Baha'i Faith

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History. Bahaism as a religion had as its background two earlier and much different movements in nineteenth-century Shi?ite Shaikhism (following Shaikh Ahmad Ahsa?i) and Babism. Shaikhism centered on theosophical doctrines and believed that a perfect Shi?ite existed on earth at all times, and many Shaikhis (as well as other Shi?ites) expected the return of the hidden Twelfth Imam in 1260/1844. Shaikhis in particular joined the messianic Babi movement of the 1840s, which shook Iran as Sayyed ?Ali-Mohammad Širazi proclaimed himself, first the bab or “gate” of the Twelfth Imam, and then the return of the imam himself. As the new creed spread, violence broke out between Shi?ites and Babis, ending when Qajar government troops intervened to besiege and massacre the Babis. The government executed the Bab in 1850. Some Babi leaders in Tehran plotted, in revenge, the death of Naser-al-Din Shah, but the assassination failed and large numbers of suspected Babis were tortured and killed.

An Iranian notable and important Babi figure, Mirza Hosayn-?Ali Nuri, “Baha?-Allah” was imprisoned but found innocent after the attempted assassination. He was exiled to Iraq, in the Ottoman empire, then to Istanbul and Edirne in Turkey. He was accompanied by his younger half-brother, Mirza Yahya Sobh-e Azal, whom the Bab appears to have pointed to in 1850 as leader of the Babi community. The Bab had also spoken of the advent of another messianic figure, “he whom God shall make manifest (man yozheroh Allah),” and in 1863 in the garden of Necip Pasa in Baghdad Baha?-Allah informed a handful of close followers that he was the messianic figure promised by the Bab (Ostad Mohammad-?Ali Salmani, Katerat, ms., International Baha?i Archives, Haifa; Eng tr. M. Gail, My Memories of Baha?u’llah, Los Angeles, 1982, p. 22). While in Edirne (1863-68) Baha?-Allah wrote letters to Babi followers in Iran openly proclaiming himself to be the spiritual “return” (raj?a) of the Bab. During the Edirne period relations between Baha?-Allah and Sobh-e Azal became increasingly strained, and in 1867 Baha?-Allah sent his younger brother a

missive demanding his obedience to the new revelation, which Azal rejected. Babis in Iran were then forced to choose between Baha?-Allah and Azal. The vast majority accepted the assertions in Baha?-Allah's writings that he was a manifestation of God (mazhar-e elahi) bearing a new revelation, rejecting Azal's form of Babism. Although the Bahais date the inception of their religion from Baha?-Allah's 1863 private declaration in Baghdad, the Bahai community only gradually came into being in the late 1860s, and most Babis did not become Bahais in earnest until after 1867, though many may have been partisans of Baha?-Allah earlier (Baha?-Allah, "Surat damm," Atar-e qalam-e a?la IV, Tehran, 125 Badi?/1968, pp. 1-15; "Lawh-e Nasir," Majmu?a-ye matbu?a-ye alwah, Cairo, 1920, pp. 166-202; Salmani, Katerat, tr. pp. 42-48, 93-105).

In 1868 Baha?-Allah and some close followers were exiled to ?Akka, in Palestine, by the Ottomans, and Azal and his partisans were sent to Cyprus. The vast majority of Babis lived in Iran, and Baha?-Allah found ways to continue to send epistles and tablets (sing. lawh) to them. In 1873, while under house arrest in the old city of ?Akka, Baha?-Allah, in response to requests by the Bahai community in Iran for a new book of laws to accompany his new revelation, set down the Aqdas (al-Ketab al-aqdas, Ketab-e aqdas "Most holy Book"), meant to supersede the Koran and the Bab's book of laws, the Bayan.

One of the problems facing the Babis in the 1850s and 1860s was that of religious authority. With the execution of the Bab and the massacre of many prominent Babi disciples, the original leadership of the religion was mown down. Regional sects developed within Babism, with local claimants to high station competing for allegiance. Azal, who followed a policy of keeping himself incognito, provided little effective leadership. Baha?-Allah won out partially because he solved these problems of legitimacy and organization. The Aqdas prescribes that in every locality a Bahai steering committee (termed bayt al-?adl "house of justice") should be set up to administer the affairs of the religion. In addition, Baha?-Allah provided active leadership through his letters from exile, and through his close companions (called moballegin "teachers") who were sent back to Iran to implement his policies (al-Ketab al-aqdas, Bombay, n.d., pp. 30-31; ?Abd-al-Baha?, Tadkerat al-wafa?, Haifa, 1924; Kazem Samandari, Tarik-eSamandar wa molhaqat, Tehran, 131 Badi?/1974; Mirza Haydar-?Ali Esfahani, Bahjat al-sodur, Bombay, 1913).

After 1873 the Bahais in Iran began to organize themselves in accordance with the Aqdas and gradually began to follow its laws. For example, because of that book's emphasis on the education of children of both sexes, informal Bahai schools were set up. The Christian missionary Bruce noted in 1874 in Isfahan the rapid increase in Bahais (letter of Reverend Bruce, 19 November 1874, in M. Momen, ed., The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts, Oxford, 1981, p. 244). J. D. Rees of the Indian civil service found in 1885 evidence of substantial Bahai followings among the merchant class

in Qazvin, and among townsmen in Hamadan, Abada, and Mašhad (J. Rees, “The Bab and Babism,” Nineteenth Century 40, 1896, pp. 56-66, quoted in Momen, Babí and Bahá’í Religions, p. 245). The government and the Shi?ite ?olama? carried out periodic persecution of the new religion, as in Isfahan in 1874 and 1880, in Tehran in 1882-83, and Yazd in 1891 (see missionary and consular reports in Momen, Bábí and Bahá’í Religions, pp. 251-305). Bahaism spread in this period, not only among Iranian Shi?ites but also among the Zoroastrians in Yazd and Jews in Kašan and Hamadan (see the letters to the Zoroastrians by Mirza Abu’l-Fazl Golpayegani in his Rasa?el wa raqa?em, ed. R. Mehrabkani, Tehran, 1978, pp. 463-511). Internationally, Bahaism spread from the late 1860s to 1892 in Iraq, Turkey, Ottoman Syria, Egypt, Sudan, the Caucasus, Turkish Central Asia, India, and Burma.

Baha?-Allah appointed his eldest son ?Abbas Effendi ?Abd-al-Baha? (q.v.) to head up Bahaism after him. ?Abd-al-Baha? assumed the leadership of the religion in 1892 upon his father’s death, and was accepted by almost all Bahais as the perfect exemplar of his father’s teachings. Some of his younger half-brothers, led by Mohammad-?Ali, joined a handful of Bahai “teachers” in opposing ?Abd-al-Baha?’s authority, but this small group eventually died out. From 1892 to 1921, under ?Abd-al-Baha?’s leadership, Bahaism spread to Tunisia, Arabia, North America, Europe, China, Japan, South Africa, Brazil, and Australia, as well as making further progress in countries where it had earlier been established, such as India. The well-organized Bahai community of the United States was particularly active in spreading the religion, and was encouraged to do so by ?Abd-al-Baha? in such of his writings as the Alwah-e tabligi-e Amrika (in ?Abd-al-Baha?, Makatib III, Cairo, 1921; tr., Unveiling the Divine Plan, New York, 1919). In Iran Bahais continued to be active, and to spread their religion. They faced several waves of major persecutions. The 1896 assassination of Naser-al-Din Shah by Mirza Reza Kermani (q.v.), a follower of Sayyed Jamal-al-Din “Afgani” (q.v.), was widely blamed on Babis or Bahais at first. Pogroms against Bahais were undertaken in 1903 in Rašt, Isfahan, and especially Yazd (Mohammad-Taher Malmiri, Tarik-ešohada?-e Yazd, Cairo, 1926; diplomatic correspondence in Momen, Bábí and Bahá’í Religions, pp. 373-404). They were caught in the middle of the Constitutional Revolution of 1905-11. Despite the support for constitutionalism in Baha?-Allah’s writings, Bahai leaders were careful not to take sides too openly, primarily, it seems, in order to avoid provoking their opponents in the opposing camps thus endangering their vulnerable community, but probably also out of concern that their very identification with the cause might undermine it in Iran. Nevertheless, ?Abd-al-Baha? around 1906 urged Bahais to attempt to elect two ayadi-e amr Allah “Hands of the cause of God” (q.v.) to parliament (copies of ms. letters in the author’s possession). He later became disillusioned with the Majles and urged Bahais to dissociate themselves from

politics (?Abd-al-Baha?, Resala-ye siasiya, Tehran, 1913), a policy which gradually became frozen into a Bahai principle. Anti-Bahai attacks increased again at times of political unrest, and the early 1920s prelude to Reza Khan's coup also saw numerous pogroms (diplomatic correspondence in Momen, Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, pp. 405-52).

?Abd-al-Baha? further refined the Bahai administrative apparatus, calling for elections of local Houses of Justice or Spiritual Assemblies (mahfel-e ruhani-e mahalli) by majority vote, and preparing for the election of national Spiritual Assemblies (mahfel-e melli) and of an international House of Justice (bayt al-?adl-e bayn al-melali). Also in his will and testament (Alwah-e wasaya, in ?Abd-al-Hamid Ešraq Kavari, ed., Resala-ye ayyam-e tes?a, Tehran, 103 Badi?/1947, repr. 129 Badi?/1973, pp. 456-84; tr. Shoghi Effendi, Will and Testament of ?Abdu'l-Baha, New York, 1925) he appointed his grandson Shoghi (Šawqi) Effendi Rabbani (q.v.) leader of Bahaism after him as wali-e amr Allah (Guardian of the cause of god). He stipulated that Shoghi Effendi should appoint the next guardian from among his children or close cousins. Some Bahais, like Ruth White, refused to accept Shoghi Effendi, others, like Ahmad Sohrab thought him too authoritarian. Only a miniscule number of Bahais, however, followed them, and Shoghi Effendi's vigorous leadership and administrative abilities led to a great expansion in the number of Bahais world-wide. In his first decade of leadership he presided over the election of Bahai national Spiritual Assemblies in the British Isles (1923), Germany (1923), India (1923), Egypt (1924), the United States of America (1925), and Iraq (1931) (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, Wilmette, Ill., 1944, 1970, pp. 323-401; Ruhíyyih [Mary Maxwell] Rabbani, The Priceless Pearl, London, 1969).

After 1925 many Iranian Bahais began refusing to be identified by their family's ancestral religion on their passports and other official papers, and Bahai institutions began issuing marriage certificates in accordance with the laws of the Aqdas. In 1927 Bahais convened their first national conference of delegates from the nine provinces of Iran, and planned to begin annual national conventions like those held in the United States. Bahais organized for the establishment of primary schools, the improvement of the status of women, and the propagation of their religion. The secularism of the Reza Shah government in the late 1920s at first helped the Bahais, who built a Bahai center (hazirat al-qods) in Tehran, and began holding public meetings. There, eighty-four of the ninety-five delegates to the national convention gathered to elect the first national Spiritual Assembly in 1934 in accordance with the by-laws translated from those of the national Spiritual Assembly of the United States. Wali-Allah Khan Warqa was elected chairman, ?Ali-Akbar Forutan became secretary. National committees were set up for children's education, women's progress, and the establishment of a Bahai house of worship (mašreq al-adkar) on a tract of land near Tehran ("Report Prepared by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha?is of Iran," The Bahá?í World: A Biennial International Record 6, Wilmette, Ill., 1937, repr. 1980, pp. 94-108; "Baha?i Administrative Divisions in Iran," Bahá?í World 7, Wilmette,

Ill., 1939, pp. 571-75).

From 1934, however, the Reza Shah period was not a particularly happy one for the Iranian Bahai community, though violence against them occurred much less frequently because of better security and less influence over affairs by the Shi?ite ?olama?. Reza Shah's autocratic rule meant he brooked no independence and uncontrolled activity from any social or religious institutions, including Bahaism. The rise of the Bahai administrative order was perceived as a challenge to this central policy, and therefore all schools belonging to the Bahai community were closed (see bahai schools) throughout Iran. Moreover, his government refused to recognize the validity of Bahai marriage certificates, banned the printing and circulation of Bahai literature, closed some local Bahai centers, confiscated Bahai ballot boxes at district conventions in some localities, forbade Bahais to communicate with their coreligionists outside Iran, dismissed some Bahai government employees, and demoted some Bahais in the military. Elections of the national Spiritual Assembly had to be held by mail (Knatchbull-Hugessen to Simon, no. 554, 15 December 1934, FO 371/17917, quoted in Momen, Bábí and Báhá'í Religions, pp. 477-78, sec also pp. 462-81; National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Iran, "Annual Report," Bahá?í World 7, Wilmette, Ill., 1939, pp. 133-45).

The installation of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi as shah in the 1940s signaled no change in the legal status of Bahaism. Looser government authority in that decade allowed an increase in major mob attacks on Bahais, such as those at Abada in May of 1944, and at Šahrud in July-August of 1944. In 1946-50 the national Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Iran adopted a six-point plan for spreading Bahaism and for improving the status of women. For the first time, women were elected to Bahai assemblies in Iran (they had served on them in the West much before), and women's adult education and literacy classes were set up (Shiraz Diary, no. 91, 15-31 May 1944, FO 371/40162 in Momen, The Bábí and Bahá'í Religions, pp. 479-80; "Report from Persia," ed. and tr. M. Gail, Bahá?í World 10, Wilmette, Ill., 1949, pp. 35-48; Horace Holley, "International Survey of Current Baha?i Activities," Bahá?í World 11, Wilmette, Ill., 1951, pp. 34-36).

In 1955, in a move which seems to have done as much for the appeasement of ?olama? as to divert the attention of the general populace from unpopular policies, including the forging of a US-British-sponsored military alliance (the Baghdad Pact, q.v.), the shah's military destroyed the dome of the Bahai center in Tehran, Ayatollah Behbahani (a pro-court clergyman, q.v.) sent congratulatory telegrams to the shah and to Ayatollah Borujerdi the chief Shi?ite clergyman in Qom. The ?olama? and pro-clerical deputies in the docile parliament took the opportunity to voice support for the complete outlawing of the Bahai faith, the jailing of all avowed Bahais, and the sequestration of all Bahai property. During this campaign some Bahai shops and farms were damaged by mob attacks, and a number of Bahais were assaulted. The government ultimately gave up the move, but the campaign did strengthen the

hand of the ?olama? with the government until the late 1950s (S. Akhavi, Religion and Politics in Contemporary Iran, Albany, N.Y., 1980, pp. 76-87).

In the 1950s Shoghi Effendi appointed a large number of Hands of the Cause, and constituted some of them as an International Bahai Council, in preparation for the election of the Universal House of Justice. In 1953 he launched a global campaign of peaceful proselytizing for Bahaism, the “Ten-year World Crusade (jehad),” which sought with some success to spread the religion even to remote areas and islands. Shoghi Effendi did not live to see the end of the project, dying in London in 1957. Because he died childless, and the actions of his eligible relatives had forced him to excommunicate them, he had found it impossible to appoint a Guardian to succeed him. In 1963 the International Bahai Council convened in London a global congress and the first Universal House of Justice was elected. It included five American members, two from Britain, and two Iranians. Almost all Bahais accepted its authority, though a small number followed Hand of the Cause Mason Remey, who declared himself the Guardian despite ?Abd-al-Baha?’s stipulation of descent from Baha?-Allah. The Remey movement remained tiny. The Universal House of Justice was thereafter elected every five years by members of the world’s national Spiritual Assemblies. Its seat, like that of ?Abd-al-Baha? and Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, is in Haifa, now Israel, near the shrines of the Bab and Baha?-Allah. After 1957 Bahaism became a mass movement in some parts of the Third World, in Africa, South Asia, and South America. Some of the first mass conversions occurred in Uganda, India, and Bolivia (P. Haney, “The Institution of the Hands of the Cause;” letters issued by the Hands of the Cause 1957-63; and M. Hofman, “International Survey of Current Baha?i Activities,” in Bahá?í World 13, Haifa, 1970, pp. 245-309, 333-94; B. Ashton, “The Most Great Jubilee” and “The Universal House of Justice,” Bahá?í World 14, Haifa, 1974, pp. 57-80, 425-43; Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance, Wilmette, Ill., 1969; V. Johnson, “An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha?i World Faith,” Ph.D. dissertation, Baylor University, 1974, pp. 330-90).

In the 1960s and early 1970s the lot of Bahais in Iran improved somewhat, though they still continued to labor under many legal and latent social disabilities. In 1964 Iran had 530 local Spiritual Assemblies. In 1975 Bahais feared for their safety when Mohammad-Reza Shah insisted that all Iranians join his Rastakiz party. The national Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Iran informed the shah that although Bahais were law-abiding citizens, they could not join his party, given the non-political nature of Bahaism. In the 1970s Bahais were often watched and harassed by the shah’s security apparatus, SAVAK, and the Bahai Publishing Trust in Tehran was forced to offset rather than print books and to limit the number of books it circulated in order to avoid sanctions.

A number of Bahais, such as Habib Tabet, Hožabr Yazdani, and ?Abd-al-Karim Ayadi, grew extremely rich and powerful under the Pahlavis, and helped form a general public impression of Bahais as a bourgeois group

supportive of the unpopular policies of the regime and close to the shah or the royal family. This rekindled dormant prejudices and provoked anger and resentment towards the Bahai community as a whole but the Babi and Bahai religions were mass movements, encompassing villagers and peasants, artisans and tradesman, and working class people in the large cities, who formed the vast majority of the country's three to four hundred thousand Bahais (P. Smith, "A Note on Babi and Baha?i Numbers in Iran," Iranian Studies 15, 2-3, 1984, pp. 295-301) and who had no desire for or interest in siding with unpopular policies and alienating the majority. That these ordinary Bahais were forbidden by their national Spiritual Assembly from joining any political party, and even from voting (unlike their coreligionists in the West, who may vote if they can do so without joining a party) made their political preferences a private matter which, in normal circumstances, should have been viewed as irrelevant to the political process.

Since its inception in 1979, the Islamic Republic of Iran has, despite denials and explanations, demonstrated every intention of destroying the Bahai community altogether. It has gradually and systematically confiscated all Bahai properties and investment companies, fired Bahai civil servants, dissolved all Bahai national and local Spiritual Assemblies, and executed nearly two hundred of the country's most active and prominent Bahais. It has harassed, detained, and persecuted many others on various pretexts, ranging from violation of Islamic laws, to conspiracy with and spying for international Zionism and imperialism. Since the Islamic Republic considers the performance of Bahai marriage ceremonies heretical and illegitimate, local Spiritual Assembly members who performed them have been tried on charges of promoting prostitution. Bahais who went on visitation to shrines in Israel or sent monetary contributions to the Bahai world center in Haifa came under suspicion of supporting Zionism or spying for it, even though the establishment of ?Akka and Haifa as Bahai centers dated from the nineteenth century, long before the founding of Israel. Hundreds of recantations have appeared in newspapers, the circumstances of their procurement being highly suspicious. The parliament has made it illegal for parents to pass Bahaism on to their children, has refused admittance of Bahai children to schools, and denies Bahais ration cards. The government's confiscation of membership records at the National Bahai Center in Tehran allows it to identify Bahais throughout the country (Human Rights Commission of the Federation of Protestant Churches in Switzerland, "Declaration on the State of Religious Minorities in Iran," World Order 13, no. 4, 1979, pp. 15-20; Amnesty International U.S.A., "Under Penalty of Death: In Iran a Campaign of Terror against Baha?is," Matchbox, October, 1983, p. 11).

Administrative apparatus. Bahai administration evolved gradually, but this overview will discuss current practice. Bahaism possesses no clergy formally trained to administer rituals. Rather, the administration both of religious observances and of community affairs rests with elected officials. At the level of villages, towns, cities, or counties, these officials constitute the local Spiritual Assembly, consisting of nine members elected annually on the eve of

April 21 by universal adult suffrage and by secret ballot. Women as well as men serve on the local and national Spiritual Assemblies (Aqdas, pp. 30-31; ?Abd-al-Baha? in ?A. Ešraq Kavari, ed., Ganjina-ye hodud wa ahkam, New Delhi, 1980, pp. 57-67; Shoghi Effendi, Bahá?í Administration, Wilmette, Ill., 1986, pp. 20-24; “The Local Spiritual Assembly,” Bahá?í World 14, pp. 511-30).

In addition to their own, usually closed administrative meetings, every nineteen days local Spiritual Assemblies sponsor the Bahai feast (ziafat) for the entire community, consisting of three parts. In the first part local lay believers read from Bahai writings first, and then often from scriptures of other religions, as well. In the second part community affairs are discussed. Committees of the local Spiritual Assembly and its officers give reports on their activities. Suggestions may be made from the floor for the local Spiritual Assembly to consider at its next meeting. The third part consists of friendly conversation over refreshments. Because the feast partially has the character of a community business meeting, only registered members of Bahaism may attend (Baha?-Allah, Aqdas, pp. 30-31, 61; ?Abd-al-Baha?, quoted in Ešraq Kavari, ed., Ganjina, pp. 156-58; National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha?is of the British Isles, comp., Principles of Bahá?í Administration, London, 1950, pp. 51-53).

Bahai communities are also apportioned among larger districts for the purpose of electing delegates to an annual national convention. The district conventions, held in the autumn, elect a number of delegates, based on the size of the local Bahai population, and send with them local concerns they want raised at the national convention. The national convention takes place again in April and elects nine members to the national Spiritual Assembly. Campaigning is not allowed at these elections, though discussion of issues is encouraged (Shoghi Effendi, Bahá?í Administration, pp. 65, 79, 89, 91). The national Spiritual Assembly, an institution created by ?Abd-al-Baha? (Baha?-Allah had spoken only of the local Houses of Justice and of the Universal House of Justice), has the responsibility of administering the affairs of the national Bahai community and of propagating the religion in its country (Shoghi Effendi, Bahá?í Administration, passim).

Every five years members of all the Bahai national Spiritual Assemblies in the world send their ballots to or gather at an international convention to elect nine persons to the Universal House of Justice. Of this body Baha?-Allah wrote, “It is incumbent upon the Trustees of the House of Justice to take counsel together regarding those things which have not outwardly been revealed in the Book, and to enforce that which is agreeable to them” (“Kalemat-e ferdowsiya,” Majmu?a-i az alwah ka ba?d az Ketab-e aqdas nazel šodand, Hofheim-Langenhain, 1980, p. 37; tr., p. 68; cf. “Ešraqat,” Majmu?a-i az alwah, pp. 75-76; tr. pp. 128-29). All these elected institutions make their decisions by majority vote, though unanimity is preferred, after long discussions called consultation (mašwerat), in which members are urged not to become attached to their own suggestions, but to

consider each motion dispassionately.

This administrative structure is complemented by appointed institutions of the "learned" (?olama?fi'l-Baha?) (Baha?-Allah, Aqdas, pp. 170-71).
The first body of the learned were the Hands of the Cause of God appointed by Baha?-Allah and by Shoghi Effendi. Since only the Guardian could appoint Hands of the Cause, according to ?Abd-al-Baha?, the lapsing of the institution of the guardianship after 1957 meant that the institution of the Hands also lapsed. The Universal House of Justice has attempted to compensate by creating a new institution of counselors (mošawerin) who are appointed to five-year terms. They have the functions of protecting Bahaism from internal threats to its integrity such as schism, and of spreading the religion. The counselors appoint, with the consent of the Universal House of Justice, auxiliary board members with either of the specific functions of protection and propagation. The auxiliary board members appoint assistants, again with approval from their superiors. Members of these appointed institutions of the learned have no executive power, and can only advise the elected institutions ("The Institution of the Hands of the Cause," Bahá?í World 14, 459-74; Universal House of Justice, Wellspring of Guidance). Since no Bahai seminaries or full-time clerical offices exist, the institutions of the learned are filled by active laymen, often teachers, librarians, or other intellectuals.

Theology. Bahai theology posits several metaphysical levels of reality. The highest of these is the divine realm of unicity (ahadiya), wherein only God's essence and his essential attributes exist. In this station (maqam), God's knowledge is his essence and his essence is his knowledge; God is unmanifest and alone, and completely inconceivable. In the second station God manifests himself by his essence to his essence, bringing into existence the Word of God (kalemat Allah) or divine manifestation (zohur-e elahi). This primal manifestation of God then dawns forth on the world of contingency (emkan) with all the names and attributes of God, causing the new creation to come into being. Each being can reflect an attribute of God, but only human beings can spiritually advance to the point where they can reflect all the attributes of God. They can do so only with the help of prophets and messengers, called generally manifestations of God (mazhar-e elahi), who perfectly show forth the names and attributes of God in the human realm. Unlike similar Sufi schemas, in the Bahai system metaphysical realms are absolutely separate; Bahai thought rejects the Sufi theory of wahdat al-wojud or existential monism (?Abd-al-Baha?, "Tafsir-e konto kanzan makfian," Makateb-e ?Abd-al-Baha? II, Cairo, 1330/1911-12, pp. 2-55; Baha?-Allah, Majmu?a-ye matbu?a, pp. 339, 346).

Bahai psychology accepts a basically Aristotelian view of the various types of soul or spirit, positing a vegetative spirit with its faculty of spatial growth, the animal spirit with its sensitive and locomotive faculties, and the immortal human spirit or rational soul (nafs-e nateqa), with its faculty of intellectual investigation. But two further spirits are posited. The spirit of faith is a moral and ethical faculty whereby the human soul acquires the

perfections of God. Finally, the holy spirit (ruh al-qods) pertains only to the prophets and messengers, or manifestations of God. Prophets possess all of these spirits, from the bodily ones through the rational soul, and including the holy spirit (?Abd-al-Baha?, al-Nur al-abha fi mofawazat ?Abd-al-Baha?: goft-o-gu bar sar-e nahar, Leiden, 1908, pp. 108-10, 114-17, 154).

The universal intellect (?aql-e koll) or word of God (kalemat Allah), the first, preexistent emanation of God, perceives the universe directly and intuitively. It emanates this knowledge upon the prophets, allowing them to found systems of religious law which are appropriate to the conditions of society. They know the necessary connections that relate all entities in the world, and their laws are aimed at regulating and balancing this world-system. God has been sending manifestations of God, whether prophets or messengers, since the inception of the human race, and will continue to do so in the future. Baha?-Allah's writings recognized all the Judaic prophets, Zoroaster, Jesus Christ, Mohammad, the Bab, and Baha?-Allah himself as historical manifestations of God, and ?Abd-al-Baha? recognized such South Asian figures as Krishna and Buddha, as well. The Bahai conception of progressive revelation, which sees successive manifestations of God as having brought increasingly sophisticated religious teachings over time, allows Bahais to incorporate local religious traditions throughout the world into their schema. An essential Bahai teaching is the ultimate unity of all the great prophets and founders of the world religions. Indeed, despite their individuality and differences in station, each manifestation of God can be seen as a "return" (raj?a) of his predecessors, not in the sense of reincarnation but in that of the return of spiritual attributes (Baha?-Allah, "Jawaher al-asrar," Atar-e qalam-e a?la III, Tehran, 129 Badi?/1972-73, pp. 33-37; Baha?-Allah, Ketab-e iqan, Cairo, 1900, pp. 127-29, 147-48; ?Abd-al-Baha?, Mofawazat, pp. 119-20, 123-24, 164-66).

Bahai anthropology sees human beings as burdened with the passions of an animal nature, which can be overcome only through special training and effort. The teacher in this enterprise of spiritual education is the manifestation of God. ?Abd-al-Baha? spoke of three kinds of education. The first is education for the welfare of the body. The second is education for the welfare of human society, including policy, administration, commerce, industry, sciences, and arts. This is an education for civilization and progress. The third is education for a sound character and the acquisition of divine perfections. The educator is perfect in all respects and by his teachings organizes the world, brings nations and religions together, and delivers man from vices (?Abd-al-Baha?, Mofawazat, pp. 6-7).

In the Bahai interpretation, human history has been dominated by spiritual cycles (sing. dawr) initiated by the periodic advent of a new prophet. Baha?-Allah interprets Koranic references to the resurrection day (qiama) and the attainment of the presence of God (leqa? Allah; see Koran 29:33,

18:110, 13:2, 2:46, 2:49) as symbolic allusions to the advent of a new manifestation of God (Baha?-Allah, Ketab-e iqan, pp. 115-19). ?Abd-al-Baha? taught that a great cycle in human religious history is characterized by three periods. The first is a series of manifestations of God which prepare for a universal theophany. The second period starts when the universal manifestation of God arrives and begins his dispensation. The third period within the great cycle is that of manifestations of God that succeed the universal manifestation. Although they can reveal new laws and abrogate his ordinances, they remain under his spiritual shadow. Adam (whom Bahais do not consider the first man) began the current cycle, in which the first, preparatory period extended from his time until the Bab. Baha?-Allah was the universal manifestation for this cycle. After no less than a thousand years, further manifestations of God may arise, but their spiritual themes will start from Baha?-Allah's principles of the political and religious unification of the earth for human welfare (?Abd-al-Baha?, Mofawazat, pp. 120-22; Baha?-Allah, Aqdas, pp. 38-39).

Social principles. Bahaism sees itself as primarily preaching the unity of mankind, and criticizes nationalist chauvinism and jingoism as productive of war. Baha?-Allah wrote, "The earth is but one country (watan), and mankind its citizens (ahl-e an)" ("Lawh-e maqsud," in Majmu?a-i az alwah, p. 101; tr. p. 167). To unite the world Bahais advocate the adoption of a universal language, to be chosen by the leaders of the world ("Bešarat," no. 3, "Kalemat-e ferdowsiya," no. 8, Majmu?a-i az alwah, pp. 11, 37-38). Baha?-Allah charged the Universal House of Justice with promoting peace among the secular powers to avert exorbitant defense expenditures ("Lawh-e donya" in Majmu?a-i az alwah, p. 50; tr. p. 89). He urged the establishment of a world assembly of rulers to discuss peace and to prevent wars through collective security ("Lawh-e maqsud," in Majmu?a-i az alwah, p. 99, tr. p. 165). Baha?-Allah apparently did not mean this internationalism to detract from loyalty to national governments, since he commanded obedience to government and attempted to make the Babi community less radical ("Bešarat," nos. 4, 5 in Majmu?a-i az alwah, pp. 11-12). Baha?-Allah did not, however, simply approve of the governments in power; despite both Ottoman and Qajar opposition to the principle, he advocated constitutional monarchy on the British model as a means of restraining tyranny ("Bešarat," no. 15, pp. 13-14).

?Abd-al-Baha? in his journeys to Europe and North America 1910-13 often listed the basic principles of Bahaism. A typical listing is (1) the independent investigation of reality (taharri-e haqiqat, the opposite of taqlid or blind imitation), (2) the unity of mankind, (3) religion must be a source of unity and harmony, otherwise a lack of religion would be preferable, (4) religion and science complement one another, (5) religious, racial, political, and nationalist prejudices are destructive of human society, (6) equal rights for all human beings, (7) greater equality of income distribution (ta?dil-e ma?išat) so that none would be needy, (8) world peace through the foundation of an international court of arbitration that would settle

disputes, (9) the separation of religion from politics, (10) education and advancement for women, (11) the inculcation of spiritual virtues and ethics to complement material civilization (?Abd-al-Baha?, Ketabat hazrat ?Abd-al-Baha? fi Awrobba wa Amrika I, Cairo, 1921, repr. Karachi, 1980, pp. 30-32). Shoghi Effendi elaborated at length on the Bahai conception of world government in his letters of the 1930s, published as World Order of Baha?u?llah (2nd, rev. ed., Wilmette, Ill., 1974).

Laws and ethics. The basic book of laws in Bahaism is the Arabic al-Ketab al-aqdas, though it is supplemented by a number of other works. Laws of ritual pollution are abolished, and peoples of other religions are decreed ritually pure, unlike the case in Twelver Shi?ism (Aqdas, pp. 79-81). Believers are commanded to consort with the followers of all religions with amity and concord (p. 144). If someone shows anger to a Bahai and torments him, the Bahai must respond with kindness and lack of opposition (p. 152). Believers are forbidden to carry arms except when necessary (p. 157). The Aqdas makes it incumbent on believers to engage in productive work, interdicting begging (pp. 32-33). It insists on meticulous cleanliness and polite manners (latafa; pp. 50-51). Slander and backbiting are forbidden (pp. 22). It is mandatory for parents to arrange for the education of both male and female children (pp. 52-53). Repentance for misdeeds is commended, but only in private and not before a clergyman (p. 53; Baha?-Allah, “Bešarat,” in Majmu?a-i az alwah, p. 12). Listening to music is allowed, and is recommended as a means of spiritual advance (Aqdas, pp. 53-54). Holy war (jehad) is forbidden (“Bešarat,” p. 10).

The Aqdas forbids the imbibing of intoxicants and use of opium, as well as gambling (pp. 120, 153-54). It prohibits murder and adultery (p. 22). It prescribes banishment and imprisonment for theft, and the tattooing of an identifying mark on the forehead of third-time offenders (pp. 48-49). Wounding or striking another person is punishable by a set of fines, depending on the severity of the injury (p. 60). There is also a fine (dia) to be paid to the victim’s family for manslaughter (p. 185). The minimum penalty for arson and first-degree murder is life imprisonment; the maximum for arson is to be burned, the maximum for murder is execution (pp. 64-65). Slavery is forbidden (p. 75). All believers must leave a will (p. 111).

Marriage is enjoined; the Aqdas permits two wives, but recommends only one and ?Abd-al-Baha? later interpreted this verse to allow only one wife. The consent of both individuals and the permission of all four parents is required, as is the payment of a limited dowry by the man (pp. 64-67). It is permitted to marry non-Bahais (Baha?-Allah, Resala-ye so?al o jawab, Iran National Bahai Archives, no. 63, Tehran, n.d., p. 36). Adultery is punishable by a fine which doubles with each offense, payable to the house of justice (Aqdas, p. 53). Divorce is allowed but only after a year of patience is waited out during which no conjugal relations take place. Remarriage is permitted (pp. 70-73). It is forbidden to marry one’s father’s widow, and homosexuality is prohibited (pp. 110-11).

Believers are to pay a nineteen-percent religious tax on gold and on profits beyond expenses, called the hoquq Allah (the right of God; pp. 100-01). In addition, zakat, another religious tax, is to be paid, in accordance with the laws of the Koran (p. 145).

Religious rituals and observances. Like Bahai administration, Bahai religious observances have evolved over time. For the sake of brevity, these will be discussed in terms of twentieth-century practice, and only widely practiced or central rituals will be surveyed. There are four basic sorts of daily ritual. The Aqdas prescribes the private recitation by individuals of verses revealed by Baha?-Allah every morning and evening (p. 149; So?al o jawab, p. 30). In addition, believers are to go to a central place of worship (mašreq al-adkar) between dawn and two hours after sunrise to recite and listen to prayers (monajat; Aqdas, p. 116; So?al o jawab, pp. 7-8). Aside from these supplicatory prayers, believers are to pray an obligatory prayer (salat, namaz) after ablutions (wozu?). Baha?-Allah set down three different obligatory prayers, a long one with prostrations to be said once in twenty-four hours, a middle prayer to be said three times a day, and a short prayer to be said once a day. Believers may choose any one of these to say individually. Congregational salat is forbidden, as are pulpits (sing. menbar). The believer must face the qebla (point of adoration) while performing the obligatory prayer, which is fixed as Baha?-Allah's resting place. It is not necessary to face the qebla when saying other sorts of prayer (Aqdas, pp. 152-53, So?al o jawab, pp. 29-30; Ešraq Kavari, ed., Ganjina, pp. 11-33). Finally, once a day believers should seat themselves facing the qebla and repeat the greatest name of God, Allaho abha, ninety-five times (Aqdas, pp. 21-22). Another important ritual prayer is the salat for the dead, which is the only sort of salat Baha?-Allah permitted to be said in congregation; it is almost identical with that set down by the Bab in the Bayan (wahed 5, bab 11) (Ešraq Kavari, ed., Ganjina, pp. 136-41).

The Bahai calendar (Badi?, q.v.), originating with the Bab, consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, in addition to a short intercalary period. At the beginning of each Bahai month, Bahais are to gather in the nineteen day feast (ziafat-e nuzdah ruza), discussed above under administration, where the only approximation to a ritual is the reading by lay believers of passages from scripture. The Aqdas instructed that the intercalary days be placed just before the last month, the month of fasting (?Ala?). Bahais are to fast (siam) from the age of maturity (15), from sunrise to sunset for nineteen days. Since the Bahai calendar is a solar one, the fasting month always falls just before the vernal equinox. The intercalary days (ayyam-e ha) are set aside as a time of gift giving and feasting. The fast usually ends on 20 March, and the vernal equinox (Nowruz) starts the new year (pp. 18-21, 126). Nowruz is one of nine Bahai holy days on which work must be suspended. Bahais hold festive gatherings on these days. They include the anniversaries of the birth of the Bab and of Baha?-Allah (celebrated on 1 and 2 Moharram in the Middle East, and on 20 October and 12 November in the rest of the world), and the first, ninth, and twelfth days of Rezwan, the

twelve-day (April 21-May 2) festival celebrating Baha?-Allah's declaration of his mission in Baghdad (pp. 112-15; So?al o jawab, pp. 12). The other holy days are the declaration of the Bab, the martyrdom of the Bab, and the "ascension" (so?ud) of Baha?-Allah (texts relating to these holy days have been collected by Ešraq Kavari in Resala-ye ayyam-e tes?a).

Pilgrimage (hajj) is required of financially able male believers once in a lifetime either to the house of the Bab in Shiraz or the house of Baha?-Allah in Baghdad (Aqdas, p. 32; So?al o jawab, p. 15; Ešraq Kavari, ed., Ganjina, pp. 67-71). Even before setting down the Aqdas, Baha?-Allah wrote out tablets containing instructions for the performance of the pilgrimage, and had Mohammad "Nabil" Zarandi perform the rites at the house of the Bab. These include the paring of nails, ablutions, the recitation of special verses, and circumambulation. But problems of security prevented subsequent performance of the rites. At present, the pilgrimage is not undertaken, given the persecution of Bahais in Iraq and the destruction of the house of the Bab by the revolutionary government in Iran in 1979. Visitation (ziarat) often psychologically took its place, many believers simply visiting the house of the Bab in Shiraz, the house of Baha?-Allah in Baghdad, or the Bahai properties in Edirne, Turkey, and Haifa and ?Akka (now in Israel). A nine-day visitation to the Bahai shrines in Haifa and ?Akka has become common among Bahais who can afford it.

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