

of Islamic sciences, and from then on he was invited to preach from the pulpit (menbar). Preaching in mosques, however, did not prevent him from promoting the Babi movement privately, and some inhabitants of the region embraced Babism. His missionary activities eventually antagonized the local ulema, who persuaded the governor to have him arrested (Foʻadi Bošruʻi, forthcoming; Solaymani, pp. 454-55). He was imprisoned and tortured for two months in nearby Birjand and then returned to Qaʻen, where he remained under house arrest for two years before being banished to Mašhad. The governor of Mašhad, Soltan Morad Mirza Hosam-al-Saltana, respected Nabil and offered him protection, and after one year he returned to Qaʻen as a free man.

During the year that he was in Mašhad, Molla Mohammad-ʻAli Zarandi (Nabil-e Aʻzam) informed him of Bahaʻ-Allah's public declaration of his mission. Nabil wrote a letter to all Babis in the region, encouraging them to accept Bahaʻ-Allah's claim. Local ulema, in particular Sayyed Abu Taleb, a cleric in Qaʻen, wrote letters to eminent ulema lobbying for a death sentence. Finally Nabil was sent in exile to Tehran in 1870 by the royal order (Foʻadi Bošruʻi, forthcoming; Solaymani, p. 456).

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Nabil could no longer wear the turban denoting his profession and had to wear layman's hat instead, but this did not stop him promulgating the Bahai religion in Tehran for the next three and half years. He left Tehran for Qazvin in 1874 (Samandar, 1976, p. 325) and shortly afterwards visited Bahaʻ-Allah in Acre and received from him the title of Nabil-e Akbar. In his honor, Bahaʻ-Allah also penned the Lawh-e hekmat, a philosophical text that forms the central part of Bahaʻ-Allah's writings (Shoghi Effendi, p. 219).

After a year in Acre, he returned to Persia and, despite the danger, continued preaching the Bahai religion privately and publicly. He traveled to major cities, including Tehran, Tabriz, Isfahan, Shiraz, Yazd, Kerman, Mashad, Zanjan, and Qazvin, meeting with local ulema and other notables. Some converted to the Bahai religion through him, such as Mirza Hasan Adib, a prominent early Bahai. The threat to his life and the lives of those associated with him continued, and the Bahais felt unable to protect him (ʻAbd-al-Bahaʻ, tr., p. 3; Solaymani, p. 480). So, in 1890, he left for Ashkabad (q.v.), in the company of his nephew Shaikh Mohammad-ʻAli (q.v.). He was arrested in Sabzavar on the way to Ashkabad, but the governor of the city was so impressed with him that he helped him escape. Nabil settled in Ashkabad, continued his missionary activities, and contributed to the establishment of a large, resourceful Bahai community there (Solaymani, pp. 480-85; Mehrab-kani, p. 226; Momen, pp. 286-87). In 1890-91, he and Mirza Abu'l-Fazl Golpayegani (q.v.) assisted in the establishment of Bahai communities in Bukhara and Samarqand (Shoghi Effendi, p. 195). Shortly afterwards, Nabil died in Bukhara and was buried there.

ʻAbd-al-Bahaʻ, Bahaʻ-Alla's son and the leader of the religion since

1892, wrote a ziarat-nama (prayer recited at the time of entering a shrine) for Nabil and instructed the local Bahais of Ashkabad to send an annual delegation of nine believers on his behalf to visit Nabil's grave and recite this text. Twenty years later, 'Abd-al-Baha' instructed Shaikh Mohammad-'Ali, Nabil's nephew, to transfer his remains to the Bahai cemetery in Ashkabad, where they remain. He also instructed Mohammad-'Ali Zarandi to compose a versified biography of Nabil, which he did in the form of a matnawi (Raf'ati, pp. 107-19).

Nabil has been described by 'Abd-al-Baha' as a man "of wide learning, at once a mojtahed, a philosopher, a mystic, and gifted with intuitive sight, he was also an accomplished man of letters and an orator without a peer" (tr., p. 5; Balyuzi, pp. 112-15; Samandar, pp. 317-27; Taherzadeh, pp. 91-95). In recognition of his contributions to the Bahai cause, he was posthumously given the title of "Hand of the Cause" (see AYADI-E AMR-ALLAH), an honorific title given to eight Bahais during Baha'-Allah's lifetime, and referred to as one of the nineteen "Apostles of Baha'-Allah" by Shoghi Effendi (Balyuzi, p. 261).

Works. His major work is his Resala (1858) a versified treatise in Arabic on the fundamental tenets of Islam, for which he received the license to practice ejtehad (Solaymani, pp. 444-45; Ešraq Kavari, pp. 133-50); copies exist in private collections. Qasida-ye ta'iyya is a poem in 445 Arabic verses emulating al-Ta'iyā al-kobra, the classic mystical masterpiece of Ebn al-Farez. It was composed in Iraq in 1859, probably influenced by Baha'-Allah's Qasida-ye warqa'iya. It is a description of Nabil's mystical search for truth and his eventual belief in Baha'-Allah (publ. in photocopies of Nabil's own handwriting; see Ešraq Kavari, pp.133-50; Rohani, pp. 73-106). Other works include: an incomplete qasida in 65 Arabic verses, discussing Islamic eschatology, in particular the Bahai proofs for the causes of Bab and Baha'-Allah (Ayati, I, pp. 421-26); Šab o ruz, a Persian poem in couplet form of 378 lines (partly publ. in Doka'i Bayza'i, pp. 279-83); a versified letter of 31 distiches in Persian addressed to a certain 'Ali-Mohammad Varqa (Solaymani, pp. 539-42); and a collection of mainly apologetic letters, written in Persian and Arabic to government officials, religious leaders, and friends (Solaymani, pp. 464-78, 501-42).

In addition, Nabil edited Mirza Hosayn Hamadani's Tarik-e Badi'-e bayani (1883-84), on the history of the Babi faith, at the behest of Baha'-Allah. Based on the noticeable stylistic variation, it is thought that the later sections dealing with the proofs of Babism were written by Nabil (Forqani, pp. 56-72); a copy is held in the International Bahai Archives, Haifa. Other, unpublished works by Nabil remain in private collections, such as a resala in Persian titled Tohfa-ye Naseriya, a Bahai apologetic (rFo'adi Bošru'i, forthcoming; Solaymani, pp. 494).

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