

Babism and the Bab

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IN studying the origins of an ancient religion and endeavoring to sift its records so as to extract the pure gold of unalloyed truth, the candid scholar soon comes face to face with unexpected difficulties. He finds himself in a world very different from that which he has been accustomed to deal with ; he meets a class of minds marked by an intense conviction and readiness of belief quite foreign to our nineteenth century indifferentism. The air is electric with supernatural tension and miraculous signs. Hidden wisdom is claimed for the most trivial acts, and providential guidance for the most ordinary occurrences, and the usual sequence of motives and conduct seems often radically altered. Prudence and caution give place to enthusiastic ardor and an unshakable devotion to some religious leader whose lightest word is sacred authority, and in loyalty to whom fortune, rank, home and family interests are counted as dross. Visions of a new and better age, a reign of God's saints on a renovated earth, sweep not only peasants and fishermen, but also merchants, scholars and philosophers off their feet to encounter persecution and death in its most frightful forms.

In these graphic narratives, with their signs and prophecies, sudden conversions and extraordinary heroisms, — annals so full of the broadest contrast to the usual course of things to-day, — how much may the historian credit as having actually occurred? Does the intense conviction that seals its testimony with its blood authenticate the accuracy of the accounts, or does it cast doubt upon them? Are these reported marvels the signs of supernatural agency and an inspired authority, or, on the other hand, are they exaggerations of certain natural facts, or, perhaps, even pure myths, originated by dogmatic tendencies and popular expectations, in the prolific soil of the believer's imagination? When the first outbursts of enthusiastic faith and heroic self-sacrifice have passed away, and the chronic human passions of envy, ambition and jealousy have sprung up again among the successors of the first prophets and martyrs of the cause, should we suppose that the early accounts will then pass down to us in their original simplicity, or may they be radically mutilated or embellished by the later propagators and leaders of the faith?

In solving these questions it is evident what a priceless light is supplied by the analogies to be found when we can study at close range the rise of a new religion in our own age. This fact it is

that gives such special value to the study of the origin and history of the Babi movement. Not a few of its original disciples and leaders are still living, or were living a few years ago, and have supplied to European scholars their personal narratives of the movement. Several inestimable early records have already been published and been put beyond reach of alteration. The growth of the movement, moreover, in spite of the terrible persecutions it has suffered, has been more than sufficient to give it notable political significance. In the abundance and moving power of its dramatic incidents, in the unswerving fortitude under all the tortures that Oriental tyranny could invent and the absorbing personal loyalty to their adored leader exhibited by his disciples, the story of Babism is one of the most romantic to be found in either ancient or modern history. In the light of these facts it is evident how instructive, both to the student of comparative religion, and to him who would get a clearer understanding of Christianity, the history of the Bab and the faith he founded must be.

"Fifty years ago," to quote the words of Mr. Edward G. Browne, to whose researches, conducted with truly remarkable enthusiasm, diligence and thoroughness, we owe so much of our knowledge of this movement, "Persia belonged to all intents and purposes to the ancient world. There hardly anything was impossible, and not very many things grossly improbable." The delight in mystical theosophic speculations, the readiness to believe any wonder or supernatural claim, and the susceptibility to emotional excitement in response to florid rhetorical appeals existed in a form and degree genuinely Oriental. The Persian genius and tendencies, having remained immovably Aryan (however unconsciously so), have never found the Semitic faith of Islam entirely congenial. This is the secret of the division of the Shiite Moslems from the Sunnites, and the license accorded here to the pantheistic rhapsodies of the Sufis. This has also undoubtedly increased the natural irritation of the people against the Moslem priests. The quibbling and hypocrisy, the cupidity, narrowness and ignorant dogmatism of the Mullahs had become notorious, and the mass of spurious tradition and absurd fable that they strove to force men to believe brought religion into contempt and disrepute. These various influences naturally combined to disturb the religious world of Persia, whose waters, for that matter, are always seething with some new doctrinal agitation.

But sixty years ago a more special and intense source of commotion began to fill all Persia with unrest. This was the expected coming of the Imam-Mihdi. According to the Shiites, the Twelfth Imam, Muhammad, "the Proof of God," who succeeded to the Imamate in the year 260 of the Muhammadan era,

did not die, but disappeared mysteriously. The Moslems of the East held that he still lives (like Frederick Barbarossa in the German legend) surrounded by a chosen band in the mysterious city of Jabalka. When the fullness of time comes, and the earth is filled with injustice and the appointed signs appear, he will come forth to overthrow the infidels and inaugurate a reign of universal peace and blessedness. During the period, however, that the Imam-Mahdi was hidden from the sight of men, certain channels of communication, or Gates, might appear.

As the year 1844 of our era, which would complete the cycle of a thousand years from the date of the minor occultation of the original Imam-Mahdi, came near, the expectation and excitement over the manifestation of the Coming One naturally grew intense throughout Persia. The multiplication of sects and schisms and the very corruption of the regular Muhammadan clergy were regarded as signs that a new Divine Manifestation was at hand, for it is just before dawn that the night is darkest. Some years before, a famous ascetic and seer, the pious Sheykh Ahmad of Ahsa, had founded a new school of faith called the Sheykhi. Residing mainly in the neighborhood of the holy shrine in Kerbela, he visited Persia several times and diffused through that country also his somewhat heterodox views. He believed himself under the special guidance of the Imams, whom he regarded as creative forces. He taught that the grosser elements of the body perish irrevocably at death, but that there is a subtle celestial body which survives.

On the death of Sheykh Ahmad his disciple, Haji Seyyid Kazim of Resht, succeeded him ; this teacher's various works are said to exceed three hundred volumes. He emphasized especially the doctrine called the Fourth Support, — that there must always be in the true Moslem church some one perfect man or spiritual guide and revealer, capable of serving as a channel of grace between the invisible Imam and his church. The last years of his life were devoted to discussing the promised Proof, — the Coming One, — the signs of his manifestation and the qualities of his character. Seyyid Kazim, however, did not name any one, vouchsafing only the information that he would be a young man; and that when this Sun of Truth appeared, it would "irradiate all horizons." After his death, the Sheykhis, therefore, were anxiously expecting the appearance of some one to take the leadership of their body. As Simeon, in the days when Jesus was born, was waiting for the Consolation of Israel, so in Persia, in those days, there were many men, just and devout, who were looking for him who was to be a light unto their nation and manifest the return of the long-awaited Imam, the Divine Revealer.

It was in this atmosphere of expectation and faith that the young man, Mirza Ali Muhammad, afterwards called the Bab, grew up, and at this juncture he first came into public notice. According to the best accounts he was born on October 9, 1820, in the city of Shiraz. The Babis say that at the moment of his birth he exclaimed "The kingdom is God's." His teacher, who afterwards became an ardent disciple, relates that the very first day on which the little Ali was brought to school and the alphabet had been written down for him, he read both Persian and Arabic with ease and amazed the teacher with subtle reasonings and questions. Before he had been instructed in writing he composed and wrote down eloquent verses on the mystery of the Divine Unity. These marvelous signs of the Bab's holiness and lofty spiritual rank are attested not only by his teacher, but also by his maternal uncle, who brought Ali up, after his father's early death, and subsequently died a martyr to his Babi faith. If our Christian readers are inclined to be skeptical as to the honesty of the witnesses, we can only refer them to the argument of the Babi historian, a familiar and accepted argument in most books of Christian Evidences: "Persons so virtuous and reasonable as these would not have been so convinced of the truth of the Bab's claim as thus willingly and joyfully to forego life, wealth, fame, name, wife and child unless they had observed in that Proof of God the clearest evidences of divine powers and qualities" ("New History of the Bab," by E. G. Browne, p. 265).

Although claiming to be a Seyyid, or descendant of the Prophet, Ali Muhammad engaged at seventeen in commercial pursuits in the town of Bushire. He won the esteem of the merchants by his integrity and piety ; when he was at his devotions he preferred to suffer pecuniary losses rather than have his prayers interrupted. After five years of mercantile life, he went to visit the holy shrines of Kerbela and Nejed. During this time he attended the lectures of the leader of the Sheykhi School, the Seyyid Kazim, already mentioned. But the Babis reject the idea that this was for purposes of study and maintain that it was the elder teacher rather who was helped by this acquaintance. Those who do not belong to the Babi circle, however, declare that, as a youth, Mirza Ali Muhammad was illiterate and had no sufficient knowledge of Arabic grammar ; scholars have found even his mature writings very peculiar, to say the least, in their grammatical construction.

After the death of Seyyid Kazim, the members of the Sheykhi School, as we have seen, were in great perplexity as to whom they should recognize as the God-ordained channel of divine grace, worthy to wear the mantle of their departed Master. Meeting after meeting was held with prayer and fasting, seeking divine

guidance in their choice. This went on for some five months, when, one day, the Mullah Huseyn of Bushraweyh, one of their most learned and influential leaders, came to visit Mirza Ali Muhammad. The young man asked the Mullah whom the Sheykhis now acknowledged as their Master. When told that, as yet, they had recognized no one, he boldly asked if the Mullah did not recognize in him the characteristics and signs required. As the Mullah in two months' acquaintance with him had not observed any signs of special knowledge, he frankly answered in the negative. But soon thereafter, being shown Commentaries upon the Surat u'l Bakara, the Sura of Joseph, and the "Tradition of the Handmaiden," and hearing Mirza Ali Muhammad recite verses of a very lofty and profound character, whose subtlety and eloquence he believed were quite beyond what he could have uttered had he not been supernaturally inspired, Mullah Huseyn recognized the young man as the long-looked-for Bab, the Gateway or Door of Revelation. The title was not new, but anciently had been used to designate those who had access to the Twelfth Imam during his seclusion. It had also been assumed in the tenth century by a noted heresiarch and was used by the Seyyid Kazim to designate his inspired function as the forerunner of the Coming One. As Ali, the Prophet's nephew, had been the gate by which men entered the city of the prophet's knowledge, so Mirza Ali Muhammad (whose very name showed him to be a return of the ancient revealer) was the gate through which men might have knowledge of the great Revealer who was shortly to appear.

Many of the Sheykhi School vigorously repudiated these lofty pretensions of a young man of poor education, hitherto quite obscure. But fully one half of them, led by Mullah Huseyn (who, as the first disciple to acknowledge the Gate, was called the Gate of the Gate), accepted the new revelation and recognized in the young man the fulfillment of the promised signs. It was recalled that when the departed Master Seyyid Kazim was asked about the manifestation which was to succeed him, he had said, "There will be a schism amongst my followers, but God's affair will be clear as this rising sun." As he spoke, he pointed to the door, through which streamed a flood of sunlight ; and at that same moment, Mirza Ali Muhammad crossed the threshold. The very fact that the young man had, before this time, been considered illiterate, and had been found stumbling over the interpretation of passages in the Koran, made it so much the clearer proof of his divine inspiration that verses which were regarded as superior in eloquence and beauty to those of the Moslem Scriptures should be "poured forth like copious showers by this simple and unlettered youth." "O God!" exclaimed the Saint of

Khurasan, "in face of such ample proofs, how is denial possible?" The Mullah Muhammad Ali of Barfurush, a man noted for his piety and godliness, had no sooner seen and conversed with the Bab than he at once believed, without seeking any further sign, regarding such a demand as unseemly, and was rewarded with the title of Hazrat-i-Kuddus — "His Holiness the Sacred."

Another of the early and prominent disciples was the remarkable woman — the Hypatia of the movement — Zarrin-taj, or "Golden Crown." The daughter of the Mullah Salih of Kazvin, she was as beautiful in person and as winning in her grace and sweetness as she was eloquent in public speech and learned in scholarship. A melodious poet and a profound and subtle philosophic reasoner, rich and noble by birth, she subordinated all her gifts to a fervent piety of the most austere and enthusiastic kind. She had been an admirer and disciple of the departed leader of the Sheykhi School, the Seyyid Kazim of Resht, and was one of those who were anxiously expecting the approaching manifestation of the promised Proof, or Door to the Twelfth Imam. So, when her friend, Mullah Huseyn of Bushraweyh, had recognized in the young Mirza Ali Muhammad the looked-for Gate, and she had had a chance to read his verses, doctrinal treatises and devotional works, without waiting to see the new Master face to face, she became his disciple and was rewarded with the title of Jenab-i-Tahira, "Her Holiness the Pure." She was, however, best known by the poetic name, Kurratu'l-Ayn, i.e. "The Consolation of Eyes," a name given her by her first teacher, Seyyid Kazim. Her faith in the new prophet was intense and her ardor of the most impetuous type. She threw herself heart and soul into the new crusade ; she left her husband and child and counted the loss of wealth, name and position as nothing if she might serve her Master. The lectures which she instituted to proclaim the signs and teachings of the new prophet, to which she admitted both men and women (only separated by the curtain behind which she was seated), made an immense sensation. It was charged that she even discarded the veil. But the Babis say that it was never intentionally, but only by chance, that, in the excitement of her oratorical or poetic improvisations, the covering of her face dropped from its place. The appearance of such a woman as "Consolation of Eyes," Mr. Browne well says, "is in any country and any age a rare phenomenon ; but in such a country as Persia it is a prodigy — nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion and her glorious martyrdom, she stands forth incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen."

Under the impulsion of these enthusiastic apostles and their fellow proselyters, many important converts were made and the new faith began to spread. To give it greater prominence, the leaders of the new movement planned to go to the ruined mosque of Khufa, deeply revered in that part of Asia, and there proclaim their master as the forerunner and channel of communication of the Imam-Mahdi. But as the Musulman world did not seem ready to respond to this call and many of their missionaries received disrespectful treatment, a bolder and more effective plan was formed. This was no less than to send the Bab, under the guidance of his lieutenants, Haji Suleyman Khan and Hazrat-i-Kuddus, to Mecca, and there proclaim his divine mission to the great assemblage of pilgrims from all quarters of Islam. Not only would the good news thus be spread more widely than in any other way ; it would also fulfill the prophecy which declared that the Imam-Mahdi would manifest himself at Mecca, Medina, and beyond Khufa and Khurasan at the end of a thousand years.

This plan was accordingly carried out. The pilgrimage was made, and in 1844, the exact completion of the cycle of a thousand years, the Bab proclaimed at Mecca his manifestation as the Divine Gate and performed the circumambulation of the Holy Mosque, "with such an air" (to quote the words of one who dated his conversion to Babism from that incident) "of solemn ecstasy, reverence and humility as filled me with amazement, so that I knew of a surety that this must be either He who is to arise out of the family of Muhammad (i. e. the Mahdi) or else one of the Guardians who shall accompany him."

In 1845 the Bab returned to Bushire by sea and then visited Khufa and Khurasan, to complete the fulfillment of the prophecy, and at once sent out his missionaries to all the principal cities of Persia to proclaim him as the "Remnant of Allah," him who should appear from the lineage of the great Prophet. Eighteen chief apostles were appointed, called the Letters of the Living. The vices, ignorance and narrowness of the regular Moslem clergy were unsparingly denounced ; the descent of the Bab from the great prophet and the miracles that attended him were proclaimed ; the inspiration which enabled him to write Arabic verses that were superior to those of the Holy Book was triumphantly adduced, and the notable conversions of eminent Doctors of Islam and the very dissensions and persecutions of the time were brought forward as signs that he was the true Gate of the New Dispensation.

The Mullahs and the more fanatical of the Moslem laity were exceedingly angry at the outbreak of this new heresy. The

preachers of the faith were mobbed and grievously maltreated, and even punished with the lash by the authorities. The Bab was seized and confined at Shiraz ; his house was attacked by a rabble instigated, it is alleged, by the authorities themselves. The Governor, instead of punishing the ringleaders of the mob, confiscated the goods of the Bab and subjected his uncle, the owner of the house, to the bastinado. But all these persecutions only spread abroad the fame of the new prophet. The officer to whose custody the Bab was committed became convinced that the recovery of his son from an attack of the plague was due to the Bab's prayers, and so gave him liberty to escape. In this flight, as in that of Muhammad to Medina, supernatural wonders lent their sacred halo to the Prophet. To whichever of the three horses the Bab rode, "a peculiar virtue was communicated, so that it went more smoothly and swiftly and forbore to void its excreta." One night, when the Bab had been missed and sought in vain, suddenly his voice was heard speaking to his companion: "Why are you troubled? Come." His companion looked and saw the form of his Holiness erect in the saddle, like the Alif which is symbolical of the Divine Unity, while a continuous flow of light hung like a veil round about him and rose heavenwards. This light so encompassed him, forming, as it were, a halo round about him, that the eye was dazzled. The other companion of the flight, beholding this, uttered a loud cry and swooned away, and was never again in his right mind, and soon after, as the effect of this vision, yielded up his spirit to the Lord of glory. This miracle of the Bab's transfiguration is perhaps one of the most striking of the supernatural powers and incidents attributed to him by his followers. But it is only one among many. The faith of the Babis in the divine mission and character of their prophet was so ardent as readily to lend a miraculous tinge to very commonplace occurrences. Doors, bolted and locked, opened at his command. A box of sweetmeats that he had kept perennially filled. A metal pipe-cover was transmuted to gold at his touch. At Milan he healed a scald-headed child by drawing a handkerchief over him and repeating certain holy words. The water in which he washed was sought by the crowd to use for healing the sick, and proved efficacious in working wondrous cures. Besides this he exhibited marvelous powers of prophecy and knowledge of secret things, such as a message hid in a cucumber. Mullah Mirza Muhammad once wrote down two thousand and four hundred occurrences of a miraculous character which he had witnessed on the part of his Holiness, the Bab, and his apostles. The Bab himself, however, did not regard these as proofs of his mission, and did not desire to have them published. The one supernatural sign on which he rested his commission was his inspired poetic improvisations. "By what sign," the Imam-

Jum'a asked him at Isfahan, "do you establish the truth of your claim?" "By verses," said the Bab, "for without pause of pen I can, in the space of three hours, write a thousand sentences on any subject that I please." "But," objected his host, "you may have considered the matter previously." "I will write," replied the Bab, "on any subject you like." "Then," said his host, "write for me a commentary on the Sutra Wa'l-asr" (103 of the Kuran). "So his Holiness began to write and in three hours [or six, in Mirza Jani's account] wrote a thousand verses. Thus the Imam-Jum'a was convinced that such power was from God, being beyond the capacity of man" ("New History of the Bab," pp. 209 and 347).

On his arrival at Isfahan, the Bab was entertained by one of its most distinguished religious leaders, who soon became a convert. The governor, Minuchir Khan, took a strong interest in him, and tried to arrange a public discussion between him and the leading Mullahs concerning the new faith. The regular clergy were afraid to risk an argument with the heresiarch, and, instead, ran to the higher officials at Teheran with a batch of gross misrepresentations. The governor, ordered to send the Bab to the capital, made a feint of so doing, but concealed him in his own palace, and even offered, it is alleged, to lend him five thousand tribesmen to back him, in case he was disposed to go to war with the royal authority. Not long after, however, this independent governor, who had become so attached to the Bab, died, and the Bab was removed as a prisoner of state, first to Maku, next to Chihrik, and then to Tabriz. In these various places the Bab was confined for three or four years, being allowed, however, to write and communicate with his followers. The epistles, prayers, treatises, sermons and commentaries on the Kuran that he wrote in this time are said to have exceeded one hundred thousand verses ; they were spread among all classes of the people and through all quarters of the land, and made multitudes of converts. During this time, also, a great step in the doctrinal development of the Babi faith was taken.

In the early years of the movement, Mirza Ali Muhammad had been content to call himself the Bab or Gateway of entrance to a greater Divine Manifestation of which he was the forerunner. But, as the movement grew and his disciples everywhere asked, "Who is this greater Incarnation, and when will he manifest himself?" theosophic imagination and natural personal ambition, inextricably mingled with it, plumed their wings for a still higher flight. Where else should one look for this greater Theophany, the goal of the Divine Manifestation, than among the Babi leaders themselves? It seems to have been Hazrat-i-Kuddus who first laid claim to being this Final Manifestation of God, the

Nukta or Point of Revelation in whom the divine inspiration reached its climax and God returned in bodily form to the earth. As proof he produced a lot of verses with which he had been inspired. For a time Mirza Ali Muhammad allowed the claim ; and his sun became "effulgent in quiescence." He deferred to Hazrat-i-Kuddus as his spiritual superior and ceased to write epistles to the Babi church as its head. The leading apostle and chief arbiter of the sect, Mullah Huseyn, who had first discovered the Bab, and so gained the title of "The Gate of the Gate," also yielded precedence to the bold disciple who had been the very last to be admitted to the inner circle of the "Letters of the Living," but who now aspired to rise above them all at one bound, as the Mahdi, or Twelfth Imam returned, or (as, at other times, he claimed to be) Christ come back to earth. The prophetess Kurratu'l-Ayn also claimed to be a manifestation of Fatima, the prophet's daughter, and that anything unclean was rendered pure by being submitted to her gaze.

After a short period of submission to these loftier claims of Hazrat-i-Kuddus, the Bab and his first Apostle, Mullah Huseyn, who from the outset seems to have been the resolute ruling spirit of the new sect, concluded to "turn down" their too ambitious disciple. Whether they did not find Hazrat-i-Kuddus' verses genuine or sufficiently inspired, or this vain and bumptious leader failed to secure the confidence or popular support of the mass of the disciples, we can only conjecture. At any rate, the leaders concluded to promote the Bab himself to the higher dignity of Point or Supreme Revealer. Mirza Ali Muhammad from the beginning, it was claimed, had been the destined Goal of Revelation, the Final Manifestation of Allah, only at first his divinity had been veiled and he had been content to manifest himself simply as the Bab or Gate. The Babi church enthusiastically adopted this solution of the mysteries of Providence ; and the Mullah Huseyn was rewarded for his inestimable services by being promoted to the position of Bab. With the acknowledgment of the Supreme Lordship of Mirza Ali Muhammad, this dignity of Bab was left open to descend to the next in rank in the Babi hierarchy. Just what compensation or pressure was employed upon Hazrat-i-Kuddus to make him yield his claims we are not told ; but yield he did. Now that the Bab had become the Kaim, the Supreme Manifestation of the Divine, greater wonders than ever attended his career. "Such radiance of might and majesty streamed from his countenance that none could bear to look upon the effulgence of his glory and beauty." No sooner did the Indian Believer catch sight of the face of His Holiness than he exclaimed "This is my Lord," and fell swooning to the ground.

The excitement and dissension in Persia over the Bab (for, although he had now become to his followers "His Supreme Holiness, the Point," it will be most convenient to continue to call him by the name by which he has always been known in the world at large) were of course now greater than ever. Not long after this the Crown Prince happened to visit Tabriz and decided to investigate personally the claims of the new prophet whom so many revered as the long-expected Mahdi. The Bab conducted himself with dignity and courage, repeating his claim to be the inspired channel of God's grace, authenticated by his miraculous gift of versification. The Muhammadan clergy contended that he could not be the expected Mahdi because there was no mystery about either his birth or parentage, and they indulged in much heated abuse. The Crown Prince and his officers badgered and mocked the prophet by asking him a multitude of impertinent and ridiculous questions, and at length the sentence to the punishment of the bastinado, determined upon in advance, was ordered.

Soon after this, the Shah, Muhammad, passed away, and the present ruler of Persia, Nasir-u'd-Din, ascended the throne. Such changes of dynasty in the East, where government is so purely a personal, not a constitutional matter, are always periods of unrest and turbulence. The antagonism between the Babis and the regular clergy grew sharper and sharper. About this time, or a little earlier, there occurred at Badasht a conference in which there was a great deal of wild talk, the reports of which increased the popular prejudice against the Babis. All the outward forms of religion, prayer, fasting, pilgrimage and alms, were explained away as allegories, and esoteric meanings were substituted. All men's goods were declared to be the property of the Point, the head of the Babi church. The polygamy and the restrictions on woman's activities prescribed in the Kuran were attacked. "The religion of the Kaim (i. e. the Point) is to abrogate all previous religions and laws." Under the rule of "him who is to arise of the family of Muhammad, men will go to the bazaars, invoke blessings and take whatever they please from the shops. All goods are the goods of the Point ; all men are his servants, and all women are his handmaidens, whom he giveth to whomsoever he pleaseth and taketh from whomsoever he pleaseth." The Kibla (or place to which one turns in prayer) is all around us. When Hazrat-i-Kuddus was turning towards Mecca to recite his prayers, "Consolation of Eyes" bade him kneel to her: "I am the Kibla."

These erratic doctrines seem not to have remained mere speculations ; many of the Babis began to put them in practice. They refused to pay taxes to the government. The Bab, as head of the church, took it on him to divorce men and women, releasing, for

example, Hazrat-i-Kuddus and "Consolation of Eyes" from their old marriage bonds and giving them to each other. Fanatic disciples, at a hint from any high dignitary of the new faith, that certain persecutors of the young church would be better off if out of the way, undertook to remove them with the dagger. In Kazvin, the father-in-law of the prophetess "Consolation of Eyes," who had taken up a most uncompromising attitude as a persecutor of the new sect, was assassinated by one of the Babis. None of the leaders of the Babis could be proved to have been concerned in the murder, but they naturally had to bear the brunt of it. Several were executed and many more banished.

The controversies and antagonism between the adherents of the old faith and the new grew daily more bitter. In Mazandaran, where the Babi religion spread rapidly, the two parties came to blows. As the Mullah Huseyn was entering Barfurush at the head of several hundred followers, an attack was made upon them, which the Babis vigorously resisted. A truce having been made, the Babis marched away. But soon after, being attacked by certain bands of armed men who sought to plunder them and who partly succeeded in stripping them of their baggage, the Babis retired to a secluded spot, surrounded by woods and swamps, and erected a fortification called the Castle of Sheykh Tabarsi. They numbered at first only three hundred ; but they soon increased by recruits from various quarters to seven or eight hundred, — most of them, however, men quite unused to arms and warfare. The government gathered a force to dislodge them. But in a bold night attack the Babist leader, Mullah Huseyn, surprised and routed them. The governor of the province collected a still larger force, but only to suffer ignominious defeat. Four times in all, the besieging army, each time larger in number than its predecessor, advanced to dislodge the gallant garrison, and four times, by the most intrepid sorties, the Babis dispersed and routed the enemy. In the last sortie, however, the resolute and sagacious Babi commander, Huseyn, called the "Gate of the Gate," the first of the apostles, was wounded, and he soon died. The ambitious Hazrat-i-Kuddus, who succeeded, lacked the fallen general's courage and sagacity, and the garrison was soon helplessly shut in by their besiegers. But they held out heroically, killing their horses and subsisting first on horseflesh and next on grass, leaves and the leather of the saddles, till, at the end of nine months, the besiegers offered to give them a safe conduct to depart from the province if they would leave the castle. But hardly had the brave defenders been inveigled into leaving their intrenchments and laying down their arms than the Babis were treacherously surrounded and shot down, only a few of the leaders being reserved for a more lingering and painful death

at the hands of their enemies. The Said-u'l-Ulama gratified his religious hate by first mutilating, and then killing with his own hand, the leader of these obstinate heretics.

These harsh measures, far from silencing the Babis, only inflamed their zeal. In Teheran, the capital itself, a rising was actually meditated by them. The project was, however, betrayed before the date set for the conspirators to strike their blow, and thirty-seven were arrested. All those who would renounce their faith were offered pardon. But seven faithful ones determined to die rather than fail in loyalty to their Lord. All of them faced death and torture with a steadfastness that profoundly impressed the public, who crowded the Royal Square to witness their execution. When a rich merchant sought to ransom the Bab's uncle, he replied, "My sole desire is martyrdom and the attainment of this happiness." Mirza Kurban-Ali's last words were "Know that this man (the Bab) is he who is to arise of the family of Muhammad and we are his servants. Were I possessed of a thousand lives I would sacrifice them all for him." As one after another of their comrades was beheaded before their eyes, not one of the seven weakened. Tertullian's saying, "The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church," daily made its truth known in the adhesion of brave men and pure women, in the North, the South, the East and the West, to that great prophet who could inspire in his followers such fortitude. Who else could he be but the Return of the Imam-Mahdi, the Dayspring of Divinity, the culmination of sacred Revelation?

In Zanjan, under the lead of Mullah Muhammad Ali, called the Proof of Islam, who had been forbidden to preach the doctrines of Babism in the Mosque, several thousand Babis rose in arms, and for a while held out heroically against the overwhelming bodies of troops brought against them. In Niriz, the Seyyid Yahya of Darab, a learned divine, was forbidden to teach. His followers defended him and hostilities broke out. In both cases the story was substantially the same ; despotic harshness that drove the Babis to desperation ; heroic resistance of a few thousands against overwhelming military forces. Then, as the heretics failed to yield to force as promptly as desired, offers of amnesty or honorable capitulation were made with covenants and vows registered on the Kuran ; but as soon as treachery succeeded in getting the rebels into the hands of the government, these were recklessly repudiated and the too trustful Babis were put to the sword or handed over to the orthodox doctors to be tortured to death. The women and children were sold into slavery and the houses and property of the Babis given over to plunder.

Still, the accursed heresy survived and spread ; growing secretly where it

could not publicly. The Prime Minister therefore decided by one trenchant stroke to put an end to the annoying matter. He would have the Bab himself put to death and so terminate the craze. When he had been hung up before the face and eyes of the public and shot, and his corpse exhibited, nobody would any longer fancy him the Imam-Mahdi. The Bab, with four companions, was taken from the prison where he had been quietly living for a long time, and brought to Tabriz. Here he was incontinently tried and sentenced by the ecclesiastical authorities as an apostate. The Bab adhered unshrinkingly to his claim to be the Kaim or great Revealer for whom twelve centuries had looked. But the night before his execution he tried to prevail upon one of his disciples to slay him, as it would be better for him to die by the hands of his friends than by those of his enemies. Mirza Muhammad Ali of Tabriz was ready to do this, but the two other disciples prevented it. Then the Bab prevailed on his secretary to recant, in order, it is said, to secure the safety and communication to the Babis of their Lord's last words and instructions. But after the Bab's execution, this recantation so filled the secretary with remorse that in the next time of trial he proclaimed his faith and died a steadfast martyr. Two of the Bab's companions seem to have availed themselves of offers of secret release ; but Mirza Muhammad Ali remained heroically by his master. The Bab was paraded about the town on an ass, receiving many indignities, and then brought to the Barrack Square. There he and his faithful companion were hung up by ropes against the lofty brick walls of the Barracks. When the friends of Mirza Muhammad cried out that his confession of his Babi faith was due to an attack of madness, he cried, "I am in my right mind, perfect in service and sacrifice."

The first volley, intended to intimidate the Bab, was fired at the faithful disciple and, as he fell at the Master's feet, the Bab exclaimed, "Thou art with me in Paradise." The second volley was fired at the Bab. When the smoke had rolled away — lo — a miracle! The Bab had disappeared. A great clamor arose. Some cried "He has gone up to heaven." The officers were in terrible perturbation. Was it a trick? Or a miracle? At any rate, it would cost them their commissions, perhaps their lives. They made search, and in a little room, which opened by a single door on to the platform over which the condemned man had been suspended, the Bab was found. There, with a fragment of charcoal, he was calmly writing on the wall this stanza:—

I bid thee not be moth or salamander,
But, as thou 'rt bent on burning, be a man.

As the executioners ran up to seize him, he said: "O people, am I not, after all, the Son of God's apostle? Fear God and have some shame before his apostle. What is my crime but that I have invited you to the knowledge of God and cast myself into affliction and suffering for your sake?" ("New History," p. 383). But the executioners had no time to waste in listening to him. He was promptly strung up again and the soldiers were ordered to fire another volley. As the men, who were Muhammadans, were reluctant to do so, a Christian regiment, considered to be untainted by the new heresy, was ordered out and their volley proved at once fatal to the prophet. The Babi historians assure their readers that the strange escape of the Bab from the first volley was due to his sovereign will which overruled the evil purpose of men "for the showing forth of his power and the fulfilling of his proof, to confirm his servants and to corroborate the truth of his word: 'There shall not come to pass save that which I will.'" When the Bab fell under the second volley, it was because his own Divine Grace seconded and gave effect to the will of his persecutors, to exhibit the sinfulness and rebelliousness of the wicked, according to the verse, "We will cause him to obtain that to which he is inclined."

The historical student, however, who prefers to think that not even a Bab's will overrules the natural connections of cause and effect, will be apt to accept the more prosaic explanation, that the soldiers of the Muhammadan regiment, who first fired at the Bab, secretly sympathized with him and so aimed at the cords, not at the person, of the Bab. Whatever the explanation, the incident will always remain one of the most striking instances of the tremendous importance in the history of a nation that a single minute, wisely improved or stupidly lost, may attain. Had the Bab, when the soldiers' bullets had cut the cords and he was thus strangely released, kept his presence of mind and run into the throng of spectators, largely composed of Babis or secret sympathizers with the new faith, there is little doubt that his life would have been saved. The whole population, ready believers in the supernatural, would have regarded it as an evident proof of his divine claims. Not a soldier, as Gobineau says, would have dared to fire upon him. There would have been a revolt, a general insurrection, and in a city of the importance of Tabriz, the second capital of the Empire, to suppress it would have been quite another affair than quelling the rising in Zanjan. The dynasty now reigning would perhaps have succumbed, and Babism have become the state religion of Persia, if not of a still greater part of Asia. But, unfortunately, the Bab, tortured as he had been since early morning, with his mind dazed by the painful suspension on the wall and the sudden fall, knew not

what he was doing and, under the unreflecting instinct of taking refuge somewhere, almost unconsciously turned into the open door of the guardhouse. Then, finding himself in a cul-de-sac, he submissively resigned himself to the discovery and death which must soon overtake him.

It was on July 8, 1850, that the Bab was executed. For two days his body, with that of his faithful disciple, was exposed to public view. Then the Babis, by bribing the sentinels, succeeded in getting possession of it and transferred it to a shrine near Teheran, which the Bab himself had before appointed as his grave. The chief of the new religion was dead and, according to the calculations of the prime minister, Mirza Taki Khan, the most profound peace ought to be established and the empire be no more troubled from the side of this obstinate heresy. But this was one of those cases that needed something more than political experience and sagacity. If the prime minister had taken the pains to study the doctrines of the new faith, he would have known that the perpetuity of the sect was not bound up with the life of any individual ; that the offices of Bab and Point continued, whatever happened to the persons who temporarily held them, and that the successor to Mirza Ali Muhammad might give the government even more trouble than the pious youth of thirty had who became a revered martyr. Long before his death, the Bab, in anticipation of that event, had appointed the next head of the church. This was Mirza Yahya, a scion of one of the noble families of Persia, born in Teheran in 1830 ; he was a young man of great modesty, piety and courtesy, a fine Persian scholar, especially fond of the poems of the mystics. With his brother, he went to Mazandaran and became acquainted with the chief Babi apostles. Hazrat-i-Kuddus and "Consolation of Eyes" took a special interest in the youth, still in his teens, filling him with the milk "whereof the savor altereth not." At the time of the siege of the fortress of Sheykh Tabarsi, the young man and his elder brother, Beha, sought to aid the besieged, but were captured and for a time imprisoned. On account of his ardor in the cause and his high position among the Persian nobility, he was made the fourth of the "Letters of the Living ;" and when the leaders preceding him in the apostolic line had perished in the conflicts in Mazandaran, the Bab, in order that there might be "no intermission in God's grace," nominated Mirza Yahya as the next head of the church under the title Subh-i-Ezel (the Morning of Eternity) or Hazrat-i-Ezel (His Holiness the Eternal). He also sent him his personal effects and the holy rings according to the number of the Unity (19). Subh-i-Ezel, as he is usually called, at once took up the superintendence of the Babi church. Seeking a place of retirement where he

thought himself safe, he engaged in transcribing and circulating the Babi books, expounding the doctrine, and comforting and encouraging the church by his epistles.

But the many fervid and ambitious spirits who had been wrought up to a high pitch of enthusiasm by the theophanies and transcendental mysteries of the new faith were by no means content to leave this prize of Divinity to this youth of twenty-three without a struggle. The first manifestation of the "Blessed Tree of the Eternal" was an illiterate confectioner, eighteen years of age, called Zabih. His devotees exalted him as "the Manifestation of the Everlasting, the mystery uncreate, the eternal essence."

"From the reed bed" of the young confectioner's wisdom, they declared, "grew sugar-canes of affection." "His walking was the glory of God, his looking the influence of God, his silence wisdom, and by his sweet smile he introduced a new joy into the very Essence of Heavenly Bliss." Next a blind seer and mystic, Jenab-i-Basir, called the Indian Believer, about whom many signs and wonders clustered, "manifested himself." He claimed to be a return of the Imam Huseyn and a Gate of the two masters (the Bab and Subh-i-Ezel) and that his godhead was proved by the greatest of all signs, "to wit, verses spontaneously uttered." Jenab-i-Azim also made the same claim, but hesitated to put it to the test of improvising verses, and there was much heart-burning and wrangling among the followers of each. At Tabriz, at Fars, and at Baghdad also, manifestations of the Godhead, "sprinklings from the ocean of Divinity" appeared, and their various adherents, in a Divine ecstasy, "with the eye of God saw the glories of God" in their respective idols, each of whom revealed verses and exerted mysterious influences. In fact, there was a very chaos of theophanies, and the young and inexperienced head of the Church, Subh-i-Ezel, instead of surmising in the least the mischief that would result, actually plumed himself upon the confusion, seeing in the multitude of these claimants fresh proofs of the fruitfulness of his "tree of revelation," and the greatness and dignity of his manifestation. Under these circumstances it was not strange that the religious excitement grew daily more intense.

In the efforts of the government and the orthodox church to suppress Babism in Zanzan and Niriz, hundreds, if not thousands, were massacred. The bitter feeling of the injustice of the government, that had so cruelly persecuted them and murdered the founder of their church, waxed too strong to be restrained from overt acts, at least by such a weak hand as that of the youth Subh-i-Ezel. Seven of the Babis, burning with a sense of their wrongs, determined to have revenge and to punish him whom they regarded as most responsible for it — the Shah himself.

Four withdrew from the conspiracy when it came to the point of execution ; but three, Mullah Fathu'llah, Sadik of Zanzan, and Mirza Muhammad of Niriz, determined to put an end to the Emperor's life. Disguised as laborers, they approached the Shah one autumn day in 1852, as he was riding out to the chase from his country residence, and on account of the dust was somewhat separated from his retinue. Pretending to offer a petition, they drew near without exciting suspicion, when one fired a pistol and another pulled the Shah from his horse to the ground, intending to cut his throat. But, before the conspirators could effect their purpose, assistance came to the Shah and the two assassins who survived were seized. They boldly declared, when questioned, that they were Babis, and had made the attempt to avenge the blood of their master.

This audacious attempt excited the alarm and anger of the Shah and his ministers to the utmost. They convinced themselves that, although the arrested men declared they had done what they had done of their own thought and motion, it was a sign of a widespread disaffection and conspiracy of the Babi church which could be checked only by a commensurate revenge, calculated to strike terror into the hearts of all. Every Babi leader who could be seized was arrested, even though for months or years he or she had been in confinement (as had the prophetess, "Consolation of Eyes"). Some of these, especially those who had influential friends, succeeded in convincing the government of their innocence of the conspiracy. But twenty-eight of the leaders were doomed to execution. To divert exclusive responsibility for these executions from the court, the ministry and the ordinary administrators of the law, the astute but horrible plan was formed of compelling representatives of every class in the capital, from the princes and secretaries of state down to the merchants, professors and common people, to torture and execute the victim appointed to their respective class. Several victims were hacked in pieces with knives ; one was blown from the mouth of a gun, after his eyes had first been plucked out ; another was stoned to death ; another had iron nails driven into his feet and head. Mullah Fathu'llah, the son of the one who fired the shot at the Shah, had holes cut into his body into which lighted candles were inserted, and then, after this kind of torture had gone on for a time, he was hacked in pieces with knives. Suleyman Khan and Kasim of Niriz, two of the most distinguished Babis, first had lighted candles inserted in deep cuts made in their bodies for the purpose, and thus were paraded through the streets to the sound of minstrelsy. Glowing iron shoes were next nailed to their naked feet and their teeth and nails pulled one by one. These frightful tortures were borne with marvelous

fortitude, and the victims through their long agony ceased not to testify their joy that they should have been worthy to suffer martyrdom for their Master's cause. Suleyman Khan, the Bab's former scribe, even sang and recited verses of poetry. "Why do you not dance," asked his executioners mockingly, "since you find death so pleasant?" "Dance!" cried the Babi martyr. "Yes! in one hand the wine-cup, in one hand the tresses of the Friend — such a dance in the midst of the market place is my desire."

Last, but not least, among the victims of this devilish vengeance was the beautiful and accomplished Kurratu'l-Ayn, the prophetess "Consolation of Eyes." For the preceding two or three years she had been kept in prison in the house of Mahmud Khan, the Kalantar at Teheran. Like every one else who came in contact with this most captivating woman, the Kalantar was fascinated by her, and extended to her every favor and comfort consistent with the discharge of his duty. Having been closely confined for so long a time, it was plain that "Consolation of Eyes" could have had no hand in the conspiracy. But, as she was the idol of the Babis and an immense source of strength to their cause, it was determined to remove her for good and all, unless she would recant. If she would but abjure her faith, she might be released at once, she was assured. But her noble spirit scorned such cowardice and disloyalty. She was ready for martyrdom and glad to seal her faith with her blood. As with the others, her death was made as painful and lingering as the ingenuity of her cruel executioners could devise, but she met it with what one who witnessed it was compelled to call "a superhuman fortitude."

The Shah and his ministers expected by these horrible punishments to strike such terror into the Babis as to put an end, from that time on, to the accursed heresy. But they had overshot the mark. The heroism of the martyrs made a deeper impression than the severities of the government. Not an apostate was found. Even their executioners were imbued with admiration for the courage and devotion of the Babis. The public curiosity to know more about these doctrines, and the popular expectation of a great career in the future for a religion which could command such astonishing consecration and self-sacrifice were raised to an extraordinary pitch. As Gobineau says — "That one day gave the Bab more secret partisans than all his preachings could have gained." Soon, in the province of Niriz, there was a new rising. The governor was killed, and only after some time was the insurrection put down. Again the government accompanied its victory with horrible but ineffectual cruelties, visited upon the heads of the vanquished women and children as well as men.

After a time, however, there came a lull. The Babi leaders adopted a new policy, — the policy of concealment and secret propagandism, avoiding all open conflicts with the government. It was under the direction of a new leader, Mirza Huseyn Ali, called Beha'u'llah, a half brother of Subh-i-Ezel (the successor of the Bab) that this took place. Subh-i-Ezel, to save his life, disguised himself and fled, and for a long time remained hidden.

When, at length, he ventured to reappear, it was across the frontier, in Turkish territory. As he was more of a scholar and a devotee than a man of affairs, the interests of the Babi church were plainly beginning to suffer. Too many new claimants of the headship, new incarnations of Godhead, were allowed to manifest themselves and distract the church. The Babis were allowed to take up a too irreconcilable attitude towards the Persian authorities.

Beha'u'llah, thirteen years older than his brother, and a man of more resolute spirit and executive ability, to whom much of the administrative work of the church had been already intrusted, became convinced that Subh-i-Ezel was not equal to the situation. A community of religious enthusiasts, revolutionaries, visionaries and speculative mystics (for of such material the Babi church was in great measure composed) needed a firmer hand than his gentle and contemplative half-brother could supply. For a while the practical and determined Beha'u'llah managed things in his brother's name. But at length he concluded that he might as well have the official position as be the unrevered power behind the throne. It was not a difficult thing to do. He had but to proclaim himself as the real Point of Revelation, the long expected One who was to appear, of whose greater glory and full Divinity in the time to come the Bab had at first prophesied. As all the Babis agreed, the sign of "Him whom God shall manifest," who was to perfect and complete the Babi religion, was the revelation of verses. This was a very easy miracle, and so in the year 1866 or 1867, at Adrianople, whither the Babi exiles had been removed because of the strife and disorders they had created while at Baghdad, Beha'u'llah "revealed" sundry signs in eloquent Arabic and Persian wherein he summoned all the Babis to acknowledge him as their supreme and sole chief and spiritual guide. Beha'u'llah was to be revered as the final Point or Goal of Revelation, to whom all the verses and prophecies of the Bab had pointed, and the Bab was no longer to be looked upon as a veritable manifestation of the Divine but as a mere precursor of the more perfect theophany of Beha'u'llah. Subh-i-Ezel, who had been the appointed successor and for so many years had been revered as their authoritative teacher and incarnation of heavenly wisdom and virtue, was to be branded as the "First Letter of

Denial" of the New Dispensation.

This proclamation shook the Babi church to its centre and the communities were rent asunder by the most bitter of schisms. The majority of the Babis, especially the younger, accepted Beha'u'llah as their master. The older leaders, who had been personal friends of the Bab and had exposed their lives in his behalf, stood stanchly by his nominee, the gentle visionary Subh-i-Ezel. But, one by one, they dropped away, victims of the unscrupulous violence of their rivals. Two of the Letters of the Living, the original apostles, were assassinated, one at Tabriz, the other at Kerbela. At Adrianople and Acre half a dozen more of the elder leaders, who stood by Ezel, were stabbed or poisoned by the followers of Beha. From sixteen to twenty of the older leaders were thus removed, and it is charged in the Hasht-Bisht that Beha'u'llah even made an attempt (which miscarried only by accident) to poison his half-brother. As an incarnation of the Supreme, had he not an entire right to do whatever he judged best to establish the true religion on the earth? "What is the Constitution between friends?" said the Jersey judge. What is mortal life or human morality when the Almighty Lawgiver and Revealer of truth is present in the flesh and rebellious mortals oppose him? Something of this sort seems to have been the reasoning of "the Most Holy and Splendid Dawn, the Supreme Horizon." It was not proved that he ordered the assassinations ; but he was evidently gratified by their occurrence and said not a word to prevent them.

At any rate, if the end justifies the means, the means were approved by the victory achieved. The assassinations were a success. The weak Subh-i-Ezel was deserted. The great majority joined Beha's party. The Turkish government, to put a stop to the wrangling and disorders, exiled Subh-i-Ezel to Famagusta in Cyprus, where he still lives in obscurity. Beha was sent to Acre, where he peacefully passed away in 1892. Before his death he had worked a momentous revolution in Babism. As soon as he was established in his authority, he began to exercise the privilege which all the Babis recognized as belonging to the final Point of Revelation, to abrogate, change, develop and supersede the earlier revelations. He discouraged the visionary speculations of his followers, made the religion more moral and less metaphysical, and abolished many useless and impractical regulations ; especially he did everything he could to conciliate the temporal authorities, even the Shah of Persia, whom the older Babis were accustomed to curse as the Nero of their faith. Believing that the new faith could grow better by assimilating the elements already estranged from the orthodox Musulman church, he strove steadily to diminish the ratio of Muhammadan thought

in it and to seek a better understanding with the Christians, Jews and Zoroastrians. In short, he tried to make Babism henceforth more of a universal system suitable to all mankind. The older Babi scriptures and epistles, with their magniloquent rhapsodies, foggy mysticism and wild visions of the return of the Imam-Mahdi and the marvels of the new age, he allowed to fall into innocuous desuetude. The earlier history of the origin and rise of the Bab and his church was written over in an entirely new vein ; the Bab was represented as a mere forerunner of Beha ; Subh-i-Ezel was described as a coward and fugitive ; his earlier friends, Hazrat-i-Kuddus and "Consolation of Eyes," were craftily depreciated ; and Beha'u'llah and his Neo-Babi doctrines were profusely glorified, and every expression of detestation of the Shah which might interfere with Beha's new policy of conciliating the government was eliminated. The effort to metamorphose thus radically the whole record of Babism fortunately failed through the fact that many of the early documents had previously passed into European hands ; but the effort to establish pacific relations with the Persian government proved successful, and for thirty years the Babis have been free from public persecution ; by a secret propaganda they have so diffused their doctrines that their numbers are now estimated at half a million or more.

We will now briefly consider the Babi literature. The writings of the Bab are extremely voluminous ; one of his followers claimed that he wrote not less than a million verses. In general they are called the Beyan, or Exposition, although in a more special sense this term is applied only to such compositions as have the form of Arabic verse, a form considered preeminently inspired. Besides the Arabic verses, there are the Commentaries on the Sura of Joseph, the Bismillah and the Wa'l-asr, and a larger Commentary on the Kuran ; the Book of Recompense, the Book of Names, the Book of Figures and a large number of Prayers, Supplications and miscellaneous writings. Subh-i-Ezel wrote "The Book of Light" and many other works. Mr. E. G. Browne, who has made a more thorough study of these books than any other European, says they contain "noble ideals, subtle metaphysical conceptions, and splendid though ill-defined aspirations. . . . But they are so lost in trackless mazes of rhapsody and mysticism, so weighed down by trivial injunctions and impracticable ordinances that no casual reader can hope to find them."

The leading doctrine is that of the Manifestations. Outside of God there is no other God. From Him all existences emanate ; but they suffer diminution and imperfection in so doing. The world emanates from divinity by the action of seven attributes or letters ;

force, power, will, action, condescension, glory and revelation. In the sympathetic stream that passes between the Infinite and the finite, God shows his living nature by his continued relations with his creatures. All the great prophets and sages are words of God ; they come from him more really and return to him more directly than other men. As men cannot know the eternal essence of God but only the manifestation of the Divine Will, there occur from time to time incarnations of the Primal Will. Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, were all such intermediaries between God and man. Each was successively more full of truth and grace than his predecessor, and revealed sufficient for the time. All these Theophanies are identical in their essence, and differ only in circumstance, just as the sun which shines to-day is the same as the sun which shone yesterday. The periods when these great prophets or Imams flourish are the Theophanic Days, and the periods between are the periods of Occultation. But even in this night, the last Revealer still lives in concealment and communicates with his followers by certain Gates. When the Revealer is about to reincarnate himself again, this great event is preceded by a number of prophetic Gates or Channels of communication.

After these new Gates or seers appear, and schisms and certain other signs are observed, then the Heaven of Will, the Proof of God, manifests himself. Coupled with this doctrine is a curious belief called that of "the Return." In the first Vahid or section of nineteen chapters in the Beyan it is asserted that Muhammad, the great prophet, Fatima, his daughter, the twelve Imams and the Four Gates (who followed the Twelfth Imam) have returned to the life of the world with such as believed in them. In the second Vahid, it is taught that by the Resurrection is meant the new Manifestation ; by the Questioning of the Tomb, the tidings of it brought by its messengers to those who slumber in ignorance ; by the Raising of the Dead, the awakening of those who lie thus dead in ignorance, and so on ; the ideas which prevail of a corporeal resurrection, a material heaven and hell, and the like are mere figments of the imagination. Haji Mirza Jani, the Babi historian, who had been a personal friend and follower of the Bab, declares that this doctrine of the Return means neither incarnation, absorption nor transmigration. But he admits that "none knoweth it save those who have returned ;" and, if it is not substantially a doctrine of soul-transmigration it is difficult to say what it is. Not only in the Apostles of the Unity, but also in the bosom of all the faithful, according to their respective careers and missions, does this communication of the divine and reincarnation of the great of the past occur. When one of them was found fulfilling a certain role which recalled that of some holy

saint preceding him, it was said among the Babis, "That is the Imam-Riza, or Ali, or Jesus Christ, returned." Although the Babis constantly affirm their fidelity to the doctrine of Divine Unity, it is plain that we have here very patent germs of a luxuriant polytheism, and if the religion goes on we shall one day have personal cults, symbols and temples. Is it, after all, the long smothered spirit of ancient paganism that is reasserting itself so strangely against the too bare and hard monotheism of Islam which had been imposed upon it by force of arms?

A second peculiar doctrine of Babism is the sacred character of the number 19. As the word ahyy, "he who gives life," has 19 for its numerical equivalent, this, it was argued, is the divine number. As the world is only a divine emanation and rests on these same principles of life, this number 19 is found at the basis of all things rightly organized. Over the whole world this number should reign. Accordingly the Bab ordered his followers to reconstitute all divisions of time and space according to the sacred number. In the Babi year there were to be 19 months ; and every month should have 19 days, every day 19 hours, and every hour 19 minutes. All measures of length and weight were also revolutionized by a division into 19. In the courts, the temples and the ecclesiastical organizations, everything was to be regulated by the same numerical cycle. Naturally, therefore, the Apostles, or "Letters of the Living," as the Bab poetically called them, were eighteen, who, with the Bab, constitute again the sacred number. It is worthy of notice that, although the Bab is the Point, the Divine Manifestation, yet it is not in him by himself that this virtue is held to be seated, but in that Divine Unity formed by this inspired college of 19. Hence, when the Bab was put to death, the divine wisdom and authority which resided in him, constituting him the Point of Revelation, did not cease to be, but joined itself to the activity residing in the rest of the sacred college, and the signs of the Godhead appeared in the next in dignity among the sacred Letters. At the last Judgment, the Point of Revelation is to preside. All the pure, in recompense for their virtue, will have given to them the full revelation of truth : thus prepared, they will be united with God, to live eternally with Him participating in all his perfections and happiness. The wicked will be annihilated.

On the earth, when the Babi faith comes to its own, there will be established a faith at once monarchical, theocratic and democratic. On the places where the Babi leaders died as martyrs, the holiest sanctuaries will be built. In the temples, there will be employed the most precious materials and richest stuffs and every kind of costly decoration, with lofty thrones for the priests. The faithful will have talismans, — star-shaped amulets in which

they can put entire confidence. In the Babi state, when it can be set up, the unbelievers who reject the Bab will have no legal rights. All their property may rightly be taken from them, and five provinces, at the very heart of the Persian empire, are named in which they are not even to be allowed to reside. When a town or province of the unbelievers is conquered, one fifth of the spoils belongs to the Head of the Church ; then the warriors are to take what they need, and the rest is given to the poor ; but the lives of the unbelievers are not to be taken simply because of unbelief.

The Babis need not engage in public prayer, except upon specially solemn occasions, and the ablutions and the doctrines of ceremonial impurity of which the Moslems make so much are entirely abrogated, since they give God neither pain nor pleasure. These two reforms would remove very great sources of national and religious friction, and be a genuine service (say those who know the East) to Oriental society. To the government, a certain tax, or per cent, on every miskal of gold or silver is due. If one pays, he fulfills his duty. If he does not, he should not be constrained, but the punishment should be left to God. The penalties and chastisements allowed by Babism are very mild. The death penalty is never mentioned. Torture and blows are formally prohibited. The legal penalties are of two kinds. The first is a fine nineteen times the injury, or some higher multiple of nineteen, according to the gravity of the case. The second kind of penalty consists in interdiction of conjugal indulgences for a number of days or months, according to the gravity of the transgression. For example, if a man strikes a child he is prohibited from approaching his wife for ninety days. Begging, so common in the East, and regarded as rather meritorious than involving any disgrace, is strictly forbidden. Everything belongs to God, and the rich hold their wealth only in trust for Him and must give liberally to the cause of religion and to those who have not enough.

The Bab encouraged commerce and recommended tranquillity of mind, affectionate relations and an extreme politeness. Discussion should be avoided. The books of the faith are to be diligently studied, but writings alien to the Babi doctrine should be avoided and even destroyed. Asceticism is reprov'd. The Babis should not fear that which gives pleasure. Rich clothes, silken goods, embroideries and jewels not only may, but ought to be procured and enjoyed by the faithful, according to the measure of their resources. Especially at weddings should those who are able, adorn themselves richly ; but, if they are not able, they should not mourn, for their Lord, at the Last Judgment, will bestow on his faithful servants these rewards.

The Bab attached extreme importance to marriage and to the establishment and upholding of the family, — that great desideratum in Asiatic civilizations. To continue the family line is a religious duty, and after eleven years of age marriage is recommended. A second wife is permitted but not recommended.

Concubinage, a common vice of the East, is severely interdicted. These were important measures in the interest of woman. But the Bab did not content himself with these. He also prohibited divorce and abrogated the use of the veil. The great plague of Persian and most Moslem societies is not so much the license they give to have more than one wife, but the freedom which the laws of divorce allow to the husband to change his wife at any moment and on the most frivolous pretext. The transitory nature of the usual marriage has done much more than polygamy or concubinage to deprave the relations of the sexes and render real marriage unions impossible. Most women from twenty-two to twenty-four years old, says Gobineau, have had two or three husbands. The Bab struck at these disorders by prohibiting divorce except in cases of extreme necessity, and then only after waiting a year, and by interdicting the covering of woman's face with the veil, — a custom, Eastern observers say, which gives especial opportunity and encouragement to the most unprincipled intrigues.

Those who became Babis were to associate together freely, though discreetly, without regard to sex : at the hospitable table which the well-to-do Babi was to spread, women as well as men were to be admitted. Women might also go on pilgrimages ; but they were to be encouraged rather to attend to their homes and children ; if they go on a pilgrimage, they are to be very careful about over-fatigue or danger to their health. No child is to receive a blow before five years of age : after that time it must not receive more than five blows at a time and these must not be on the bare skin. Parents should desire the young to laugh, play games and to do everything which will make them happy. Men should not drink wine or smoke opium, or wear beards, but shave their faces ; they should never forsake their own country nor leave their families to take journeys, nor read any but religious books.

Such is the Babi Utopia. If the sect could obtain such a majority as to put it into practice, it would certainly make a great revolution in Persia. The Babis have been accused of being communists, of allowing nine husbands to one woman, of drinking wine and of indulging in all sorts of promiscuous license in the love feasts to which their women come unveiled. But the universal testimony of those who know them is that, on the contrary, they are distinguished as a body by an unusually high standard of morality. They are temperate, chaste, pious, pure,

self-sacrificing, and of late years peaceable and obedient to the laws, at least outwardly. They still look and wait for the time when "the just shall inherit the earth," and they firmly believe that they, the disciples of the Bab, are the persons to whom that final triumph is promised.

The future of the Babists it is difficult to predict. They have abandoned the idea of open conflict and adopted the plan of a secret propaganda which does not even hesitate, in case of need, at denying their belief under oath. It is possible, therefore, that the glowing faith which courageously confronted the most frightful tortures and filled princes with dread of dire convulsions may, like the flame of Anabaptist zeal in Germany, cool down to tepid respectability, accommodate itself to the world and simply add one more to the many obscure sects of the Orient.

On the other hand, we must remember the weakness of the Persian power and the activity of these dreamers of a new kingdom of heaven on earth. The unhesitating faith, the burning enthusiasm, the heroic martyrdoms and the fearless loyalty of the Babis, belong to all ages and classes ; their devotion "inspires respect in the indifferent and strikes profound terror in their adversaries." When we think of these things it will not seem improbable that some day there may be "a Manifestation" and explosion, both political and religious, in that ancient country which will work as great a revolution as Muhammad in the seventh century wrought in Arabia and Syria.

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— Babism and the Bab (Used by permission of the curator)