

Bahaism

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PREFACE

THE recent visit of 'Abbas Efendi, son of the late Baha'u'llah, and now leader of the Baha'i community, to London and Paris has drawn public attention to the religious system known as Bahaism.

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 Baha'u'llah and his teaching and the assumption that 'Abbas Efendi 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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BAHAISM

THE Musalmans of Persia belong to the Shi'ah sect which, itself formed by a revolt from orthodox Islam, has been, more than any other section of the Muhammadan 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 Sunnis, the Shi'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 Shi'ahs have always held many esoteric doctrines and have secretly taught them. The Sufis, 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 Islam was largely influenced by political motives, but it was not altogether free from doctrinal reasons. This revolt led to the formation of

the Shi'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 Bahatism, a development of the earlier system of Babiism.

The origin of Bahatism is to be found far back in the Shi'ah doctrine of the Imamate. The tragic end of 'Ali the fourth Khalifa, and his two sons, Hasan and Husain, called forth a deep affection for their memory. They were looked upon as the true and rightful Imams, the only legitimate successors of Muhammad, the great Arabian Prophet. According to the Isma'ilians, one of the two main subdivisions of the Shi'ah sect, there were twelve Imams, the last of whom, Abu'l-Qasim, 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-Mahdi, the guided one, who is, therefore, able to be a guide to others. The Imams 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 living Imam, though according to the Shi'ahs, he is now concealed. Al-Mahdi 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 — Jabulka and Jabulsa. In due time he is to reappear, his advent being heralded by Jesus Christ. Then injustice and misery are to be banished, the true (Shi'ah) faith will prevail and a millennium 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 Abwab or gates. These men were four in number, and for sixty-nine years they were, one after another, the gates through which the concealed Imam made known his will. This period (A.H. 260 to 329) is called the ghaibat-i-sughra, or the lesser seclusion. When Abu'l-Hasan, the last Bab (gate), came to the end of his life, the people begged him to appoint a successor, so that they might still learn the Imam'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 Imam 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 Babiism, of which Bahatism is a later development.

We must now pass over many centuries until we come to the time of Shaikh Ahmad (A.D. 1733 to 1826) the founder of the Shaikhi sect. He was a devout ascetic and a man of independent thought. He had a profound belief in 'Ali. The memory of the Imams was dear to him. He looked upon them as creative forces, arguing from the text, 'God the best of Creators', that, if He is the best, He cannot be the only one. One of the earliest writers on the Babi movement, Mirza Kazim Beg, in the *Journal Asiatique* 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 Imams are personifications of the divine attributes.' Thus, the twelve Imams from 'Ali downwards to al-Mahdi were personifications of the attributes of God. 'Ali is the chief of these and holds higher rank than Muhammad.

The successor of Shaikh Ahmad was Haji Sayyid Kazim, 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 Shaikhi doctrines spread rapidly, and it is said that there were soon a hundred thousand disciples in 'Iraq. This does not appear to have called forth any opposition from the Mullas, 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 Haji died in the year A.D. 1843 and left no successor. Apparently he and his predecessor looked upon themselves, at least so the Babi 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 Mulla Husain, 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 Shaikhis, 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. Mulla Husain proceeded to Shiraz and there met with a young man, named Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, an ardent enthusiast who claimed to have received a call to a divine mission. Mulla Husain thought him too young for such leadership. Then one day Mirza 'Ali said: 'By what signs canst thou recognize the Master?' Mulla 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.' Mirza 'Ali then proceeded to give a marvellous exposition of many abstruse questions as proof that he possessed the 'Point of Knowledge'. Mulla 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 Haji Sayyid Kazim 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 Bab or gate, brought great honour to Mulla Husain who received the titles of Babu'l-Bab — 'Gate of the gate'; the Harf-i-Awwal — the 'First Letter'; the Awwal man amana — the 'First to believe'. Then arose a great dispute. Many of the Shaikhis refused to receive the Bab, as we shall now call Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, and became his bitter enemies, but in time the great majority accepted him, and he became the real founder of the Babi sect.

The Shaikhis rejected two of the five articles of the Shi'ah creed — 'adl, or

justice of God, and ma'ud or the 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 prophetship, 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-Rabi', or the Fourth Support or Pillar. This is interpreted to mean that there must always be amongst the believers a perfect man — Shi'ah-i-kamil — who can be the channel of grace — wasita-i-faid — between the absent Imam and his people. The term is thus primarily applied to the dogma that the absent Imam, now somewhere concealed, must always have someone 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 Bab at first claimed this position, and thus to occupy the place held by the gates, or intermediaries, between the absent Imam and his followers. Thus Babiism is connected with the central dogma of the Shi'ahs, the belief in the Imamate; still it has so far departed from accepted Muslim ideas in other matters as to form a new sect altogether.

The Bab was born in Shiraz 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'an known as the Suratu Yusuf. This was followed by commentaries on other Suras and also by an edition of some prayers. These he called *asha'if-i-ilhamiyah*, or inspired pages; *kalam-i-fitra*, or word of conscience, but he made no claim to the highest form of inspiration (*wahi*), which Muslims hold to be that of the Qur'an. 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.'

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 of the Bab, 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 Mullas, but, according to Kazim 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.

There is some difference of opinion as to the reason which led him to adopt the title of Bab. The most accurate account seems to be: 'He (Mirza 'Ali Muhammad) now gave out that, as 'Ali 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 Imam (al-Mahdi).' Later on he discarded the name of Bab, and called himself the Qa'im, or the expected Imam. His followers gave him the titles of Hazrat, or Holiness; Hazrat-i-nuqta-i-bayan, or His Holiness the Point of Revelation; Hazrat-i-Rabbiyu'l-A'la, or His Holiness the Lord Most High; Hazrat-i-nuqta-i-ula, or His Holiness the First Point. Gobineau says: 'Mirza 'Ali Muhammad said 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 gate of the knowledge of truth; but that he was the Point (nuqta), or the originator of truth, a divine appearance, a powerful manifestation.' 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 Islam, nor did it postpone the opposition of the Mullahs, 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 Shiraz, though liberty of speech and action was given to him. He avoided attacks on the dogmas of Islam, but severely rebuked the Mullahs. 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 Mullahs; but according to Kazim Beg, one ended disastrously. The 'Ulama assembled. The governor, Husain Khan, who had assumed the character and position of a learner, humbly suggested that the Bab should demonstrate that his doctrines were superior to those of Muhammad. The Bab answered boldly: 'Take my Qur'an, compare it with that of your Prophet and you will be convinced that my religion is the preferable one.' The governor was offended and the Bab was bound and beaten. An attack was made on the house in which the Bab dwelt, but he was allowed to escape and make his way to Isfahan. The governor, Minuchir Khan, a Georgian eunuch, was kind to him and gave all the needed protection and invited the learned Mullahs to a discussion with the Bab. According to the Nasihu't-Tawarikh, the Bab was not able to answer satisfactorily the questions put to him. The account given in the Tarikh-i-Jadid shows that at first the Mullahs 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 Bab, was much displeased at the decision arrived at, and protected him as long as he lived. After Minuchir Khan's death in 1847, the Bab was removed to the castle of Miku, 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 Mazandaran which led the authorities to place the Bab in closer confinement, and to restrict the privilege of intercourse with his friends. His new place of imprisonment was the citadel of Chihriq. He was then taken to Tabriz to undergo his first examination. The Muhammadan version of it is that the Bab showed himself foolish and ignorant. The Babi account is that he advanced in a successful manner his claim of Mahdihood, which caused a tumult. 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 Chihriq. The reason for this probably was the new attitude taken by the Mullas, who, in addition to the charge of religious error, maintained that the Bab and his followers were a danger to the State. The King, Muhammad Shah, however, declined to interfere on the ground that the public peace had not been so disturbed as to warrant extreme measures.

In the year 1848, Nasiru'd-Din Shah was crowned at Tihran and the position of the Babis became more critical. The Prime Minister, Mirza Taqi Khan, 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 Babis was broken by the fall of the fort of Shaikh Tabarsi, and the slaughter of its garrison in 1849. The commander of the royal forces, Prince Mahdi Kuli Mirza, was guilty of a great act of treachery. He invited the Babi 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 Babis were seized and put to the most cruel tortures. Some three hundred men were smeared with naphtha and burnt alive. Still the Babis remained true to their leader. Persecution seemed to have no effect on them, and so Taqi Khan saw that he must put the Bab 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 Tabriz, who are the firm supporters of the Church of Ja'far (the sixth of the twelve Imams) and the impregnable stronghold of the Shi'ah religion. Summon the troops, suspend the Bab before all the people and give orders for the soldiers to fire a volley.'

On the following day the Bab and one of his youthful disciples, Aqa Muhammad 'Ali, were condemned by the Mullas and then (July 9, 1850), handed over to the Colonel of the regiment appointed to carry out the sentence of death. Mirza Kazim 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. Aqa Muhammad 'Ali 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 Bab kept perfectly silent. His solemn demeanour and attitude aroused the sympathy and compassion of the spectators. The governor and the Mullas tried to allay this by preaching loudly against the Babi 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 Bab and his young disciple met their fate.' There were no political grounds for this execution of the Bab, for though, driven to it by persecutions, the Babis had been in revolt, there is no evidence to show that the Bab, then a prisoner, had any part in it or even encouraged it. This is the opinion of Count Gobineau, a great authority on Babiism.

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 Babis, 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 Tihiran where, by the order of Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Ezel) who, though but twenty years old, had been chosen to succeed the Bab, they were deposited in a little shrine called Imam-zada-i-Ma'sum. Here they remained for seventeen or eighteen years, till the schism originated by Baha'u'llah deprived his half-brother Subh-i-Ezel of the supremacy in the Babi sect which he had hitherto enjoyed. Then they were removed by the Baha'is to a shrine at 'Akka (St. Jean d'Acre).'

The Prime Minister fondly hoped that all trouble was at an end now that the Bab 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 Babis. So far from the loss of their leader putting a stop to the growth of the sect, it only increased its numbers.

The Bab 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 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 Mullas opposed all reforms, and that the government stood by them. Then the movement became political and the troubles began. The Bab remained passive, but the chief men amongst his followers did not. They accepted the new departure and so the death of the Bab did not, as the government expected, render them despondent. On the contrary, it exasperated them and made them the determined enemies of the Shah and his government.

The next historical event of importance is the attempt to assassinate the Shah of Persia, Nasiru'd-Din, on August 15, 1852. It does not appear to have been an act determined on by the Babi leaders, but the work of a few who desired to avenge the execution of the Bab. 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 Shah 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 Babis, 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. The authorities were alarmed and determined to make a terrible example. The prisoners, 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. 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.' 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.'

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 Bab. At Kerbela she gave a public address to the Shaikhis, 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 Babis were not well pleased that a woman should do this; but the Bab supported her and gave her the title of Janab-i-Tahira, or Her Excellency the Pure. After the insurrection at Mazandaran she was taken prisoner and sent to Tihran. The Shah having seen her said he liked her looks and that she should be left quiet. Her imprisonment was not, therefore, rigorous, and she was allowed to have occasional intercourse with her Babi friends. Her marvellous beauty, enthusiasm and eloquence won for her the regard of her custodian Mahmud Khan, 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 Shah was made. Even then she was offered her freedom if she would deny that she was a Babi, 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 Shah, 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 Bab. 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 Sufi element in them, 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 Bab is contained in his book called Bayan, composed in 1848, a name sometimes applied to his collective writings, sometimes to a particular book. A good deal of the Bab'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 is a Primal Will, or Mashiyat-i-ula, who becomes incarnate in the prophets. This Primal Will which spoke in all the prophets of the past, spoke also in the Bab who is the Nuqta-i-Bayan, or the 'Point of Revelation' and will speak in 'Him whom God shall manifest'. This is apparent from the following texts of the Bayan: 'The whole Bayan revolves round the saying of "Him whom God shall manifest".' 'A thousand perusals of the Bayan are not equal to the perusal of one verse of what shall be revealed by "Him whom God shall manifest".' 'The Bayan is today 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 Baha'u'llah afterwards claimed, and is allowed by his followers, this exalted position.

The chapters of the Bayan are arranged in groups of nineteen, a number which has a peculiar significance with the Babis. 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 wahid. The numerical value of the letters in this word is nineteen. God is absolute Being, or wujud, the value of the letters of which also comes to nineteen. The names of one of the attributes of God is Hayy, or the living one. The sum of the letters of Hayy 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 Mirza 'Ali Muhammad, the Bab who is called the Nuqta, or Point, and his eighteen disciples. These eighteen are called the huruf-al-Hayy, or letters of the living, because by them the Bab bestowed life upon the world. These again with their leader form the number nineteen, and thus constitute a wahid, 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 Bayan has nineteen parts, and each part has nineteen chapters. The Babi 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 Bab 'all things under the number of the unity, that is to

say, by a division into nineteen parts.'

Another point on which the Báb 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 *Khatamu'l-Anbiya*, 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. All these 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 Muhammad, the promised comforter, arrived, they would not accept him. The Shi'ahs pray for the coming of al-Mahdi, 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'. Baha'u'llah claimed to be that person.

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.'

The great festival is that of the Persian Nauruz or New Year's day. Instead of the Muhammadan fast of Ramadan 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. 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. 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 alaikumu's-salam' or 'peace be upon you' and 'upon you be peace,' the Babis amongst themselves say, on meeting one another, Allahu abha — 'God is most bright,' to which the response is the same.

After the death of the Bab, the chief interest in the movement circles round Mirza Yahya and his elder half-brother Mirza Husain 'Ali, known as Baha'u'llah, who became the respective leaders of the two sects, into which the Babis soon became divided, the Ezelis and the Baha'is. There seems no doubt that the Bab in the year 1849 nominated the former, whom he named Subh-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 Babi community.

In 1852, when the attempt on the life of the Shah was made, the Babis were bitterly persecuted, and Subh-i-Ezel escaped to Baghdad, which then became the headquarters of the sect. Baha'u'llah, who had been imprisoned in Tihiran for four months, joined him some years after.

They remained quietly at Baghdad for eleven or twelve years, directing a cautious and steady propaganda. In the early part of this period Baha'u'llah retired for two years into Turkish Kurdistan, which the Baha'is 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.

The Persian government, stirred up by the orthodox Mullahs, at length objected to the residence of the Babis 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. Subh-i-Ezel led a very secluded life in Baghdad, and the correspondence was carried on and other matters attended to by Baha'u'llah, a man of resolute will and ambitious character. At first he acted in the name of Subh-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 Babis. Thus the influence of Baha'u'llah 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 Bab referred in the expression, 'He whom God shall manifest.'

The Ezelis did not admit the claim made by Baha'u'llah and maintained that before the person of whose advent the Bab had spoken could come, Babiism must obtain general currency, and the laws laid down by the Bab in his books must be accepted by most of the nations of the world. They further added to their reply that it was not to be supposed that two manifestations, that of the Bab, and that of 'Him whom God shall manifest' could take place with so short an interval between them. The Baha'is, who admitted that Subh-i-Ezel was the first vice-regent of the Bab, to all the objections alleged against Baha'u'llah replied that Subh-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 Bab had stated that the new prophet come suddenly, and that it could not happen that anyone should falsely claim the honour of being the new manifestation.

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. They asserted that the *Lauh-i-Nasir*, the book in which Baha'u'llah announced his mission, fulfilled 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 Baha'u'llah, though there is not sufficient evidence to show that they acted under his orders. He was, however, charged with an attempt to poison Subh-i-Ezel. The Baha'is rebut this charge by saying that it was Subh-i-Ezel who put the poison in the food Baha'u'llah was expected to eat. That three, at least, of the Ezelis were put to death by the Baha'is is, in Professor Browne's opinion, hardly a matter of doubt. He further states that 'Abbas Efendi would appear to have interceded for the murderers. 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 Muhammad himself, and it would not, therefore, necessarily appear objectionable to the Baha'is. 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 Babis at Adrianople determined to separate the disputants. Baha'u'llah and his followers were sent to 'Akka in Syria, and Subh-i-Ezel and his people to Famagusta in Cyprus. This took place in 1868. A few Ezelis were sent with Baha'u'llah and a few Baha'is with Subh-i-Ezel. It was hoped that by this arrangement the minority, in each case, would act as spies, and prevent any communication between Babis in Persia and either of the rival leaders.

After a time Baha'u'llah was allowed to live in a house outside the town of 'Akka. When the deposition of Sultan 'Abdu'l-Hamid took place still more liberty was allowed, and 'Abbas Efendi can now travel abroad. His permanent residence is at Haifa near 'Akka, 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. Subh-i-Ezel in his island home may be compared to Napoleon in St. Helena — a man who has played a great role in stirring events and times, but whose active life and power to mould men's thoughts have passed away.

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

Baha'u'llah's claim to be the messenger of a new dispensation was an unlooked

for development of the work of the Bab, and caused at the time much consternation in the Babi world. A hopeless schism was made. It was much more than a mere struggle for leadership, for Baha'u'llah virtually deposed the Bab 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 Babis. It placed the Bab in the lower position of one sent to announce the advent of Baha'u'llah, whose followers no longer call themselves Babis, but Baha'is.

The teaching of Baha'u'llah was more practical than that of the Bab. It was less mystical and he made his appeal not merely to the Shi'ahs of Persia but to all men. The laws framed by Baha'u'llah are found in the Kitab-i-Aqdas. They are much simpler than those laid down by the Bab. He is more concerned with ethics than with metaphysics. Whatever view may be taken of Baha'u'llah'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 Bab 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 'Akka. The Baha'i missionary has all the tact of the Da'i of the ancient Shi'ah sect of the Isma'ilians, who accommodated the instruction given to the opinions of his hearers and only gradually led on to the esoteric doctrines of the system. In Persia itself there have since been occasional outbursts of persecution, accompanied with the cruelties so common to all Persian repressive action. The political influence of the Baha'is in Persia is not great. Under orders issued from headquarters, they took no part in the first parliament. In the constitutional movement in Persia (1907) the Babis, 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 Mullas, would have proved fatal. 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.

Baha'u'llah 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. 'Abbas Efendi, who was called 'the servant of Baha' (Abdu'l-Baha), 'The Most Mighty Branch' (Ghusn-i-A'zam), and 'He whom God hath desired' (man urada'llahu), claimed the right to succeed his father. This claim was disputed by his brother Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, called 'The Most Great Branch' (Ghusn-i-Akbar), who received the support of his two younger brothers. 'Abbas Efendi has on his side a document left by his father which seems to indicate Baha'u'llah's intention that he should succeed him. This probably would have been conclusive, but 'Abbas 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 revelation was closed, and quoted from Baha'u'llah's book, the Kitab-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.' Thus the position is curious. On the one hand, 'Abbas Efendi 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.

The party of 'Abbas Efendi is, however, in the ascendant and is likely to remain so.

About the time when Baha'u'llah died, a curious extension of the movement took place in America. A Syrian, Ibrahim George Khayru'llah, 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 Baha'u'llah. 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 'Abbas Efendi a large house at the foot of Mount Carmel, and another has written a play celebrating Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the devoted female follower of the Bab. 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'llah espoused the cause of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, but 'Abbas Efendi 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 Mirza Muhammad 'Ali, who lives in California, declares that the claim of 'Abbas Efendi to be a present channel of revelation is totally opposed to Baha'u'llah'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 Baha'is, who maintain some communication with 'Abbas Efendi at 'Akka.

Baha'u'llah in the Lauh-i-Aqdas (most holy book) laid down many practical rules which differ considerably from those which are current in Islam. 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 Islam 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.' That 'Akka is here meant is clear, because it is said that when Baha'u'llah 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 Baha'u'llah 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 Islam; but polygamy and easy divorce are sanctioned. Their efforts to improve the social position of women have been much exaggerated. Some of the practical duties enjoined are obedience and submission to the ruler and laws of the country in which Baha'is 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 Bahaism is a broad latitudinarian system. It is essentially dogmatic. 'Every utterance made by the "Manifestation" of the period (whether the Bab, Subh-i-Ezel, Baha'u'llah, 'Abbas Efendi and Muhammad 'Ali respectively), must be accepted without reserve.'

An American follower of 'Abbas Efendi, in a book called 'Abbas Effendi, writes enthusiastically of the marvellous spirit of liberality shown in Bahaism. He says that 'it recognizes every other religion as equally divine in origin with its own;' but Baha'u'llah writing of his own religion in his most important work, the Kitab-i-Aqdas, says: 'The first thing which God has prescribed unto His servants is knowledge of the Dayspring 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.' In other words no amount of good deeds will help a man who does not attain to a knowledge of Baha'u'llah. That is the road to the attainment 'of all good', which is scarcely a recognition of 'every other religion as equally divine.' The Babis were intolerant and would have kept unbelievers in a position of inferiority. The Baha'is 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.

Professor Browne who wrote the preface to Mr. Phelps' book, referring to that author's confidence in the tolerant spirit of Bahaism, says: 'I cannot wholly share his confidence as to how the Baha'is would treat either the Shi'ite Muhammadans, the Sufis, 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 of possibility, become paramount in Persia.' Again, 'it is not certain to the present writer (Professor Browne) that their triumph over Islam 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.'

Mr. Phelps, an ardent admirer of 'Abbas Efendi, gives an account of the religion and philosophy of Bahaism, as it was taught to him at 'Akka from which we gather the following information. 'The Baha'i 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 'Abbas Efendi, 'is pure essence.' '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 Baha'i faith. The revelation of the last is fuller than any which has preceded it, men being now better fitted to understand the truth.'

'The real human soul' is described by 'Abbas Efendi as a ray of God's love, sent by Him to every human being at its conception; with this soul the human consciousness must effect union during the term of its earthly existence. 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.' Thus a Baha'i 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 Baha'u'llah.' 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.'

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 to assimilate.' 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 Baha'u'llah.' One of 'Abbas Efendi's statements is: 'Look always to God for aid, not to frail human nature.' Then follows: 'Call on Baha for strength to guide you. That spirit is now the renovating influence upon this earth.'

An excellent account of the teaching given will be found in the Record of Christian Work (August, 1912). It summarizes the teaching of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abbas Efendi 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.'

'Abbas Efendi 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 Baha'u'llah was al-Mahdi of the Muslims; the Christ of the Christians come again at this His second advent; the Messiah of the Jews. Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Muhammad and Baha'u'llah were all messengers and manifestations of God. Baha'u'llah was the last and greatest of all.

The recent visit of 'Abbas Efendi to Paris and London has called forth some periodical literature, not of any historical value, but interesting as showing how many people there are who are ever seeking after something new. 'Abbas

Efendi is described as receiving in his residence in London 'Christians of every denomination, Buddhists of every nationality, Theosophists, Muhammadans, 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, Bahaism is Christianity; to a Buddhist, Buddhist; to a mystical Sufi it speaks in the mystical language of the Sufi; to a rationalist it is logical.'

Both Baha'u'llah and 'Abbas Efendi, 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. The conclusion finally arrived at is that 'to know the Master of 'Akka ('Abbas Efendi) 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.'

We have seen that it was a leading principle of the Babis and the Baha'is that the new manifestation came when the world was weary and the times, in a religious sense, were out of joint. 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.

[The Islam Series — a list of companion volumes by Canon Sell and others on Islam, published by the Christian Literature Society for India.]

— Bahaism (Used by permission of the curator)