

thought. He had a profound belief in 'Ali, and was devoted to the memory of the Imams, whom he looked upon as creative forces, arguing from the text, "God the best of creators" (Surah, xxiii. 14), that, if He be the best, He cannot be the only one. The special point of his teaching was that "God is immanent in the universe which proceeds from Him, and that all the elect of God, all the Imams, and all just persons are personifications of the divine attributes." [1]

[1] Journal Asiatique, 6me Serie, tome vii. p. 458.

[p. 325]

Shaikh Ahmad was succeeded by a man who soon commanded much respect and influence. His name was Haji Syed Kazim. He died in the year 1843 A.D., and left no successor. After fastings, vigils, and prayers for guidance, the Shaikhis began to consider what was to be done in the matter of a spiritual director. Mulla Husain proceeded to Shiraz, and there met with Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, who produced before him the signs of his call to his divine mission. For several days Mulla Husain pondered over these matters, and, after a long and severe struggle, became convinced that he had found in the young and ardent enthusiast before him the "True One," to whose advent Haji Syed Kazim had pointed. "He wrote to his friends at Karbala that neither he himself nor any other of them was worthy of the high dignity of Murshid (or leader), and that that "Illuminated One" to whom their late master had referred was alone worthy." He also said, "I have found him at Shiraz, and he is worthy to be the Murshid." [1]

As the connexion between the Babis and the Shaikhis is thus so close, we must now see what was the special dogma of the latter sect. The orthodox Shi'ah creed consists of five articles, which are called "the pillars" or supports of the Faith (irkan-i-din). They are belief (1) in the unity of God (tauhid), (2) in the justice of God ('adl), (3) in prophetship (nabuwat), (4) in the imamate (imamat), (5) in the resurrection (ma'ad). The Shaikhis set aside the articles two and five as already implied in the belief in God and the prophets. To take the place of the rejected articles and to bring the number up to four, they added a new one which they called the Fourth Support or Pillar (rukni-i-rabi'). The meaning of this is that there must always be amongst believers one perfect man (Shi'ah-i-Kamil) who can be the channel of grace (wasita-i-faiz) between the absent Imam and his people. The term "fourth support" is primarily applied to the dogma that the concealed Imam must always have on earth some one who possesses his entire confidence, to whom he gives special spiritual instruction, and who is thus qualified to convey to the believers the wishes and wisdom of their invisible head. The term has, however, come to be applied to the person who fulfils this office. At first the Bab claimed to be this "fourth support," and so to occupy the place held by the "Doors," who were the earlier intermediaries between the Imam and his followers. Thus it is that Babiism is connected with the very central doctrine of the Shi'ahs, though in many other ways it has so far departed from accepted Muhammadan ideas as to form a new sect altogether.

Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, the Bab, was born at Shiraz on the 9th of October, 1820. When quite young he lost his father. For a time the youth assisted his uncle in mercantile pursuits, but as his mind was more inclined to religious meditation and speculative thought than to business affairs, he proceeded to Karbala, where he was brought into contact with Haji Syed Kazim, the Shaikhi leader, whose lectures he occasionally attended. At Karbala he was distinguished by his zeal for learning and by his remarkably austere life. Visitors to

[1] Journal Asiatique, 6me Serie, tome vii. p. 465.

[p. 326]

Karbala, especially those from Shiraz, showed him much consideration, and so his fame was spread abroad. He now composed a commentary on Suratu'l-Yusuf. The Babi historian[1] says of this work, that therein he sought help in the disposal of his affairs and showed his readiness to give up his life. He addresses the Imam thus: — "O residue of God,[2] I am wholly sacrificed to Thee; I am content with curses in Thy love."

Thus it came to pass that on the 23rd of May, 1844, when he was about twenty-four years of age, Mirza 'Ali Muhammad more definitely formulated his views and announced himself as a duly authorized teacher and guide. He then assumed the name of the Bab. He said, "Whosoever wishes to approach the Lord his God and to know the true way that leads to Him ought to do it through me." Of this period of his career Mirza Kazim Beg says: "The number of his adherents increased day by day, and when they demanded that he, like the ancient prophets, should give them a sign in proof of his mission, he relied on this, that he could write a thousand inspired lines in one day. By his peculiarities and by his austere life, even when still at Karbala, he was called the "Illuminated." When the inhabitants of Shiraz returned from Karbala they used to say, "Have you heard of our Syed 'Ali Muhammad? He is no longer as we are; he has become famous and has merited the name of the 'Chosen of God.' All people, small and great, flock around him." He also adds that dreamers and mystics, and evil-disposed persons from self-interest joined him. No doubt some did so from mixed motives; but Mr. E. G. Browne, who is now the best European authority on this subject, seems to me to give the fairest account. He divides the Bab's first adherents into several classes. Firstly, rigorous and pious Muhammadans, who really believed that the signs of the twelfth Imam were fulfilled in him; secondly, all those who desired reform in Persia, and thought that Babiism would conduce to that end; thirdly, the mystics, who considered Babiism to be similar to their own pantheistic system; fourthly, those who were drawn by the personal influence and character of the Bab.[3]

[1] Maqalah-i-Shakhsi Saiyah, p. 4.

[2] The expression residue (or remnant) of God — Baqiyat Ullah — is a very peculiar one. It is connected with a curious belief of the Shi'ahs, viz. that God allowed some part or fraction of Himself in some way or other to be connected with the Imam. As soon then as Mirza 'Ali Muhammad was raised by his

followers to the dignity of the Bab, or as soon as the idea became present to his own mind, he could address the Imam as the Baqiyat Ullah, and set forth his complete devotion to him. His followers then gave him the titles of the servant of Baqiyat Ullah, the mystery of Baqiyat Ullah, the friend of Baqiyat Ullah. Gradually as, during his imprisonment, he became more and more invisible to his followers, and when he became credited with the power of working miracles and more or less a mythical being, he was no longer called the servant, or the mystery, or the friend of Baqiyat Ullah, but himself was esteemed to be the Baqiyat Ullah — the true Imam so long looked for. Mirza Kazim Beg says that under the term "mystery" they understood one who shared the secrets of the Imam, "The name Sirr-Ullah, Mystery of God, was given to 'Ali, as to one who knew the secrets of divine revelation; and so, in its new application, the title Sirr-i-Baqiyat Ullah, now a name of the Bab, would mean the one who knew all that was in the mind of the concealed Imam, who himself was the remnant (or residue) of God." (Journal Asiatique, 1866, vol. viii. p. 486.)

[3]Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 504.

[p. 327]

On his return from Karbala he was heartily welcomed. Until then, it is said, he looked upon himself only as one who had made some progress in the divine way (tariqat), but he soon began to consider himself a master, appointed by heaven to regenerate his country. There is some difference of opinion as to what he exactly meant by the title of Bab which he had assumed. Mirza Kazim Beg says: "I do not know whether he was acquainted with the words of Christ, 'I am the door,' but he doubtless knew that Muhammad had said, 'I am the city of knowledge, and 'Ali is the gate of that city.'" A Muhammadan historian, an enemy of the Bab, says "that the Bab, having gathered some Shaikhis together, said, 'I am the "door" of God. Whosoever desires to come to God, and to know the religion of God, cannot do so till he sees me and receives permission from me". His followers have now, however, discarded that name, and he is known amongst the Babis by several titles, such as His Highness, His Highness the Point of Revelation. More recently the Beha'is call him His Highness the Evangelist. Gobineau, a good authority on the subject, says: "Mirza Muhammad 'Ali said that he was not the Bab in the sense in which they (his followers) had believed and as he himself had thought — that is to say, the 'door' of the knowledge of truth — but that he was the Point, or the originator of truth, a divine appearance, a powerful manifestation," and so goes on to show that the title Bab was set free, and could henceforth reward the pious devotion of one of the Bab's followers. As a matter of fact, it was bestowed on Mulla Husain, who is sometimes called His Excellency the Gate of the Gate (Hazratu'l Babu'l-Bab).

The Bab performed the pilgrimage to Mecca, in November, 1844, where he stayed a short time and completed all the rites incumbent on pilgrims, returning early in the following year to Bushire. He soon gathered together a large body of disciples and aroused the hostility of the ulama. The matter then acquired such

importance that the reigning Shah sent one of the most learned Doctors of the age, Syed Yahya, to interview the Bab and report the result. He held three long conferences with him, but the result was that he was so charmed with the Bab that he accepted him as a leader and admitted all his claims. About this time Mulla Muhammad 'Ali, a leading teacher, sent a person to Shiraz to ascertain the facts of the case. This messenger returned with some of the Bab's writings, which so impressed Mulla Muhammad 'Ali that he, too, became a follower of the Bab, and urged all his disciples to become Babis. The Mullas complained to the Shah, and Mulla Muhammad 'Ali was summoned to Teheran, but he was able to meet successfully all his opponents in debate, and nothing came of this action.

The cause of the Bab was now very much strengthened by the support of such famous teachers, who were most earnest and active in propagating the new faith. The orthodox Mullas soon perceived that they must attack the Bab direct. The result of this hostility was that the Bab, after undergoing a strict examination at Tabriz, was kept in confinement.[1]

[1] A full account of this examination is given in the Episode of the Bab, pp. 277-290.

[p. 328]

All this time the Bab's followers were most active in spreading his Doctrines throughout the land. It was now that his most famous convert was made. This was a woman called Kurratu'l-'Ayn (Lustre of the Eye). She went everywhere preaching and making converts to the Babi faith. Some of the Babis looked with disfavour on this preaching by a woman; but the Bab supported her, applauded her zeal, and bestowed on her the title of Janab-i-Tahira (Her Excellency the Pure). From that time all acknowledged her position. She was put to death in the massacre at Teheran which followed on the attempt to kill the Shah in 1852. Kurratu'l-'Ayn was the most remarkable of the Bab's disciples. She was a person of marvellous beauty; possessed of high intellectual gifts, eloquent, devoted, and fearless. She threw her whole soul into the cause she advocated, and her martyrdom sheds a halo of glory round her short and active career. A Babi historian says: "Such fame did she acquire, that most people who were scholars or mystics sought to hear her speech, and were eager to become acquainted with her powers of speculation and deduction. She wrested pre-eminence from stalwart men, and continued to strain the feet of steadfastness, until she yielded up her life at the sentence of the mighty doctors in Teheran." Mirza Kazim Beg, a most sober writer, waxes eloquent over the charms of Kurratu'l-'Ayn, thus: "This woman had an influence over her hearers wholly spiritual. She knew how to inspire them with perfect confidence;

She was well educated and very beautiful. Everything retired before her. She raised the veil which covered her face, not to set at nought the laws of chastity and modesty, so deeply graven on the tables of the orthodox law and in popular prejudice, but much rather in order to give by her look more force to the inspired words she spoke. Her speeches stigmatized that gross tyranny which for so many centuries had imprisoned liberty. She preached not, as some

have said, to abolish the laws of modesty, but to sustain the cause of liberty. The eloquent words which fell from her mouth captivated the hearts of her hearers, who became enthusiastic in her praise." Her romantic career, her marvellous power, and her tragic end, will continue to give for a long time to come strength to the Babi cause and the spirit of endurance to its followers.

In the year 1848 Nasiru'd-Din Shah, the present ruler of Persia, was crowned at Teheran, and the position of the Babis became most critical. The Prime Minister hated and persecuted them. A civil war broke out, and the Babis suffered a great deal; but no persecution, however severe, could restrain the ardour of the Babi teachers or the devotion of their followers. It became plain to the authorities that the Bab himself must be put out of the way. He was then condemned to death.[1] A young disciple, Aka Muhammad 'Ali, who belonged to a noble family of Tabriz, was also condemned at the same time. Great pressure was brought on him by his relatives to induce him to recant and thus to save his life, but he remained quite firm,

[1] Full details of the execution are given in the *New History of the Bab*, by E. G. Browne, pp. 299-306.

[p. 329]

and shared the martyrdom of his beloved master. It is a remarkable witness to the power which the Bab had over his disciples, a power which could lead this youth, with so promising a future before him, to give up home and life, to face death and its terrors, rather than be separated from the master he loved so truly." It may be well at this point to give a summary of the character of the Bab, as portrayed by Mirza Kazim Beg, always remembering that the critic, though eminently fair, does not believe in the claims the Bab: —

He

had some characteristics truly great and noble, and was a man of firm and settled convictions. His moral character was high, and he aimed in his preaching to bring all his countrymen into a community united by intellectual and moral ties. He spoke with much earnestness on the necessity for a religious and social reform in Persia, a cessation of religious persecution, and the amelioration of the lot of women. It is said that much of what he preached on these points had an esoteric meaning, known only to his disciples; but whether that is the case or not, the veneration they felt for him was profound, and there can be no doubt that the teaching of the Bab was in the direction of freedom, and that he personally was in favour of reform. Mirza Kazim Beg sums up his reflections thus: "We neither consider him an adventurer nor a fanatic, but an eminently moral man, a dreamer brought up in the school of the Shaikhis, and possessing some touch of Christianity. We regard him also as a man troubled by the direct influence of some of his devoted and ambitious disciples. In any case, we believe that the appearance of the Bab will be more or less of use in time to the cause of civilization in Persia." [2] In the year 1852 an attempt was

made by some Babis to assassinate the Shah. It does not appear to have been the

result of a plot made by the Babi leaders, but rather the independent action of a few men who had in themselves, or in their families, suffered wrong. A bitter persecution followed. "The Babis," says Mirza Kazim 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. A furious proscription followed. 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." Renan speaks of the massacre thus: "The day of the great slaughter of the Babis in Teheran was perhaps a day unparalleled in the history of the world." [3] He quotes from M. le Comte de

[1] For a very touching letter by Aka Muhammad 'Ali see New History of the Bab, p. 202, or R.A.S. Journal, October, 1889, p. 382.

[2] Journal
Asiatique, 6me Serie, tome vii. p. 384

[3] Les Apotres; p. 378.

[p. 330]

Gobineau's work, "Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale," to the following effect: "Children and women with lighted candles stuck into the wounds were driven along by whips, and as they went along they sang, 'We came from God, to Him we return.' When the children expired, as many did, the executioners threw the corpses beneath the feet of their fathers. Life was offered if they would recant. An executioner told one father that if he did not recant, his two sons, the elder of whom was fourteen years old, should be slain on his breast. The father, lying down, said that he was ready, and the elder boy claimed by right of birth to be the first to have his throat cut. At last night fell on a mass of shapeless flesh, and the dogs of the suburbs came in troops to the place." So ended one important period in the history of the Babis.

There has been since then no formal outbreak of Babi revenge, nor has there been any persecution like it. Even this altogether failed of its purpose, for it gave to the movement a vigour and vitality which otherwise it might have lacked. It is said that half a million Persians are Babis, but the Hon. G. Curzon considers the total to be nearer one million. He says: "They are to be found in every walk of life, From the ministers and nobles of the court to the scavenger or the groom, not the least arena of their activity being the Musalman priesthood itself. It will have been noticed. that this movement was initiated by Syeds, Hajis, and Mullas." Whilst it is true that there has been no persecution so terrible as the one in 1852, yet now and again the hostility of the 'Ulama shows itself. In 1878, 1888, and in 1889 Babis were put to death.

The heroism and the devotion of the Babis is something very wonderful. It is said that there is only one instance of a Babi having recanted under pressure, and he returned again to his faith, and was afterwards put to death for his renewed devotion to the Bab.

After the death of the Bab, the chief interest in the movement circles round Mirza Yahya, and his half-brother Beha'ullah, who became the respective leaders of the two sects, into which the Babis are now divided — the Ezelis and the Beha'is. There seems no doubt that the Bab in the year 1849 nominated the former,[1] whom he named Subh-i-Ezel (Morning of Eternity), as his successor, and that for a short time he really held an undisputed position as head of the Babi Church.

In 1852, when the attempt on the life of the Shah was made, the Babis were bitterly persecuted, and Subh-i-Ezel retired to Baghdad, which then became the headquarters of the sect, and was for many years recognized, at least nominally, as its head. Mirza Husain 'Ali Beha'ullah, who was Subh-i-Ezel's senior by thirteen years, and had just been released from imprisonment, joined him in 1853. The Persian Government, at length, objected to their residence there, and prevailed on the Turkish authorities in 1863-64 to deport them to Constantinople, from whence a few months later on they were sent to Adrianople. Subh-i-Ezel led a very secluded life, and the corre-

[1] A copy of the original letter is given in the *New History of the Bab*, p. 426.

[p. 331]

spondence and other matters were carried on by Beha, who acted for him. The influence of Beha then grew, and at last he began to advance claims which afterwards, in the years 1866-67, culminated in the assertion that he was the person to whom the Bab referred as "Him whom God shall manifest." To this claim the Ezelis replied that before the person of whose advent the Bab had spoken could come, Babism must obtain general currency, and the laws laid down by the Bab in his books must be accepted by most of the nations in the world. The Beha'is, who admitted that Subh-i-Ezel was the first viceregent of the Bab, to all the objections alleged replied that his 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. They also used an argument well known amongst Muhammadans, an argument based on the literary style of the books given by means of a divinely appointed messenger, and urged that the *Lauh-i-Nasir*, in which Beha announced his mission, fulfilled this condition of a divine revelation by its eloquence of diction and the wonderful knowledge, unacquired by study, displayed by the writer. Anyhow, the conflicting claims to the leadership led to quarrels and the Turkish Government then determined to separate the disputants. Beha and his followers were sent to Acre, and Mirza Yahya and his people were exiled to Famagusta in Cyprus. Since then the followers of Beha have increased very much, while those of Subh-i-Ezel, or

Yahya, have decreased. This is an unlooked-for development of the work of the Bab, for Beha claims to be the messenger of a new dispensation altogether.

The question at issue now became something more than a mere struggle for leadership, for Beha's claim virtually deposed the Bab from his position as the "Point of Revelation" and made him the forerunner of "Him whom God shall manifest." The Ezelis are, however, nearly extinct, and it is not likely that they will ever attain to power again. Assuming that Beha had right on his side, it is stated that the changes he made were in a practical direction and beneficial.

The Babi doctrines are to be found in the writings of the Bab called the Beyan, a name sometimes apparently applied to them collectively, but more generally to a particular book. Many of the dogmas are very mystical, but the following is a brief summary:- 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 is a Primal Will[1]

[1] There is an evident connexion between this dogma of the Babis and the Sufi system, in which the "First Intelligence" or "Primal Element" is represented as a manifestation of God. To the Sufi, as to the Babi, 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 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 Babi and the Primal Element of the Sufi, who also calls it by the names of the Pen, the First Principle, the spirit of Muhammad, Universal Reason ('aql-i-kull). God's voice is heard through it, by it material things were brought into existence. It works in Prophets and Saints. The Imam is closely connected with it. I am not able to find out whether the Bab taught that the Primal Will was created or not. In Sufi theology it certainly is, for in the Akhlaq-i-Jalali 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 Imam seeks to return. When his work in life is done, then "his end is joined to his beginning" (Ba aghaz girdad baz anjam). It is a curious phase of human thought,

which the Sufis evidently borrowed from the Gnostics and the Babis from the Sufis. 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 Sufi and Babi have so sadly missed the mark.

[p. 332]

who becomes incarnate in the prophets. This Primal Will spoke in the Bab and will speak in "Him whom God shall manifest," a position Beha assumed for himself. His followers, therefore, claim for him a very high office and dignity, and say that he has come to perfect the law of Christ; whilst some, indeed, say that he is Christ returned again to earth. Each dispensation of the Primal Will thus become incarnate supersedes a preceding one, and so Islam has ceased to be the true religion for this age. Since it is impossible for created beings to know the Divine Essence, the Primal Will has, for their guidance and instruction, incarnated itself from time to time in a human form. These incarnations are known as 'Prophets.' That which spoke in all the Prophets of the past now speaks in the Bab, and will speak through "Him whom God shall manifest," and after him through others, for there is no cessation in these manifestations. "That which spoke in Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Jesus, and Muhammad 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 Muhammad, but, as a rule, they did not accept him; so the Muhammadans are taught to look out for Imam Mahdi. Yet now he has come (i.e. in the Bab) they persecute him." [1] Another point on which the Beyan lays much stress is that no revelation is final. This is entirely opposed to the ordinary Muhammadan view, which is that, as Muhammad was the Seal of the Prophets (Khatamu'l-anbiya), his revelation closed the series. The Bab taught that, as the human race progresses, the Primal Will, the teacher of men, speaks in each new revelation more fully and more clearly. All these successive and progressive revelations and dispensations are simply to prepare the world for the fuller teaching of "Him whom God shall manifest."

[1] Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, vol. xxi. p. 914.

[p. 333]

The revelation given by a prophet remains in force only so long as it meets the needs of the race. It can, as the race progresses, be abrogated and set aside in favour of a later one. These manifestations and revelations are not opposed to each other, for the real teacher is one and the same. [1]

"A new prophet is not sent until the development of the human race renders this necessary. A revelation is not abrogated till it no longer suffices 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 fuller 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, while 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." [2] The great point in the Babi 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. The Beyan speaks with confidence of the future success of Babism, the government of which is to be tolerant. The Muhammadan doctrines of the examination in the grave, the resurrection, s'rat, heaven and hell, are all treated allegorically. [3] The views of the Bab on future state are not very clear. In any case, the hope of a future reward was not placed before his followers as an inducement to follow him. This is in direct contrast to the practice and teaching of Muhammad. In the Beyan, as translated by Mr. E. G. Browne, we find the following striking words of the Bab: — "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." By a very large number of Babis, Beha, was during the latter part of his life looked up to as a divinely appointed guide. [4] Before he assumed that position he wrote a book called the *Ikan*, which is held in great esteem. In this book he seems to acknowledge the then superior position of Subh-i-Ezel, but writes bitterly of some who were hostile to himself. Two years after the Turks had banished him to Adrianople he boldly asserted his claim and called on all the Ezelis to submit to his direction. He then wrote other treatises, in which his position is dogmatically set forth. Some of the expressions

[1] For an excellent account of Babi dogmas, see *New History of the Bab*, pp. 337-883.

[2] *A Year amongst the Persians*, by E. G. Browne, p. 108.

[3] I am informed that the miracles of our Lord are also explained away by the Babis in a similar way.

[4] He died in exile on May 16th, 1892.

[p. 334]

he uses in his writings are very beautiful, and inculcate unworldliness, simplicity, and trust. He reminds his followers that conquest over self is the first victory to be gained by those who hope to pass through life successfully.

A good many changes in religious ceremonies are made. Prayer is said three times a day instead of five, and the worshippers no longer turn towards Mecca. The fast of Ramazan is discarded, and the last month of the Babi year is substituted for it. The traffic in slaves is forbidden. 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. No one must carry arms except in times of tumult or war. All are to read the sacred books regularly, to be kind and courteous in their conduct, to approve for others what they would like themselves, — and to forgive their enemies.[1] Religious warfare, or Jihad, is abolished, and friendly intercourse with all sects is enjoined.[2]

The result of Beha's death has yet to be seen. He had marvellous influence over his followers, and seems to have been a person who commanded much real reverence. When Cyprus was handed over to the English Government, Mirza Yahya, with other political exiles, was transferred, and still remains there as a political prisoner. He, too, is a man of venerable appearance. [3]

From what has now been stated, it will be seen that Babiism is not a political movement, though in its early days it was brought into conflict with the civil power; but that it is a religious revolt against orthodox Islam, so far as that is represented by the Shi'ah sect. It raises women to a higher level, it professes to limit many of the social evils of Islam, it tends to give liberty of thought and to develop a friendly spirit to others. "Brotherly love, kindness to children, courtesy combined with dignity, sociability, hospitality, freedom from bigotry, friendliness even to Christians are included, in its tenets." If men are sometimes better than their creed, they are sometimes worse, and not every Babi lives up to this ideal. It is perhaps too soon to speculate on the future of the movement. Those who think

[1] For a fuller account see *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, October, 1892, pp. 678-799.

[2] I am indebted to a well-known missionary, now in Persia, for the following additional facts: — (1) "The Beha'is admit that the Lord Jesus Christ was the incarnate Son; but, claim that Beha was the incarnate Father — each incarnation being greater than the preceding one."

(2) "Some of the Beha'is have said to me, 'We are Christians'; others, 'We are almost Christians'; others, 'The only difference between us is that we accepted Christ when He came to us fifty years ago (i.e. in Beha) and you rejected Him.'"

(3) "They constantly invite the Christian missionary to their houses, and are most hospitable and kind."

(4) "The Beha'is admit that the New Testament is the uncorrupted Word of God."

(5) "Many Jews in Persia have become Babis, and, on the other hand, some Babis have become Christians."

[3] The personal appearance of both of these men is given in an account of an interview which Mr. E. G. Browne had with them on two separate occasions. The account will be found in the *Episode of the Bab*. pp. xl., xxiv.

[p. 335]

it will gradually take the place of Islam in Persia base a strong argument on the fact that its "recruits are won from the best soldiers of the garrison it is attacking." It certainly appeals to the traditional instincts of many Persians. The Sufi needs a Pir or living guide; the Shi'ah meditates on the Imam, and the high position accorded to that person in Babism is at least attractive. The life and death of the Bab, and the magnificent heroism of his followers, all help forward the movement. Whether, when the victory is won, the Babis in the day of power will be as gentle and as liberal as they are in the night of adversity is perhaps doubtful. To all who take an interest in Christian Missions in Persia, the movement is one of great interest. It betrays a longing for a real, living, loving, personal guide, the revealer of God to man, which can be best met by the acceptance of the Eternal Word. In any case, if only liberty of conscience can be secured, there seems to be a wide and open door.

2. Image scans (click image for full-size version)

METADATA

Views14084 views since posted 2003-10-12; last edit 2025-07-06 23:35 UTC;

previous at archive.org.../sell_the_babis;

URLs changed in 2010, see archive.org.../bahai-library.org

Language

English

Permission

public domain

History

Formatted 2003-10-11 by Jonah Winters; Proofread 2012-09 by Jonah Winters.

Share

Shortlink: bahai-library.com/2260

Citation: [ris/2260](https://bahai-library.com/2260)

select Collection:

Archives

Articles

Articles-unpublished

Audio

Bibliographies

BIC

Biographies

Books

Chronologies

Compilations

Compilations-NSA

Compilations-personal

Documents

[East-asia](#)
[Encyclopedia](#)
[Essays](#)
[Etc](#)
[Excerpts](#)
[Fiction](#)
[Glossaries](#)
[Guardian](#)
[Histories](#)
[Introductory](#)
[Letters](#)
[Maps](#)
[Music](#)
[Newspapers](#)
[NSA-documents](#)
[NSA-letters](#)
[Personal](#)
[Pilgrims](#)
[Poetry](#)
[Presentations](#)
[Resources](#)
[Reviews](#)
[Scripts](#)
[Software](#)
[Statistics](#)
[Study](#)
[Talks](#)
[Theses](#)
[Transcripts](#)
[Translations](#)
[UHJ-documents](#)
[UHJ-letters](#)
[Video](#)
[Visual](#)
[Writings](#)

[home](#)

[sitemap](#)

[series](#)

[chronology](#)

[search:](#)
[author](#)

[title](#)

[date](#)

[tags](#)

[adv. search](#)

[languages](#)

[inventory](#)

[bibliography](#)

[abbreviations](#)

[links](#)

[about](#)

[contact](#)

[RSS](#)

[new](#)

— The Babis (Used by permission of the curator)