among the Mohammedans," *The Buffalo Christian Advocate* (Buffalo, New York) vol. 27, no. 1137 (Nov. 9, 1871), pp. 2.

[39]"Remarkable Movements Among Mohammedans" *The Christian Advocate* (New Orleans) vol. 17 no. 45 (Nov. 23, 1871), pp. 1

[40]"Mohammedans," *The Christian Mirror* (Portland, Maine) no. 16 (Nov. 28, 1871), p. 1.

[41]"An Attempt to Reconcile Christianity with Islamism," *North Georgia Citizen* (Dalton, Georgia) vol. 4 no. 45 (Nov. 9, 1871), pp. 1. The publisher was J. T. Whitman.

[42]"Remarkable Movements Among the Mohammedans," *The Appleton Post* (Appleton, Wisconsin) vol. 12 no. 49 (Nov. 16, 1871), pp. 1. The proprietors were A. J. Reid and G. M. Miller.

[43]"Les Babs de la Perse," *Le Moniteur Belge, Journal officiel* (Bruxelles) no. 525 (21 Nov. 1871), pp. 3152-3153.

[44] *Süddeutsche Warte* (Stuttgart) (30 Nov. 1871), pp. 191-192; publisher and editor Georg David Hardegg (1812-1879 Haifa). See Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 238.

[45]"Les Babs de la Perse," *Journal officiel de la République Française* (Versailles) no. 336 (4 déc. 1871), pp. 4769-4770. Rédacteur en chef/directeur de la presse: Charles-Edmond Villetard de Prunières (1828 – 1889).

[46]"Un medico inglese, il signor Tommaso Chaplin," *Gazzetta Ufficiale del Regno d'Italia* (Roma) n. 338 (11 Dec. 1871), pp. 1.

[47]"Nuova sette religiosa," *Giornale di Udine* (Udine) A. 6 no. 298 (15 Dec. 1871), pp. 2.

[48]"Review: The Revival of Christianity in Syria," *The Colonial Church Chronicle, and Missionary Journal* (London) (Dec. 1871), pp. 481-485.

[49]"Who the Babs Are," *Idaho World* (Idaho City) (Dec. 21, 1871), pp. 4.

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Scottish divine and philanthropist, moderator of the Free Church of Scotland, and founder and director of "The Ragged Schools" for poor street children[50].

New Zealand was introduced to the name of Bahá'u'lláh on 3 January 1872 when the Christchurch paper *The Press* published Chaplin's letter[51]. *The Press* was printed and published by William Henry Smith and edited by Joseph Colborne-Veel (1831-1895). Christchurch was located on South Island's east coast. The newspaper would have been sent by mail-coach to Hokitika, another mining town, on the other side of the Southern Alps, where it was printed in the *The West Coast Times* by Joseph Phillip (d. 1884) and edited by Henry (Cohen/Charles) Pirani (1818-1894) on 9 January[52].

For 1872 there seems to be no logical explanation for the geographical spread of the newspaper articles which mentioned Bahá'u'lláh's name. After New Zealand, it appears in Philadelphia in February, on 9 March in Sydney, Australia, on the 14th in Stockholm, Sweden and in August and September in New York City.

Here are the details, first Philadelphia. At this time this city known as the "City of Brotherly Love," was one of the main centres for religious publishing in America. The United Presbyterian *The Evangelical Repository and United Presbyterian Review*, edited by Joseph T. Cooper and W. W. Barr published the article in its February issue[53]. On 9 March it was discovered in a newspaper published in Sydney, in the Colony of New South Wales. It was in the ultra-Protestant *The Protestant Standard*, published by William Carvosso Wearne (1836 – 1904)[54].

The next week an article appeared in the Baptist-oriented journal *Wecko-Posten* from Stockholm, Sweden[55]. The editor and publisher was Magnus Adolf Gottlob Drake (1833-1906), a Swedish Baptist minister. The last two articles based on Chaplin's letter for 1872 were published in New York City in *The Independent* on 1 August[56] and the *New Jerusalem Messenger* 4 September[57]. The latter was a Swedenborgian newspaper under the editorship of John Light Jewett (1809-1873).

Several years later in 1878, the Society of Friends, better known as the Quakers, published an article based on Dr Chaplin's letter in their *Friends' Review*[58]. The Philadelphia-based paper was edited by James Evans Rhoads (1828 Marple, Pennsylvania – 1895 Philadelphia), an American Quaker publisher and educator, and president of Bryn Mawr College.

This was the last known publication in a newspaper of Chaplin's letter prior to the small outbreak in 1883. No reviews or commentaries about his letter have been discovered.

Resurgence of 1883

In 1883 for reasons not yet understood there was a resurgence of interest in the Chaplin article and a small flurry of publications reprinted the portions of the major article mentioning the name "Beheyah Allah" [Bahá'u'lláh]. It began in Boston with a short article in *The Boston Sunday Budget* on 29 April 1883. The next month in London with *The South London Press* on 19 May[59], and on the same day it appeared in *The Sunny South* in Atlanta, Georgia[60]. From Georgia we go north to Ontario, where other articles appeared in

[50]"The Babs of Persia," *The Sunday Magazine* (London) vol. 8 (1872), pp. 157-158.

[51]"The Babs of Persia," *The Press* (Christchurch, New Zealand) vol. 19 no. 2707 (Jan. 3, 1872), pp. 3.

[52]"The Babs of Persia," *The West Coast Times* (Hokitika, New Zealand) no. 1958 (Jan. 9, 1872), pp. 4.

[53]"Remarkable Movements Among Mohammedans in Persia, etc," *The Evangelical Repository and United Presbyterian Review* (Philadelphia) vol. 10 no. 9 (Feb. 1872), pp. 578-579.

[54]"Syria: Three Thousand Mahometans Seeking the Light," *The Protestant Standard* (Sydney) vol. 3 no. 46 (March 9, 1872), pp. 3.

[55]"Babernas sekt i Persien," *Wecko-Posten* (Stockholm) nr 11 (14 March 1872), pp. 3.

[56]"Missions," *The Independent* (New York City) vol. 24 no. 1235 (Aug. 1, 1872), pp. 4. Editor, publisher and proprietor was Henry Chandler Bowen (1813 –1896).

[57]"Babism," *New Jerusalem Messenger* (New York City) vol. 16 no. 2 (Jan. 13, 1872), pp. 22.

[58]"The Babs of Persia," *Friends' Review* (Philadelphia) vol. 31 (26 Jan. 1878), pp. 382-383.

[59]"The followers of El-Bab…," *The South London Press* (London) vol. 37 no. 1026 (May 19, 1883), pp. 14, col. 3. Printed and published by James Henderson (1823 Laurencekirk, Scotland – 1906 Worthing, England), a pioneering English publisher.

[60]"The followers of El-Bab…," *The Sunny South* (Atlanta, Georgia) vol. 9 no. 401 (May 19, 1883), pp. 20. Editors and proprietors: John H. Seals (1833-1909) and William H. Seals.

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Markdale in the *Markdale Standard* on 31 May[61], in Bradford on 9 June in *The Daily Expositor*[62], on the 15 June in *The Weekly Expositor*[63], the last one discovered was in Richmond Hill's *The Liberal* also on 15 June[64].

It was not only newspapers that proclaimed Bahá'u'lláh's name during His lifetime. There were also reference works. It seems that these were also based on the Chaplin letter. They were published in England, the United States and Italy. In 1873 two appeared, *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates and Universal Information Relating to All Ages and Nations,* from London[65] and the *Supplimento Perenne alla Nuova Enciclopedia Populare Italiana. Ossia revista Annuale, 1871-1872* from Turin[66]. A further six editions of *Haydn's Dictionary* were published in London and New York City[67] during Bahá'u'lláh's lifetime, all carrying the same article. This survey ends with the Italian *Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana*, published in Turin in 1883[68].

A brief summary indicates that sixteen of the papers were associated with a religious body or association. Several others were strongly aligned to the religious convictions of their editors. All of this is to be expected considering that the author was a Christian medical missionary. However, what was not expected in the collection were the four official government gazettes from France, Belgium and Italy. The other observation is that the newspapers tend to originate both from fairly well known and prosperous cities, and from small rural villages and mining towns.

The last known article in a newspaper influenced by Chaplin's letter was from 15 June 1883. The references in the three encyclopaedias go further, but here the research is incomplete. As more library collections are digitized and made available, and improvements made in the OCR systems, other articles based on by Dr Chaplin and Rev. Hardegg letters may come to light.

This is but one chapter, albeit an important one, indicating how religious sensitivity and truth, born out of centuries of appeals to the natural goodness of man, once ignited, percolate through the dross of material civilization. The spread of Bahá'u'lláh's name occurred even though, outwardly the editors were unaware of the significance of their work. From this meagre number it is evident that thousands exercised their free will and did not participate in this dynamic development. Further studies in Bahá'í proto-history may illustrate other world-enriching events.

Two questions will always remain. Why? Here it is possible that the only answer lies in Rudolf Otto's mysterium tremendum et fascinans[69], where the question becomes the answer. And what was the effect on the readers who read The Name after a wait of almost 2000 years? A question tempting to ask, even though it is unanswerable.

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[61]"The followers of El-Bab…," *Markdale Standard* (Markdale, Ontario) vol. 3 no. 38 (May 31, 1883), pp. 2, col. 3. Editor and proprietor: Charles W. Rutledge.

[62]"Historical Items: "The followers of El-Bab…," *The Daily Expositor* (Brantford, Ontario) vol. 10 no. 364 (June 9, 1883), pp. 2.

[63]"Historical Items: "The followers of El-Bab…," *The Weekly Expositor* (Brantford, Ontario) vol. 33 no. 13 (June 15, 1883), pp. 1.

[64]"The followers of El-Bab…," *The Liberal* (Richmond Hill, Ontario) vol. 5 no. 50 (June 15, 1883), pp. 2. Editor and proprietor: J. A. Sturgeon Stewart.

[65]Vincent, Benjamin (1818 – 1899), ed., *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates and Universal Information Relating to All Ages and Nations.* – 14th ed. – London: E. Moxon, Son & Co., 1873. "Babysm," pp. 61.

[66]*Supplimento Perenne alla Nuova Enciclopedia Populare Italiana. Ossia revista Annuale, 1871-1872.* Torino: Unione Tipografice-Editrice Torinese, 1873. "Persia," pp. 618-619. Director: Francesco di Mauro di Palvica.

[67]Vincent, Benjamin (1818 – 1899), ed., *Haydn's Dictionary of Dates and Universal Information relating to all ages and nations.* – American ed. – New York: G. P. Putnam & Sons, 1874. "Babysm," pp. 61.

[68]*Nuova Enciclopedia Italiana. Vol. 17.* 6. ed. Torino: Union Tipographico-Editrice, 1884. "Persia," pp. 91-92. Editor: Gerolamo Boccardo (1829-1904).

[69] Rudolf Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923).

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Appendix 1

THE BABS OF PERSIA[70]

To the Editor of the Times

Sir.—Notices of the rise of a new quasi Christian sect in Persia have, I believe, appeared from time to time in English newspapers. Little, however, appears to be known upon the subject in this country, and the following information may therefore be acceptable to many of your readers. Of all the followers of Mahomet the Metawely of Persia[71] are among the most bigoted and fanatical. Not only will they not eat or drink with Christians, but they dash to pieces any vessel belonging to them out of which a Christian has drunk, gather their garments round them as they pass a Christian in the street lest they should be contaminated by contact with him, and should any Christian book be in their way they remove it with tongs rather than defile themselves by touching it. About 30 years ago some intelligent and thoughtful members of the sect, of good position and education, were led by this very excess of bigotry to inquire into the reason of it, and, having procured from some Christians copies of the New Testament in the Arabic language, devoted themselves to its careful study. The result of their investigation was that they became convinced of its truth, accepted it as the Word of God, and embraced its doctrines. They did not, however, abandon their faith in Mahomet as a prophet of God, and the Koran as a divinely inspired book, but believed themselves able to reconcile the hitherto antagonistic creeds of Islam and Christianity. Their doctrine, which received the name of Bab el Huk (door of truth), spread rapidly, and in the course of a few years was professed by 200,000 persons. A persecution now arose, during which 20,000 adherents of the new doctrine were slain, and its founder, known as Beheyah Allah, took refuge with a small band of friends in Bagdad. Here he continued to hold communication with his followers in Persia, and exercised so much influence that the Government of that country requested the sultan of Turkey to remove him from such dangerous proximity to some place where he could less easily be communicated with. He was accordingly sent to Edernay, and subsequently to another fortress where he now is. In the spring of the present year I had an opportunity of visiting the Babs in their place of confinement. Beheyah Allah himself does not readily concede an interview to strangers, and receives only such as are desirous of obtaining from him instruction in religious truth. We were received by his son, who is apparently about 30 years of age, and has a fine intellectual countenance, with black hair and beard, and that sallow, melancholic look which distinguishes nearly all Persians of the intelligent and religious class. He was dressed in a robe of white flannel, with a cap of the same material, and a small white turban. Over his shoulders was thrown a brown cloth abbai. He appeared pleased to see us, but objected to answer questions respecting the origin and history of the sect. 'Let us speak of things spiritual,' he said, 'what you are now asking me is of no importance.' But on our telling him that people in England would naturally be curious to know in what way so remarkable a religious movement had arisen, and who were the originators of it, he gave us the information here detailed. He had a remarkably earnest, almost solemn manner, spoke excellent Arabic fluently, and showed a minute and accurate knowledge of the Old and New Testaments, as well as an acquaintance with the history of religious thought in Europe. Our interview lasted two hours, during the whole of which time an animated conversation was maintained. Like a true Oriental, he seldom gave a direct answer to a question upon any point of doctrine, but replied by another question, or by an illustration, his object throughout apparently being to convince his questioners of what he considered to be truth. He seemed to speak as one conscious of possessing superior light—as a great teacher might speak to his disciples. 'Why,' he inquired, 'did not the Jews, who at the time of our Lord's advent were in expectation of their Messiah, believe on him?' And, assenting to our reply that it was because they misunderstood the Scriptures, he asked whether it might not be the case that Christians in like manner now misunderstood the Scripture—the inference (not expressed) being that his father was sent by God to teach the true doctrine.

[70]Reprinted in Moojan Momen, *The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981), pp. 210-212.

[71]Refers to the Twelver Shiʿa Muslim population of Persia [ed.]

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We did not obtain from him a clear statement of the views of the sect with reference to his father's character and office, but a very intelligent convert subsequently informed us that he was (at least by some) believed to be the angel spoken of in the first verse of the 18th chapter of Revelation. The fundamental doctrines of the sect we ascertained to be—1. That Christ is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. 2. That he died and rose again. 3. That justification is by faith in him. 4. That the new birth is necessary to salvation and good works as an evidence of it. 5. That the Holy Spirit operating upon the heart produces this new birth. They have no priests and no baptism. Circumcision is practised among them, but is not essential. They have several works written by Beheyah and other members of the sect, but it does not appear that these are regarded as authoritative. They believe that Christ will return, but spiritually. Beheyah Allah is said to have arrived at the truth solely by study of the Word of God. It is believed that he has at present 70,000 or 80,000 followers in Persia, but not openly professed. When persecuted they do not fight or resist, but are ready to die for their opinions. Between 70 and 80 share the exile and imprisonment of their leader. They are allowed considerable liberty within the walls of the city, Beheyah alone being confined to his house. They are allowed about 5d. a day per man by the Turkish Government. It is 15 years since they left their native country and between two and three since they were brought to their present place of confinement. This remarkable movement and its history are suggestive of many reflections. In its religious, social, and political aspects it is full of interest, and it seems surprising that public attention has not been earlier drawn to it. Some may be disposed to ask whether England, Bible-loving and freedom-loving as it is her boast to be, has no voice to raise in behalf of men whom she, by her Bibles, has, probably, been the unconscious means of enlightening, and whose enlightenment appears to be their only crime. From all that I could learn, these people lead pure and harmless lives, and hold no political opinions which could render them dangerous. But the subject has a wider interest than that involved in the fate of these individuals. A question as great as any that have ever agitated the world is beginning to press for settlement—namely, whether the progress or enlightenment, and, in particular, of Christian enlightenment among Mahomedan races is to be stopped by the rude hand of persecution and massacre. It is not in Persia alone that this question is presenting itself.

Your obedient servant,
THOMAS CHAPLIN, M.D.
16 Lincoln's-inn-fields.

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Appendix 2

Newspaper databases consulted:

BanQ— Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec **(Canada). Available:** *https://www.banq.qc.ca*

Biblioteca Nacional de España (Spain). Available: **https://www.bne.es**

British Newspaper Archive (United Kingdom). Available: https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

Chronicling America (United States). Available: https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov

GenealogyBank (United States). Available: https://www.genealogybank.com

Google Books (Global). Available: https://books.google.com

HathiTrust (United States). Available: https://www.hathitrust.org

Internet Archive (Global). Available: http://archive.org

KBR – Royal Library of Belgium (Belgium). Available: https://www.kbr.be

NewspaperArchive (United States). Available: https://newspaperarchive.com

Newspapers.com (United States). Available: https://www.newspapers.com

Papers Past (New Zealand). Available: https://paperspast.natlib.gov.nz

Retronews (France). Available: https://www.retronews.fr

Svenska tidningar (Sweden). Available: https://www.kb.se/eng.html

Trove (Australia). Available: https://trove.nla.gov.au/newspaper/

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