



his missionaries were arrested and expelled from Shiraz, and the Bab was arrested in Shiraz and imprisoned in the fortress of Mahku (1847) and later in the castle of Chehriq (1848), where he remained until his execution. Assembling at the convention of Badasht in 1848, the Bab's followers declared a formal break with Islam.

The personality of the man was such that he could win over the shah's envoy who was sent to investigate the movement, as well as the governor of Esfahan, who protected him in that city, and even the governor of the fortress of Mahku, where he was first confined. Nonetheless, a committee of mujtahids decided he was dangerous to the existing order and demanded his execution. On the first volley from the firing squad he escaped injury; only the ropes binding him were severed, a circumstance that was interpreted as a divine sign. On the second volley he was killed and his body disposed of in a ditch. Several years later it was buried by the Baha'is in a mausoleum on Mount Carmel, in Palestine.

Late in his active period, 'Ali Muhammad had abandoned the title Bab and considered himself no longer merely the "gateway" to the expected 12th imam (imam-mahdi) but to be the imam himself, or the qa'im. Later he declared himself the nuqtah ("point") and finally an actual divine manifestation. Among his followers, Babis and later Azalis, he is known as noqtey-e ula ("primal point"), hazrat-e a'la ("supreme presence"), jamal-e mobarak ("blessed perfection"), and even haqq ta'ala ("truth almighty"). The Baha'is identify him both as a forerunner of Baha' Allah—the founder of the Baha'i Faith—and as a prophet in his own right. He is generally referred to as the Bab by Baha'is, but some Baha'is also use the names adopted by the Babis and Azalis.

The Bab wrote a great many works not only in his native Persian but also in Arabic. Among the most important and most sacred are the Arabic and the longer Persian versions of his Bayan. Although these are the holy books of Babi revelation, all the writings of the Bab and his successors are considered divinely inspired and equally binding.

Babism, Religion that developed in Iran around Mirza 'Ali Muhammad's claim (1844) to be the Bab. Its beliefs are set forth in the Bayan, a holy book written by the Bab, which proclaims a universal law in place of all existing religious legal codes. Babism originated as a messianic movement in Shi'ite Islam. In 1867 the movement split, with the Azalis remaining faithful to the original teachings of the Bab and those of his successor Sobh-e Azal. Most Babis accepted the leadership of Sobh-e Azal's half-brother Baha' Ullah, and under him the Baha'i faith was developed.

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