

[page 47]

great lords of the Shah's court, and, from the ranks of the 'Ulamá, the Seyyids or descendants of Muhammad."2

These are the words of a thoughtful Musalmán who is in no sense a friend to Bábíism, but who seeks to give a fair historical account of the Báb and his followers up to the year 1866. The subject has more recently been investigated by Mr. E. G. Browne, Lecturer in Persian at the University of Cambridge. His work, *The Episode of the Báb*, is a most valuable contribution to the knowledge of a movement as remarkable as it is little known. It brings the history nearly up to the present day. Much previous knowledge of Muslim thought and ways is, however, necessary to the intelligent study of the few existing works on the subject.

No sect in modern days has suffered such persecution and survived. The movement is one which illustrates the mystical tendency of Persian thought, the fanaticism of the Mullás, and the barbarity of the rulers; but all the efforts of the Muslim Church and State in Persia have hitherto failed to suppress Bábíism, or to lessen the veneration in which the Báb is held by those who accept his teaching.

The Musalmáns of Persia belong to the Shí'ah sect, which, itself formed by a revolt from orthodox Islám, has been more than any other section of the Muhammadan people subject to divisions. This is partly due to the character of the Persians, and partly to a somewhat freer spirit, which, as compared with the Sunnís, the Shí'ahs cultivate.

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, p. 331.

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, p. 333.

Outwardly, it is true, there is not much difference, and the freedom is only a relative one;

but under the garb of faultless profession, the Shí'ahs have always held many esoteric

doctrines and have secretly taught them. The Súfís, or mystics, are the best example of this,

but the Bábís seem to have little or no connection with them.

The Persians are not naturally a narrow minded people. In the past they have

shown

considerable freedom of thought. It is true that their first great revolt against orthodox Islám was largely

[page 48]

influenced by political motives, but it was not altogether free from intellectual aspirations.

The Mutazala, the Súfí, the Bábí are all more or less rationalistic and the two latter, being

extremely mystical, should be liberal in their views. The Persians no longer lead in

literature and philosophy, but some of the old traditions remain, and they are open to

varying impulses and modes of thought, and yet there is no real religious freedom and no

true religious toleration.

In order to understand the special standpoint of the Báíb and to have an intelligent

knowledge of his claims as a religious leader, we must consider briefly the central and

special doctrine of the Shí'ah system. It is known as the dogma of the Imámate. Sharastání

defines it thus³: "The Imámate is a light (núr) which passes from one to the other and

becomes prophetship." "The Imáms are prophets and divine. Divinity is a ray (núr) in

prophetship, which again is a ray in Imámate, and the world is never free from these signs

and lights (anvár)."

The Khalif of the Sunni sect, though according to Muhammadan tradition he should be

an Arab and a descendant of the Quraish tribe, is now a Turk, and may, practically, be a

man of any race who can command the allegiance of the orthodox. Amongst the Shí'ahs the

Imám occupies this position not by election⁴, or by virtue of any special capacities, but by

divine right and his office is altogether spiritual.⁵ The first Imám, 'Alí, was

[page 49]

appointed by Muhammad and the rest are his divinely ordained successors. They are

believed to be immaculate, infallible, and perfect guides to men. "The Imámities believe that

the Imám is preserved inviolate from sin and knows all things."⁶ "The

authority of the
Imám is the authority of God, his word is the word of God and of the prophet,
and
obedience to his orders is incumbent.”⁷ It is said, “God calls the Imáms
His word, His
hands, His signs, His secret.” Their commands and prohibitions, their actions
also, He
recognises as His own. Thus Sharastání: “The orders of the Imáms are
divine.”⁸ As
mediums between God and man they hold a far higher position than the prophets,
for “the
grace of God, without their intervention, reaches to no created being.” The
Imám is the
supreme Pontiff, the Vicar of God. The possession of an infallible book is not
enough. The
infallible guide is also needed by the Shí‘ah. This is the general belief
about the Imáms and
their functions, though there are differences of opinion as to the succession.
Setting aside

Milal wa Nihal, pp. 133, 135.

There is one exception. The people of Omán adopted the elective principle and
held that the Imám
might be deposed for misconduct. ‘Abdu’lláh-ibn ‘Ibádh (744 A.D.) was a
vigorous preacher of this
doctrine, and from him the sect known as the ‘Ibádhíyáh takes its rise. The
result of his teaching
was the establishment of the power and jurisdiction of the Imáms of Oman. A
full account will be
found in Dr. Badger’s Seyyids of Oman.

“In a word, the Khalif of the Sunnís is merely the outward and
visible Defender of the Faith;
the Imám of the Shí‘ahs is the divinely ordained successor of the Prophet,
one endowed with all
perfections and spiritual gifts, one whom all the faithful must obey, whose
decision is absolute and
final, whose wisdom is superhuman.” Episode of the Báb, p. 296.

Jelálu’d-dín As-Suyúti. Bibliotheca Indica, Fas: v. p. 473.

Hyátu-n-nafis.

Milal wa Nihal, p. 132.

the smaller and less important sects, we may notice the two principal ones. The
Ismá‘ílíans,
who reckon ‘Alí as the first Imám, believe in twelve.⁹ The other sect is
that of the Imámítes,
who hold that Sádiq, the sixth Imám, was the last one who publicly
exercised the office,
and that after his time, not after that of Imám Abu’l-Qásim, the succession

of the concealed
Imáms commenced. It is not at all necessary to enter into the question of
these different
opinions. The point which now concerns us is that both sects equally believed
that there
never could be a time when there should be no Imám. “The earth is never
without a living
Imám, though concealed.” “He who dies without knowing the Imám, or who is
not his
disciple, dies ignorant.”¹⁰

[page 50]

Abu'l Qásim (Al-Mahdí) succeeded his father as Imám in the year 260 A.H.,
just one
thousand years before the manifestation of the Báb. He is said to have
disappeared in the
year 329 A.H. and to be now living in one of the two mysterious cities —
Jábulka and
Jábulsá.¹¹ It is believed that in due time he will reappear, that Jesus Christ
will herald his
approach, that then injustice and misery will be put away, that the true
(Shí'ah) faith will
prevail, and that a millennium of happiness will be ushered in. Meanwhile, he
is invisible
and inaccessible to the great mass of his followers. At first, however, he held
direct
intercourse in some way with a select few who were the channels of
communication
between himself and the larger body. These intermediaries were called Abwáb,
or Gates.
Their names are Abú 'Umr 'Usmán ibn Sa'id 'Umarí, Abú Ja'far
Muhammad ibn Usmán,
Husain ibn Rúh Nawbakhtí, and Abú'l-Hasan 'Alí ibn Muhammad
Símarí. For a period of
sixty-nine years these Gates, one after the other, were the medium of
communication with
the Imám. This period is called that of the ghaibat-i-sughra¹², or minor
occupation. The day
came at length when the last Gate, Abú'l-Hasan, reached the end of life
and the people
begged him to nominate a successor, as his predecessors had done; but he
absolutely
refused to do so, alleging as his reason that “God hath a purpose which He
will
accomplish.” That which the Faithful had looked forward to with despair had
now come to
pass, and all intercourse with the Imám was at an end. This period is called

the ghaibat-i-kubra, or major occultation.¹³ The importance attached to these men and to their position is seen from the following extract from the Beyán, a Bábí book to be explained later on, in which we read: “For God hath associated refuge in Himself with refuge in His Apostle, and refuge in His Apostle with refuge in His Executors (i.e., the Imáms), and refuge in His

[page 51]

Executors with refuge in the Gates of His Executors. . . . For refuge in the Apostle is the same as refuge with God, and refuge in the Imáms the same as refuge in the Apostle and refuge in the Gates is identical with refuge in the Imáms.”¹⁴

We next come to the time of Shaikh Ahmad (1753-1826 A.D.) the founder of the Shaikhí sect. He was a devout ascetic and a man of independent thought. He had a profound

The names and order are as follows: ‘Alí ibn Abí Tálíb, Hasan, Husain, ‘Alí (Imám Zeynu’l ‘Abidín), Muhammad Bákír, Ja‘far-i-Sádiq, Músa Qásim, ‘Alí ibn Músá ar-Riza, Muhammad Takí, ‘Alí Nakí, Hasan ‘Askari, and Abu’l Qásim, or the Imám Mahdí. He is also called the Hujjatu’lláh (the proof of God).

Sharastání in the Milal wa Nihal, pp. 146, 147.

For a curious account of these by Ibn ‘Abbás see the Episode of the Báb, pp. 299-301.

Episode of the Báb, p. 233.

belief in ‘Alí, and was devoted to the memory of the Imáms, whom he looked upon as

creative forces, arguing from the text, “God the best of creators”¹⁵ that, if He be the best,

He cannot be the only one, Mírzá Kázim Beg describes him as a teacher who by his virtues,

austerity, and erudition was celebrated amongst his contemporaries. Disciples flocked to

him from all parts. The special point of his teaching was that “God is immanent in the

Universe, which proceeds from Him, and that all the elect of God, all the Imáms, and all

just persons are personifications of the divine attributes.” According to this belief, he held

that the twelve Imáms from ‘Alí to Al-Mahdí were personifications of twelve chief

attributes of God, and that, consequently, they were eternal. Amongst these Imáms 'Alí holds the highest rank, being superior to angels, to prophets, and to Muhammad.¹⁶

[page 52]

He used also to quote the Tradition attributed to 'Alí, "I am the creator of the heavens and the earth"¹⁷ and said that in reciting the first chapter of the Qurán, the Súratu l-Fátihah, the worshipper should fix his thoughts on 'Alí and say "Thee do we worship."¹⁸

The successor of Shaikh Ahmad was Hájí Seyyid Kázim. He was a young man of a very strict manner of life and so mysterious in his actions that some of the more wordly-minded [sic] Persians looked upon him as foolish, but the greater part called him the Enlightened. The Shaikhí doctrine now spread all through Persia. In Irak alone there were more than a hundred thousand disciples. However, they did nothing to call forth the opposition of the Mullás, nor any political repression: on the contrary, among the admirers of the Shaikh were a great number of state officials, and of the chief among the clergy; all proud of his fame and enthusiastic about his philosophy."¹⁹ He died in the year 1843 A.D. and left no successor. According to the Bábí writers he appointed no one, because he looked upon Shaikh Ahmad and himself as forerunners of one who should shortly appear, and be far more glorious than they had been. Mr. Browne gives the following translation²⁰ of a passage in a Bábí history,²¹ which bears on this point: "When Hájí Seyyid Kázim had but recently departed this life,²² I arrived at the supreme shrines (Kerbelá and Nejef) and heard from his disciples that the late Seyyid had, during the last two or three years of his life, wholly restricted his discourse, both in lecture room and pulpit, to discussing the promised Proof, the signs of his appearance and their explanation, and to enumerating the qualities of the Master of the dispensation, repeatedly declaring that he would be a

[page 53]

Súra xxiii. 14.

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, tome vii. p. 458.

Mírzá Kázim Beg adds the following note: "The scholastic Musalmáns say that the attributes of God are equal and of one quality; but to the human comprehension some appear superior to others, for example, mercy surpasses severity. According to the doctrine of the Sifátíans, the attributes of God are eternally inherent in His essence. The Mutazalas do not admit this and say: There is only one supreme existence and that is God; otherwise we must admit a multiplicity of eternal existences, which is contrary to the dogma of the divine unity. The doctrine of the Shaikhí school is that the attributes of God proceed from the supreme existence, and by His own will become personified in blending with the human soul and spirit which also emanate from God."

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, tome vii, p. 463.

Episode of the Báb, p. 239.

The New History of the Báb.

In the year 1259 A.H. — 1843-4 A.D.

youth, that he would not be versed in the learning of men. Some times, too, he would say, I see him as the rising sun. One day an Arab suddenly entered his presence and said, I have seen a vision touching your reverence. On receiving permission he repeated the dream; whereupon Seyyid Kázim appeared somewhat troubled and said, 'The interpretation of this dream is this, that my departure is nigh at hand and I must go hence.' His companions, who were present, were much distressed and grieved at this intelligence; but he turned his face to them and said, 'The time of my sojourn in the world has come to an end, and this is my last journey. Why are ye so grieved and troubled because of my death? Do ye not then desire that I should go and that the true one should appear?'" To Mullá Husain, one of his most distinguished followers, he said, "From whatever quarter the sun of truth shall arise, it will irradiate all horizons and render the mirrors of believers hearts capable of receiving the effulgence of the lights of wisdom."

The Shaikhís seem to have been expecting the advent of some one who should be their leader and so, after fastings, vigils, and prayers for guidance, they began to consider what was to be done in the matter of a successor, a spiritual director. They then went in different directions. Mullá Husain proceeded to Shíráz and there met with Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad, who produced before him the signs of his call to his divine mission. Amongst these was his commentary on the Súra of Joseph, one of the chapters of the Qurán. To the enquiry of the Báb, as to whether the Shaikhís had yet appointed a successor to the late Seyyid Kázim, he was obliged to say that as yet they had found no one worthy enough for so high an office. The Báb suggested that he might do, but Mullá Husain could not see how one so young would do. One day the Báb said: By what sign canst thou recognize the Master? Mullá Husain replied, “By the possession of the Point of Knowledge, which is the source and centre of all the wisdom of past and future prophets and saints.” Then followed marvellous expositions and clear explanations of most abstruse questions.²³ For

[page 54]

several days Mullá Husain pondered over these matters, and, after a long and severe struggle, became convinced that he had found in the young and ardent enthusiast before him, the Proof, the True One, the Sun of Truth, to whose advent Hájí Seyyid Kázim had pointed. “He wrote to his friends at Kerbelá that neither he himself nor any other of them was worthy of the high dignity of Murshid, or leader, and that that ‘Illuminated One, to whom their late master had referred, was alone worthy. I have found him at Shíráz and he is worthy to be the Murshid.”²⁴ It is for this reason, and because he so heartily espoused the cause of his new master, that Mullá Husain is named the Bábu’l-Báb, or Gate of the Gate; the Harf-i-Awwal, or First Letter, and the Awwal man ámana, or the First to believe. But this decision was not acceptable to all the Shaikhís. A party headed by Hájí Muhammad

Karím Khán²⁵ of Kirmán utterly refused to receive the Báb and became his bitterest persecutors. Indeed at his first examination at Tabríz, some of his opponents were Shaikhís, and some later on approved of his condemnation to death. The Shaikhís thus became divided into two sects. One passed on to Bábíism of which it was, in a way, the source. At all events, it gave it strength and a rapid diffusion. The other was, and continued to be, in fierce conflict with it. However, the great majority followed Mullá Husain, and Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad become their recognized leader.

As the connection between the Bábís and the Shaikhís is thus so close, we must now see what was the special dogma of the latter sect. The orthodox Shí‘ah creed consists of five articles, which are called arkán-i-dín, or the pillars or supports of the Faith. They are belief (1) in tauhíd, or the unity of God, (2) in ‘adl, or the justice of God, (3) in nabuwat, or prophetship, (4) in imámat, or the imámate, (5) in ma‘úd, or the resurrection. The Shaikhís set aside the articles two and five, for they said that

A full account of Mullá Husain’s conversion is given in the *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 34-38.

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, tome vii. p. 465.

The Bábís called him the “Very Essence of Hell-fire.”

Episode of the Báb, p. 242.

[page 55]

there seemed no sufficient reason why justice alone of all the attributes of God should be selected as an article of the creed, and that there was just as much reason for inserting His wisdom, power, or any other attribute. They also objected to the resurrection as a special article, on the ground that belief in the attribute of justice and in the resurrection is implied in the acceptance of prophetship. He who believes in a prophet accepts that which he sets forth, and these are cardinal parts of his teaching. To take the place of the rejected articles and to bring the number up to four they added a new one, which they called the rukn-i-rábi‘²⁶, or the Fourth Support or Pillar. The meaning of this is that there

must always be amongst believers one perfect man, a Shí‘ah-i-kámil²⁷ who can be the wásita-i-faiz,²⁸ or the channel of grace between the absent Imám and his people. Four pillars give stability to any thing, so no more are needed in a creed. The term Fourth Support is primarily applied to the dogma that the concealed Imám must always have on earth some one who possesses his entire confidence, to whom he gives special spiritual instruction, and who is thus qualified to convey to the believers the wishes and wisdom of their invisible head.²⁹ The term has, however, come to be applied to the person who fulfils this office. It is said that Hájí Muhammad Karím Khán, the Shaikhí who refused to accept Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad as a leader, considered himself to be the Fourth Support. This, too, was the position of the Báb; at all events at first, for he claimed to be this Fourth Support, and thus to occupy the place held by the Gates, who were the intermediaries between the Imám and his followers during the minor occultation. Thus it is that Bábíism is connected with the very central doctrine of the Shí‘ahs, though in many other ways it has so far departed from accepted Muhammadan ideas as to form a new sect altogether. This will appear as we record the life and work of the Báb.

Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad was born at Shiraz, on the 9th of

[page 56]

October, 1820. When quite young, he lost his father. He was brought up by an uncle who was engaged in mercantile pursuits. For a time the youth assisted his uncle, but as his mind was more inclined to religious meditation and speculative thought than to business affairs, he proceeded to Kerbelá, where he was brought into contact with Hájí Seyyid Kázim, the Shaikhí leader, whose lectures he occasionally attended. At Kerbelá he was distinguished by his zeal for learning and by his remarkably austere life, as well as by the great esteem in which his teacher and others held him. Visitors to Kerbelá, especially those from Shíráz,

showed him much consideration, and so his fame was spread abroad. He now began to commit his thoughts to writing, and composed a commentary on one of the chapters of the Qurán, the Súra of Joseph.

The Bábí historian³⁰ says of this work that in it “he addressed himself to that person unseen, from whom he received help and grace, sought for aid in the arrangement of his

Vide Episode of the Báb, pp. 243-4 for an exposition of these two views. preliminaries, and craved the sacrifice of life in the way of love. Amongst others is this sentence, “O residue of God,³¹ I am wholly sacrificed to Thee;

[page 57]

I am content with curses in Thy way, I crave nought but to be slain in Thy love, and God the Supreme sufficeth as an eternal protection.”

He also wrote a commentary on other parts of the Qurán, and some prayers.

These

writings he called ashá’if-i-ilhámiyah, or inspired pages and kalám-i-fitra, or word of

conscience; but he made no claim to the kind of inspiration called wahí, that is, the

revelation brought by an angel or in some mechanical way.³² He believed his meditations to

be divinely inspired, but the inspiration was subjective.³³

He now began to attract general attention. Some persons were highly displeased, others

were drawn towards him. Thus it came to pass that on the 23rd of May, 1844, when he was

about twenty-four years of age, Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad more definitely formulated his

views and announced himself as a duly authorised teacher and guide. He then assumed the

name of the Báb. He said, “Whosoever wishes to approach the Lord his God and to know

the true way that leads to Him ought to do it through me.” Of this period of his career Mírzá

Kázim Beg says: “The number of his adherents increased, day by day, and when they

demand that he, like the ancient prophets, should give them a sign, in proof of his

mission, he relied on this that he could write a thousand inspired lines in one day. By his

peculiarities and by

Episode of the Báb, p. 4.

The expression, residue (or remnant) of God — Baqíyat Ulláh — is a very peculiar one. It is connected with a curious belief of the Shí‘ahs, viz.: that God allowed some part or fraction of Himself, in some way or other, to be connected with the Imám. As soon then as Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad was raised by his followers to the dignity of the Báb, or as soon as the idea became present to his own mind, he could address the Imám as the Baqíyat Ulláh, and set forth his complete devotion to him. His followers then gave him the titles of the servant of Baqíyat Ulláh, the mystery of Baqíyat Ulláh, the friend of Baqíyat Ulláh. Gradually, as, during his imprisonment, he became more and more invisible to his followers, and when he became credited with the power of working miracles and more or less a mythical being, he was no longer called the servant, or the mystery, or the friend of Baqíyat Ulláh, but himself was esteemed to be the Baqíyat Ulláh the true Imám so long looked for. Mírzá Kázim Beg says that under the term mystery they understood one who shared the secrets of the Imám. “The name Sirr-Ullah, or Mystery of God, was given to ‘Alí, as to one who knew the secrets of divine revelation; and, so in its new application, the title Sirr-i-Baqíyat Ulláh, now a name of the Báb, would mean the one who knew all that was in the mind of the concealed Imám, who himself was the remnant (or residue) of God.” *Journal Asiatique*, 1866, vol. viii. p. 468.

Episode of the Báb, p. 4.

Count Gobineau says: “Dans le premier de ces livres, il était pieux et mystique: dans le second, la polemique et la dialectique tenaient une grande place, et les auditeurs remarquaient avec étonnement qu’il découvrait, dans le chapitre du Livre de Dieu qu’il avait choisi, des sens nouveaux dont personne ne s’était avisé Jusqu’alors, et qu’il en tirait surtout des doctrines et des enseignements complètement inattendus” *Les religions et les philosophies dans L’Asia Centrale*, p. 147.

his austere life, even when still at Kerbelá, he was called the

'Illuminated'. When the inhabitants of Shíráz returned from Kerbelá, they used to say: "Have you heard of our Seyyid 'Alí Muhammad? He is no longer as we are, he has become famous and has merited the name of the 'Chosen of God'. All people, small and great, flock around him." He also adds that dreamers and mystics, and evil disposed persons from self-interest joined him. No doubt some did so from mixed motives; but Mr. E. G. Browne seems to me to give the fairest account. He divides the Báb's first adherents into several classes. Firstly, rigorous and pious Muhammadans who really believed that the signs of the twelfth Imám were fulfilled in him; secondly, all those who desired reform in Persia and thought that Bábíism would conduce to that end; thirdly, the mystics who considered Bábíism to be similar to their own pantheistic system; fourthly, those who were drawn by the personal influence and character of the Báb.³⁴

On his return from Kerbelá he was heartily welcomed. Until then, it is said, he looked upon himself only as one who had made some progress in the *tárfat*, or the divine way; but he soon began to consider himself a master, appointed by heaven to regenerate his country.

It was now that Mullá Husain cast in his lot with the Báb. This period is known as that of the *zahúr*, or manifestation.

There is some difference of opinion as to what he exactly meant by the title of Báb

which he assumed. Mírzá Kázim Beg says: "I do not know whether he was acquainted with the words of Christ, 'I am the door,' but he doubtless knew that Muhammad had said: I am

the city of knowledge and 'Alí is the gate of that city.'" ³⁵ Another writer says: "He

announced that he was the Gate, by which alone any one can attain to the knowledge of

God." A Muhammadan historian, an enemy of the Báb, says that "the Báb, having gathered

some Shaikhís together, said: — 'I am the Gate of God. Whosoever desires to come to God, and

[page 59]

to know the religion of God cannot do so till he sees me and receives permission from me.” The most accurate account is this: - “He (Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad) now gave out that, as ‘Alí had been the Gate, by which men entered the city of the Prophet’s knowledge, even so he was the ‘Gate’ through which men might attain to the knowledge of the twelfth Imám.”³⁶ His followers have now, however, discarded that name, and he is known amongst the Bábís by several titles, such as Hazrat, or His Highness; Hazrat-i-nuqtah-i-beyán, or His Highness the point of Revelation; Hazrat-i-nuqtah-i-úlá, or His Highness the First point; Hazrat-i-rabbi ala’ala, or His Highness my Lord the Supreme. More recently the Behá’ís call him Hazrat-i-mubashshir, or His Highness the Evangelist.³⁷ Gobineau, a good authority on the subject, says: — “Mírzá Muhammad ‘Alí said that he was not the Báb in the sense in which they (his followers) had believed and as he himself had thought, that is to say, the Gate of the knowledge of truth; but that he was the Point, or the originator of truth, a divine appearance, a powerful manifestation,”³⁸ and so goes on to show that the title Báb was set free and could hence forth reward the pious devotion of one of the Báb’s followers. As a matter of fact, it was bestowed on Mullá Husain, who is some times called His Excellency, the Gate of the Gate, Janáb-i-Bábu’l Báb.³⁹ Having made this digression we may now continue the history of this remarkable man.

Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 504.

Journal Asiatique, 1866, p. 343.

Watson’s History of Persia, p. 348.

Episode of the Báb, p. 230.

The next step seems to have been the pilgrimage to Mecca in November 1844, where

he stayed a short time and completed all the rites incumbent on pilgrims. His stay in Mecca

does not seem to have confirmed his faith in Islám, from which he was

[page 60]

now becoming detached.⁴⁰ He returned early in the following year to Bushire. He soon become the centre of attraction, His personal charms and his attractive manners drew many people to him. The orthodox were pleased with the apparent veneration he held for the Prophet and the Imáms, whilst his more ardent companions rejoiced at the liberality of his views. The Mullás and others, however, became excited about him. They induced Husain Khán, the Governor of Fárs, to give orders that some of his followers should be beaten. A little later on in the year the Báb was brought as a prisoner to Shíráz. The impression he produced then was very great amongst the literary and religious classes. Whenever he appeared in the Mosque they listened to him in silence. In his public discourses he did not now attack the foundations of Islám, but was unsparing in his rebukes of the Mullás. His general theme was the sad and distressed state of men generally. Obscure allusions in his speeches awakened an interest amongst the curious, and delighted those who were in part initiated into his teaching.⁴¹ The Mullás of Shíráz appointed their ablest men to dispute with him, with the result that the enthusiasm regarding him grew to a great extent. He taught openly in the Colleges and in the Mosques, but his special followers received instruction in his own house. Mírzá Kázim Beg thus describes one of these famous disputations. “The ‘Ulamá assembled. The Báb appeared in the midst of them and spoke with courage and enthusiasm. The Governor, Husain Khán, who had assumed the character and position of a learner, humbly suggested that the Báb should demonstrate that his doctrines

[page 61]

were superior to those of Muhammad. The Báb answered boldly, ‘Take my Qurán, compare it with that of your prophet, and you will be convinced that my religion is the preferable one.’ On hearing these words, the Governor changed his attitude and called for the executioner to whom he pointed out the prisoner. The Báb was then bound and beaten.”

A Bábí historian⁴² gives fuller details. He says that the matter acquired such importance that the reigning Shah sent one of the most learned Doctors of the age, Seyyid Yahyá, to interview the Báb and to report the result. He held three long conferences with him, but the result was that he was so charmed with the Báb that he accepted him as a leader and admitted all his claims. About this time, Mullá Muhammad ‘Alí, a leading teacher, sent a person to Shíráz to ascertain the facts of the case. This messenger returned with some of the Báb’s writings, which so impressed Mullá Muhammad ‘Alí that he too became a follower of the Báb. When he next met his pupils in his lecture room he gathered up his books, and said: “The season of spring and wine has arrived. Search for knowledge after reaching the known is culpable.” Then he urged all his disciples to become Bábís, and sent to the Báb a statement of his own adherence to his teaching. The Mullás complained to the Shah, and Mullá Muhammad ‘Alí was summoned to Teheran; but he was able to meet successfully all his opponents in debate and nothing came of this action. The cause of the Báb was now very much strengthened by the support of such famous teachers, who were most earnest and active in propagating the new faith. The orthodox Mullás soon perceived that they must attack the Báb direct, and so they urged the Governor of Fars, Husain Khán, to take more decisive action, saying: “If thou desirest the extinction

This is the view taken by Gobineau, but Kázim Beg says that it was “après avoir semé bon gré mal gré quelques mauvais grains dans cette terre de Chiraz si fertile en préjugés et en superstitions” that he went to Mecca. So also a Bábí writer who says: — “When the Báb had laid the foundation of such an edifice, he, according to his promise, set out for Mecca.” Anyhow his stay in Mecca did not bring him back to orthodoxy. See a Traveller’s Narrative, p. 251. Les religions et les philosophies dans L’Asia Centrale by Count Gobineau, p. 148.

Episode of the Báb, p. 7.

of this fire, or seekest a firm stopper for this rent and disruption, an

immediate cure and
decisive remedy is to kill the Báb.”

An attack was made on the house in which the Báb lived; but,

[page 62]

apparently with the connivance of those who had charge of him, he was allowed
to make

his escape and to proceed to Isfahán. This event took place about March 1846.

Before his

arrival at Isfahán he wrote a letter to the Mu‘tamu’d-Dawla, the
Governor of the

Province, asking for a suitable lodging. The Governor, Minúchihr Khán,
afforded him

protection and showed him hospitality. At first, the ‘Ulamá paid the Báb
much respect; but

soon began to be alarmed at his growing influence with the Governor, by whom
the learned

doctors of Islám were invited to a public discussion with the Báb. After
accepting the

proposal, they withdrew, saying: “If there be doubt in the matter there is
need of assembly

and discussion; but as this, person’s disagreement with the most luminous Law
is clearer

than the sun, therefore the best possible thing is to put in practice the
sentence of the

Law.”⁴³ They thus refused to meet him and, instead of doing so, signed a
declaration to the

effect that they were quite convinced of the heretical character of his
doctrines. This very

much displeased Minúchihr Khán, the Governor, who seems to have been a firm
friend to

the Báb. After his death in 1847, the Báb was removed to the castle of
Mákú, a fortress on

the north-west frontier, though his confinement was not at first a rigorous
one. His

followers were allowed free intercourse with him, and continual correspondence
went on

between the Báb and his principal agents. The Báb at this time wrote many
religious books,

and his influence seemed to be on the increase. After the insurrection of
Mázandarán it was

determined to place him in stricter confinement, and so he was removed to the
citadel of

Chirik, near Urumiyyé, of which place Yahyá Khán was the Governor. He
treated the Báb

with deference and respect. It was with difficulty that correspondence was now
carried on,

but letters were passed in by means of some very clever stratagems. According to some accounts he was allowed to address the people, and

[page 63]

one eye-witness states that he saw the balcony from which the Báb preached, that the concourse of people was very great, and that they listened with attention to the words of the new Quran. He prayed and worked without ceasing. All who approached him, even the soldiers who guarded him, were influenced by his calm manner and his attractive conversation. The Báb was confined at Chirik about two and a half years, and, it is said,

there declared himself to be the Qá'im. or the Imám Mahdí.

Soon after his arrival at Chirik he was brought to Tabríz to undergo his first examination. A full account of this is given by the Muhammadan historians, but as they

represent him as utterly foolish and ignorant,⁴⁴ it is more than probable that it did not take

place as narrated. Mírzá Kázim Beg says that the accounts given of the interview were most

contradictory, and he does not give any credence to the more absurd ones. The Bábí

account of it is that the Báb advanced the claim of Mahdí-hood, on which a great tumult

arose, and that, in general, his defence was a success. This much is certain that he was

severely beaten and sent back to confinement in Chirik. Then we are told that "learned

divines and esteemed lawyers who were possessed of power and influence, girt up the loins

of endeavour for the eradication and suppression of this sect." They maintained that the

Báb and his followers were not only in error, but were also hurtful to Church and State. The

Maqálah-i-Shakhsi Saiyah.

A full account is given in the Episode of the Báb, pp. 277-290: also in the New History of the Báb, pp. 285-291.

King, Muhammad Shah, however, declined to interfere, and declared that so long as the

public peace was not disturbed the Government would not further interfere with him.

At this time the Báb's followers were most active in spreading his doctrines throughout

the land. It was now that his most famous convert was made. This was a woman called Qurratu'l-'Ayn (Lustre of the Eye.) The course of the narrative may well be interrupted in order to give a brief account of so great and distinguished a woman. She was the daughter of Hájí Mullá Muhammad Sálíh, a

[page 64]

learned resident of Kazvín. She was an excellent Arabic scholar and was so intelligent that she could follow the most subtle discussions. Her acquaintance with the commentaries on the Quran and with the Traditions was very extensive.⁴⁵ She was acquainted with Hájí Seyyid Kázim, the Shaikhí leader, and his famous disciple Mullá Husain. When the latter set out for Shíráz Qurratu'l-'Ayn corresponded with him and begged him to let her know when he had found the spiritual teacher he was in search of. Mullá Husain showed her letter to the Báb, who was much interested in it. For a while she lived at Kerbelá and gave addresses to the Shaikhís. This displeased the governor of the place and she retired to Baghdád. Again she was ordered to change her place of residence. She then visited Kirmánsháh and Hamadán, everywhere preaching and making converts to the Bábí faith. Some of the Bábís looked with disfavour on this preaching by a woman; but the Báb supported her, applauded her zeal, and bestowed on her the title of Jenáb-i-Táhira, or Her Excellency the Pure. From that time all acknowledged her position. Her father now brought her back to her home at Kazvín, but she was not happy there, as her friends and relatives were all bitterly opposed to the Shaikhís and the Bábís. Her uncle, who showed much hatred of the Bábís, was now assassinated, and Qurratu'l-'Ayn was unjustly charged with being privy to the deed. This rendered her further stay in Kazvín impossible, and she left for a place called Núr, where she remained until the suppression by the Government of the Mázandarán insurrection. She was then made a prisoner and sent to Teheran. On her arrival she was taken before the Shah who said: "I like her looks, leave her and let

her be.”⁴⁶ She was then kept in prison, though her confinement does not appear to have been very rigorous, for she had occasional intercourse with different Bábís and her life was in no danger

[page 65]

until the attempt to assassinate the Shah was made, when the mere fact of being a Bábí was sufficient to imperil life. Even there her marvellous beauty, enthusiasm and eloquence won for her the regard of her custodian, Mahmúd Khán. He did all he could, consistent with his duty, to soften the rigours of captivity and held out hopes for the future. Her cheerfulness when any day the sentence of death might be passed astonished the attendants. One morning Mahmúd Khán returned from Court, saying that he had brought good news. He told Qurratu'l-'Ayn that she was to appear before her judges, and it was understood that, if she denied that she was a Bábí, she would be left alone, on condition that she lived quietly and ceased to teach. She indignantly replied that she would do no such thing and prophesied his own down-fall. Strange to say this came true for a few years after Mahmúd Khán was executed by the order of the Shah. This refusal to deny her faith in the Báb was strong in her, and she did so refuse when confronted with her judges. They could not save her, and so she was put to death in the massacre at Teheran which followed on the attempt to kill the Shah in 1852. Various accounts are given of the manner of her death. Gobineau

Les religions et les philosophies dans L'Asia Centrale by Count Gobineau, p. 168.

says she was burned and then strangled: others that she was strangled⁴⁷ and then cast into a well. Her death was painful, and she was as brave in death as she had been in life.

Qurratu'l-'Ayn was the most remarkable of the Báb's disciples. She was a person of marvellous beauty, possessed of high intellectual gifts, eloquent, devoted and fearless. She

threw her whole soul into the cause she advocated, and her martyrdom sheds a halo of glory round her short and active career.

A Bábí historian says: — “Such fame did she acquire that most people who were

scholars or mystics sought to hear her speak, and were eager to become acquainted with her

powers of speculation and deduction. She wrested pre-eminence from

[page 66]

stalwart men, and continued to strain the feet of steadfastness, until she yielded up her life

at the sentence of the mighty doctors in Teheran.” Mírzá Kázim Beg, a most sober writer,

waxes eloquent over the charms of Qurratu’l-‘Ayn. Thus: “This woman had an influence

over her hearers, wholly spiritual. She knew how to inspire them with perfect confidence.

She was well educated and very beautiful. Everything retired before her. She raised the

veil⁴⁸ which covered her face, not to set at nought the laws of chastity and modesty, so

deeply graven on the tables of the orthodox law and in popular prejudice, but much rather

in order to give by her look more force to the inspired words she spoke. Her speeches

stigmatized that gross tyranny which for so many centuries had imprisoned liberty. She

preached not, as some have said, to abolish the laws of modesty, but to sustain the cause of

liberty. The eloquent words which fell from her mouth captivated the hearts of her hearers,

who became enthusiastic in her praise.”

Some of her poems breathe the spirit of Súfíism and show how deeply her mind was

imbued with mystic lore. This is far more apparent in the original than in any translation of

them. The following lines are from a translation by Mr. Browne.

“Though with sword in hand my Darling stand, with intent to slay, though I sinless

be.

If it pleases him, this tyrant’s whim, I am well content with his tyranny.

The country of ‘I’ and ‘We’ forsake; thy home in annihilation make.

Since fearing not this step to take, thou shalt gain the highest felicity.”

With this may be compared a verse of a Súfí poet.

[page 67]

Her romantic career, her marvellous⁴⁹ power, and her tragic end will continue to give for a long while to come strength to the Bábí cause, and the spirit of endurance to its followers.

“As she would not suffer them to remove the veil from her face (though they repeatedly sought to do so), they applied the bow-string over her veil and thus compassed her martyrdom. Then they cast her holy body into a well in the garden.” *Tárikh-i-Jadíd*, p. 284.

Some Bábís say she did not do this; but Count Gobineau says: — “elle s’*éleva non seulement centre la polygamie, mais contre l’usage du voile.*” p. 168.

The following sonnet on Qurratu’l-‘Ayn brings out some characteristic aspects of her influence: —

Qurratu’l-‘Ayn! not famous far beyond
Her native shore. Not many bards have sung
Her praises, who, her enemies among,
Wielding her beauty as a magic wand,
Strove for the cause of him who had proclaimed
In the year 1848, Násiru’ d-dín Sháh, the late ruler of Persia, was crowned at Teheran,
and the position of the Bábís became more critical. The Prime Minister was Mírzá Taqí Khán, who, though favourably spoken of by some historians, was distinguished by great hatred of the Báb and the Bábís, whom he persecuted with much cruelty. A civil war now raged, and on both sides much ferocity was shown; but the power of the Bábís was broken by the fall of Shaikh Tabarsí and the slaughter of the Bábí garrison in 1849. The victory of the royal troops was sometimes gained by base acts of treachery. Mírzá Kázim Beg gives an instance. He says: “Prince Mahdí Kulí Mírzá, the commander of the royal forces, sent assurances of safety to the Bábí leaders who accepted his invitation to the camp, where they were received with much attention and courtesy. This was what the Prince desired, and when he saw that his guests were at their ease and had set aside their weapons, he gave a signal, and the unsuspecting Bábís were at once seized and put to the most cruel tortures. Some three hundred men were smeared with naphtha and then

burnt alive.” The Bábí historian’s version of it is that the Prince swore on the Qurán thus:

“You shall not be molested, return to your own places.” As they were famished and in great distress they accepted the offer, came to the camp, and whilst engaged in eating were suddenly attacked by the soldiers.

This kind of treachery was resorted to more than once; but no amount of hostile repression and bitter persecution could restrain the ardour of the Bábí teachers, or the

devotion of their followers. Mírzá Taqí Khán now perceived that he must get the Báb put out of the way, and so he sent an order to his brother to this effect:

“Obtain a formal and explicit sentence from the learned doctors at Tabriz, who are the firm supporters of the Church of Ja‘far (i.e., the 6th Imám), and the impregnable stronghold of the Shí‘ah faith.

Summon the Christian regiment of Urúmiyya, suspend the Báb before all the people and give orders for the people to fire a volley.”

Mírzá Husain Khán summoned the chief of the farráshes and gave him his instructions.

On the following day, the Báb and a young man named Áká Muhammad `Alí, a youthful

Bábí, who belonged to a noble family of Tabriz, were delivered up, after having been duly

condemned by the Mullás, to the Colonel of the Christian regiment already named. On the

previous evening, the Báb said to his followers: To-morrow they will martyr me with

boundless shame and dishonour. Let one of you now arise and slay me, so that I may not

have to suffer all this dishonour and humiliation from the adversaries, for it is pleasanter for

me to be slain by the hands of friends than by the hands of enemies.”⁵⁰ All, with great

expressions of sorrow began to excuse themselves, except Mírzá Muhammad `Alí, who

seemed as if about to obey the command. His comrades, however, prevented him, saying:

“Such boldness and rashness is not the characteristic of true service.” For the following

account of what really transpired I am indebted to Mírzá Kázim Beg.⁵¹

For poor down-trodden womanhood the right
Of freedom. Lifting high her beacon light
Of truth, she went unveiled and unashamed.
A woman, in the land where women live
And weep and die secluded and unknown,
She broke the bonds of custom, and to give
The Báb her aid, she dared the world alone,
Only to fail: death closed the unequal strife,
And Persia blindly wrecked a noble life.

New History of the Báb, p. 298.

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, tome vii. p. 377. The New History of the Báb also has a full account, pp. 297-312.

The roads which led to the court of the Barracks were crowded with people. At a military execution in Persia, the condemned are tied together with their backs turned towards the firing party. Áká Muhammad ‘Alí begged to be allowed to turn his face towards the people, and then, in a loud, but calm voice, he began to say some prayers which had been composed by the master. The Báb kept perfectly silent. His pale and beautiful face surrounded by a black beard, his white and delicate hands, his figure and distinguished manner, everything in his person and in his dress aroused the sympathy and compassion of the spectators. The Governor and the Mullás tried to keep this in check by preaching loudly against the Bábí doctrines, exaggerating the evils of the system. They recounted in a pathetic manner the end of those who had met their death at the hands of the Bábís; still, so strong was the feeling aroused by the self-sacrifice of Áká Muhammad ‘Alí and the dignity of the Báb that it required the utmost effort of the Mullás to suppress it. The first volley fired simply severed the cords by which the prisoners were fastened to the post. A second volley proved effectual. The crowd then dispersed in silence, but many men carried in their hearts the germs of hostility towards the Government. The execution of the Báb (A.H. 1266) does not seem to have been justified on political grounds, for as Gobineau says, though “The Bábí chiefs had given trouble to the state, the Báb himself had done nothing of

the kind and no proof was brought forward that he had encouraged his disciples in their line of conduct.”⁵² A Bábí historian gives a miraculous turn to the failure of the first volley that was fired at the execution. He says: “An iron nail was hammered into the middle of the stair-case of the very cell wherein they were imprisoned, and two ropes were hung down. By one rope Áká Muhammad ‘Alí was suspended and by the other the Báb, both being firmly bound in such wise that the head of the young man was on the Báb’s breast. From the fire of the volleys a mighty smoke was produced. When the smoke cleared away they saw that

[page 70]

young man standing, with the Báb, who has seated by the side of his amanuensis, Áká Seyyid Husain, in the very cell from the staircase of which they had been suspended.” The bodies were finally cast out of the city, near the moat, to be devoured by dogs and jackals; but on the second night were conveyed away by the Bábís who by bribes, or the influence of powerful friends, obtained possession of them. “They were wrapped in white silk, placed in one coffin, and sent to Teheran, where by order of Mírzá Yahyá (Subh-i-Ezel), who, though but twenty years old, had been chosen to succeed the Báb, they were deposited in a little shrine called Imám-zádé-i-Ma’súm. Here they remained for seventeen or eighteen years, till the schism originated by Behá deprived his half-brother Ezel of the supremacy in the Bábí church which he had hitherto enjoyed, when they were removed by the Behá’ís, to whom alone is now known the last resting place of the Martyrs of Tabriz.”⁵³ The chief of the religion was dead and, according to the calculations of Mírzá Taqí Khán, the Prime Minister, peace would now be soon established and there would be no more trouble from the Bábís ; but, as Count Gobineau points out,⁵⁴ his political sagacity was entirely at fault for the death of the Báb only increased the movement and fawned the ardour of his followers.

Great pressure had been brought to bear on Áká Muhammad ‘Alí by his relatives to make him recant, but he was imbued with devotion to his master. He wrote a very touching letter in reply to an affectionate appeal from his brother, urging him to give up the Báb, to save his life and to return to his family. This is the letter.

“He is the Compassionate.
O thou who art my Qibla! My condition, thanks to God, has no fault, and “to every difficulty succeedeth ease.” You have

Les religions et les philosophies dans L’Asia Centrale, p. 262.

A Year amongst the Persians, p. 64.

Les religions et les philosophies dans L’Asia Centrale by Count Gobineau, p. 271.

[page 71]

written that this matter has no end. What matter, then, has any end? We, at least, have no discontent in this matter: nay, rather, we are unable sufficiently to express our thanks for this favour. The end of this matter is to be slain in the way of God, and O! what happiness is this. The will of God will come to pass with regard to his servants, neither can human plans avert the divine decree. thou who art my Qibla, the end of the world is death. If the appointed fate which God hath decreed overtake me, then God is the guardian of my family, and thou art mine executor; behave in such wise as is pleasing to God, and pardon whatever has proceeded from me which may seem lacking in courtesy, or contrary to the respect due from juniors: and seek pardon for me from all those of my household and commit me to God. God is my patron and how good is He as a Guardian!”
This letter is a remarkable witness to the power which the Báb had over his disciples, a power which could lead this youth, with so promising a future before him, to give up home and life, to face death and its terrors rather than be separated from the Master he loved so truly. The original letter is given in a foot-note.⁵⁵

The Báb does not appear to have been a political agitator;

[page 72]

certainly politics had nothing to do with the inception of the movement. He wished to effect religious reform, not to deal with affairs of the State, or to injure the status of the reigning family. He was absorbed in spiritual meditations and in mystical contemplations and was not a political fanatic. But when his followers found that the Government would not help forward reforms and would not move from the orthodox Shí'ah standpoint, they gave to the Bábí movement a political turn which it had not previously possessed. The Báb himself remained passive, but most of the chief men amongst his disciples accepted this new departure. Then after the death of the Báb instead of becoming, as was expected by the Government, despondent and discouraged, they became exasperated and stern. The last restraints were now removed and they did not hesitate to count themselves enemies of the Sháh and his government.

It may be well at this point to give a summary of the character of the Báb, as portrayed by Mírzá Kázim Beg, always remembering that the critic, though eminently fair, does not believe in the claims of the Báb.

“He had some characteristics truly great and noble and was a man of firm and settled convictions. His moral character was high, and he aimed in his preaching to bring all his countrymen into a community, united by intellectual and moral ties. He spoke with much earnestness on the necessity for a religious and social reform in Persia, the cessation of

Royal Asiatic Society's Journal, October 1889, p. 902.

religious persecution, and the amelioration of the lot of women. It is said that much of what he preached on these points had an esoteric meaning, known only to his disciples; but whether that is the case or not, the veneration they felt for him was profound, and there can be no doubt that the teaching of the Báb was in the direction of freedom and that he personally was in favour of reform.” Mírzá Kázim Beg sums up his reflections thus: “We neither consider him an adventurer nor a fanatic, but an eminently moral man, a dreamer

brought up in the school of the Shaikhís and possessing some touch of

[page 73]

Christianity. We regard him also as a man troubled by the direct influence of some of his devoted and ambitious disciples. In any case, we believe that the appearance of the Báb will be more or less of use in time to the cause of civilization in Persia.”⁵⁶ The next historical event of importance is the attempt on August 15th, 1852,⁵⁷ to assassinate Násiru’d-dín Sháh. It does not appear to have been an act determined on by any large number of the Bábí leaders, but to have arisen from a spirit of revenge in a few devoted followers of the Báb. If such be the case, the frightful persecutions which followed are utterly unjustifiable, even from an oriental standpoint. The accounts differ as to the number of Bábís engaged in this. Some say that there were twelve conspirators, others say that there were seven. In any case only three actually took part in the attack on the Sháh. These were Mulla Fathu’lláh of Kum, Sádiq of Zanján, and Mírzá Muhammad of Níríz. They got themselves engaged as gardeners in a country palace, to which the Sháh used to resort. One day in the garden he was eating some fresh water melons and seeing three gardeners, looking wearied with heat and work, sent them some of the fruit. This kind act made the conspirators hesitate in the carrying out of their commission. However, in a few days, the effect of the Sháh’s kindness passed away and, as he was out riding one day, they approached him, under the pretence of having a petition to offer, and then one of them fired, it is said, three times, the last shot slightly wounding the Sháh. The escort then came up, and Sádiq, one of the assassins, was killed on the spot and the other two were arrested. The Sháh was really in a very great fright, but the Musulmán historians give a different account. The following is a very good specimen of oriental hyperbole and flattery: “The dust of per turbation settled not on the skirt of the patience and self-control of the king, whose elemental material, God the Creator had

[page 74]

leavened with the liver of the lion, the heart of Ardashír, the ardour of Shápúr, and the majesty of Taimúr. Nor did the pellucid stream of his mind become troubled by the foulness and filth of these events. Neither did he urge his horse to leap aside, nor did he utter a word indicative of alarm or consternation. He kept his place on the poplar-wood saddle like some mountain of massive rocks, and notwithstanding that wound, turned not aside in any direction, and carried not his hand to his hurt, so that those present in his escort knew not that any hurt had befallen the king, or that he had suffered any wound.”

At the examinations before the Council of Ministers, the two arrested Bábís, though most severely tortured, declared that they had no accomplices, that they could not hesitate to obey the sacred orders of their chiefs who were no longer in Persia. They said: — “you can torture us till the day of judgment, we shall say no more.” The Bábís attribute the failure of the plot to the fact that the impetuosity of the three conspirators led them on to the attack before the others were ready. The most stringent measures were at once taken against the Bábís. The police at Teheran searched everywhere for them and succeeded in arresting, according to one account, forty, and, according to Mírzá Kázim Beg, seventy persons. Most of these who were arrested were condemned to death, whether any proof could be given of their complicity in the plot or not. It was quite

Journal Asiatique, Sixième Série, tome vii. p. 384.

A.H. 1268.

enough to be known as a Bábí. A great fear fell upon those in authority, and it was determined to make a terrible example. The principal malefactors, says Mírzá Kázim Beg, “were tortured in the most odious manner, with an unheard of refinement of cruelty.” An English traveller says⁵⁸: “Tow steeped in oil was inserted between their fingers and behind their shoulder blades, leaving portions hanging down which were lighted, and in this

condition the unhappy wretches were led, as long as they could walk, through the principal streets of the capital. A furious

[page 75]

proscription followed. No time was lost between apprehension and execution, death was the only punishment known, the headless bodies lay in the streets for days, the terrified relatives fearing to give them burial, and the dogs fought and growled over the corpses in the deserted thoroughfares.”

A most ingenious plan was adopted to avert from the Sháh and his Ministers, any special and definite hatred of the Bábís and to make the subjects of a possible retaliation on their part as varied as possible. The prisoners were divided amongst⁵⁹ the different classes

of the community who were made responsible for the execution of the victims allotted to

them.⁶⁰ They were thus informed that their loyalty would be above suspicion.

Another

expected result was that, owing to the retaliation to which they would be exposed, they

would be permanently alienated from the Bábí movement and personally interested in its

entire suppression. Some of the classes thus made to take part in the executions were the

‘Ulamá, the Princes, the Employes of the foreign office, the Nobles, the Mír-i-Akhúr, or

Master of the Horse and his assistants; the Sar-kishík or the Captain of the Guard; and the

Yúz-Báshís, or Centurions; the Artillerymen, the General and Officers, the Professors and

Students, the Merchants, the City people, and so on.

The details are sickening. One illustration will be enough. Hájí Sulaimán Khán and

Kázim of Níríz were first wounded in many parts of their bodies, and in these wounds

lighted candles were placed. They were then paraded through the streets and bazaars,

accompanied by musicians, whilst the spectators threw dust and ashes on them.

At last they

were sawn asunder. Sulaimán bore these tortures most heroically and during them testified

to the joy he felt at suffering martyrdom for the cause of the Báb.

[page 76]

He recited the following verses:

“I have returned! I have returned! I have come by the way of Shiraz!
I have come with winsome airs and graces! Such is the lover’s madness.”⁶¹

“Why do you not dance,” said the executioners, “since you find death so pleasant?”

“Dance,” said Sulaimán Khán.

“In one hand the wine cup, in one hand the tresses of the friend.
Such a dance in the midst of the marked place is my desire.”

Renan speaks of the massacre thus: — “The day of the great slaughter of the Bábís in

Teheran was, perhaps, a day unparalleled in the history of the world.”⁶²
Referring to the

Diary of a Journey from London to Persepolis, by John Ussher, p. 628.

Curzon’s Persia, vol. I, p. 402.

This reminds us of what is said of Queen Joan of Naples, who, when she strangled her husband, called out to her fellow-conspirators, ‘Gentlemen you must all take hold of the rope.’ Quarterly Review, No, 353, p. 290.

This is the original Persian:

Les Apôtres, p. 378.

same event, Count Gobineau says⁶³: “Children and women with lighted candles stuck into

the wounds were driven along by whips, and as they went along they sang, ‘We came from

God, to Him we return.’ When the children expired, as many did, the executioners threw

the corpses beneath the feet of their fathers. Life was offered if they would recant. An

executioner told one father that, if he did not recant, his two sons, the elder of whom was

fourteen years old, should be slain on his breast. The father lying down said that he was

ready, and the elder boy claimed by right of birth to be the first to have his throat cut. At

last, night fell on a mass of shapeless flesh, and the dogs of the suburbs came in troops to the place.”

So ended one important period in the history of the Bábís. This day made more secret

followers of the Báb than all his preaching had done, for the impression produced upon the

people by the calmness and patience of the Martyrs was profound and lasting.⁶⁴

[page 77]

There has been since this time no formal outbreak of Bábí revenge, nor has there been any persecution like it. Even this altogether failed of its purpose, for it gave to the movement a vigour and vitality which otherwise it might have lacked.⁶⁵ It is said that half a million Persians are Bábís, but the Hon'ble G. Curzon considers the total to be nearer one million. He says⁶⁶: — “They are to be found in every walk of life, from the ministers and nobles of the Court to the scavenger or the groom, not the least arena of their activity being the Musalmán priesthood itself. It will have been noticed that the movement was initiated by Seyyids, Hájís and Mullás.” Whilst it is true that there has been no persecution so terrible as the one in 1852, yet now and again the hostility of the ‘Ulamá shows itself. In 1878, 1888, and in 1889 Bábís were put to death.⁶⁷ The heroism and the devotion of the Bábís is something very wonderful. It is said that there is only one instance of a Bábí's having recanted under pressure. He, however, he returned again to his faith, and was afterwards put to death for his renewed devotion to the Báb. After the death of the Báb, the chief interest in the movement circles round Mírzá Yahyá and his half-brother Behá'ulláh, who became the respective leaders of the two sects, into which the Bábís are now divided — the Ezelís and the Behá'ís. Before proceeding to give an account of the Bábí doctrines, we may briefly continue the narrative of events. There seems no doubt that the Báb in the year 1849 nominated the former,

[page 78]

whom he named Subh-i-Ezel (morning of eternity), as his successor, and that for a short time he really held an undisputed position as head of the Bábí church. His claim to that office is based on a document, said to have been written by the Báb, of which the following is a translation⁶⁸ by Mr. E. G. Browne: —

“God is most great with the utmost greatness.

Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale, p. 302.

Ibid, p. 303.

En très peu d'années, c'est-à-dire de 1847 à 1852 cette religion s'est répandue dans presque toute la Perse et y compte des zéloteurs innombrables. . . . Et ce n'est point une populace ignorante qui s'est surtout émue; ce sont des membres éminents du clergé; ce sont des gens riches et instruits, des femmes appartenant à des familles importantes; ce sont, enfin, après les musulmans, des philosophes, des soufys en grand nombre, beaucoup de juifs, qui ont été conquis tout à coup par la nouvelle révélation. Les religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale, p 308.

Persia, Vol. I, p. 499.

Ibid, p. 500.

The New History of the Báb, p. 426. A fac-simile of the transcript by Subh-i-Ezel from the original letter written by the Báb is also given.

This is a letter on the part of God, the Protector, the self-Existent.

To God, the Protector, the self-Existent.

Say, 'All originate from God.'

Say, 'All return to God.'

This is a letter from 'Alí before Nabil⁶⁹ the remembrance of God unto the worlds,

Unto him whose name is equivalent to the name of One,⁷⁰ the remembrance of God unto the worlds.

Say, 'Verily all originate from the Point of Revelation (Nuqta-i-Beyán).

O Name of the One,⁷¹ keep what hath been revealed in the Beyán,

And what hath been commanded, 'Verily Thou art a mighty way of Truth.'"

In 1852, when the attempt on the life of the Sháh was made, the Bábís were bitterly

persecuted, and Subh-i-Ezel retired to Baghdád, which then became the head-quarters of

the sect, and was for many years recognised, at least nominally, as its head.

Mírzá Husain

'Alí Behá'ulláh, who was Subh-i-Ezel's senior by thirteen years,

and had just been released

from imprisonment, joined him in 1853. The Persian Government, at length, objected to his

residence there and prevailed on the Turkish authorities in

[page 79]

1863-4 to deport him and his followers to Constantinople, from whence a few months later

on they were sent to Adrianople. Subh-i-Ezel led a very secluded life, and

the
correspondence and other matters were carried on by Behá, who acted for him
and was a
man of resolute will and ambitious character. For a time he acted in the name
of Subh-i-
Ezel and professed to do all he did under his instructions; but in time the
idea gradually
formed itself in his mind that should become actually as indeed he was already
virtually the
head and leader of the Bábís. Thus the influence of, Behá grew, and at last
he began to
advance claims⁷² which afterwards culminated in the assertion that he was the
person to
i.e., The Báb.

Wáhid, one. The numerical value of the letters of wáhid is 18, which is
also the value of those in
Yahyá, one of the names of Subh-i-Ezel.
i.e., Yahyá.

Amongst these was one advanced for him by Mírzá Abú'l Fazl in the
in which it was
maintained that Behá was the promised Messiah of the Jews. He speaks of a good
time coming
when all nations will be of one religion and Israel shall inherit the earth, if
they do not turn away
from the light and guidance now come to them.

R.A.S. Journal, October 1892, p. 703.

whom the Báb referred as 'Him whom God shall manifest.'⁷³ To this claim⁷⁴
the Ezelís
replied that

[page 80]

before the person of whose advent the Báb had spoken could come, Bábíism
must obtain
general currency, and the laws laid down by the Báb in his books⁷⁵ must be
accepted by
most of the nations of the world. They further added to their reply that it was
not to be
supposed that two manifestations zahúr — that of the Báb and that of
'Him whom God
shall manifest' — could take place with so short an interval of time
between them. The
Behá'ís, who admitted that Subh-i-Ezel was the first vice-regent of the
Báb, to all the
objections alleged replied that Mírzá Yahyá's rule was only to last
until the manifestation
of the new leader, who was to come suddenly, and the time of whose advent was

known

only to God; that the Báb had stated that he, the new prophet, would come suddenly, and

that it could not come to pass that any one should falsely claim the honour.

They also used

an argument well known amongst Muhammadans, an argument based on the literary style

of the books given by means of a divinely appointed messenger, and urged that the Lauh-i-

Nasír, the book in which Behá announced his mission, fulfilled this

condition of a divine

revelation by its eloquence of diction and the wonderful knowledge, unacquired by study,

displayed by the writer. Anyhow, the conflicting claims to the leadership led to quarrels and

blows.⁷⁶ The Turkish Government then determined to separate the disputants.⁷⁷

Behá and

his followers

[page 81]

were sent to Acre,⁷⁸ and Mírzá Yahyá and his people were exiled to Famagusta, in Cyprus.

A few Ezelís were sent with Behá, and a few Behá'ís were sent with Mírzá Yahyá. It was

hoped that by this arrangement the minority, in each case, would act as spies and prevent

any communication between Bábís in Persia and either of the leaders. Since then the

followers of Behá have increased very much, whilst those of Subh-i-Ezel, or Yahyá, have

decreased. This is an unlooked for development of the work of the Báb, for Behá claims to

be the messenger of a new dispensation altogether.⁷⁹

man yazarulláh. He declared openly his divine mission in 1866-7 at Adrianople,

from which date the schism commences.

It required great firmness to meet the claim and Mr. Browne says, — “Such firmness Subh-i-Ezel, a

peace-loving, contemplative, gentle soul, wholly devoted to the memory of his beloved master,

caring little for authority, and incapable of self-assertion, seems to have altogether lacked.”

Introduction to the New History of the Báb, p. xxi.

“The Bábí literature is extensive but secret, for he who was known to possess such books put his

life in great danger.” *Les Religions et les philosophies dans l'Asie*

Centrale, p. 310.

“Amongst the Bábís the effect of this announcement (i.e., Behá’s claim) was little short of stupendous. From Constantinople to Kirmán and from Cairo to Khurásán the communities of the faithful were rent asunder by a schism which every subsequent year has rendered wider and more permanent, and which nothing short of the complete extinction of one of the two rival factions can possibly heal. At Adrianople itself the struggle was short and the triumph of Behá complete.” New

History of the Báb, p. xxii.

For the view of the Ezeli historians on what they consider to be the grave misconduct and treachery

of the Behá’ís, see Episode of the Báb, pp. 359-364.

The Behá’í version of the affair is given on pp. 368-9.

This is still the head-quarters of the Behá’ís, to which sect most of the Bábís now belong.

Mr. Browne put the following question to a Behá’í: “Why do you speak of Mírzá Yahyá as though

he were of no account? In the books about your religion which I read in Europe, he is described as

the Báb’s chosen successor and, after him, as the chief of your sect?”

“Yes,” replied Mírzá Hasan, “it is true that he was one of the early believers, and that at first

he was accounted the successor and vice-regent of the Báb, but he was repeatedly warned not to

withhold his allegiance from ‘Him whom God shall manifest’, and threatened that if he did so, he

This caused much consternation in the Bábí world. A hopeless schism was made, and

peace can only come by the extinction of one party. The question at issue now became

something more than a mere struggle for leadership, for Behá’s claim virtually deposed the

Báb from his position as the ‘Point of Revelation’ and made him the mere forerunner of

‘Him whom God shall manifest’. The Ezelís are, however, nearly extinct, and it is not

likely that they will ever attain to power again. Assuming that Behá had right on his side, it

is stated that the changes he made were in a practical direction and beneficial.

The Bábí doctrines are to be found in the writings of the Báb called the Beyán,⁸⁰ a term

he used as conveniently expressing

[page 82]

the sphere in which his thoughts moved. It is a name sometimes apparently applied to the collective writings, but more generally to a particular book.⁸¹ Many of the dogmas are very mystical:⁸² but the following is a brief summary.

God is eternal and unapproachable, All things come from Him and exist by Him.

Man

cannot approach Him except through some appointed medium. So, distinct from God there

is a Primal Will,⁸³ or Mashiyat-i-Úlá, who becomes incarnate

would fall from the faith and become as one rejected. In spite of these clear warnings of his master,

he refused to acknowledge the new manifestation when it came; wherefore he is now regarded by

us as of no account.” — *A Year amongst the Persians*, p. 335.

Composed in 1848.

Count Gobineau considers that the name applies to all he wrote and that he used it “pour titre à tout

ce qu’il composa.” *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L’Asie Centrale*, p. 311.

It is not always easy to understand the esoteric dogmas of these Persian sects for, as Mr. E. G.

Browne says: — “There is a profound difference between the Persian idea of religion and that

which obtains in the west. Here it is the ideas of faith and righteousness (in different proportions, it

is true), there it is knowledge and mystery. Here religion is regarded as a rule by which to live and a

hope wherein to die, there as a key to unlock the secrets of the spiritual and material universe. Here

it is associated with work and charity, there with rest and wisdom, here a creed is admired for its

simplicity, there for its complexity.” . . . “Thus it comes to pass that

Persians have as often died for

belief in some obscure mystical dogma as for some ethical principle or motive.” *Royal Asiatic*

Society’s Journal January 1898, p. 88.

There is an evident connection between this dogma of the Bábís and the Súfí system, in which the

‘First Intelligence,’ or ‘Primal Element’ is represented as a

manifestation of God. To the Súfí, as to

the Bábí, God is “sterile in His inaccessible height.” Men can never be more than slaves, nearness

to Him is impossible. But men longed for communion with some one or something above them.

They felt the need of some intermediary and found it in a revival of the old Gnostic notions of the Æons, forms of manifestation of the Ineffable and Incomprehensible. Neander thus describes the Gnostic view: — “Self-limitation is the first beginning of a communication of life from God — the first passing of the hidden deity into manifestation, and from this proceeds all further self-developing manifestation of the divine essence. Now, from this primal link in the chain of life there are evolved, in the first place, the manifold powers or attributes inherent in the divine essence, which, until that first self-comprehension, were all hidden in this abyss of His essence.” This intermediary is the Primal Will of the Bábí and the Primal Element of the Súfí, who also calls it by the names of the Pen, the First Principle, the spirit of Muhammad, Universal Reason or ‘aql-i-kull. God’s voice is heard through it, by it material things were brought into existence. It works in Prophets and Saints. The Imám is closely connected with it. I am not able to find out whether the Báb taught that the Primal Will was created or not. In Súfí theology it certainly is, for in the Akhláq-i-Jalálí it is written: “It is admitted, equally by the masters of perception and conception, that the First Principle which, at the mandate, ‘Be and it is,’ issued, by the ineffable power and will, from the chaotic ocean of inexistence, was a simple and luminous essence which, in the language of philosophy, is termed the Primary Intelligence, and the great fathers of mysticism and investigation call it the Muhammadan Spirit.” It is to this and not to the inaccessible and incomprehensible God that the Imám seeks to return. When his work in life is done, then his end is joined to his beginning, — Ba ághaz girdad báz anjám. It is a curious phase of human thought which the Súfís evidently borrowed from the Gnostics, and the Bábís from the Súfís. This earnest longing for communion with a manifestation of God we can sympathise with, and only regret that, in their ignorance or

[page 83]

in the prophets. This Primal Will which spoke in all the prophets of the past, spoke also in the Báb who is the Nuqta-i-Beyan, or the point of Revelation and will speak

in 'Him whom
God shall manifest'. This is apparent from the following texts of the Beyán:
— "The whole
Beyán revolves round the saying of 'Him whom God shall manifest.'" "A
thousand
perusals of the Beyán are not equal to the perusal of one verse of what shall
be revealed by
'Him whom God shall manifest.'" "The Beyán is to-day in the stage of
seed, but in the day
of 'Him whom God shall manifest' it will arrive at the degree of
fruition." It must be
remembered that Behá claimed, and is allowed by his followers this exalted
position. The
following are some of the expressions used of Behá by his followers: —
"Behá has come
for the perfecting of the law of Christ, and his injunctions are in all
respects similar. For
instance, we are commanded that we should prefer that we should be killed
rather than that
we should kill. It is the same throughout, and, indeed, could not be otherwise,
for Behá is
Christ returned again, even as He promised, to perfect that which He had
begun." "Christ
returns to you as Behá with Angels, with clouds, with the sound of trumpets.
His angels are
his messengers, the clouds are the doubts which prevent you recognising him;
the sound of
the trumpets is the sound of the proclamation which you now hear, announcing
that He has
come once more from heaven, even as he came before."84

[page 84]

Each dispensation of the Primal Will thus become incarnate supersedes a
preceding
one, and so Islám has ceased to be the true religion for to-day. It has
already been shown (p.
55) that devotion to the Imám was a very prominent point in the teaching of
the Báb. In one
of the earliest of his writings, we read, "When thou wishest to visit the
Friend of God, or
one of the Imáms of the Faith, first purify thy body from everything which thy
heart
dislikes; then wash thyself with seven handfuls of water upon thy head." Then
follow
directions how to approach the Imám with humility, and the prayer to be said.
He addresses
the Imáms as Effulgences of the Divine Glory, Manifestations of God,

Intercessors, with Him for sinful men. He longs for communion with them. Thus, "Where are the days of your manifestation that I may be independent of all except you? and where are the days of the appearance of the signs of your lordship, that by your permission, I may say to whatsoever I will, 'Be', and it shall become existent before you." These are the enthusiastic utterances of a devout Shí'ah, and represent the feelings of the Báb before he felt conscious of any special mission. But this constant dwelling on the glory of the Imáms, the dispensers of God's will and favour, gradually led to the formation of the idea that he had special communication with them and was, in fact, the Báb. At this stage the usual Muhammadan customs were not set aside. The month of Ramazán was observed as a fast; but the 'Ulamá were bitterly reproached for opposing this new revelation. Thus the Báb says: — "O people of the earth! give thanks to God, for verily we have delivered you from the doctors of doubt." For a more complete exposition of the Bábí dogmas, Mr. Browne, to whose valuable researches we are chiefly indebted for the best information on the subject, refers to the Persian Beyán, from which quotations have already been made. This work brings out more fully the theory of a Primal Will. "Since it is impossible for created beings to know the Divine Essence, the Primal Will has for their guidance and instruc-

[page 85]

repudiation of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation, both Sufí and Bábí have so sadly missed the mark.

A Year amongst the Persians, pp. 308-9.

tion, incarnated itself from time to time in a human form. These incarnations are known as 'Prophets.' That which spoke in all the Prophets of the past now speaks in the Báb and will speak through 'Him whom God shall manifest,' and after him through others, for there is no cessation in these manifestations. "That which spoke in Adam, Noah, Moses, David, Jesus and Muhammad⁸⁵ was the one and the same Primal Will. In each manifestation news

has been given of the following one. Thus the Jews were told to expect a Messiah but they rejected him; the Christians to expect Muhammad but, as a rule, they did not accept him; so the Muhammadans are taught to look out for Imám Mahdí. Yet now he has come (i.e., in the Báb) they persecute him.”⁸⁶

The chapters of the Beyán are arranged in groups of nineteen, a number which has a peculiar significance with the Bábís. Each letter of the Arabic alphabet has a numerical value, and so dates can be given by words or sentences. Alif, the first letter, stands for God, and the word for one is wáhid. The numerical value of the letters in this word is 19. God is absolute Being, or wujúd, the value of the letters of which also comes to 19.⁸⁷ The name of one of the attributes of God is Hayy, or the Living. The sum of the letters of this word is 18, to which, if we add the letter Alif the One which pervades all — we again get the sacred number 19. Nineteen, then, represents the manifestation of the unknowable essence, and $19 \times 19 (= 361)$ represents the manifested universe, or all things, expressed by the term ‘kullu shey’ the numerical value

[page 86]

of which words is 360, to which Alif, the One pervading all, is added and we then get 361.

In this world, God is represented by Mírzá ‘Alí Muhammad, the Báb, who is called the nuqta, or Point, and his 18 disciples. “These eighteen are called the hurúfát-i-hayy, or Letters of the Living, because by them the Báb bestowed new life upon the world.” These again with their leader form the number 19, and thus constitute a wáhid, or complete unity, and, as each disciple was to have 19 others under him, we again arrive at 361, which represents the numerical value of ‘kullu shey’, or the number of all things that is, the ‘‘adad-i-kullu shey.’ On this same ground the Beyán has 19 parts and each part has 19 chapters. The Bábí year has 19 months of 19 days, each day 19 hours, each hour nineteen minutes. The same principle was to regulate measures of distance and of

weights. Law and commerce were to come under its influence. "Organise," said the Báb, "all things after the number of the Unity, that is to say by a division into nineteen parts."⁸⁸ Another point on which the Beyán lays much stress is that no revelation is final. This is entirely opposed to the ordinary Muhammadan view, which is that, as Muhammad was khátamu'l anbiyá, or the seal of the Prophets, his revelation closed the series. The Báb taught that, as the human race progresses, the Primal Will, the teacher of men, speaks in each new revelation more fully and more clearly.⁸⁹ All these successive

[page 87]

These are the Anbiyá Ulú'l 'Azm of Islám. Vide Faith of Islám, p. 216.

Journal of the R.A.S., vol. xxi. pp. 914, 925.

This is in accord with the second canon of the Cabbalistic system of Biblical interpretation in the

thirteenth century, which is called Ghematria, or "the use of the numerical values of the letters of a

word for purposes of comparison with other words which yield the same or similar combinations of

numbers." [Biblical Study, by Dr. Briggs, p. 301.] I am not prepared to say that there is any

historical connection between the Cabbalist and the Persian mystic. The subject needs investigation.

Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale, p. 322.

Il a dit qu'il ne venait donner qu'un développement de plus à la science de la nature divine; que

tous les prophètes successivement en ont dit plus que leurs prédécesseurs n'avaient eu mission de la

faire, et que c'est simplement en conséquence de ce progrès régulier que lui a été commise la tâche

d'être plus complet que Mahomet, lequel l'avait été plus que Jésus, qui, à son tour, en avait su plus

que ses prédécesseurs." Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asia Centrale, p. 317.

"Enfin le Báb parut à son tour, et sa révélation, plus complète sans doute et, comme diraient

chez nous certains politiques, plus progressive, a d'ailleurs revêtu des caractères assez particuliers,

qui sont la démonstration et la preuve de son excellence." Ibid, p, 326.

and progressive revelations and dispensations were not for the purpose of abrogating

preceding essential laws, but to complete them and especially to prepare the world for the

fuller teaching of 'Him whom God shall manifest.'

"A new prophet is not sent until the development of the human race renders this

necessary. A revelation is not abrogated till it no longer suffices for the needs of mankind.

There is no disagreement between the prophets: all teach the same truth, but in such

measure as men can receive it. As mankind advance and progress they need fuller instruction. The instruction given by Abraham was suitable and sufficient for the people of

his day, but not for those to whom Moses was sent, while this in turn had ceased to meet

the needs of those to whom Christ was sent. Yet we must not say that their religions were

opposed to one another, but rather that each manifestation is more complete and more

perfect than the last."⁹⁰

The great point in the Bábí theology is that the teacher is one and the same, though he

manifests himself according to the capacity and needs of those to whom he is sent. The

outward form changes but the Universal Spirit remains.⁹¹ It then follows that "since this

Universal Spirit is absolute good, we must believe that it always has a manifestation in the

world . . . hence during the long intervals which separate one prophetic dispensation from

the next, there must be in the world silent manifestations of the spirit, intrinsically not less

perfect than the speaking manifestations whom we call prophets."⁹² Such persons would

seem to be those who in Súfí phraseology had annihilated self, "escaped the delusions of

plurality and realised the unity of True Being," who differ in degree but not in kind from

the Prophets.

[page 88]

The Báb was a prisoner when he showed such interest in preparing the mind of his

followers for this 'Coming One'. The Beyán is full of it. It is laid down that in every

assembly of believers a vacant place must be left for him. When his name is mentioned all

must rise up. In any case the ground was well prepared for Behá when he made his claim.

The Beyán speaks with confidence of the success of Bábíism. The future

Bábí

community is to form a perfect Utopia and its governments are to be tolerant.⁹³

The kindly

nature of the Báb is seen in the fancy sketches he draws of the future.

At the day of Judgment, 'He whom God shall manifest' will preside. All the good

people will be praised for their works, their piety, their obedience. Evil men will be

annihilated. Thus the good will return to God and dwell in Him; the bad will pass away and

be no more.

The Muhammadan doctrines of the examination of the dead in the graves,⁹⁴ the Resurrection, Sirat, Heaven, Hell, are all treated allegorically. The first

is really a summons

to the people to believe in the next manifestation of the Primal Will (p. 82), the

Resurrection is the appearance of this manifestation. Sirat, or the

Bridge,⁹⁵ is the belief in,

the prophet of the age, a matter difficult to the self-willed, but easy to the seeker after God.

Hell is ignorance and denial of the last manifestation of God, through the Primal Will

incarnated in the Prophet, whilst Heaven is joy in it. The views of the Báb on a future life

are not very clear. Speaking of Barzakh⁹⁶ he says, "What is intended by Barzakh. is merely

the interval between two manifestations, and not that which is commonly known amongst

men, for none knoweth what shall be decreed unto them after death except God." The hope

of a future reward was not placed before his followers as an inducement to accept him, and

this is in direct

A Year amongst the Persians, p. 303.

"The religion of God is One, though the Theophanies differ." New History of the Báb, p. 336.

A Year amongst the Persians, p. 327.

For a fuller account see Journal, R. A. S., vol. xxi., pp. 927-8.

Sell's Faith of Islam, p. 204.

Ibid, p. 226.

Ibid, p. 228.

[page 89]

contrast to the conduct and teaching of Muhammad. In the Beyán the Báb wrote the

following striking words: — "So worship God that, if the recompense of thy worship of

Him were to be the fire, no alteration in thy worship of Him would be produced. If you worship from fear, that is unworthy of the threshold of the holiness of God, nor will you be accounted a believer; so also, if your gaze is on Paradise, and if you worship in hope of that, for then you have made God's creation a partner with Him."⁹⁷ To a very large number of Bábís, Behá was during the latter part of his life⁹⁸ looked up to as a divinely appointed guide. Before he assumed that position he wrote a book called the *Ikán*, which is held in great esteem. In this book he seems to acknowledge the then superior position Subh-i-Ezel, but writes bitterly of some who were hostile to himself. Two years after the Turks had banished him to Adrianople, he boldly asserted his claim and called on all the Ezelís to submit to his direction. He then wrote other treatises in which his position is dogmatically set forth. "If any one understood the love of Behá in the world of creation, and were to fight on his side against all who are in the earth and the heavens, God would verily make him victorious over them, as a showing forth of his power, a setting forth of his Majesty." The people of the Beyán (i.e., the Bábís not of his party) complained about all this, and Behá very severely censures them: — "O people of the Beyán! have you not considered that he⁹⁹ for twenty years has stood up by himself against the enemies. Many are the nights when all were sleeping at ease on their beds, while this Beauty of Primal Unity (i.e., Behá) was standing up openly against the unbelievers." The extent of his claim is well shown by Mr. E. G. Browne in a descriptive¹⁰⁰ passage from which I

[page 90]

have quoted freely. Behá also says in a book of his: — "I¹⁰¹ revealed all the heavenly books by the glorious tongue of might." The Bábí hierarchy consists of the Point and eighteen 'Letters of the Living,'¹⁰² making up the mystic number nineteen. The Point is the manifestation of the essence of God: the others, the eighteen, are regarded as incarnations or manifestations of the

attributes or
names of God. According to Behá he himself was the Point and Subh-i-Ezel
one of the
eighteen Letters of the Living. This throws light on a passage where Behá
calls himself
Málik-i-Sifát, or the Lord of the attributes, i.e., that he is the divine
essence made manifest,
who reproves those who are “veiled by the names” from the essence.
Subh-i-Ezel he calls a
name amongst my names, whom I created by a single letter, and to whom I gave
life and
who yet “arose in war” against his “Beauty.” In another place he calls
himself the Nuqta-i-
Úlá or the First Point, or the Báb returned to life again.
A few extracts¹⁰³ from some of Behá’s writings will show to some extent what
he
taught his followers. “As for those who commit sin and cling to the world
they assuredly
are not of the people of Behá. O worshippers of the Unity, make firm the
girdle of
endeavour, that perchance religious strife and conflict may be removed from
amongst the
people of the world and be annulled. For love of God and His servants engage in
this great

R.A.S. Journal, October 1889, p. 931.

He died in exile on May 16th, 1892.

Behá, who is writing of himself in the third person.

Journal of the R. A. S., vol. xxi., pp. 951-2.

Behá is here expressing the Bábí dogma of the Unity of the essential
principle which spoke
through all the prophets, and so what was revealed by preceding prophets he
could describe as “I
revealed.”

In reality Subh-i-Ezel was the 4th letter. The Báb was the first, then
came Mullá Muhammad ‘Alí

Bárfurúshí (Jenáb-i-quddús); then Mullá Husain of Bushraweyh
(Jenáb-i-Bábu’l Báb); then Mírzá

Yahyá (Subh-i-Ezel), who on the death of the two above him became
second, and on the death of
the Báb claimed to be the first.

Episode of the Báb, pp. 70, 114.

and mighty matter. Religious hatred and rancour is a world-consuming fire.”

“With perfect

compassion and mercy have we guided and directed the people of the world to
that

whereby their souls shall be profited. I swear by the sun of truth

[page 91]

that the people of Behá have not any aim save the prosperity and reformation of the world and the purifying of the nations.” “The heart must be sanctified from every form of selfishness and lust, for the weapons of the worshippers of the Unity and the saints were, and are, the fear of God.” “Every one who desireth victory must first subdue the city of his own heart with the sword of spiritual truth and of the word.” “No stranger must find his way into the city of the heart, so that the Incomparable Friend (i.e., God) may come unto His own place — that is. the effulgence of His names and attributes, not His essence, for that Peerless King hath been, and will be holy for everlasting, above ascent or descent.”¹⁰⁴

People often came to Behá for direction as to their conduct and for instruction. This led him to write the *Lauh-i-aqdas*, or the “Most Holy Book,” in which many practical rules are laid down. It will be seen that they differ considerably from those which are current in Islám. Prayer is to be said three times a day, and the number of prostrations are much fewer than those held necessary amongst Muhammadans. The worshipper no longer turns to Mecca, but towards “the Most Holy Region, the Holy Place, whence issueth the command to whomsoever is in the earths and the heavens.”¹⁰⁵ That Acre is here meant is clear, because it is said that when Behá dies, or, as it is put in hyperbolic language, “when the sun of truth and exhortation sets,” the Qibla is to be changed to “that place which we have appointed you.”

[page 92]

The great festival is that of the Persian Naurúz or New Year’s day. Instead of the Muhammadan fast of Ramazán of thirty days, a month of nineteen days, the last month of the Bábí year, is appointed. Images and pictures are not allowed in places of worship; but music and singing are lawful in such buildings for purposes of devotion. A

belief in the efficacy of talismans and charms is encouraged.¹⁰⁶ Each man constantly carries on his person a charm in the shape of a star, the rays of which are formed of lines, containing the name of God; the women wear one made in the form of a circle. No encouragement is given to mendicants. It is said: — “The most hateful of mankind before God is he who sits and begs: take hold of the rope of means, relying on God, the Causer of Causes.” The traffic in slaves is forbidden, and there are laws about great criminal offences, and civil matters such as inheritance, endowments, and so on. Shaving the head is not allowed, but the beard, may be cut off. Legal impurity is abolished and intercourse with persons of all religions is enjoined.¹⁰⁷ Music is permitted, wine and opium are prohibited. The furniture of houses should be renewed every nineteen years. It is recommended that chairs should be This is to guard against the idea held by some that God comes down into man, or man rises up unto God, and that thus both are identified. The mystical view is that man is annihilated in God. Mr. Browne gives a good quotation from Jámí, a Súfí writer, on this point. “So tread this path that duality may disappear, For if there be duality in this path, falsity will arise: Thou wilt not become He; but if thou strivest, Thou wilt reach a place where thou-ness (tú tú’í) shall depart from thee.” Count Gobineau says that the Báb did not substitute any Qibla for the ancient ones of Jerusalem and Mecca which he set aside; but declared that “ce sera le grand Révélateur qui décidera.” *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L’Asie Centrale*, p. 332. Il (Báb) consacre à nouveau la science talismanique et la relève sans hésiter de la condamnation prononcée contre elle par le Christianisme, et, avec regret, prononcée aussi par l’Islám. *Ibid*, p. 336. A Missionary in Persia writes: — “I can again testify, as I did in the pages of the C. M. S. Intelligencer five years ago, to the exceeding friendliness, and even brotherliness of these dear people.” *C. M. S. Intelligencer*, 1898 p. 648. used. No one must carry arms except in times of tumult or war. Circumcision is treated as a

matter of indifference. The Báb allowed a second wife to be taken, but prohibited concubinage. His reluctance, however, to polygamy was so manifest that his successors consider it an evil thing to accept the tolerance which he showed as regards duality of wives.¹⁰⁸ All are to read the sacred books regularly, to be kind and courteous in their conduct, to give alms, to approve for others what they would like themselves, [page 93]

and to forgive their enemies. Instead of the usual Muhammadan salutation, As-Saláma ‘alaikum and ‘alaikumu’s-salám, or “peace be upon you” and “upon you be peace”, the Bábís amongst themselves say, on meeting one another, “Alláhu abhá” — God is most bright, to which the response is the same.

The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society for October 1892 contains a translation of some of Behá’s selected precepts. They are introduced by the following statement made by

Behá: “These divine ordinances and commands, formerly revealed in sundry epistles, in the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, in the Illuminations, Effulgences, Ornaments, &c., have, agreeably to the

Supreme and most Holy command, been collected, that all may become cognizant of the grace, mercy, and favour of God (great is His glory) in this most mighty Manifestation and

this great Announcement, and may engage in praise and thanksgiving to the desired object

of all the inhabitants of the world. Verily, He helpeth His servants unto that which He

willeth, for He is the wise ordainer.” Some of the precepts to guide the conduct of Bábís are

on the following subjects: —¹⁰⁹

1. Abolition of religious warfare.
2. Friendly intercourse with all sects and people.
3. Promise of this ‘Most Great Peace.’¹¹⁰
4. Obedience to the ruler who protects them.
5. Submission to the laws of the country in which they live.
6. Confession of sin to fellow-men is prohibited. Confession must be to, and pardon sought from, God only.
7. The study of such sciences as tend to the welfare of mankind is encouraged.

[page 94]

8. All must learn some trade or practise some profession.

9. Visits to tombs and shrines are not obligatory.¹¹¹

The personal influence of Behá over his followers is not to be wondered at when an English visitor can thus describe an interview with him. "The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul: power and authority sat in that ample brow; while the deep lines of the forehead and face implied an age which the jet black hair and beard flowing down in undistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain."¹¹²

Les Religions et les Philosophies dans L'Asie Centrale, p. 346.

For a fuller account, see *Journal of the R. A. S.*, October 1892, pp. 678-9.

An expression used by Behá in conversation with Mr. Browne. Behá said, "We desire that all

nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bond of affection and unity

between the sons of men should be strengthened; that diversities of religion should cease, and

differences of race be annulled — what harm is there in this? Yet so it shall be; these fruitless

strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come." Traveller's

Narrative, vol. ii., p. 40.

For a fuller account, see *Journal of the R. A. S.*, October 1892, pp. 678-9.

The Episode of the Báb, p. 40.

Behá has now passed away.¹¹³ A letter written by his son on June 3rd, 1892, gives the

sorrowful news. A short quotation from a translation made by Mr. Browne reads as follows:

—

"The horizon of the phenomenal world is bereft of the effulgence of the sun of wisdom

and revelation, the throne of the universe is deprived of the radiance of the most mighty

luminary. The ears of the friends are, to outward appearance, debarred from hearkening to

the cry of the Supreme Pen and the eyes of the longing are veiled from the contemplation of

the most Glorious Horizon. Great God! how dire a catastrophe is this which has arisen in

the world. The sun of truth has bidden farewell to this earthly sphere. . . .
We and you alike
must adorn ourselves with the ornament of patience and resignation, must lay
hold of the
firm rope of submission and acquiescence, apply ourselves with strong hearts
and tranquil
souls to what will conduce to the progress of mankind, the peace and prosperity
of the
world, the amelioration of character, and the appearance of charity and
concord, and attach
ourselves

[page 95]

with our whole being to the counsels of the Lord of the Visible and the
Invisible, so that the
Phenomenal World may, by the Grace of that Beneficent Being, be beheld an envy
to the
Garden of Paradise.”¹¹⁴

After the death of Behá his eldest son ‘Abbás Effendi became his successor
and is
called — *man arádalláhu*¹¹⁵ — He whom God hath desired. He is described as
a strong, tall
man, with a broad forehead. and keen eye, indicating a firm will and strong
intellect. Those
who come into contact with him feel his influence and soon learn to respect
him.¹¹⁶ Some
Behá’ís consider that he, like Behá, is a divine manifestation and not a
mere man, others
deny this and say that he is nothing more than a servant of Behá, for they
hold that no

His followers do not speak of his death, but always refer to it as his
ascension, C. M. S.

Intelligencer, 1898, p, 645.

The following is the Persian text of the extract from the letter.

R. A. S. *Journal* for October 1892, p. 707.

Mr. E. G. Browne, writing after a personal interview, says: — “subsequent
conversation with him
served to heighten the respect with which his appearance had from the first
inspired me. One more
eloquent of speech, more ready of argument, more apt of illustration, more
intimately acquainted
with the sacred books of the Jews, the Christians, and the Muhammadans,
could, I think, scarcely
be found even amongst the eloquent, ready and subtle race to which he belongs.
These qualities,

combined with a bearing at once majestic and general, made me cease to wonder at the influence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the circle of his father's followers. About the greatness of this man and his power no one who had seen him could entertain a doubt."

Episode of the Báb, p.

xxxvi.

further manifestation will take place until a thousand years shall have passed away. 'Abbás

Effendi lives at Acre, and maintains a correspondence

[page 96]

with his followers in Persia and is visited by some of the more devout of his followers who

look upon the journey from Persia to Acre as a pilgrimage. In the year 1898 he was much

troubled by dissension caused by the rivalry of his younger brother.

The Behá'ís in Persia enjoy much more liberty under Muzaffara'd-dín Sháh than they

did under the late Sháh, Násiru'd-dín.

Space forbids us to follow the fortunes of Subh-i-Ezel in Cyprus, His person and

appearance are thus described by Mr.

Browne.¹¹⁷ "A venerable and benevolent-looking old man of about sixty years of age,

somewhat below the middle height, with ample forehead on which the traces of care and

anxiety were apparent, clear searching blue eyes and long grey beard, rose and advanced to

meet us. Before that mild and dignified countenance, I involuntarily bowed myself with

unfeigned respect; for at length my long-cherished desire was fulfilled, and I stood face to

face with Mírzá Yahyá, Subh-i-Ezel (morning of Eternity), the appointed successor of the

Báb, fourth Letter of the First Unity. "When Cyprus was handed over to the English

Government, Mírzá Yahyá, with other political exiles, was transferred, and still remains

there as a political pensioner.

From what has now been stated, it will be seen that Bábíism is not a political

movement, though in its early days it was brought into conflict with the civil power; but

that it is a religious revolt against orthodox Islám, so far as that is represented by the Shí'ah

sect. It raises women to a higher level, it professes to limit many of the

social evils of

Islám, it tends to give liberty of thought and to develop a friendly spirit to others. Mr.

Curzon says: —118 “Brotherly love, kindness to children, courtesy combined with dignity,

sociability, hospitality, freedom from bigotry, friendliness even to Christians are included

in its tenets.” If men are sometimes better than their creed,

[page 97]

they are sometimes worse, and not every Bábí lives up to this ideal. It is perhaps too soon to

speculate on the future of the movement. Those who think it will gradually take the place of

Islám in Persia, base a strong argument on the fact that its “recruits are won from the best

soldiers of the garrison it is attacking.” It certainly appeals to the traditional instincts of

many Persians. The Súfí needs a Pír, or living guide; the Shí‘ah meditates on the Imám, and

the high position accorded to that person in Bábíism is at least attractive.

The life and death

of the Báb, and the magnificent heroism of his followers all help forward the movement.

Whether when the victory is won, the Bábís in the day of power will be as gentle and as

liberal as they are in the night of adversity is perhaps doubtful. The whole movement has a

disintegrating effect in Islám as professed in Persia, though whether it will prepare the way

for the Gospel is a matter on which there is room for difference of opinion.

Some persons,

well qualified to judge, consider that it yields a present satisfaction to quickened religious

instincts, and supplies a brotherhood not yet to be found in Christianity in Persia, where

indeed it appears to the Persians themselves as a foreign religion. In such a case it would

seem likely to be a final home, rather than a resting place on the road from Muhammad to

Christ. But to all, who take an interest in Christian missions in Persia, the movement is one

of great interest.119 It does, at least, betrays [sic] a longing

Episode of the Báb, p. xxiv.

Persia, Vol. I, p. 502.

I am indebted to a well-known Missionary who has spent a long time in Persia

for the following
facts:

(1) The Behá'ís admit that the Lord Jesus Christ was the incarnate son; but claim that Behá was the incarnate Father, and as each incarnation is superior to a proceeding one, Behá is greater than Christ.

[page 98]

for a, real, living, loving, personal guide, the revealer of God to man, which can be best met by the acceptance of the Eternal Word. In any case, if only liberty of conscience can be secured, there seems to be a wide and open door for the proclamation of "Him whom God has manifested," "in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge", for it "pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell."120

(2) Some of the Behá'ís now say: — 'we are Christians; others say: we are almost Christians; others, 'The only difference between us is that we accepted Christ when he came to us fifty years ago (i.e. in Behá) and you rejected him.

(3) They constantly invite the Christian Missionary to their houses, and are most hospitable and kind.

(4) The Behá'ís admit that the New Testament is the uncorrupted Word of God.

(5) Many Jews in Persia have become Bábís and, on the other hand, some Bábís have become Christians.

Colossians ii. 3; i. 19.

— The Bab and the Babis (Used by permission of the curator)