

and manifestation of a supreme superhuman mission within the development of Islam. From the consciousness of being a Báb, that is “ a door” by which the infallible will of the hidden Imam, as the highest source of all truth, reveals itself to the world, he soon came to believe that in the economy of spiritual development he was really the organ of the hidden instructor, the Imam of the age. In other words, he himself was the new Mahdi, whose coming had been foretold at “ the end of

Digitized by Google

LAT KR I) KV K1,0PM KNTS. 313

the first millennium,’*after the twelfth Imam (260-12G0)* after Mohammed. He is Mahdi, however, no longer as the ordinary Shiite conceives of this dignity, but (and here he touches Isma'ilitic doctrines) as a manifestation of the spirit of the world, as “ the point of manifestation,” the highest truth, which, having taken on bodily form in him, differs only in appearance, but is identical in being with those previous manifestations of that spiritual substance proceeding from God. He is the reappearance on earth of Moses and Jesus, as well as the embodiment of all other prophets through whose bodily appearance in former aeons the divine world-spirit had manifested itself. He preached to his followers opposition to the Mullahs—in Persia more particularly, the Ulemas are so-called—to their sanctimoniousness and hypocrisy, and their worldly strivings. He even went so far as to raise the revelation of Mohammed, which he interpreted largely in an allegorical sense, to the highest level. The practices of Islam, the minute laws on ritualistic purity, etc., were little considered in his doctrine. Sometimes others were substituted for them. Divine judgment, paradise, hell and the resurrection had other meanings. In this he had predecessors in earlier spiritualistic systems. Resurrection is every new periodic manifestation of the divine spirit in relation to a preceding one. The latter comes to new life through its successor. This is the meaning of the “ meeting with God,” as the future life is designated in the Koran. It is, however, not only in dogmatic and legal conceptions that the young Persian visionary opposed the petrified theology of the Mullahs. With his proclamation he attacked the social relationships of his fellow believers. His sympathetic ethics, the brotherhood of all men, were offered in place of the wall of separation between classes. He wished to raise women from the

low position in which actual conditions had placed her

- Of the Mohammedan era.

Digitized by Google

314 MOHAMMED AND ISLAM.

in the name of tradition, to one of equality with man. He begins this task by doing away with the obligatory veil, and by rejecting the coarse conception of marriage as it had developed in Moslem communities, as this development was not a necessary result of religious principles. He connected the nobler conception of the marriage relation with thoughts on the function of the family and the reform of education.

The religious reforms of Bab, therefore, included in their aim the fundamentals of community life. He is a social as well as a religious reformer, but as at the beginning he started with gnostic and mystic views, the latter element permeates his entire system by which he builds up his view of the world. He combines a distinctively modern point of view with Pythagorean subtleties; like the Hurüfîs (page 268) he toys with combinations of the letters of the alphabet, and assigns a numerical value to them. The number 19 possesses the greatest importance and serves him as the point of departure for "Gemutria" (i. e., combinations of letters according to their numerical value), which play a great part in his speculation.

In regard to his own person he teaches his identity with the prophets which preceded him, a conception which has its roots in gnosticism, and even found an expression in earlier schismatic movements in Islam. Similarly he announces for the future a constantly renewing manifestation of the divine spirit, embodied for his days in his own person.² Divine revelation is not concluded either with Mohammed or with him. The divine spirit reveals itself in a progressive chain of periodical manifestations, which proclaim the divine will in a steadily increasing maturity, according to the progress of the times. Through such teachings Mirza Muhammed 'All paved the way for the transformation which took place in his community soon after his death.

Digitized by Google

LATKH DKVKLOI'MENTS. :J15

lie has embodied the substance of his teachings in a religious work regarded as sacred, and known as Bayan, i. e., Interpretation. His doctrine, naturally, appeared exceedingly dangerous from a political as well as from

a religious point of view. The founder and his followers who gathered around him, among whom the heroine Kurat al-'Ain (comfort of the eye) arouses our sympathy, were unsparingly persecuted and proscribed, pursued and turned over to the executioner. Mohammed 'All himself was put to death in July, 1850. Those of his followers who escaped the martyr's death, whose enthusiasm was increased by the persecutions which they suffered, found an asylum on Turkish soil.

Soon after the death of the founder a split occurred within the community, according as the followers recognized the one or the other of two pupils singled out by the Báb, as the authentic interpreter of the will of the late leader. The minority gathered around Subh-i-ezcl (dawn of eternity) with headquarters in Famagusta (Cyprus), who proposed to sanction the work of the Báb in the form given to it by the master. They are the conservative Bábists. The others supported the contention of the other apostle, Bella-Allah (splendor of God), who in the beginning of the sixties, during the stay of the Báb-exiles in Adrianople, declared himself on the basis of a cyclic system, to be the more perfect manifestation proclaimed by the master, through which the latter's own work would be raised to a higher level. Mohammed 'All was his precursor, his John, as it were. The divine spirit had appeared in him to fulfill the preparation made by the precursor. Behä is greater than Bab. The latter was the Kä'im (the one who rises up), Behä is Kayyüm (the permanent one); "He who will appear," the expression used by Báb with regard to his successor, "is greater than the one who has already appeared."³ By preference he calls himself

Digitized by Google

31G MOHAMMED AND ISLAM.

mazhar or mangar, the revelation of God in which the beauty of God is to be seen as in a mirror. He himself is "the beauty of Allah," whose face shines between the heavens and the earth as a precious polished pearl.*

Through him alone the being of God can be known, whose emanation he himself is.⁰ His followers actually invest him with divine attributes, as illustrated in the extravagant hymns addressed to him which have been published by E. G. Browne.⁰

On account of the quarrel which broke out between his followers and the conservative Bábists, Báb and his community were transferred to Akka, where he per-

fecting his doctrine into a complete system in opposition not only to the mild al furkân, the congregation of the Koran, but also to the mild al hayan, i. e., the old Bâbists who would not accept his reform, who declined to pass beyond the Bayun.

His teachings have been embodied in a number of books and epistles in Arabic and Persian, of which the Kitâb akdas (Sacred Book) is the most important.⁷ For his written declarations he claims divine origin. "Even this tablet (referred to in one of his epistles), is a hidden waiting which has been guarded from eternity among the treasures of divine exemption, and whose characters are written with the fingers of divine power, if you would but know it." Thus he conveys the impression as though he did not reveal the whole wealth of his doctrine of salvation, reserving apparently some esoteric thoughts for the innermost circle. He maintains also that certain teachings ought to be kept secret from opponents. In a certain passage he declares : " We must not discuss this stage in detail, for the ears of our opponents are directed toward us in order to over-hear, while offering opposition to the true and everlasting God. For they do not attain to the mystery of knowledge

Digitized by Google

LÂTEK DEVELOPMENTS. 317

and of wisdom of the one who arises from the horizon of the splendor of divine unity."

This manifestation of the universal spirit in Behâ, as the fulfilment of the announcement of the original founder, resulted in the abrogation of the revelation to the Bab in some essential points. While the latter is at bottom only a reform of Islam, Behâ advanced to the larger conception of a world religion which was to unite mankind in a religious brotherhood. As in his political teachings he professes cosmopolitanism—emphasizing that there is "no preference to be given to him who loves his country, but to him who loves the world,"⁸ his religion in this matter was stripped of all narrow sectarianism.

He regards himself as the manifestation of the world spirit to all mankind. With this in view he sends his epistles, which form a portion of his book of revelations, to the nations and rulers of Europe and Asia; and he extends his horizon even to "the kings of America, and to the chiefs of the republic" ; he proclaims "what the dove coos on the branches of constancy." In the eyes

of his followers he becomes a divine man filled with the prophetic spirit, when in his epistle to Napoleon H I he announced, four years before Sedan, the Empire's approaching downfall.

With his cosmopolitan aims in view, he commanded his followers to prepare themselves, by the study of foreign languages, for the mission of apostles of the world religion which was to unite all mankind and all nations "in order that the interpreter of God's cause reaching the east and the west should announce it to the states and nations of the world in such a way, that the minds of men should be drawn to it, and mouldering bones should be brought to life." "By this means, unity is to be brought about and the highest task of civiliza-

Digitized by Google

318 MOHAMMED AND ISLAM.

tion accomplished."0 The ideal means by which the understanding of the world is to be won is a common world language. He wishes that kings and ministers might unite in recognizing one of the existing languages, or else create a new one as the universal language which should be taught in all the schools of the world.10 He threw aside all limitations both of Islam and of Babism. With regard to the latter, it is true, he did not free his proclamation from all mystical speculations, tricks of letters and numbers, which had gathered around early Babism. His main interest, nevertheless, is directed toward the building up of the ethical and social factors. War is strictly forbidden, only "in case of need" is the use of weapons allowed; slavery also is forbidden, and equality of all men is taught as the nucleus of the new gospel.11 In a revelation entitled *Sūrat al-Muliik* (Sura of the Kings) he severely reproached the Sultan of Turkey for allowing such great differences in power to exist among his people.12 In a reforming spirit, he takes up the question of marriage relations already considered by Bab. His ideal is monogamy, but he makes concessions to bigamy, which, however, is to be regarded as the limit of polygamy. Divorce is recognized, but modified in a humane spirit. The reuniting of those who have separated is allowed, provided they have not married again; in direct contrast therefore to the custom of Islam. The law of Islam is regarded as completely superseded; new forms for prayer and ritual are introduced, public prayer with its liturgical forms (*salat al-jama'*) is done away with.

Each individual prays alone (furädä). Common prayer
• is retained only for prayers over the dead. The kibla
(the direction of prayer) is not toward Mecca but toward
the place where the one is whom God has sent down
“ as his manifestation.” When he wanders the kibla
wanders, until he takes up an abode somewhere. Bodily

Digitized by Google

LATER DEVELOPMENTS.

319

cleanliness, washing and bathing, are most emphatically
ordained, as religious duties, together with a warning
against bathing establishments such as those of the
Persians which are represented as very unclean.

With a stroke of the pen he strikes out the limitations
which Islam had laid upon the believers, without going
into any detail except in the case of certain laws of dress.
You may do anything which is not opposed to common
sense.¹³ Like his predecessor he is tireless in his war
against the ‘Ulema who twist and check the will of God.
One is, however, to keep clear of disputes with religious
opponents. The Bella religion recognizes no profes-
sional spiritual position. Every member of this uni-
versal church should work toward a productive aim,
useful to the community. Those who have the ability
should be the spiritual teachers of the community with-
out compensation.¹⁴ The suppression of the corporate
business of teaching was demonstrated by the abolish-
ment of the pulpit (minbar) in public gathering places.¹⁰
We will be disappointed if we expect to find Behä in
the camp of the liberals in political matters. He surprises
us by fighting political freedom—“ We see that many
men desire freedom and boast of it: they are obviously
in error. . . . Freedom brings about confusion whose
fire is not extinguished. Know that the origin and
appearance of freedom is animalic ; man must be under
laws which guard him from his own barbarity, and the
harms which may be done by those who are false. Indeed
freedom removes man from the demands of culture and
propriety.”—and so on, in undisguised reactionary lan-
guage.¹⁸ The adherents of the Bella do not even favor
the liberal political developments in Turkey and Persia,
but look with disfavor on the dethronement of the sultan
and the shah.¹⁷

The mission of the Behä Alläh passed after his death
(May 16, 1892), with only a few objections by the

Digitized by Google

320 MOHAMMED AND ISLAM.

“ friends” (ahbâb), to his son and successor ‘Abbfis Effendi, called ‘Abd-al Balia, or Ghusn Azam (the Great Branch).¹⁸ He carried the views of his lather to a comprehensive development. They are made to conform more and more to the forms and aims of the intellectual thought of the Occident. The fantastic elements which had still clung to the previous stage are made as mild as possible, although not yet completely thrown off. ‘Abbfis makes a wide use of the writings of the Old and New Testament which he quotes for his purposes. In this way he strives to extend the influence to still wider circles than those to which the followers of his father had appealed.

Since the appearance of ‘Abd-al Bahfi the propaganda has attained very remarkable results. A great number of American ladies (the names of a few can be found in the notes) made a pilgrimage to the Persian prophet at the foot of Mount Carmel in order to bring to their western homes words of healing from his own lips, words which they had heard directly from the holy man. The best presentation of the teaching of ‘Abbfis we owe to Miss Laura Clifford Barney, who, living a long time in the vicinity of ‘Abbfis, took down his teachings in shorthand in order to bring them to the western world as representing an authentic conception of the new Balia doctrine.¹⁰

The movement started by the Bfib is no longer to bear the name of its founder. There has developed lately a preference to call this offspring of the doctrine of MĪrzâ Mohammed ‘All which is constantly spreading and leaving its rivals behind, Behdiyya, a name which the faithful give themselves in opposition to the unimportant remnants of the conservative Bayfin-adherents who are gathered under other leaders.

The wide universalistic aim which characterizes it has drawn its adherents not only from mosques, but from

Digitized by Google

LATÍ It DÍ VJ5L0PM 1ÍNTS. »21

churches, synagogues, and fire temples. A building for public worship has lately been erected in Ashkabad near the Persian boundary in Russian Turkestan. A description of it has been given by an enthusiastic European interpreter of Bella*ism, Hippolyte Dreyfus.²⁰ On the other hand, the designation BcluV ism embodies the idea of religious free-thought, of the laying aside of the positive doctrine of Islam. As formerly the term Zindik

meant an early Moslem whose religious views were influenced by Parseeism and Manichaeism, and as later the name Failasüf (Philosopher), lately also Farmasfm (franc-maçon) without regard to a definite kind of backsliding from true Islam generally refers to a free-thinker, so to-day in Persia, Behfi'1 is applied not only to this latest development of the Bábi faith, but as Rev. F. M. Jordan has remarked, " many of those who are given this name are really nothing but 'irreligious rationalists.' " 2' Since the adherents of this form of belief in Persia and also in other Moslem lands still have every reason to hide their completely anti-Mohammedan convictions from publicity and to claim the practice of takiyya (above page 228), it would be difficult to offer even approximately correct statistics as to the followers of Bfibiism in both its forms. The statement of Rev. Isaac Adams, one of the latest to picture Babi conditions, that their number in Persia reaches three millions, would seem to be exaggerated. This would mean almost a third of the whole population of the country. 'Abbas Effendi himself in an interview in New York in July, 1912, said he could not give the number of the followers of Beim* ism.

Bfibism, passing over into Bella* ism, has undertaken a serious propaganda. Its teachers and followers have not hesitated to draw the consequences of their conviction that they are not a sect of Islam but the representative of a world-wide doctrine. Its propaganda has

Digitized by Google

322 MOHAMMED AND ISLAM.

not only spread far among those of Moslem faith (as far as Indo-China) but with remarkable success is going farther and farther beyond the boundaries of Islam. The prophet of 'Akka has found in America and in Europe also, it is claimed, zealous adherents even among Christians.²¹ Through the spread of literature the attempt is made to crystallize American Beha'ism. Its journalistic interpreter is a magazine known as the Star of the West, which has appeared nineteen times every year since 1910 (19 being the sacred number of the Bab). With Chicago as its center, it covers a wide area in the United States, and it is in this very city that plans are being formed for the erection of a religious gathering place, mashrak al-Adkat, for the American Behas. A considerable sum raised by the " Friends" has assured the acquisition of a large piece of land on the banks of

Lake Michigan which was dedicated on the first of May, 1912, by 'Abbas Effendi during his tour in the United States.²³ Jewish visionaries also have picked out from the books of the Old Testament prophets the foretelling of the Behfi and 'Abbas. According to them, wherever the "glory of Jahweli" is spoken of, the appearance of the Saviour of the world, Bella Allah is meant. They find support in all the references to Mount Carmel, in the neighborhood of which the Light of God shone for all men at the end of the nineteenth century. Nor have they neglected to ferret out from the visions of the Book of Daniel²⁴ the foretelling and even the chronology of the movement beginning with the Bab. The 2300 year-days (Dan. viii:14) at the end of which "the sanctuary shall be cleansed" corresponds, according to their reckoning, with the year 1844, of our era, the year in which Mirza Mohammed 'All proclaimed himself as Báb, and at which time the universal spirit (Welt-geist) entered into a new phase of its manifestation.

Digitized by Google

LATER DEVELOPMENTS. 323

With the appearance of 'Abbas Effendi, the application of Biblical interpretations went one step farther. According to these he was foretold as "the child who will be born to us, the son who will be given to us," on whose shoulders lie the responsibilities of a prince, and who is the bearer of the wonder epithets in Isaiah 9:5. As I write these pages I listen to these Biblical proofs from the lips of a Bella visionary who for two years has been staying in my town. He was formerly a physician in Teheran, and is endeavoring to find followers for his faith here. Itc feels in himself a special mission to my country. This fact is one more proof that it is not on American soil alone that the extra-Mohammedan propaganda of the new Beim is directed.

Digitized by Google

— Mohammed and Islam (Used by permission of the curator)