

He wrote, according to His own testimony, no fewer than 500,000 verses of scripture (P VI,11).[1]

Babiyyat (Gatehood) was a familiar term among the people at the time of the Bab. However, as a result of the new definition of the term, which the Bab presented in His first commentary, the Qayyumu 'l-Asma' (The Commentary on the Surah of Joseph), the Shia religious leaders arose and gradually united in opposition to Him. But a group of seekers accepted His call. The Bab gave the first eighteen of His followers, which included seventeen men and one woman, the name Huruf-i-Hayy (the Letters of the Living). In the first year after His declaration, the Bab, with one of His first believers, went on pilgrimage to Mecca. His Cause spread widely because of the journeys undertaken, at His behest, by the Letters of the Living to proclaim the Bab's message. As a result of the Bab's pilgrimage and the travels of the Letters of the Living, the ulama (religious leaders) arose in opposition and demanded that the new movement be suppressed. In response, the government placed the Bab in custody. These events were precursors of the general opposition that the Bab was to experience during the six remaining years of His earthly life and that led to His banishment to Isfahan and Azerbaijan, His imprisonment in the mountains of Azerbaijan, and finally His martyrdom in Tabriz. They also led to the imprisonment and massacre of His followers, both individually and collectively, with the result that thousands of believers in His Cause lost their homes, their families, and their lives.

The Bab revealed the Bayán (Utterance) in the fourth year of His revelation (1847-48). Although He never concealed the nature of His claims, it was in the Bayan that He first set out the laws of the new revelation, including its fundamental beliefs, moral principles, laws, ordinances for the administration of human society, and, finally, expectations for the future. The Bayan contains both Persian and Arabic sections. The Arabic Bayan consists of eleven vahids (units), each vahid consisting of nineteen babs (chapters), constituting approximately 420 verses or 700 lines. The Persian Bayan consists of nine vahids of nineteen chapters each, except for the last vahid, which has only ten chapters, constituting about 8,000 verses or 6,000 lines in all. Since the Bayan was originally planned to comprise nineteen vahids of nineteen chapters each, it is evident that both books are unfinished. Apparently, their unfinished state was intentional since the Bab was not martyred until more than two years after the revelation of these books. In addition to calling the Persian and Arabic works containing the laws of His revelation the Bayan, the Bab also gave the name bayan to His writings in general (P III,17).

The Bayan is the divinely revealed source book of the Bábi Faith. Because it is important for the followers of Islam, who are its primary recipients, to understand its significance, the Bab compares it to the Koran, the divinely revealed book of Islam (A I). A careful study of the Arabic and Persian Bayans leaves no doubt about their fundamental unity. The common titles given to the chapters of these two books show that the Arabic Bayan, which is by far the more concise and legislatively oriented, may be regarded as the general

foundation and outline of the work, and the Persian Bayan, with its far more discursive style and philosophical focus, as the Arabic Bayan's explication and elucidation. The correlation of the two parts may be confirmed by comparing many of the corresponding vahids and chapters in each book that deal with the same topics and particularly by comparing the second vahid of the Persian and Arabic Bayans. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that the two books are merely two versions of the same work, one concise and the other detailed, since the order of the contents is not identical, and some of the chapters appear only in one or the other text and not in both (compare, for example, the first vahid in each book).

The Persian and Arabic Bayans were revealed during the same period and within a short space of each other, and each is mentioned in the other (A XI,10; P IV,18). The fundamental beliefs set out in the two books have their background in the Bab's earlier writings, particularly in the Qayyumu'l-asma', the Dala'il-i-Sab'ih (The Seven Proofs), and other works. The Arabic Bayan is written in a style that indicates that it proceeds directly from God and represents His voice; the Persian Bayan is written in a style that indicates that it is the Manifestation of God who is interpreting the verses of God.

Fundamental Beliefs and Worldview

THE fundamental beliefs expounded in the Bayan cover many of those addressed in other divine revelations, particularly those of the Semitic religions, with one difference: in the Bayan concepts of the destiny of humanity and the Last Day are presented in the light of new interpretations that conform with reason and scientific developments. For this reason the imagery associated with the expectations regarding the Promised Day, which has so strongly influenced the theological tenets of past religions, is given a spiritual interpretation, which, far from contradicting the holy books of these religions, merely expresses and unfolds their true allegorical signification.

The Bayan's worldview regarding existence and the purpose of life is founded on the unity of the Divine Essence (A I; P Preface) and the impossibility of knowing or attaining the presence of that Essence (A III,7; P IV,1, 2, 6; V,17). The world of existence is created by the Divine Will, and absolute nonexistence is meaningless (P II,8). Humanity is the apex of creation; the Manifestations of God are the Chosen Ones from among humankind (A III,7; IV, 4; P III,7-12; IV,6). A direct relationship between man and the Source of Creation is impossible (P II, 8, 10, 14-15; IV,1), but an indirect relationship may be entered into through the intermediary of the Manifestation of God. Indeed, this is the very purpose of human life, and the same achievement that, in past religions, has been described as seeing, or attaining the presence of God (P II,7, 8, 10, 14; VI,13). Other than the Unknowable Essence of God, everything else in the world is His creation (A III,6; P III,6; IV,1; VI,1-10).

The religion of God is one (P III,4-11). As the human world progresses, the Manifestations of God, Who are the exponents of the unique and true Religion of God, are progressively made manifest in the world (A III,4; P III,4-13). Since

the world of humanity is always in a state of progress, the revelations of God's Manifestations are, likewise, progressive (P I,2; IV,12; VII, 15). The Manifestations of God are, in reality, one, even though they appear to be different. The sun is their visible symbol since it is always the same sun, even though it dawns from different points of the horizon (A I; P III,12). The religion of God, like the human soul, is dynamic and in constant evolution and is the means of distinguishing between good and evil (P II,2, 15).

Belief in the oneness of God, which is the basis of faith, consists in acknowledging that God is one and peerless in His essence, His attributes, and His acts and in the manner in which He should be worshipped — that is to say, one must not regard the attributes of God as separate from His essence, nor consider His acts as limited by any conditions, nor attribute any partner to Him in worship. Such belief in the oneness of God can only be attained through recognition of the oneness of the Manifestation of God in each age (A I; IV,6-7), because recognition of the unknowable essence of God is impossible (P III,7). In each revelation there are always two proofs: the revealed verses and the author of the revelation (P II,3). The Manifestations of God have two stations — the one of Godhead and the other of servitude, or, in other words, a divine station and a human station (A, P IV,1; IX,1). They are the embodiments of the words "He shall not be asked of His doings" (A, P IV,6); thus it is possible for an alteration (bada') to take place in God's decree (A, P 4,3). As well as symbolizing God's absolute power over the contingent world, the phenomenon of bada' serves also as a reminder, on the human plane, of the capacity of the soul for spiritual change, whether in the direction of advancement or degradation, in a manner calculated radically to affect the ultimate destiny of the individual.

Humankind derives its life from the spiritual world even though it is unconscious of it (P IV,6). At the same time, the immortal life of the soul in the unseen spiritual worlds has its beginning in the life of this world (P II,8; VIII,17). Even though there are many levels in the world of existence — from the highest states of the inmost heart (fu'ad), by whose aid man can recognize the Manifestation of God, to the lowest states of physical matter — all of them are epitomized in man (P II, 5-8; III,10; IV,8).

The Bayan provides new meanings for the allegorical terms used in the Scriptures of the past. Thus Resurrection refers to the advent of the new revelation, when the Manifestation of God unfolds the mysteries and all that was hidden in the allegorical language of the previous Holy Books. Purgatory refers to the interval between two revelations, which is compared to night, in contrast to the time of the Manifestation, which is called the Day of God. Heaven is the recognition of God, while Hell is disobedience to and rebellion against, Him. Return is the return of qualities and attributes and not the return of spirits (A VIII,10; P II,2, 7, 9, 14; V11,19; VIII, 9,14). The devil symbolizes rebellion and disobedience (P II,17; VIII,4).

In each revelation all things are subordinated to the command of the Manifestation of God in that Dispensation (P III,5). The hierarchy of spiritual

stations begins with Him and becomes manifest primarily in the Letters of the First Vahid (Letters of the Living) (A I; P VII,8, 19; VIII,3, 4, 7, 18, 19).

With each new revelation the existing order is revolutionized; often those who had occupied a lowly station become distinguished by their faith, while those who were at the apex are toppled down (P VII,18; VIII, 4, 14). The word of the Manifestation of God is the source of a new system of culture and morality (P VIII, 17). Faith is the basis of all true family relationships (P IX,6). The acceptance of acts of worship is dependent upon faith in the Manifestation of God (P V,14; VIII,19). At the time of a new revelation all people are put to the test spiritually (P VI,10; VII,4).

The world of creation is the place of the appearance of two entities: love, which manifests itself through faith in God and belief in His oneness; and hatred, which is made manifest through denial of God and joining those who oppose Him. With the appearance of each revelation a new world of values is created through the promulgation of a new code of laws. All the components of the world (kull-i-shay') influence each other and, through their harmony, gradually attain perfection. The resurrection of each being takes place when this perfection is achieved (A I; P Preface;II,3,4, 5,7).

The Manifestation of God reveals the Divine Will and is, like the sun, unique. With respect to the Manifestation, all others are as mirrors. However, one must not be veiled from the sun by reason of the mirrors, for the mirror will only provide a true image of the Manifestation as long as it is turned toward Him (P VI,10). The Manifestation of God, on the one hand, prohibits the people from trying to know the essence of God, which is impossible, and, on the other hand, attracts them to Himself through His superhuman attributes and powers (A I; P I,2). The Manifest Point — that is, the Manifestation Himself — is the origin of all realities, just as in the contingent world, the geometric point is the origin of all things (P V,3). All things achieve existence by the aid of the Will of God but without that Will becoming incarnate in them (P II,8; III,8).

All values come into being in consequence of the relation in which everything in life stands to the Manifestation of God (P II,10, 11; III,10; IV,4). The people's rejection of the Manifestation does not detract from His truth (P VII,15; VIII,3). The Word of God is one, but its reflection in human souls is dependent upon their attitude — that is, whether they are attracted to unity or to division. Thus it can become manifest as affirmation and faith or as negation and rebellion; it can become heavenly or diabolic; and it can fill the soul with joy or misery (P II,1, 4, 8). Of all created things, it is humanity that embodies all the Names of God, and these Names are resplendent within human individuals whose reality derives succor from them (P I,2).

The acceptance of individuals in the sight of God and their salvation is dependent upon their turning to, and invoking the mediation of, the Manifestation of God; their recognition of Him is linked to their recognition of the Letters of the Living (P II,4; VI,1,19), in such a way that belief in the Manifestation will automatically entail belief in the Letters of the Living

and vice versa. The capacity to recognize God is created in those whose inner eyes are open at the time of the revelation (P VI,13).

The Bayan glorifies the Prophets of the past and their Books. In the Dispensation of the Bayan, the Manifestation of God is the Bab, the Gate of God, also named the Essence of the Seven Letters (in reference to the fact that His name, 'Ali Muhammad, is composed of seven letters in Arabic). All created things have come from Him and shall finally return to Him (P III,10). Belief in the unity of God signifies faith in Him, His Letters of the Living, and His Book, the Bayan. The Bayan is His proof and must be held sacred (A VI,1; P III,16, 17, 18, 19), and whatsoever does not derive inspiration from it is misguided (A IV,2). The Point of the Bayan (the Bab) has no peer or likeness (A I; X,4; P II,1), and His word is the criterion for all things (P VI,1).

The Bab is simultaneously the Primal Will (P IV,2), the Manifestation of Divinity to all people, and the Qa'im (literally, He Who Shall Arise, a title designating the Promised One of Islam) (P I,15; VII,15). Through His coming the prophecies of the past have been fulfilled, all that the people had yearned and longed for down the ages has been made manifest, and whatsoever they ask for will be revealed by Him. The objections made against Him are the same as those brought forward by the unbelievers in the early days of Islam. The current sciences are worthless and without meaning if they do not conform to His Words. No one has any alternative but to believe in and obey Him.

The Bayan uses three terms in connection with the believers: "mirrors," a general term for the followers of the Bayan; and "witnesses" and "guides," terms applied specifically to the scholars, the learned, and the teachers (P I,1: II,3).

The Word of God constitutes the "Silent Book," and the Manifestation of God Himself, the "Speaking Book" (P II,3). The Bayan is God's Balance, by which everything is judged until the next revelation — that of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (the Promised One of the Bayan — Baha'u'llah) (P II,6; III,16). The only pilgrimages allowed are those of visiting the Shrine of the Bab and those of the Letters of the Living (A, P VI, 16).

Moral and Spiritual Principles

MORALITY and spiritual development are accorded an exalted station in the Bayan. The foundations of the laws and ordinances are spiritual mores. Greater attention is paid in the Bayan to the moral purpose of the laws than to their legal and executive aspects. The basis of morality may be found in the teaching of the Bayan that the purpose of man's creation is to attain perfection (P II,7). The paradise for each thing is its state of perfection (P V,4, 9; VII,1), and perfection for each thing consists in its attainment to the purest state of being of which it is capable (P IV,11; V,4; VI,3).

Science and knowledge are praised. True perfection consists in the union of knowledge, faith, and action (P VI,4, 7, 13), while ignorance is the precursor of disbelief. The greatest human achievement is to acquire human perfections

and achieve a high level of moral excellence (P IX,4) — more particularly, to reach a station in which individuals will neither see nor desire evil (P IV, 16; IX,4) and will not wish for others that which they do not wish for themselves (P IV,4, 14). Salvation lies in the sincerity of one's actions (P VI, 7), and emphasis is placed on purity of intention (P IX,5). Moderation in all things is praiseworthy (P VI, 1). Patience, serenity, and mental composure are praised (P IV, 16; VI,18), and it is not permissible to lament and become disconsolate at someone's death (A IX, 18). The Bayan teaches that love is the foundation and secret of the world of existence (P IV,6; V, 16, 19). Giving thanks to God consists of showing love and humility toward His creatures (P VI,9).

According to the teachings of the Bayan, offending or saddening others, particularly women, is highly reprehensible (A IV, 11; P IV,4; V,19; VI,11, 16; VII,18). Among the most laudable acts of worship for a woman is to love and care for her husband and children (A, P IV, 19). It is forbidden to enter into conflict with others or even to engage in verbal disputation (AX, 15; P VIII, 18). Proper forms of courtesy must be observed in debates and discussions (A X,6), and to raise one's voice is outside the bounds of human behavior (A VI, 16). Coercion is forbidden, and it is incumbent upon all to prevent oppression (AX, 17; XI, 16). Emphasis is placed on the obligation of settling one's debts (P VII,3). It is important to show consideration for animals (A X,15; P VI,16), and moderation in one's diet is recommended (P VI, 14).

Laws

THE LAWS of the Bayan have much in common with those of the Old Testament and the Koran, yet they are completely independent of them. These observances include, for example, obligatory prayer and turning to the Qiblah (the focus to which the faithful turn in prayer) (A VII,19; VIII,7, 10; X, 8; XI,14, 15; P VII,19; VIII,8); fasting (A, P VIII,18); pilgrimage (A, P IV,16, 17, 18); and alms (A, P VIII,16, 17). Close examination of the laws of the Bayan also reveals new ideas that had not been expressed, at least in the precise form in which they are there given, in the past. Among these are the prohibition against carrying arms (A, P VII,6) and the abolition of capital punishment (A XI, 16; P IV,5).

Certain broader philosophical considerations are also presented in the Bayan, arising out of its more detailed discussion of particular laws. The following are some examples. Religious laws and ordinances, like humanity itself, are constantly evolving and progressing (P II,15). The promulgation of laws is necessary because people do not follow the dictates of their spiritual and higher nature of their own accord (P VIII, 12; V, 19). Transgressing the laws is a sign of lack of faith (A, P IV, 11). Purity of intention is of fundamental importance (P VII,2), and sincerity and spirituality are essential in the performance of one's religious duties (P IX,4). All people are equal before the laws of the Book, regard-less of their class or condition in life (P IV, 11). It is not permissible to interpret the Book (P III, 16). There is a wisdom in each of the laws and commandments (P VIII, 18). All precepts and mores in

the world are divine in origin (P IV,7). Paradise is adhering to the commandments of God, and hell, transgressing against them (P V, 19). It is incumbent upon all believers to write a confession of faith and an account of their actions, to be presented to Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest at the time of His appearance. This confession is also to serve as a reminder to them, so that, when He Whom God Shall Make Manifest does appear, they may not be deprived of recognizing Him (P V, 13; VIII,9).

The Bayan prescribes various systems of measurement, including a new calendar; units of weight; and units for measuring the length of written works (A, P V,3, 19; VI,1, 14). Special symbols for males and females are specified for use by the believers (A VI, 10; P V,10), and principles for the naming of children are laid down (A, P V,4). The common forms of greeting are modified (A VI,4; P VI,5).

The source of all purity is the Word of God; it is spiritual, rather than physical, purity that is essential. Although the notion of ritual, or ceremonial, “impurity” and “uncleanliness” is abrogated, great emphasis is, nevertheless, placed upon physical cleanliness and purity. Semen is declared to be pure (having previously been considered unclean in Islam). The Bayan ordains the cleaning of houses and cities; bathing once every four days; and the use of perfume and rosewater. It recommends that bathhouses be constructed both in cities and villages and states that it is better to wash by pouring water over one’s body than to make use of public reservoirs (A V,7, 14, 15; VI,2, 5, 17; VIII,6, 10; X,1, 5; P V,7, 14, 15; VI,2, 3, 17; VIII,6, 19; IX,10). Both the use of, and trade in, intoxicating drinks, narcot-ics, and whatsoever is contrary to refinement (litafat)[2] are forbidden (A IX,7, 8; XI,18; P IX,7, 8). Healing through the use of foods is recommended (A IX,2; P IX,8).

Specific prayers are revealed for the new born and the dead. Corporal punishment of children, and whatever may frighten or alarm them, are prohibited. The use of amulets and special prayers is recommended. The age of maturity is specified. Marriage and the procreation of children are enjoined, and the institution of temporary marriage is forbidden.[3] Divorce is considered reprehensible, and it is laid down that a year of waiting must be observed before divorce can take place. The length of time one is permitted to be absent from one’s spouse while traveling is limited. The rites to be followed in washing and burying the dead, including interment in coffins of crystal or stone, and placing a special ring on the hand of the deceased, are all ordained. The writing of a will is enjoined, and the rules of inheritance specified (AV,11, 12, 13; VI,7, 11, 12, 16; VII,6, 10; VIII,2, 11, 15; X,3, 10; P V,11; VI,7, 11, 12, 16; VII,6, 10; VIII,2, 15). The proper relationship between parents and children and their respective rights are explained (AX, 14).

The purpose of devotional acts is to promote spiritual progress, and the most meritorious act of devotion is to bring happiness to others. Even though the fundamental goal of worship is the cultivation of inner purity and the

performance of virtuous deeds, the observance of outer forms is also necessary. The Bayan ordains numerous prayers and states that prayers and divine verses should be recited only to the extent that they bring pleasure to the heart (A III, 9, 10; V,6, 17; VII,4, 8,17; VIII,13, 14, 19; XI,14; P V,8, 17, 19; VI,2; VII,4, 13, 14, VIII,5, 14, 19). Congregational prayer is prohibited (P IX,9), while offering up prayers for one's parents is highly recommended (P VIII, 16).

According to the Bayan, human beings have an exalted station, attributable to their capacity both to acknowledge the oneness of God and to recognize and obey Him (A I; P I,2). The human soul is eternal, and its progress within its station is limitless (P II,9). All are equal before God, and there is no difference between men and women. It is not permissible to excommunicate or denounce others. The apex of human perfection consists in faith, not in the acquisition of either knowledge or riches. It is permissible to be insistent in teaching the Religion of God, but only if this be done in a spirit of love and friendship (P II,16). It is not befitting for the rich to vaunt themselves above others. The banishment of people from their homes and countries, imprisonment and blows, ridicule, confiscation of belongings, intimidation, and reading other people's letters are all forbidden. Responding to letters and questions from others is required (A IV,5; VI, 16, 18, 19; VII,18; VIII,9; IX,16; X,2, 3, 6, 17, 18; XI,5, 17; P IV,5; V,4, 5, 16; VI,2, 9, 16, 18, 19; VII,6; VIII, 10). Ascending pulpits is not allowed (P VII,11), nor is it allowed to confess one's sins to others (A, P VII,14).[4] The acquisition of sciences in general is encouraged, but that of pseudosciences is forbidden (P IV, 10).[5]

Punishments in the Bayan are primarily emotional, involving deprivation of marital relations between spouses and, secondarily, pecuniary payments, taking the form of fines (see, for example, A X,10, 14, 17, 18; XI,3, 16, 17; P V,6; VI,11, 16; VII, 18). From the practical and implementational point of view, these punishments are highly attuned to the sensual and material civilization of the present day. On a spiritual level, however, the commission of forbidden acts is a sign of the weakness of one's faith. If the transgressor does not compensate for his action, he loses the merit of his other deeds and is deprived of the good pleasure of God, which is the source of salvation in the world to come (A XI, 16). In all cases, the payment of the fine is the responsibility of the transgressor, and no one is authorized to demand it of him (PV, 16).

Administration of Society

THERE is no hierarchy in the Bábi Faith because the Bab established no administrative or ecclesiastical hierarchy. The Bayan recognizes the station of kingship but does not institute a system of hierarchy in either the secular or religious domains nor appoint successors to the Bab comparable to the Imams in Islam (P III,16; VI,14). Kings are regarded as the centers of government and sovereignty, but the importance of their station resides principally in the visible symbol they present of the majesty of God. The affairs of society are

in the hands of tradesmen and workers, who are to adhere to justice, according to the commandments of the Bayan (A VIII, 17; X,17; XI,3; P V,6; VII,6). Details about the administration of social affairs are not divulged, and there is no mention of the separation of the legislative, executive, and judicial powers. Everything is subordinate to the laws of the Bayan, and the learned of the Bayan must not, like the religious leaders of the past, misguide the people at the time of the next revelation (P II,3; IV,10; VII,11; IX,3). Private property is not abolished, and permission is given to use gold and silver vessels and to wear silk (A VI,9). Nevertheless, it is better to spend one's wealth and riches for the welfare and guidance of the people than to hoard it (P VI,9). Interest may legitimately be charged on sums of money (P V,18).

The importance of the holy places of the past has now come to an end; yet building places of worship in the name of the Bab and the Letters of the Living is enjoined (A IV, 16; V,1, 2; P IV,13; VI,13). According to the Bayan, non-Babis are not allowed to reside in the provinces of Azerbaijan, Fars, Iraq, Khurasan, and Mazandaran (A VI,3; P VI,4; VII, 16). The property of nonbelievers is to be appropriated but returned to them if they become believers (A, P V,5); there is no provision dealing with holy war (jihad) as such. The non-believing spouses of those who become followers of the Bayan are deprived of their property rights (A, P VIII, 15). Those in authority are responsible for the execution of these laws with the utmost clemency and kindness but also with consistency and firmness (P IV,5; II,16).

Future Expectations

WITH regard to expectations about the future and the Promised One of the Bayan, it must be mentioned that the Bayan does not recognize any period as the Time of the End. Even though it posits a cyclical scheme of recurrence and renewal of religious systems, it nevertheless teaches that the world is eternal and in a state of gradual evolution. It asserts as a natural law that divine revelation progressively unfolds in response to the unfolding material exigencies of the world. The followers of the Bayan must be educated and exhorted not to be deprived of true faith by reason of the external trappings of belief (P V, II,13). The Bayan styles the author of the next revelation He Whom God Shall Make Manifest, and in many ways the Bayan is more a eulogy of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest than a code of laws and doctrine. It teaches that, before His declaration, there is no outward difference discernible between Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest and other people (P VI,4; IX, 1), and for this reason certain of the laws of the Bayan, framed primarily to secure the welfare of the Promised One, must be observed toward all people. Although the laws and teachings of the Bayan serve generally to promote the education of humanity, the immediate purpose of the Book is, nevertheless, to prepare its followers for the recognition of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest (P III,13).

If one were to list all that the Bayan has to say concerning Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, one would, without exaggeration, have to refer to at least two thirds of the Persian and Arabic Bayans. Only a few points, therefore, are mentioned here. He Whom God Shall Make Manifest represents the essence and

inner truth of all that is mentioned in the Bayan (A III,12); He is all good (P II,5), and the Bayan is but a humble gift to Him (P II,19). Whatsoever is unique and peerless should be presented as a gift to Him (A V,6, 16; VIII,5).

With the aim of honoring the Promised One, the Bayan exhorts the believers to compose, once every nineteen years, a treatise about Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, setting forth the proofs of His revelation, that they may not remain deprived of recognizing His signs when He appears (A VII,3); to turn, for one month each year, toward one of the Names of God and repeat it, that, through the grace vouchsafed by that Name, they may be enabled to believe in Him (A VII,4); to recite, once every month, a special chapter of the Bayan (P VI,8) and to reflect upon it so that they may not be deprived of recognizing Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest; to request, if they should achieve the bounty of meeting Him, that He bless their dwellings with His presence, since, if He were to receive a drink of water from their hands, this would be better for them than their reviving with the water of life all created things (A VII,7);[6] to arise from their seats every time they hear His Name, as a sign of courtesy and respect to Him (P VI, 15); to leave empty in every gathering nineteen seats or (if this be not possible), at least one seat, so that, should He Whom God Shall Make Manifest arrive, He might occupy that seat (P IX, 1); to remove anyone who is the cause of grief to Him (P VI, 15) (this is the only command to remove in the whole of the Bayan); and, finally, should any of the laws of the Bayan be inconsistent with the veneration and glorification of Him Whom God Shall Make Manifest, to cast aside that law and forget it completely (A X, 19).

When the code of the laws of the Bayan is viewed in its entirety, it would seem evident that most of them are to various degrees incapable of practical implementation and are designed rather to emphasize the exalted station of the Promised One of the Bayan, in Whose honor the majority of them have primarily been conceived, and to emphasize the imminence of His advent.

Notes

* H. M. Balyuzi, *The Bab: The Herald of the Day of Days* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973) 152; Moojan Momen, ed., *The Bábí and Baha'í Revelations, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1981) 23; Balyuzi, *Bab 154*

“P” refers to the Persian Bayan, and “A” to the Arabic Bayan. Roman numerals indicate the vahid (unit), and Arabic numerals the bab (chapter).

Litafat encompasses a range of meanings from decorum to intellectual refinement, including the sense of gracefulness, civility, politeness, and courtesy.

Temporary marriage is an institution sanctioned in Shia Islam that allows a man to take additional wives for a contractual period of as little as a few hours.

It is still practiced in Iran today.

Both the Babi and Baha'í faiths prohibit one's confession to and seeking

absolution of one's sins from another human being, for such confession humiliates and debases the confessor.
Forgiveness is the province of God.

By pseudosciences are meant medieval pseudosciences.

See also P VII, 7, which discusses the same concept but does not mention the "drink of water."

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