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The Rev. Canon Sell, D.D., M.A., F.S.



ABBAS EFENDI

BAHÁISM

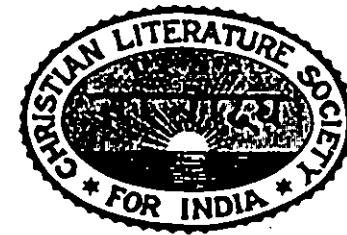
BAHÁISM

BY

THE REV. CANON SELL, D.D., M.R.A.S.

FELLOW OF THE UNIVERSITY OF MADRAS

AUTHOR OF 'THE FAITH OF ISLAM,' 'THE RELIGIOUS ORDERS OF ISLAM,' 'ESSAYS ON ISLAM,' 'ISLAM: ITS RISE AND PROGRESS,' 'THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE QUR'AN'; AND 'THE RECENSIONS OF THE QUR'AN'



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PREFACE

THE recent visit of 'Abbás Efendí, son of the late Bahá'u'lláh, and now leader of the Bahá'í community, to London and Paris has drawn public attention to the religious system known as Baháism.

It is hoped that this historical account of the rise of the sect may be of some use in counteracting the extraordinary claims now made for Bahá'u'lláh and his teaching and the assumption that 'Abbás Efendí is the prophet of a new era.

For typographical reasons the dots and dashes used in the transliteration of certain Arabic and Persian letters are omitted in the notes.

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BAHÁISM

THE Musalmáns of Persia belong to the Shí'ah sect which, itself formed by a revolt from orthodox Islám, has been, more than any other section of the Muḥamadan people, subject to divisions. This is partly due to the character of the Persians, and partly to a somewhat freer spirit, which, as compared with the Sunnís, the Shí'ahs cultivate. Outwardly, it is true, there is not much difference, and the freedom is only a relative one; but, under the garb of faultless profession, the Shí'ahs have always held many esoteric doctrines and have secretly taught them. The Şúfís, or Mystics, are the best example of this tendency.

The Persians are not naturally a narrow-minded people. In the past, they have shown considerable freedom of thought. It is true that the first great revolt against orthodox Islám was largely influenced by political motives, but it was not altogether free from doctrinal reasons. This revolt led to the formation of the Shí'ah sect to which the Persians belong. The Persians no longer lead in literature and philosophy, but some of the old traditions remain, and they are open to varying impulses and modes of thought, of

which the most remarkable instance in recent years is the rise of Baháism, a development of the earlier system of Bábism.

The origin of Baháism is to be found far back in the Shí'ah doctrine of the Imámat.¹ The tragic end of 'Alí the fourth Khalífa, and his two sons, Hasan and Husain², called forth a deep affection for their memory. They were looked upon as the true and rightful Imáms, the only legitimate successors of Muḥammad, the great Arabian Prophet. According to the Ismá'ílíans,³ one of the two main subdivisions of the Shí'ah sect, there were twelve Imáms, the last of whom, Abú'l-Qásim, who succeeded his father in A. H. 260, is supposed to be still alive, though he is now quite concealed from human eyes. After duly performing the funeral ceremonies for his father, he secluded himself entirely. He is called al-Mahdí, the guided one, who is, therefore, able to be a guide to others. The Imáms are believed to be immaculate and infallible. Their authority is the authority of God, their work the work of God. As mediums between God and man they hold a far higher position than the prophets. It is further an article of belief that the earth is never without a

¹ See *The Faith of Islám* (S.P.C.K.), pp. 108-13; 117-18.

² The Imáms were descended from al-Husain who is said to have married a captive lady, the daughter of Yazdigird III, the last Sassanian king. They were thus descendants of the royal house of Persia, which may account for the fact that the Persians became and remain Shí'ahs. It also explains in part their intense devotion to the Imáms.

³ See *The Cult of 'Alí* (C.L.S.), pp. 11-12 and *The Faith of Islám* (S.P.C.K.), pp. 113-5.

living Imám, though according to the Shí'ahs, he is now concealed. Al-Mahdí is said to have disappeared in the year A. H. 329 = A. D. 940, and to be now living in one of the mysterious cities—Jábulka and Jábulsa. In due time he is to reappear, his advent being heralded by Jesus Christ. Then injustice and misery are to be banished, the true (Shí'ah) faith will prevail and a millenium of happiness will be ushered in. Meanwhile he is invisible and inaccessible to the great mass of his followers. For a time, however, he seems in some mysterious way to have held intercourse with a select few, who became the channels of communication between himself and the large body of believers. These intermediaries were called Abwáb or gates. These men were four in number, and for sixty-nine years they were, one after another, the gates through which the concealed Imám made known his will. This period (A. H. 260 to 329) is called the *ghaibat-i-sughra*, or the lesser seclusion. When Abú'l-Hasan, the last Báb (gate), came to the end of his life, the people begged him to appoint a successor, so that they might still learn the Imám's will and so be able to obey his commands. He, for some reason or other, absolutely refused to do this, alleging as his reason that 'God hath a purpose which He will accomplish.' Now the faithful were sad, for all intercourse with the concealed Imám was at an end. This period is known as the *ghaibat-i-kubra*, or the greater seclusion. We have in this curious belief the origin of Bábism, of which Baháism is a later development. The importance which the Bábís attached to these gates is seen

from the following statement about them made many centuries after they had passed away: 'For God has associated refuge in Himself with refuge in His Apostle (Muḥammad) and refuge in His Apostle with refuge in his executors (the Imáms), and refuge in his executors with refuge in the Abwáb (gates) of his executors . . . for refuge in the Apostle is the same as refuge with God, and refuge in the Imáms is the same as refuge in the Apostle, and refuge in the Abwáb is identical with refuge in the Imáms.'¹

We must now pass over many centuries until we come to the time of Shaikh Aḥmad (A. D. 1733 to 1826) the founder of the Shaikhí sect. He was a devout ascetic and a man of independent thought. He had a profound belief in 'Alí. The memory of the Imáms was dear to him. He looked upon them as creative forces, arguing from the text, 'God the best of Creators',² that, if He is the best, He cannot be the only one. One of the earliest writers on the Bábí movement, Mírzá Kázim Beg, in the *Journal Asiatique*³ describes him as a celebrated teacher, who by his virtues, austerity and erudition attracted a large body of disciples. The special point of his teaching is thus described: 'God is immanent in the universe, which proceeds from Him. All the elect of God and all the Imáms are personifications of the divine attributes.'⁴ Thus, the twelve Imáms

¹ *Episode of the Báb*, p. 233. ² *Súratu'l-Mu'minún* (xxiii) 14.

³ *Journal Asiatique*, Sixième Série, tome vii, p. 458.

⁴ According to Mírzá Kázim Beg, the doctrine of the Shaikhí school was that the attributes of God proceed from the Supreme Existence, and by His own will become personified in blending with the human soul and spirit which also emanate from God.

from 'Alí downwards to al-Mahdí were personifications of the attributes of God. 'Alí is the chief of these and holds higher rank than Muḥammad.

The successor of Shaikh Aḥmad was Hájí Sayyid Kázim, a young man so mysterious in his actions that many of the worldly-minded Persians looked upon him as foolish, but his followers called him 'the Enlightened'. Through his ministrations the Shaikhí doctrines spread rapidly, and it is said that there were soon a hundred thousand disciples in 'Iráq. This does not appear to have called forth any opposition from the Mullás, or the political chiefs, for among the admirers of the Shaikh were a number of State officials and of the clergy; all proud of his name and enthusiastic about his philosophy. The Hájí died in the year A.D. 1843 and left no successor. Apparently he and his predecessor looked upon themselves, at least so the Bábí writers say, as forerunners of one who would shortly appear, and whom they called the 'Promised Proof' the 'Master of the dispensation' and by other such like terms. To Mullá Ḥusain, one of his followers, he is reported to have said: 'From whatever quarter the "Sun of Truth" shall arise, it will irradiate all horizons and render the mirrors of the hearts of the believers capable of receiving the effulgence of the lights of wisdom.'

The Shaikhís, being now left without a leader, and bearing in mind the expressions used by those who had been their late leaders, began to look about for a spiritual director. Mullá Ḥusain proceeded to Shíráz and there met with a young man, named Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad, an ardent enthusiast who claimed to have

received a call to a divine mission. Mullá Husain thought him too young for such leadership. Then one day Mírzá 'Alí said: 'By what signs canst thou recognize the Master?' Mullá Husain replied: 'By the possession of the "Point of Knowledge", which is the source and centre of all the wisdom of past and future prophets and saints.' Mírzá 'Alí then proceeded to give a marvellous exposition of many abstruse questions as proof that he possessed the 'Point of Knowledge'. Mullá Husain pondered over this extraordinary occurrence for several days, and at last became convinced that in the young man before him he had found the 'Sun of Truth', the 'True One', to whose advent Hájí Sayyid Kázim had looked forward. He had no longer any doubt and wrote to his friends at Kerbela that he had found at last a man worthy to be their Murshid. This readiness to espouse the cause of the new leader and to recognize in him the Báb or gate, brought great honour to Mullá Husain who received the titles of Bábu'l-Báb—'Gate of the gate'; the Harf-i-Awwal—the 'First Letter'; the Awwal man ámana—the 'First to believe'. Then arose a great dispute. Many of the Shaikhís refused to receive the Báb,¹ as we shall now call Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad, and became his bitter enemies, but in time the great majority accepted him, and he became the real founder of the Bábí sect.

The Shaikhís rejected two of the five articles of the Shí'ah creed—'adl, or justice of God, and ma'úd or the

¹ They followed Hájí Muhammad Karím Khán, a member of the royal family. The Shaikhís, such as there are, still accept his descendants as their leaders.

resurrection. They said that there was no sufficient reason why justice alone of all the attributes of God should be selected as an article of belief, and that His wisdom, power, or any other attribute had just as good a claim to be inserted in the creed. They objected to the resurrection being made a special article on the ground that its acceptance is implied in the belief in prophethip, for to believe in a prophet means to accept his teaching about the resurrection. Having thus depleted the creed, it was necessary to add something to it. They invented a new article of faith, which they called the Rukn-i-Rábi', or the Fourth Support or Pillar. This is interpreted to mean that there must always be amongst the believers a perfect man—Shí'ah-i-kámil—who can be the channel of grace—wásīṭa-i-faiḍ—between the absent Imám and his people. The term is thus primarily applied to the dogma that the absent Imám, now somewhere concealed, must always have some one on earth who possesses his entire confidence, to whom he imparts special spiritual instruction, and who is thus qualified to impart to the whole company of believers the wishes and wisdom of their invisible head. Thus the name 'Fourth Support' came to be applied to the person who fulfils this office. The Báb at first claimed this position, and thus to occupy the place held by the gates, or intermediaries, between the absent Imám and his followers. Thus Bábíism is connected with the central dogma of the Shí'ahs, the belief in the Imámat; still it has so far departed from accepted Muslim ideas in other matters as to form a new sect altogether.

The Báb was born in Shíráz on October 9, 1820. At an early age he lost his father, and then under the charge of an uncle engaged in mercantile pursuits, but for these his habit of religious meditation and his love of speculative thought unfitted him. He gave them up and proceeded to Kerbela where his zeal for learning and his austere life soon brought him into notice. His earliest written work was a commentary on the twelfth chapter of the Qur'án known as the Súratu Yúsuf. This was followed by commentaries on other Súras and also by an edition of some prayers. These he called ashá'íf-i-ilhámiyah, or inspired pages; kalám-i-fiṭra, or word of conscience, but he made no claim to the highest form of inspiration (wahí), which Muslims hold to be that of the Qur'án. Count Gobineau says: 'In the first of these books, he was pious and a mystic: in the second polemic and dialectic occupy a large space, and his hearers noticed with astonishment that he unfolded new meanings which no one had hitherto thought of in the chapter of the Book of God which he had chosen, and that he deduced from it, above all, doctrines and teachings absolutely unexpected.'¹

Whilst some persons were displeased with him, many were attracted to him, but, as his views became more generally known, he became bolder in the assertion of his claims. On May 22, 1844, when about twenty-four years of age, he openly declared himself to be an authorized teacher of divine truth and assumed the name

¹ *Les religions et les philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale*, p. 147 (I shall refer in future to this work under the name of its author, Gobineau).

of the Báb, and said: 'Whosoever wishes to approach the Lord his God and to know the true way that leads to Him must do it through me.' This was a bold challenge to the Muslim Mullás, but, according to Kázim Beg, his followers increased day by day. Many were dreamers and mystics, of whom there has always been a number in Persia, who thought the teaching accorded with their own pantheistic views; there were others who, dissatisfied with the condition of life in Persia, thought that his system might lead to reforms, and some were drawn to him by his attractive personality. In any case, success began and soon after Mullá Ḥusain cast in his lot with the Báb.

There is some difference of opinion as to the reason which led him to adopt the title of Báb. The most accurate account seems to be: 'He (Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad) now gave out that, as 'Alí had been the gate by which men entered the city of the Prophet's knowledge, even so he was the gate through which man might attain to the knowledge of the twelfth Imám (al-Mahdí).'¹ Later on he discarded the name of Báb, and called himself the Qá'im, or the expected Imám. His followers gave him the titles of Ḥazrat, or Holiness; Ḥazrat-i-nuqta-i-bayán, or His Holiness the Point of Revelation; Ḥazrat-i-Rabbiyu'l-A'lá, or His Holiness the Lord Most High; Ḥazrat-i-nuqta-i-úlá, or His Holiness the First Point. Gobineau says: 'Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad said he was not the Báb in the sense in which they (his followers) had believed, and as he himself had

¹ Watson, *History of Persia*, p. 348.

thought, that is to say, the gate of the knowledge of truth; but that he was the Point (nuqta), or the originator of truth, a divine appearance, a powerful manifestation.¹ It will be seen that he now claimed to be more than a medium of information, and assumed to himself the position of one who could lay down as exact truth what his followers should believe. Having thus put forth his claim to be a recognized leader with divine authority, he proceeded to make the pilgrimage to Mecca in the year 1844. He duly performed all the ceremonies of the Hajj, but it does not appear to have brought him back to orthodox Islám, nor did it postpone the opposition of the Mullás, who now became alarmed at the growing veneration in which many people held him. A little later on he was brought as a prisoner to Shíráz, though liberty of speech and action was given to him. He avoided attacks on the dogmas of Islám, but severely rebuked the Mullás. His general topic was the sad and distressed state of men generally. Obscure allusions in his speeches awakened an interest amongst the curious, and delighted those who had been initiated into his teaching. He taught openly and had frequent discussions with the Mullás; but according to Kázim Beg, one ended disastrously. The 'Ulamá assembled. The governor, Husain Khán, who had assumed the character and position of a learner, humbly suggested that the Báb should demonstrate that his doctrines were superior to those of Muḥammad. The Báb answered boldly: 'Take my Qur'án, compare it with that of your

¹ *Episode of the Báb*, p. 230.

Prophet and you will be convinced that my religion is the preferable one.' The governor was offended and the Báb was bound and beaten. An attack was made on the house in which the Báb dwelt, but he was allowed to escape and make his way to Işfahán. The governor, Minúchir Khán, a Georgian eunuch, was kind to him and gave all the needed protection and invited the learned Mullás to a discussion with the Báb. According to the *Násikh-u't-Tawárikh*, the Báb was not able to answer satisfactorily the questions put to him.¹ The account given in the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*² shows that at first the Mullás accepted the invitation, but soon withdrew, saying: 'If there be any doubt in the matter there is need for a meeting and discussion; but, as the person's disagreement with the most luminous law is clearer than the Sun, the best possible thing to do is to put into practice the sentence of the law.' The governor, a sincere and true friend to the Báb, was much displeased at the decision arrived at, and protected him as long as he lived. After Minúchir Khán's death in 1847, the Báb was removed to the castle of Mákú, a fortress on the north-west frontier. Here also he was allowed free intercourse with his followers, both in person and by correspondence. He occupied his time in writing religious books. An insurrection then broke out at Mázan-darán which led the authorities to place the Báb in closer confinement, and to restrict the privilege of

¹ Notes of this discussion will be found in *The Episode of the Báb*, pp. 266-7.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 264-5.

intercourse with his friends. His new place of imprisonment was the citadel of Chibríq.¹ He was then taken to Tabríz to undergo his first examination. The Muḥammadan version of it is that the Báb showed himself foolish and ignorant. The Bábí account is that he advanced in a successful manner his claim of Mahdíhood, which caused a tumult.² Up to the present time he seems to have been treated by men in authority with kindness and consideration; but now he was beaten and sent back to confinement in Chibríq. The reason for this probably was the new attitude taken by the Mullás, who, in addition to the charge of religious error, maintained that the Báb and his followers were a danger to the State. The King, Muḥammad Sháh, however,

¹ Many curious expedients were resorted to for the purpose of conveying letters to the Báb (cf. *The Episode of the Báb*, p. 276). The confinement at Mákú lasted six months and at Chibríq two and a half years.

² The whole examination was naturally unfavourable to the Báb (cf. *The Episode of the Báb*, pp. 279-89). His claim to be at Mahdí is shown in the following:—

Báb.—‘I am that person for whose appearance you have waited a thousand years.’

Hájí Mullá Mahmúd.—‘That is to say you are the Mahdí, the Lord of Religion.’

Báb.—‘Yes.’

Hájí Mullá Mahmúd.—‘The same in person or generically.’

Báb.—‘In person.’

This marks a distinct advance, for he was no longer merely the gate of entrance to the concealed Imám, the medium of intercourse between that revered person and the faithful, but the twelfth Imám, al-Mahdí, come back to live amongst men and to claim the allegiance of all good Shí'ahs.

declined to interfere on the ground that the public peace had not been so disturbed as to warrant extreme measures.

In the year 1848, Násiru'd-Dín Sháh was crowned at Ṭihrán and the position of the Bábís became more critical. The Prime Minister, Mírzá Taqí Khán, was entirely opposed to them and showed much cruelty in all that he did concerning them. This led to a civil war, but the power of the Bábís was broken by the fall of the fort of Shaikh Tabarsí, and the slaughter of its garrison in 1849. The commander of the royal forces, Prince Mahdí Kulí Mírzá, was guilty of a great act of treachery. He invited the Bábí leaders to his camp, giving them assurances of personal safety. They were received with much courtesy, but, when they were at their ease and had laid aside their weapons, the Prince gave a signal and the unsuspecting Bábís were seized and put to the most cruel tortures. Some three hundred men were smeared with naphtha and burnt alive. Still the Bábís remained true to their leader. Persecution seemed to have no effect on them, and so Taqí Khán saw that he must put the Báb himself out of the way. He sent an order to his brother, who had charge of the captive, in these terms: ‘Obtain a formal and explicit sentence from the learned doctors at Tabríz, who are the firm supporters of the Church of Ja'far (the sixth of the twelve Imáms) and the impregnable stronghold of the Shí'ah religion. Summon the troops, suspend the Báb before all the people and give orders for the soldiers to fire a volley.’

On the following day the Báb and one of his youthful

disciples, Aqá Muḥammad 'Alí,¹ were condemned by the Mullás and then (July 9, 1850), handed over to the Colonel of the regiment appointed to carry out the sentence of death. Mírzá Kázim Beg gives the following account of what took place. 'The roads which led to the court of the barracks were crowded with people. At a military execution in Persia, the condemned are tied together with their backs towards the firing party. Aqá Muḥammad 'Alí begged to be allowed to turn his face towards the people, and then in a loud but calm voice, he began to say some prayers which had been composed by his master. The Báb kept perfectly silent. His solemn demeanour and attitude aroused the sympathy and compassion of the spectators. The governor and the Mullás tried to allay this by preaching loudly against the Bábí doctrines, and setting forth in an exaggerated form the evils of the system. They succeeded with difficulty in checking the pity of the spectators. Then, after two volleys had been fired, the deed was done and the Báb and his young disciple met their fate.'² There were no political grounds for this execution of the Báb, for though, driven to it by persecutions, the Bábís had been in revolt, there is no evidence to show that the Báb, then

¹ Aqá Muḥammad 'Alí was urged by his brother to give up the Báb and so to save his life. His reply shows the remarkable power the Báb had over his followers and how devoted they were to him and his cause. He met his death with complete resignation. The letter he wrote to his brother is an exceedingly touching one. See *JRAS*, October 1889, p. 992.

² *Journal Asiatique*, Sixième Série, tome vii, p. 377.

a prisoner, had any part in it or even encouraged it. This is the opinion of Count Gobineau, a great authority on Bábíism.

The corpses were cast out of the city near the moat to be devoured by dogs and jackals, but after a little time were conveyed away by the Bábís, who, by bribes or the influence of powerful friends, obtained possession of them. 'They were wrapped in silk, placed in one coffin and sent to Ṭíhrán where, by the order of Mírzá Yaḥyá (Şubḥ-i-Ezel) who, though but twenty years old, had been chosen to succeed the Báb, they were deposited in a little shrine called Imám-záda-i-Ma'súm. Here they remained for seventeen or eighteen years, till the schism originated by Bahá'u'lláh deprived his half-brother Şubḥ-i-Ezel of the supremacy in the Bábí sect which he had hitherto enjoyed. Then they were removed by the Bahá'ís to a shrine at 'Akká (St. Jean d'Aere).'

The Prime Minister fondly hoped that all trouble was at an end now that the Báb was no more, and that peace and quietness would ensue; but he entirely miscalculated the strength of the movement and the devoted ardour of the Bábís. So far from the loss of their leader putting a stop to the growth of the sect, it only increased its numbers.¹

The Báb does not appear to have been a political agitator, and politics had nothing to do with the inception of the movement. His desire was to introduce religious reform, but he did not see that in a land where Church and State were so closely connected this must eventually

¹ *Gobineau*, p. 271.

lead to political complications. Still he was not a fanatic either in religion or politics. He was a mystic, with all the unworldliness of a man devoted to meditation on abstruse subjects. His followers, however, soon found that the Mullás opposed all reforms, and that the government stood by them. Then the movement became political and the troubles began. The Báb remained passive, but the chief men amongst his followers did not. They accepted the new departure and so the death of the Báb did not, as the government expected, render them despondent. On the contrary, it exasperated them and made them the determined enemies of the Sháh and his government.

The next historical event of importance is the attempt to assassinate the Sháh of Persia, Náşiru'd-Dín, on August 15, 1852. It does not appear to have been an act determined on by the Bábí leaders, but the work of a few who desired to avenge the execution of the Báb. If this is the case, the relentless persecution which followed was not justified. The conspirators were twelve in number, but only three were actually engaged in the attempt. They contrived to be engaged as gardeners in a garden in which the Sháh sometimes walked, and one day approaching him, on pretence of having a petition to deliver, they fired three times at him, the last shot inflicting a slight wound. One assassin was killed on the spot, the other two were arrested. At their examination before the Council of Ministers, they declared that they had no accomplices and said: 'you can torture us till the day of judgement, we shall say no more.'

The most active measures were now taken against the Bábís, a number of persons, probably fifty, were arrested, of whom about twenty-eight were condemned to death. The sentence was carried out in September 15, 1852.¹ The authorities were alarmed and determined to make a terrible example. The prisoners, says Mírzá Kázim Beg, 'were tortured in the most odious manner, with an unheard of refinement of cruelty.' An English traveller says: 'Tow steeped in oil was inserted between their fingers and behind their shoulder blades, leaving portions hanging down which were lighted, and in this condition the unhappy wretches were led, as long as they could walk, through the principal streets of the capital. No time was lost between apprehension and execution, death was the only punishment known. The headless bodies lay in the streets for days, the terrified relatives fearing to give them burial, and the dogs fought and growled over the corpses in the deserted thoroughfares.'² Count Gobineau says: 'children and women with lighted candles stuck into their wounds were driven along by whips, and as they went they sang, "we came from God, to Him we return," when the children expired, the executioners threw the corpses beneath the feet of their fathers.'³ Suleymán Khán's

¹ Some of these persons, such as Qurratu'l-'Ayn, and 'Aqá Seyyid Husain of Yezd were in strict confinement at the time of the attempt in the Sháh's life and, therefore, could not possibly have had anything to do with it. Their execution was due to their religious opinions and in order to strike terror into the hearts of the Bábís.

² Ussher, *Diary of a journey from London to Persopolis*, p. 628.

³ Gobineau, p. 302.

execution is thus described: 'At first four knife wounds were made in his breast, into which lighted candles were placed. Red hot horseshoes were fastened to his feet, and he was then led round the streets of the bazaar. His teeth were then torn out of his mouth and arranged as a crescent on his head. He then died.'¹ This man bore his tortures with great heroism, and sang verses showing happy he was to give his life for his faith.

In order to avert from the Sháh and his ministers any special hatred of the Bábís, and to minimize the possibility of retaliation, the prisoners were divided amongst different classes of persons, who were responsible for the execution of the victims allotted to them. Thus the 'Ulamá representing the clergy; the princes, the nobility; military officers; professors and merchants—all had to take their part in the executions.

The punishment was for a political offence, though dislike of a sectarian movement may have had its share in the action of the government. The Bábís, however, looked upon it as a religious persecution and so far from suppressing the movement it led to a large increase in the number of the secret followers of the Báb. Persecution had failed hitherto also for it is said that, 'in a very few years (1847 to 1852), this religion spread throughout Persia, and counted innumerable devotees. It was not an ignorant population that was stirred up, but leading members of the clergy, persons of good education, women belonging to important families, philosophers and Šúfís. Even Jews were affected.'² Persecution

¹ Vámbíry, *Wanderungen und Erlebnisse in Persien*, p. 299.

² Gobineau, p. 308.

continued to fail for later on Lord Curzon¹ considered them to number nearly one million, drawn from men in every walk of life.

One of the most noted persons put to death in 1852 was Qurratu'l-'Ayn, a learned lady of great intelligence and strong personality, who had embraced with heartfelt devotion the teaching of the Báb. At Kerbelá she gave a public address to the Shaikhís, but the governor made her go away. She went to Baghdad but was again made to move on. So she wandered from place to place, everywhere preaching and making converts. Some of the Bábís were not well pleased that a woman should do this; but the Báb supported her and gave her the title of Janáb-i-Ṭáhira, or Her Excellency the Pure. After the insurrection at Mázandarán she was taken prisoner and sent to Ṭíhrán. The Sháh having seen her said he liked her looks and that she should be left quiet.² Her imprisonment was not, therefore, rigorous, and she was allowed to have occasional intercourse with her Bábí friends. Her marvellous beauty, enthusiasm and eloquence won for her the regard of her custodian Maḥmúd Khán, who did all that his duty allowed him to soften the rigour of her captivity. Her life was in no danger, until the attempt to assassinate the Sháh was

¹ *Persia*, vol. i, p. 499. It is difficult to arrive at any certainty, but the numbers seem to have been exaggerated in the past. The Bahá'ís themselves claim that their follower in Persia now number between two and three hundred thousand, but Dr. J. D. Frame, a resident in Persia, considers that there are not more than one hundred thousand. Cf. *The Moslem World*, vol. ii, No. 3, p. 238.

² زهیتش عوهم می آید بگذار باهد

made. Even then she was offered her freedom if she would deny that she was a Bábí, live quietly and cease to teach. She refused life on such terms. She had no connexion whatever with the attempt on the life of the Sháh, and so her execution which now took place was a crime and a political blunder. She was the most remarkable of all the followers of the Báb. Highly educated from an oriental point of view, eloquent, fearless, she had marvellous power over an audience. She threw her whole soul into the cause she advocated and inspired with perfect confidence all whom she influenced. She was a mystic, for her poems have the Súfí element in them,¹ yet she was a practical woman who saw much in the social and political life around her which needed reform, and she was not afraid to let her views be known. The manner of her death cast a halo of glory round her short and active career.

The teaching of the Báb is contained in his book called *Bayán*, composed in 1848, a name sometimes applied to his collective writings, sometimes to a particular book. A good deal of the Báb's teaching is very mystical and fanciful, but the following is a summary of the more important dogmas: God is eternal and unapproachable. All things come from Him and exist by Him. Man cannot approach Him except through some appointed medium. So, distinct from God there

¹The country of 'I' and 'We' forsake; thy home in annihilation make,

Since fearing not this step to take, thou shalt gain the highest felicity.

This is pure Súfism.

is 'a Primal Will,¹ or Mashíyyat-i-úli', who becomes

¹There is an evident connexion between this dogma of the Bábís and the Súfí system, in which the 'First Intelligence', or 'Primal Element' is represented as a manifestation of God. To the Súfí, as to the Bábí, God is 'sterile in His inaccessible height.' Men can never be more than slaves, nearness to Him is impossible. But men longed for communion with some one or something above them. They felt the need of some intermediary and found it in a revival of the old Gnostic notions of the Æons, forms of manifestation of the Ineffable and Incomprehensible. Neander thus describes the Gnostic view: 'Self-limitation is the first beginning of a communication of life from God, the first passing of the hidden Deity into manifestation, and from this proceeds all further self-developing manifestation of the divine essence. Now, from this primal link in the chain of life there are evolved, in the first place, the manifold powers or attributes inherent in the divine essence, which, until that first self-comprehension, were all hidden in this abyss of His essence.' This intermediary is the Primal Will of the Bábí and the Primal Element of the Súfí, who also calls it by the names of the Pen, the first principle, the spirit of Muhammad, Universal Reason, or 'Aql-i-Kull. God's voice is heard through it, by it material strings were brought into existence. It works in prophets and saints. The Imám is closely connected with it. I am not able to find out whether the Báb taught that the Primal Will was created or not. In Súfí theology it certainly is, for in the Akhláq-i-Jalálí it is written: 'It is admitted, equally by the masters of perception and conception, that the First Principle which, at the mandate, "Be and it is", issued, by the ineffable power and will, from the chaotic ocean of inexistence, was a simple and luminous essence which, in the language of philosophy, is termed the Primary Intelligence, and the great fathers of mysticism and investigation call it the Muhammadan Spirit.' It is to this and not to the inaccessible and incomprehensible God that the Imám seeks to return. When his work in life is done, then 'his end is joined to his beginning—Ba ághaz girdad báz anjám.' It is a curious phase of human thought which

incarnate in the prophets. This Primal Will which spoke in all the prophets of the past, spoke also in the Báb who is the Nuqta-i-Bayán, or the 'Point of Revelation' and will speak in 'Him whom God shall manifest'. This is apparent from the following texts of the *Bayán*: 'The whole *Bayán* revolves round the saying of "Him whom God shall manifest".' 'A thousand perusals of the *Bayán* are not equal to the perusal of one verse of what shall be revealed by "Him whom God shall manifest".' 'The *Bayán* is to-day in the stage of seed, but in the day of "Him whom God shall manifest", it will arrive at the degree of fruition.' It must be remembered that Bahá'u'lláh afterwards claimed, and is allowed by his followers, this exalted position. The following are some of the expressions used of Bahá'u'lláh by his followers. 'Bahá'u'lláh has come for the perfecting of the law of Christ, and his injunctions are in all respects similar.

For instance, we are commanded that we should prefer that we should be killed rather than that we should kill. It is the same throughout, and indeed could not be otherwise, for Bahá'u'lláh is Christ returned again, even as He promised, to perfect that which He had begun. Christ returns to you as Bahá'u'lláh with angels, with clouds, with the sound of

the Súfís evidently borrowed from the Gnostics, and the Bábís from the Súfís. This earnest longing for communion with a manifestation of God we can sympathize with, and only regret that in their ignorance or repudiation of the Christian doctrine of the incarnation, both Súfí and Bábí have so sadly missed the mark.

trumpets. His angels are his messengers, the clouds are the doubts which prevent you recognizing him; the sound of the 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.¹ Each dispensation of the Primal Will thus become incarnate supersedes a preceding one, and so Islám has ceased to be the true religion for to-day.

It has already been shown that devotion to the Imám was a very prominent point in the teaching of the Báb. In one of the earliest of his writings we read, 'When thou wishest to visit the friend of God, or one of the Imáms of the faith, first purify thy body from everything which thy heart dislikes; then wash thyself with seven handfuls of water upon thy head.' Then follow the directions how to approach the Imám with humility and the prayer to be said. He addresses the Imáms as effulgences of the divine glory, manifestations of God, intercessors with Him for sinful men. He longs for communion with them. Thus: 'Where are the days of your manifestation that I may be independent of all except you? and where are the days of the appearance of the signs of your Lordship, that by your permission, I may say to whatsoever I will, "Be," and it shall become existent before you.' These are the enthusiastic utterances of a devout Shí'ah, and represent the feelings of the Báb before he felt conscious of any special mission. But this constant dwelling on the glory of the Imáms, the dispensers of God's will and favour, gradually led to the formation of the idea that

¹ Browne, *A Year among the Persians*, pp. 308-9.

he had special communication with them and was, in fact, the Báb.

At this stage, the usual Muḥammadan customs were not set aside. The month of Ramaḍán was observed as a fast; but the 'Ulamá were bitterly reproached for opposing this new revelation. Thus the Báb says: 'O people of the earth, give thanks to God, for verily we have delivered you from the doctors of doubt.'

For a more complete exposition of the Bábí dogmas, Professor Browne, to whose valuable researches we are chiefly indebted for the best information on the subject, refers to the Persian *Bayán*, from which quotations have already been made. This work brings out more fully the theory of a Primal Will and declares that, 'That which spoke in Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Jesus and Muḥammad¹ was the one and the same Primal Will. In each manifestation news has been given of the following one. Thus the Jews were told to expect a Messiah, but they rejected him; the Christians to expect Muḥammad but, as a rule, they did not accept him; so the Muḥammadans are taught to look out for Imám Mahdí. Yet now he has come (i.e. in the Báb) they persecute him.'²

The chapters of the *Bayán* are arranged in groups of nineteen, a number which has a peculiar significance with the Bábís. Each letter of the Arabic alphabet has a numerical value, and so dates can be given by words or sentences. Alif, the first letter, stands for God, and the word for one is wáhid. The numerical value

¹These are the Anbiyá'ulá'l-'Azam of Islám. See *Faith of*

²JRAS, vol. xxi, pp. 914, 925. [*Islám* (3rd. ed.), p. 239.]

of the letters in this word is nineteen. God is absolute Being, or wujúd, the value of the letters of which also comes to nineteen.¹ The names of one of the attributes of God is Ḥayy, or the living one. The sum of the letters of Ḥayy is eighteen, to which, if we add the letter Alif, the One which pervades all, the sacred number nineteen again comes out. Nineteen, then, represents the manifestation of the unknowable essence, and $19 \times 19 (= 361)$ represents the manifested universe, or all things, expressed by the term 'Kulu Shey'. The numerical value of 'Kulu Shey' is 360, to which Alif, the One pervading all, is added, and we again get 361, or 19×19 .

In this world, God is represented by Mírzá 'Alí Muḥammad, the Báb who is called the Nuqta, or Point,³

¹This is in accord with the second canon of the Cabbalistic system of Biblical interpretation in the thirteenth century, which is called Ghematria, or 'the use of the numerical value of the letters of a word for purposes of comparison with other words which yield the same or similar combination of numbers' (Dr. Briggs in *Biblical Study*, p. 307). I am not prepared to say that there is any connexion between the Cabbalists and the Persian mystics.

²There is a connexion between the Bábí use of the term Point and the sacred number nineteen. According to a Shí'ah Tradition, 'Alí said that the whole Qur'án was implicitly contained in the Súratu'l-Fátiha (i) and that this again was contained in the Bismilláh at the head of it. This in turn was contained in the initial letter b (ب) and this in turn in the dot or point under the ب: To this 'Alí added the words: 'I am the point (nuqta) under the ب.' There are nineteen letters in the Arabic formula بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ—In the name of God, the merciful, the forgiving. These nineteen letters then are the manifestation of the point under the b or ب.

Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics, vol. ii, p. 306.

and his eighteen disciples. 'These eighteen are called the hurúfát-i-ḥayy, or letters of the living, because by them the Báb bestowed life upon the world.' These again with their leader form the number nineteen, and thus constitute a wáhid, or complete unity, and, as each disciple was to have nineteen under him, we again arrive at 361, which represent the numerical value of the letters in 'Kulu Shey' or the number of all things. On this same ground the *Bayán* has nineteen parts, and each part has nineteen chapters. The Bábí year has nineteen months of nineteen days; each day has nineteen hours and each hour nineteen minutes. The same principle was adopted to regulate measures of distance and of weight; law and commerce were to come under its influence. 'Organize,' said the Báb all things under the number of the unity, that is to say, by a division into nineteen parts.¹

Another point on which the *Bayán* lays much stress is that no revelation is final. This is entirely opposed to the ordinary Muḥammadan view, which is that as Muḥammad was the *Khatamu'l-Anbiyá*, or 'the Seal of the Prophets,' his revelation closed the series. The Báb taught that, as the human race progresses, the Primal Will, the teacher of men, speaks in each new revelation more fully and more clearly.² All these

¹ Gobineau, p. 322.

² 'He said that he (the Báb) came only for the further development of the knowledge of the divine nature; that all the prophets in succession had said more about this than their predecessors were called upon to do, and that it was simply as a consequence of this regular progress that to him had been assigned the task to

successive and progressive revelations and dispensations were not for the purpose of abrogating-preceding essential laws, but to complete them and especially to prepare the world for the fuller teaching of 'Him whom God shall manifest'.

The Báb taught that men who looked upon revelation as final had gone astray. The Jews looked forward to the advent of the Messiah, yet when he came they rejected him. The Christians were told that the Paraclete would come, yet, when Muḥammad, the promised comforter, arrived, they would not accept him. The Shí'ahs pray for the coming of al-Mahdí, but when he appeared as the Báb they put him to death. So the Báb insisted on the fact that he was not the last manifestation, and referred to 'Him whom God shall manifest'. Bahá'u'lláh claimed to be that person. Assuming that his claim is valid, which the Ezelis deny, still according to Bábí, teaching he will not be the last, and some other claimant may arise to supersede him. No doubt, the Báb expected that long ages would intervene, and the condition of the world would change before the appearance of a new manifestation. By his action Bahá'u'lláh has taught that only a few years are required and has thus prepared the way for constant change, when some one strong enough to make his way shall appear. He thus set a precedent for his son, 'Abbás Efendí, to follow. As against this theory the Báb's position is clear. 'A new religion is not sent

be more complete than Muhammad, who himself was more complete than Jesus, as Jesus in turn was more complete than his predecessors.' Gobineau, p. 317.

until the development of the human race renders this necessary. A revelation is not abrogated till it is no longer sufficient for the needs of mankind. There is no disagreement between the prophets: all teach the same truth, but in such measure as men can receive it. As mankind advance and progress they need further instruction. The instruction given by Abraham was suitable and sufficient for the people of his day, but not for those to whom Moses was sent, whilst this in turn had ceased to meet the needs of those to whom Christ was sent. Yet we must not say that their religions were opposed to one another, but rather that each manifestation is more complete and more perfect than the last.¹

The great point in the Bábí theology is that the teacher is one and the same, though he manifests himself according to the capacity and needs of those to whom he is sent. The outward form changes but the Universal Spirit remains. It then follows that 'since this Universal Spirit is absolute good, we must believe that it always has a manifestation in the world . . . hence during the long intervals which separate one prophetic dispensation from the next, there must be in the world silent manifestations of the spirit, intrinsically not less perfect than the speaking manifestations whom we call prophets.'² Such persons would seem to be those who in Şúfí phraseology had annihilated self, escaped the delusions of plurality and realized the unity

¹ Browne, *A Year among the Persians*, p. 303.

² *Ibid.*, p. 327.

of True Being. They differ in degree but not in kind from the prophets.

The Báb was a prisoner when he showed such interest in preparing the mind of his followers for this 'Coming One'. The *Bayán* is full of it. It is laid down that in every assembly of believers a vacant place must be left for him. When his name is mentioned all must rise up. In any case, the ground was all prepared for Bahá'u'lláh when he made his claim.

The *Bayán* speaks with confidence of the success of Bábíism. The future Bábí community is to form a perfect Utopia and its governments are to be tolerant. The kindly nature of the Báb is seen in the fancy sketches he draws of the future. At the day of judgement, 'He whom God shall manifest' will preside. All the good people will be praised for their works, their piety, their obedience. Evil men will be annihilated. Thus the good will return to God and dwell in Him; the bad will pass away and be no more.

The Muḥammadan doctrines of the examination of the dead in the graves, the resurrection, şiráţ, heaven, hell, are all treated allegorically. The first is really a summons to the people to believe in the next manifestation of the Primal Will, the resurrection is the appearance of this manifestation. Şiráţ, or the bridge, is the belief in the prophet of the age, a matter difficult to the self-willed, but easy to the seeker after God. Hell is ignorance and denial of the last manifestation of God, through the Primal Will incarnated in the prophet, whilst heaven is joy in it. The views of the Báb on a future life are not very clear. Speaking

of *barzakh*¹ he says, 'What is intended by *barzakh* is merely the interval between two manifestations, and not that which is commonly known amongst men, for none knoweth what shall be decreed unto them after death except God.' The hope of a future reward was not placed before his followers as an inducement to accept him, and this is in direct contrast to the conduct and teaching of Muhammad. In the *Bayán* the Báb wrote the following striking words: 'So worship God that, if the recompense of thy worship of Him were to be the fire, no alteration in thy worship of Him would be produced. If you worship from fear, that is unworthy of the threshold of the holiness of God, nor will you be accounted a believer; so also, if your gaze is on Paradise, and if you worship in hope of that, for then you have made God's creation a partner with Him.'²

The great festival is that of the Persian Naurúz or New Year's day. Instead of the Muhammadan fast of Ramaḍán of thirty days, a month of nineteen days, the last month of the Bábí year, is appointed. Images and pictures are not allowed in places of worship; but music and singing are lawful in such buildings for purposes of devotion. A belief in the efficacy of talismans and charms is encouraged.³ Each man constantly carries on his person a charm in the shape of a star, the rays of which are formed of lines containing the name of God; the women carry one made in the form of a circle. No encouragement is given to mendicants.

¹ See *Faith of Islám* (3rd ed., S.P.C.K.), p. 233.

² *JRAS* October, 1889, p. 931.

³ Gobineau, p. 336.

It is said: 'The most hateful of mankind before God is he who sits and begs; take hold of the rope of means, relying on God, the Causer of Causes.' The traffic in slaves is forbidden, and there are laws about great criminal offences, and civil matters, such as inheritance, endowments and so on. Shaving the head is not allowed, but the beard may be cut off. Legal impurity is abolished and intercourse with persons of all religions is enjoined. Music is permitted, wine and opium are prohibited. The furniture of houses should be renewed every nineteen years. It is recommended that chairs should be used. No one must carry arms except in times of tumult or war. Circumcision is treated as a matter of indifference. The Báb allowed a second wife to be taken, but prohibited concubinage. All are to read the sacred books regularly, to be kind and courteous in their conduct, to give alms, to approve for others what they would like themselves, and to forgive their enemies. Instead of the Muhammadan salutation, 'As-salama 'alaikum and alaikum-u's-salam' or 'peace be upon you' and 'upon you be peace,' the Bábís amongst themselves say, on meeting one another, Alláhu abhá—'God is most bright,' to which the response is the same.

After the death of the Báb, the chief interest in the movement circles round Mírzá Yaḥyá and his elder half-brother Mírzá Ḥusain 'Alí, known as Bahá'u'lláh, who became the respective leaders of the two sects, into which the Bábís soon became divided, the Ezelis and the Bahá'ís. There seems no doubt that the Báb in the year 1849 nominated the former, whom he named

Şubḥ-i-Ezel (Morning of eternity), as his successor, and who for a short time really held an undisputed position as the spiritual head of the Bábí community. His claim to this office is based on the document, of which Professor Browne gives the following translation:—¹

This is a letter from 'Alí before Nabíl,² the remembrance of God unto the worlds,

Unto him whose name is equivalent to the name of One,³ the remembrance of God unto the worlds.

Say, 'Verily all originate from the Point of revelation' (nuḡṡa-i-Bayán).

O name of the One, keep what hath been revealed in the Bayán,

And what hath been commanded, 'Verily thou art a mighty way of truth.'

Professor Browne says: 'In my opinion it is proved beyond all doubt that the Báb, ere his death chose him as his successor.'⁴

In 1852, when the attempt on the life of the Sháh was made, the Bábís were bitterly persecuted, and Şubḥ-i-Ezel escaped to Baghdad, which then became the headquarters of the sect. Bahá'u'lláh, who had been imprisoned in Tíbrán for four months, joined him some years after.

¹ *The New History of the Báb*, p. 426.

² A name of the Báb.

³ Wáhid, one. The numerical value of the letters in Wáhid is 18, which is also the value of the letters in the word Yahyá, one of the names of Subh-i-Ezel. It is thus clear that the Báb meant Subh-i-Ezel and not Bahá'u'lláh to succeed him.

⁴ *The Episode of the Báb*, p. 350.

They remained quietly at Baghdad for eleven or twelve years, directing a cautious and steady propaganda. In the early part of this period Bahá'u'lláh retired for two years into Turkish Kurdistan, which the Bahá'ís say was a period of purification and preparation for his great office; but the Ezelis say that he went away, because he was annoyed at the opposition he met with.¹

The Persian government, stirred up by the orthodox Mullás, at length objected to the residence of the Bábís in Baghdad, and prevailed on the Turkish authorities in 1864 to deport them to Constantinople, from whence a few months later on they were sent to Adrianople.

Şubḥ-i-Ezel led a very secluded life in Baghdad, and the correspondence was carried on and other matters attended to by Bahá'u'lláh, a man of resolute will and ambitious character. At first he acted in the name of Şubḥ-i-Ezel, and professed to do all he did under his instructions; but in time the idea gradually formed itself in his mind that he should become actually, as indeed he was already virtually, the head and leader of the Bábís. Thus the influence of Bahá'u'lláh grew, and at last in 1866-7 he began to advance claims which afterwards culminated in the assertion that he was the person to whom the Báb referred in the expression, 'He whom God shall manifest.'² It required great firmness of purpose to withstand such a claim made by such a man, and 'such firmness Şubḥ-i-Ezel, a peace-loving,

¹ *Hasht Bihisht*, cf. *Episode of the Báb*, p. 356.

« مَنْ يَطَهِّرُهُ اللَّهُ »

contemplative, gentle soul, wholly devoted to the memory of his beloved master, caring little for authority, and incapable of self-assertion, seems to have altogether lacked.¹

The Ezelis did not admit the claim made by Bahá'u'lláh and maintained that before the person of whose advent the Báb had spoken could come, Bábiism must obtain general currency, and the laws laid down by the Báb in his books must be accepted by most of the nations of the world.² They further added to their reply that it was not to be supposed that two manifestations, that of the Báb, and that of 'Him whom God shall manifest' could take place with so short an interval between them. The Bahá'ís, who admitted that Şubḥ-i-Ezel was the first vice-regent of the Báb, to all the objections alleged against Bahá'u'lláh replied that Şubḥ-i-Ezel's rule was only to last until the manifestation of the new leader, who was to come suddenly, and the time of whose advent was known only to God; that the Báb had stated that the new prophet come suddenly, and that it could not happen that any one should falsely claim the honour of being the new manifestation. They also used an argument well known amongst Muḥammadans, an argument based on the literary style of the books given by means of a divinely-appointed messenger. They asserted that the Lauḥ-i-Naşír, the book in which Bahá'u'lláh announced his mission, fulfilled

¹ *New History of the Báb*, p. xxi.

² This could not yet be the case, for as Count Gobineau says: 'The Bábi literature is extensive but secret, for he who was known, to possess such books put his life in danger.' p. 310.

this condition of a divine revelation by its eloquence of diction and the wonderful knowledge, unacquired by study, displayed by its author. Anyhow the conflicting claims to the leadership led to quarrels, blows and loss of life. A number of Ezelis, probably about twenty-five in number, were assassinated by the followers of Bahá'u'lláh, though there is not sufficient evidence to show that they acted under his orders. He was, however, charged with an attempt to poison Şubḥ-i-Ezel. The Bahá'ís rebut this charge by saying that it was Şubḥ-i-Ezel who put the poison in the food Bahá'u'lláh was expected to eat. Mr. Phelps (*Abbás Effendí*, pp. 42-3) holds the latter view and animadverts severely on Professor Browne's suggestion that assassination is less repugnant to the eastern than to the western mind. That three, at least, of the Ezelis were put to death by the Bahá'ís is, in Professor Browne's opinion, hardly a matter of doubt. He further states that 'Abbas Efendí would appear to have interceded for the murderers.¹ The assassination of opponents on the part of a religious leader has for its justification amongst persons brought up in the Muslim system, the actions of Muḥammad himself, and it would not, therefore, necessarily appear objectionable to the Bahá'ís. Only it is a bad introduction to a new system which claims above all things to be 'a religion of brotherhood.'

The Turkish authorities seeing those breaches of the peace amongst the Bábis at Adrianople determined to separate the disputants. Bahá'u'lláh and his followers were sent to 'Akká in Syria, and Şubḥ-i-Ezel and his

¹ Cf. *The Episode of the Báb*, pp. 93-4; 359-72.

people to Famagusta in Cyprus. This took place in 1868. A few Ezelis were sent with Bahá'u'lláh and a few Bahá'ís with Şubḥ-i-Ezel. It was hoped that by this arrangement the minority, in each case, would act as spies, and prevent any communication between Bábís in Persia and either of the rival leaders.

After a time Bahá'u'lláh was allowed to live in a house outside the town of 'Akká.¹ When the deposition of Sultán 'Abdu'l-Ḥamíd took place still more liberty was allowed, and 'Abbás Efendí can now travel abroad. His permanent residence is at Haifa near 'Akká, whither pilgrims from Persia, England and America resort, and by their gifts maintain him and his family in affluence. It is said that there are no converts in the neighbourhood. 'Şubḥ-i-Ezel in his island home may be compared to Napoleon in St. Helena—a man who has played a great rôle in stirring events and times, but whose active life and power to mould men's thoughts have passed away.'²

After this separation had been made, the followers of Bahá'u'lláh increased rapidly, whilst those of Şubḥ-i-Ezel have decreased. They are now nearly extinct, and are not at all likely ever to come into power again.

Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be the messenger of a new dispensation was an unlooked for development of the work

¹ It was from here that Bahá'u'lláh following the example of Muhammad, sent forth a letter to the Sháh of Persia (*Episode of the Báb*, pp. 390-400), the bearer of which was put to death, and addressed other letters, called 'Epistles to the Kings,' to Queen Victoria, the Tsar of Russia, Napoleon III and his Pope. *JRAS* 1889, pp. 489-92.

² *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 303.

of the Báb, and caused at the time much consternation in the Bábí world. A hopeless schism was made. It was much more than a mere struggle for leadership, for Bahá'u'lláh virtually deposed the Báb from his position as the 'Point of Revelation' and made him merely the forerunner or herald (*mubashshir*) of 'Him whom God shall manifest.' This involved a serious departure from the earlier conceptions of the Bábís. It placed the Báb in the lower position of one sent to announce the advent of Bahá'u'lláh, whose followers no longer call themselves Bábís, but Bahá'ís.

The teaching of Bahá'u'lláh was more practical than that of the Báb. It was less mystical and he made his appeal not merely to the Shí'ahs of Persia but to all men. The laws framed by Bahá'u'lláh are found in the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*. They are much simpler than those laid down by the Báb. He is more concerned with ethics than with metaphysics. Whatever view may be taken of Bahá'u'lláh's usurpation of the leadership, it must be admitted that his more practical mind gave to the movement that life and vigour which, had the system remained as the Báb left it, would not have come into existence.

The organization is good, and by means of letters, pilgrims and messengers communication from all parts is kept up with 'Akká. The Bahá'í missionary has all the tact of the Dá'í of the ancient Shí'ah sect of the Ismá'ílíans, who accommodated the instruction given to the opinions of his hearers and only gradually led on to the esoteric doctrines of the system.¹ In Persia itself

¹ See *The Druses* (C.L.S.), pp. 10-13.

there have since been occasional outbursts of persecution, accompanied with the cruelties so common to all Persian repressive action. The political influence of the Bahá'ís in Persia is not great. Under orders issued from head-quarters, they took no part in the first parliament. 'In the constitutional movement in Persia (1907) the Bábís, though their sympathies are undoubtedly with the reformers, wisely refrained from outwardly identifying themselves with that party, to whom their support, by alienating the orthodox Mujtahids and Mullás, would have proved fatal.'¹ This course of conduct may have led to some misconception, for they are said to be looked upon as men who consider the claims of their sect before that of their country.

Bahá'u'lláh died on May 16, 1892. As he had disputed the right of leadership with his half-brother, so now his sons commenced to quarrel over it. 'Abbás Efendí, who was called 'the servant of Bahá' (Abdu'l-Bahá), 'The Most Mighty Branch' (*Ghuṣn-i-A'zam*), and 'He whom God hath desired' (*man uráda'lláhu*), claimed the right to succeed his father. This claim was disputed by his brother Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí, called 'The Most Great Branch' (*Ghuṣn-i-Akbar*), who received the support of his two younger brothers. 'Abbás Efendí has on his side a document left by his father which seems to indicate Bahá'u'lláh's intention that he should succeed him. This probably would have been conclusive, but 'Abbás appears to have claimed that the revelation was not ended, but would go on through him. This strengthened the cause of his opponents, for they held that the

¹ *Encyclopædia Britannica* (eleventh ed.), vol. iii, p. 95.

revelation was closed, and quoted from Bahá'u'lláh's book, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas* (the most holy book) the words, 'Whosoever lays claim to any authority before the completion of a millennium is assuredly a liar and a calumniator.'¹ Thus the position is curious. On the one hand, 'Abbás Efendí seems to have his right to the leadership confirmed by his father's written wish; on the other, his claim to be still a channel of revelation is directly contrary to his father's teaching. 'As in the case of the previous schism between Bahá'u'lláh and Şubḥ-i-Ezel, so here also the conflict was between those who held that every day of Theophany must be succeeded by a night of Occultation and those who felt that the Light by which they had walked could not be extinguished, but must rather increase in brightness.'² The party of 'Abbás Efendí is, however, in the ascendant and is likely to remain so.

About the time when Bahá'u'lláh died, a curious extension of the movement took place in America. A Syrian, Ibráhím George *Khayru'lláh*, who became a convert to Baháism in Cairo, proceeded to America, became an American citizen and in 1892 made known by his lectures in Chicago the claims of Bahá'u'lláh. In 1893 the 'Parliament of Religions' was held at Chicago, which afforded a further opportunity for the propagation of Baháism, and for the bringing it prominently to the notice of the American people. An American lady has lately presented to 'Abbás Efendí a large house at the foot of Mount Carmel, and another has written a play

¹ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 304.

² *Ibid.*, p. 304.

celebrating Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the devoted female follower of the Báb. American authors have written books on the subject, to which also reference is frequently made in periodical literature, and so the movement is kept before the notice of the public. After the dispute between the two brothers took place *Khayru'lláh* espoused the cause of Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí, but 'Abbás Efendí in the beginning of 1902 sent over to America missionaries to state his own claims and to rebut those of his brother. Now, a nephew, the son of Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí, who lives in California, declares that the claim of 'Abbás Efendí to be a present channel of revelation is totally opposed to Bahá'u'lláh's teaching, which was that no new manifestation would take place for a thousand years. There are said to be in Chicago, Washington and New York communities of several thousand American Bahá'ís, who maintain some communication with 'Abbás Efendí at 'Akká.

Bahá'u'lláh in the *Lauḥ-i-Aqdas* (most holy book) laid down many practical rules which differ considerably from those which are current in Islám. Prayer is to be said three times a day, instead of the Muslim five times, and the number of prostrations are fewer than those of the Islám ritual. Worshippers no longer turn to Mecca, but towards the 'Most Holy Place, whence issueth the commands to whomsoever is in the earths and the heavens.'¹ That 'Akká is here meant is clear,

¹ Phelps, *'Abbás Effendi*, p. 159. Count Gobineau says that the Báb did not substitute any Qibla for the ancient ones of Jerusalem and Mecca, which he set aside; but declared that 'ce sera le grand Revelateur qui décidera,' p. 332.

because it is said that when Bahá'u'lláh dies, or, as it is put in hyperbolic language, 'when the Sun of truth and exhortation sets', the Qibla is to be changed to 'that place which we have appointed you.' Polygamy is sanctioned, for Bahá'u'lláh had two wives. Divorce is permitted on the demand of either party after a preliminary separation of one year. The laws in both cases seem more rigorous than those on the same subjects in Islám; but polygamy and easy divorce are sanctioned.¹ 'Their efforts to improve the social position of women have been much exaggerated.'² Some of the practical duties enjoined are obedience and submission to the ruler and laws of the country in which Bahá'ís dwell, friendly intercourse with all sects and people, such studies as tend to the welfare of mankind, and the practice of some trade or profession. They are exhorted to abstain from sin, to avoid selfishness, and to seek for the reformation of the world. All this is very good, but it does not follow that Baháism is a broad latitudinarian system. It is essentially dogmatic. 'Every utterance made by the "Manifestation" of the period (whether the Báb, Şubḥ-i-Ezel, Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abbás Efendí and Muḥammad 'Alí respectively), must be accepted without reserve.'³

An American follower of 'Abbás Efendí, in a book called *'Abbás Effendi*, writes enthusiastically of the marvellous spirit of liberality shown in Baháism. He says that 'it recognizes every other religion as equally

¹ Phelps, pp. 139-40.

² Browne, *Encyclopædia Britannica* (eleventh ed.), vol. iii, p. 95.

³ *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 305.

divine in origin with its own;'¹ but Bahá'u'lláh writing of his own religion in his most important work, the *Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, says: 'The first thing which God has prescribed unto His servants is knowledge of the Day-spring of His revelation, and the Dawning-place of His command, which is the station of His Spirit in the world of creation and command. Whosoever attaineth unto this hath attained unto all good, and whosoever is debarred therefrom is of the people of error, even though he produce all manner of good works.'² In other words no amount of good deeds will help a man who does not attain to a knowledge of Bahá'u'lláh. That is the road to the attainment 'of all good', which is scarcely a recognition of 'every other religion as equally divine.' The Bábís were intolerant and would have kept unbelievers in a position of inferiority. The Bahá'ís profess to look forward to a period of universal brotherhood, which shall include men of all religions, but this theory may be put forth more as a matter of policy than of principle. Those who know them well doubt the permanence of this idea of universal tolerance.³ Professor Browne who wrote the preface to Mr. Phelps' book, referring to that author's confidence in the tolerant spirit of Baháism, says: 'I cannot wholly share his confidence as to how the Bahá'ís would treat either the Shí'ite Muḥammadans, the Şúfís, or the Ezelis (against all of whom they have, for different reasons, a special grudge) if they should one day, as is within the range

¹ Phelps, p. xxxvii.

² *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 305.

³ Cf. *The Moslem World*, vol. ii, No. 3, p. 237.

of possibility, become paramount in Persia.'¹ Again, 'it is not certain to the present writer (Professor Browne) that their triumph over Islám in Persia would ultimately conduce to the welfare of that distracted land, or that the tolerance which they now advocate would stand the test of success and supremacy.'²

Mr. Phelps, an ardent admirer of 'Abbás Efendí, gives an account of the religion and philosophy of Baháism, as it was taught to him at 'Akká from which we gather the following information. 'The Bahá'í conception of the Supreme Being is not a personality, but an essence, an all-pervading force or power, frequently referred to as love, or truth, or life.' 'God', says 'Abbás Efendí, 'is pure essence.'³ 'A messenger comes whenever, through the lapse of time and the forgetfulness of men, the voice of his predecessor becomes obscured; and the extent to which the truth is declared by each depends upon the capacity of the age to receive it. Such messengers were Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Mahomet, and the founders of the Bahá'í faith. The revelation of the last is fuller than any which has preceded it, men being now better fitted to understand the truth.'⁴

'The real human soul' is described by 'Abbás Efendí as a ray of God's love, sent by Him to every human being at its conception;⁵ with this soul the human consciousness must effect union during the term of its

¹ Phelps, p. xx.

² *Encyclopædia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. ii, p. 307

³ Phelps, p. 114.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 126.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 124.

earthly existence.¹ This result then follows: 'When the union is complete, there results an individuality possessed of divine wisdom and the all-pervading powers of spirit, knowing itself and also knowing that it is part of the Infinite, Absolute, Eternal Essence. . . . In its ultimate perfection, it passes beyond time, space, place, and form. It is then man and God in one, the reflection and the one.'² Thus a Bahá'í must believe in an impersonal God and the loss of his own personality in the future. He must further acknowledge that 'the spirit has passed away from the bodies of the old religions', that 'these bodies are dead or dying; but the same spirit is reborn in a new body—that is, the Body of the Law contained in the utterances of Bahá'u'lláh.'³ A world-teacher greater than his predecessors has now appeared. 'He is a world-teacher in a broader sense than they. His teaching cannot be limited to any nation or race.'⁴ It is distinctly stated that in all the previous manifestations God sent His Holy Spirit, or breath to breathe upon the peoples of the world, so 'when the spirit was manifested in the prophets of old, they represented as much of the divine nature as it was possible for the people of those periods

¹ Phelps, p. 127.

² Ibid., pp. 128-9.

This does not appear to be the view held by many Persian Bahá'ís, which is that the spirits of men preserve their identity after death, and they say that 'Abbás Efendí so teaches. Probably like other mystical sects, off-shoots of the Shí'ah system, Baháism has an esoteric doctrine for the initiated, and that others hear very much what they desire to learn. Cf. Article on Baháism in *The Moslem Review*, vol. ii, No. 3, p. 240.

³ Phelps, pp. 144-5.

⁴ Ibid., p. 149.

to assimilate.'¹ Then follows the astounding statement: 'Now the world has advanced. It was necessary for the essence itself of God to become manifest and this it did through the person of Bahá'u'lláh.'² One of 'Abbás Efendí's statement is: 'Look always to God for aid, not to frail human nature.' Then follows: 'Call on Bahá for strength to guide you. That spirit is now the renovating influence upon this earth.'³

In the most recent English book⁴ on the subject many creeds are described, but the account of Baháism is short and superficial. A writer who says that 'the difference between the Shí'ah and the Sunní is mainly one of ritual' presumably knows nothing of the great Shí'ah dogma of the Imámat, and so fails to see that Bábíism and its off-shoot Baháism are in reality but other forms of Mahdíhood (ante p. 9).⁵ Unless the historical basis of Baháism is correctly understood, no right conclusion concerning it can be arrived at. Nothing is said about the supersession of Şubḥ-i-Ezel by Bahá'u'lláh,

¹ Phelps, p. 149.

² Ibid., p. 149.

³ Ibid., p. 163.

⁴ *Baháism, the Religion of Brotherhood*, F. H. Skrine.

⁵ Professor Browne referring to the ultra-Shí'ite sects and of their doctrines of Anthropomorphism, Incarnation, Re-incarnation or 'Return', and Metempsychosis says that these 'doctrines appear to be endemic in Persia, and always ready to become epidemic under a suitable stimulus. In our own day they appeared in the Bábí movement, of which, especially in its earlier form (A. D. 1844 to 1852) they constituted the essential kernel; though in later time, under the guidance of Bahá'u'lláh and now of his son, 'Abbás Efendí, they have been relegated to a subordinate, or at least a less conspicuous position.' *A Literary History of Persia*, vol. i, p. 311.

or of the opposition to the leadership of 'Abbás Efendí made by his brother Mírzá Muḥammad 'Alí. The author calls Baháism the 'religion of brotherhood', a curious title for a religion which so far has produced nothing but dissension between brothers. In its highest domestic circles it has absolutely failed to bring peace and harmony into the family life of its leaders. We are told that 'no organized religion appeases the soul's craving for light'; that 'a teacher is eagerly looked for who shall focus the mass of unco-ordinated effort and voice the aspirations of an unquiet age. The Gospel of 'Abdu'l-Bahá is, therefore, making extraordinary progress.' His followers are called 'a brotherhood of idealists whose self-devotion breathes new life into dying creeds.' But the existing organized religions are very much alive and are by no means dying. The Muslim propaganda, for example, was never more vigorous than it is now. Is it a fact that the great religions of the world can give no light to the souls of their followers? Certainly Christianity, now spreading so rapidly in all lands gives light and peace. Yet, according to the western admirers of Baháism, belief in the absolute failure of any existing religion to give any light, and the belief that other creeds are 'dying', seem to be a necessary article of faith for those who accept the teaching of 'Abbás Efendí.

An excellent account of the teaching given will be found in the *Record of Christian Work* (August, 1912). It summarizes the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh and of 'Abbás Efendí thus: '(1) The gathering of all the inhabitants of this terrestrial globe to the acceptance of him as the

manifestation of God, i.e. the divine guide to the unification of all religions in one, and that one—Baháism; (2) universal love as a consequence of the common religion; (3) universal peace and abolition of all possible causes of disagreement, with consequent prohibition of war and shedding of blood, and the mutual love which springs from confidence; (4) the harmonizing of all national customs and characteristics; (5) the unification of all the languages of the world, the only two to be left being Arabic and Persian.'

'Abbás Efendí is a man of considerable power, who, by his apparent breadth of view, captivates a certain class of hearers. As a great unifier of all religions he claims that Bahá'u'lláh was al-Mahdí of the Muslims; the Christ of the Christians come again at this His second advent; the Messiah of the Jews. Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muḥammad and Bahá'u'lláh were all messengers and manifestations of God. Bahá'u'lláh was the last and greatest of all. 'Abbás Efendí, however, is the newest manifestation. An American writer in *The Continent* (May 13, 1912) after an interview with 'Abbás Efendí at Haifa says: 'My impression was that 'Abbás Efendí had little knowledge of the progress of the spirit of truth and altruism and brotherhood throughout the world. . . . He is an improvement upon the Muslims from whom he sprung. As for accepting Baháism in lieu of Christianity, or as a thing superimposed upon Christianity that seems to me absurd and unthinkable. I expect to see the fad pass away in this country. It has shot its bolt.'

The recent visit of 'Abbás Efendí to Paris and London

has called forth some periodical literature,¹ not of any historical value, but interesting as showing how many people there are who are ever seeking after something new. 'Abbás Efendí is described as receiving in his residence in London 'Christians of every denomination, Buddhists of every nationality, Theosophists, Muḥammadans, Agnostics and Gnostics', and as answering all the varied questions put to him in a simple and direct manner. Apparently this was done to the satisfaction of his hearers, for we are told that 'to a Christian, Baháism is Christianity; to a Buddhist, Buddhist; to a mystical Šúfí it speaks in the mystical language of the Šúfí; to a rationalist it is logical.'

It is said that Baháism claims to have the adhesion of at least one-third of the Persian people,² that it has numerous followers in Egypt, India, Burmah, chiefly from among the Muḥammadans. I can only speak for India, where it certainly has not gained any hold of the Muḥammadan population. In South India I know of the existence of only one Bahá'í.

It is curious to see what little notice, often none at all, European admirers of Baháism take of the two great family quarrels. Is it because the practice in the highest circles of Baháism has been so strangely in contrast with the statements put forth for the approval of Europeans and Americans? 'Abbás Efendí is said to describe the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh thus:

¹ *The Contemporary Review*, March, 1912; *The Fortnightly Review*, April, 1912.

² A resident in Persia says they number about 100,000. See article on Baháism in the *Moslem Review*, vol. i, No. 3.

'If a religion becomes the cause of hatred and disharmony it would be better not to exist than to exist.'¹ He evidently presumed on the ignorance of these whom he addressed as to the past hatred between his father and his uncle and of his own family quarrels.

Both Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abbás Efendí, like all other religious leaders in the history of the past, often gave utterance to expressions of real devotion and also to aphorisms containing much that is good. These Mr. Phelps quotes largely and speaking of those who think about religion, the conclusion finally arrived at is that 'to know the Master of 'Akká ('Abbás Efendí) is at once a confirmation and a revelation to those who have thus searched and thought. Their reason and intuition is justified, the possibilities of human nature are revealed to them.'²

We have seen that it was a leading principle of the Bábís and the Bahá'ís that the new manifestation came when the world was weary and the times, in a religious sense, were out of joint. This ardent American advocate for 'Abbás Efendí holds³ that now faith has waned, that true religion is forgotten, that in both 'the east and the west men are wandering in the dark;' so that it belongs to the divine order that a messenger should now come. This is a weak basis on which to build up Bahá'u'lláh's claim to be such a divinely-sent messenger, or for the position assigned to 'Abbás Efendí, for it is far more correct to say that

¹ *Contemporary Review*, March, 1912, p. 397.

² Phelps, p. 255.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 256.

the Christian religion, at least, was never more alive than now, that its missionary activities were never more vigorous nor more successful, that faith in its ultimate success was never more confident, and that true religion, exemplified in countless forms of service to man, was never more intense. This being the real state of affairs, the case for the pretensions of Baháism on its own principle fails, and with it that of 'Abbás Efendí also, for it is clear that it is not a period when a new manifestation, in the form of a leader of a sectarian departure from one of the great branches of the Muslim religion, is needed for the edification and enlightenment of mankind.

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