

LIBRARY JOURNAL™

ISBN: 1931847134

Publisher: Baha'i Publishing

Published: 2004-10

Binding/Price/Pages: Paperback, \$15.00 (300p)

Subject: Religion | Baha' i; Biography & Autobiography | General

Ages:

Reviewed: 2005-06-01

Who was Bahá'u'lláh (1817-92)? Why was he persecuted, tortured, imprisoned, and exiled by the political and religious authorities of his time? These volumes attempt to make the life of this self-proclaimed divinity known to a wider audience. Bahá'u'lláh--an Arabic title meaning "Glory of God"--was the prophet-founder of the Bahá'í faith, whose worldwide adherents number roughly six million. Bahá'ís rank him with all the other great Messengers of God, believing him to be Christ incarnate and the unifier and redeemer of humankind. Poet and writer Cederquist and author, publisher, and lecturer Matthews (He Cometh in Clouds: A Bahá'í View of Christ's Return), both Bahá'ís themselves, bring this unfamiliar prophet back to life in their respective works. **Cederquist describes Bahá'u'lláh's life straightforwardly but with drama and a talent for evoking the ambience of the 19th-century Persian and Ottoman milieus.** Meant for a general reading audience, this book includes a minimum of footnotes and endnotes. The five appendixes cover chronology, Bahá'u'lláh's family, the branches of Islam, and millennial Christians. A glossary clarifies names and terms. **Matthews offers a somewhat more sophisticated examination of Bahá'u'lláh's claims to be God's mouthpiece,** framing his argument in terms of how scientific methods of investigation might be applied to them (reconciliation of science and religion is a Bahá'í principle). He uses this approach in discussing Bahá'u'lláh's predictions, knowledge, character, method of revelation, and influence to make a case for Bahá'u'lláh's claims. Parts of the book require thorough concentration, particularly where Matthews delves into physics and paleontology. The main drawbacks to these volumes are the absence of a glossary in Matthews's case and the use of capitalized pronouns for central Bahá'í figures (a Bahá'í mark of reverence but disconcerting to the uninitiated) and the occasional use jargon (e.g., "the Cause") in referring to the Bahá'í faith. As most libraries seriously lack general resources on the Bahá'í founder, both books are highly recommended for public libraries; **the dramatic tone and readability of Cederquist's work may appeal to YA audiences.**--William P. Collins, Library of Congress

Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.