



her tendency to push for the abolition of the Islamic religious Law (šariʿa). Something of this division seems to have surfaced during the famous Babi conclave held at Badašt in Mazandaran in the summer of 1847, when Qorrat-al-ʿAyn led an abolitionist party in opposition to a poorly-defined group who resisted such a radical development. There are indications that a wider split occurred between the radicals at Badašt and the followers of Molla Hosayn Bošruʿi at Shaikh Tabarsi (see Noqtat al-kaf, pp. 153-54, 155).

After the Bab's death in 1850 and the death or dispersal of most of the Babi leadership, divisions of a more complex nature occurred within the surviving community. In Iran and in Baghdad, where a core of sect members took up residence under the leadership of Mirza Yahya Nuri Sobh-e Azal, over twenty individuals made separate claims to some form of divine inspiration, usually based on the ability to compose verses (ayat). Most notable among these was the Azerbaijan-based Mirza Asad-Allah Koʿi Dayyan, whose followers became known as Dayyanis. His movement was short-lived, however, ending after his assassination in 1856. The divisions of this period culminated in the increasingly bitter dispute between Sobh-e Azal and his half-brother Mirza Hosayn-ʿAli Bahaʿ-Allah. From about 1866, this leadership quarrel hardened into a permanent division between Azali and Bahai Babis. (See MacEoin, "Divisions and Authority Claims.")

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The history of Bahaism as a distinct movement is punctuated by divisions of varying severity, usually occurring as responses to the death of one of the religion's leaders. It has become an article of faith in modern Bahai circles that the religion is protected from schism by the Covenant system of authoritative succession (see below). This has led to a strong emphasis on orthodoxy, with a tendency to play down or even ignore present or past divisions. Thus, "There are no Bahá'í sects. There never can be" (Hofman, *Renewal*, p. 110). At the same time, it should be stressed that there is a high degree of cohesion within the movement and that the authority of the mainstream Bahai leadership is seldom challenged.

Following the death of Bahaʿ-Allah in Palestine in 1892, a serious clash took place between his two oldest sons, ʿAbbas (see ʿabd-al-bahaʿ) and Mirza Mohammad-ʿAli. It was accepted that, in his will, Bahaʿ-Allah had appointed ʿAbbas his successor and interpreter of the holy text, in keeping with traditional Shiʿite notions of vicegerency (wesaya). But Mohammad-ʿAli and his partisans accused ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ of making excessive claims for himself. Since ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ' s real claims seem to have been quite limited, it is likely that his opponents were really objecting to his somewhat radical interpretations of Bahai doctrine, particularly his social and political theories. Mohammad-ʿAli and his supporters (who included most of Bahaʿ-Allah's family) termed themselves Ahl al-tawhid or Mowahhedun and were dominant for some time in Syria. ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ

drew his support chiefly from Bahais in Iran and, increasingly from the late 1890s, from the growing community in the United States, where a cult based on his personality was developed. His eventual success is attributed by Berger to his ability to sustain charismatic appeal within the new movement (“Motif messianique,” p. 102; conflicting versions of the quarrel may be found in Browne, *Materials*, pp. 72-112 and Balyuzi, *ʿAbdu’l-Baha*, pp. 50-61 ).

The split did, however, extend into America eventually, following the defection to Mohammad-ʿAli of Ibrahim George Kheiralla, the first Bahai missionary to that country. By 1899, the American Bahai community was divided into two factions: a majority of those loyal to ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ and a minority of “Behaists.” In 1900, Kheiralla founded a Society of Behaists, with himself as its Chief Spiritual Guide and with Churches of the Manifestation in Chicago and Kenosha. The Behaist faction was later reorganized as the National Association of the Universal Religion, but the number of its adherents dwindled rapidly, particularly after the successful visits to North America made by ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ between 1911 and 1913. In Palestine, the followers of Mohammad-ʿAli continued as a small group of families opposed to the Bahai leadership in Haifa; they have now been almost wholly re-assimilated into Muslim society (see Cohen, “Baháʿí Community of Acre”).

Mainstream Bahaism, as represented by ʿAbd-al-Bahaʿ and his followers, responded to the challenge of factionalism by emphasizing the doctrinal ideal of a Covenant (ʿahd, mitaq) designating a single individual head of the faith (markaz al-mitaq “Center of the Covenant”), to whom all believers were to render unquestioning obedience. The centrality of the Covenant system first became apparent in 1917-18 in the course of the Chicago Reading Room Affair, during which a group of dissenting Bahais in Chicago were expelled from the main body. (See Smith, “American Bahaʿi Community,” pp. 189-94.)

Under the leadership of Shoghi Effendi (q.v., 1921-1957), the Bahai movement underwent radical structural changes with the creation of a tightly-controlled administrative organization modeled on modern Western management systems. Challenges to Shoghi Effendi’s authority or that of the bodies under him were in numerous cases met by the excommunication of groups or individuals as Covenant-Breakers (naqezu ʿl-mitaq). The only significant breakaway groups to emerge during this period, however, were the New History Society based in New York around the anti-organization views of Ahmad Sohrab and Julie Chanler (see Johnson, “Historical Analysis,” pp. 311-18), and the German Bahai World Union which re-emerged after World War II as the World Union for Universal Religion and Universal Peace and the Free Bahais of Stuttgart. In the East, dissent tended to be even more individual, taking the form of personal defections from the movement rather than organized groupings. Faeg’s Scientific Society founded in Egypt about 1923 was atypical. Since all of the schismatic groups of this period found their *raison d’être* in the rejection of religious organization, it was inevitable that they should be short-lived and restricted in their influence.

The death of Shoghi Effendi in 1957 presented the movement with a potential

crisis of major proportions, but also allowed the administrative system established by him to demonstrate its widespread acceptance within the community at large. Between 1957 and 1963 (when a universal House of Justice, *bayt al-ʿadl-e aʿzam* [q.v.], was elected), the religion had no leader. Shoghi had had no children, had excommunicated his entire family, and had failed to designate any other successor. From about 1958, Charles Mason Remey, President of the International Bahaʿi Council, began to oppose the notion that there could be no successor to the Bahai Guardianship (*welaya*), and in 1960 he declared himself to be the second Guardian of the Bahai Faith. Under Remey’s leadership, a minority group organized themselves successively as the Bahais under the Guardianship, Bahais under the Hereditary Guardianship, and the Orthodox Abha World Faith, with its headquarters in Santa Fe (see Johnson, pp. 342-80). Remey died in 1974, having appointed a third Guardian, but the number of adherents to the Orthodox faction remains extremely small. Although successful in Pakistan, the Remeyites seem to have attracted no followers in Iran. Other small groups have broken away from the main body from time to time, but none of these has attracted a sizeable following.

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