

# **An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith**

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of  
Baylor University  
in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree  
of  
Doctor of Philosophy

by  
**Vernon Elvin Johnson**

Waco, Texas  
December 1974



## **Abstract**

# **An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith**

**Vernon Elvin Johnson**  
Baylor University

Chairman: James Leo Garrett, Jr.

The Baha'i World Faith, originating in Persia in 1844 and now extending around the world, has undergone extraordinary changes in its evolution to its present stage of development. Baha'is freely acknowledge the evolutionary character of their religion, which results in periodic outdateding of previous teachings and practice. Edward G. Browne, Cambridge University, wrote in 1910 that "few religions have undergone so rapid an evolution ...." No less spectacular have been the developments in the religion since Browne made that statement.

The dissertation focuses on the major transformations which have occurred in the religion during the faith's 130-year history with a view toward ascertaining the religion's character and its present slate of development, giving particular attention to the opposition each transformation aroused, the tensions in the faith it produced, and the adjustments it necessitated. These transformations were affected by the successive leaders in the faith, and each transformation was of a critical nature, producing a majority who accepted and a minority who rejected each

transformation. The study has particular relevance concerning the religion's claim that, unlike other religions, it is protected from schism.

Briefly defined, the transformations dealt with are the following: (1) Baha'u'llah's transformation of the Babi religion into the Baha'i faith; (2) 'Abdu'l-Baha's transformation of the faith into a more Western and socially oriented religion with Christian overtones; (3) Shoghi Effendi's transformation of the religion from its loosely organized, inclusive, and universal character into a tightly organized, exclusive, and narrowly defined religions and (4) a final transformation from a religion under the guardianship of an appointed, living descendant of Baha'u'llah to a religion directed by a body of nine elected officials whose term of office is temporary.

The study is divided into three parts. Part I deals with introductory matters, a general introduction (Chapter I) and a review of previously written histories on the Babi-Baha'i movement to which references are made in later sections of the dissertation, giving attention to the different perspectives from which they are written and their relative values in providing accurate information about the faith's history (Chapter II). Part II on the birth and early history of the Babi-Baha'i movement covers the ministries of the Bab (Chapter III), Baha'u'llah (Chapter IV), and 'Abdu'l-Baha (Chapter V) and the transformations of the faith effected within their ministries. Part III deals with "modern Baha'i," the faith as an institutionalized religion, treating the ministries of Shoghi Effendi (Chapter VI) and the Universal House of Justice (Chapter VII) and their transformations.

Appended to the dissertation are two letters discovered in the course of the research, both dated March 31, 1901, from Muhammad 'Ali and Badi'u'llah to the recently formed "Society of Behaists" and to the "president of the House of Justice".<sup>i</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> Dr Frederick O. Pease, the President of the House of Justice of the Society of Behaists.—M.W.T.

To Dee  
in appreciation for your  
love, faith, and sacrifice  
during the years of graduate study



## Preface

My first awareness of the Baha'i World Faith was in reading a question and answer section of the *Catholic Digest* ("What Would You Like to Know about the Church?") in the January, 1964, issue while I was a student at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. A reader had asked how the Baha'i religion compared with Roman Catholicism, particularly in their views of revelation. Included in the answer was a brief statement of the history and teachings of the Baha'i faith. I immediately was impressed with the faith's broad concept of revelation that God had revealed himself successively through the founders of most of the major, living religions. I made no further inquiry into Baha'i, however, until I enrolled in the graduate program in religion at Baylor University and again encountered the religion as one of a number of religious movements treated in a course I took in the spring, 1965, taught by Dr James K. Wood Jr., who became my major professor. With Dr Wood's encouragements, I began research into the Baha'i faith.

My first meeting with Baha'is was in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon Dobbins, Fort Worth, Texas. I later visited the Baha'i temple in Wilmette, Illinois, on my way to and from a session at Davison Baha'i summer school, Davison, Michigan (August 15-19, 1966). These were the first of various personal contacts with Baha'is. I also attended the Bridgeport Baha'i summer school, near Fort Worth, in the summer, 1970.

As research into the faith progressed, the need for deciding on a particular topic of inquiry concerning the faith became more pressing. The subject of the present dissertation on the transformations in the faith's evolution has undergone its own evolution. I first planned to write on "the Baha'i Concept of Unity" and even prepared a "pilot study" for a class on this projected topic. I felt later that I should narrow this subject to "the Baha'i Concept of the Unity of Mankind." But the more I studied the religion the more fascinated I became with its history and with an emerging pattern in the religion's development. I became aware of a series of "transformations" which had occurred in the religion. The most obvious was Baha'u'llah's transformation of the Babi movement into the Baha'i religion, but J. R. Richards, who wrote a book on Baha'i in 1932, spoke also of a transformation under 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah's son and successor. A study of the religion's later history revealed that transformations also had taken place in the latter two stages of the religion's evolution. I proposed at this point to write on "Critical Transformations of the Baha'i Religion through Its Successive Leadership". To define more the nature of the dissertation and to give more emphasis to the evolutionary aspect of the faith, I finally decided on the present topic, which was approved by the faculty of the department of religion.

In the meantime, my major professor, Dr Wood had accepted a position as executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, Washington, DC, and Dr James Leo Garrett, Jr., became editor of *Journal of Church and State* at Baylor and assumed other responsibilities previously held by Dr Wood. Dr Garrett also assumed responsibility as director of the present dissertation.



To both Dr Wood and Dr Garrett is due appreciation, to Dr Wood for encouragements and directing of the dissertation during the research stage and to Dr Garrett for directing the dissertation during its actual writing. The other dissertation committee members, Dr Bruce C. Cresson and Dr E. H. Duncan, with Dr Garrett made various suggestions for the correcting and improvement of the written text.

I owe a special debt of gratitude to numerous Baha'is whom I have met who have aided me in some way in the research and in understanding the religion which they espouse. The Gordon Dobbins family holds a special place in my memory and appreciation for arranging my first meeting with Baha'is. Mrs. Dobbins, especially, always most kind, offered various encouragements and leads in the research.

The Baha'is whom I met at Davison Baha'i summer school provided me with stimulating insights into their faith. Among those I met at the Davison school, I owe particular gratitude to Albert James, member of an auxiliary board to the hands of the cause, Kathleen Javid, who lectured on the life of Baha'u'llah at the school, and to Dr S. P. Raman, each of whom read my original "pilot study", offering their corrections and comments, and with whom I held a number of enlightening discussions.

Appreciation is due also to Florence Mayberry, a member of the continental board of counselors for North America, for her lectures and discussions at the Bridgeport school, to Stanwood Cobb, a Baha'i author, for letters of explanation; to the National Spiritual Assembly for information; and especially to Tarazu'llah Samandari, hand of the cause, with whom I was granted an interview in Fort Worth in January, 1968, during his North American teaching tour. Samandari was present at Bahji with Baha'u'llah,

the Baha'i prophet after whom the religion is named, before his "ascension" (death) in 1892. Samandari fell ill during his teaching mission and passed away in his ninety-third year on September 2, 1968.

For much of the information in Chapter VII, derived from letters and materials, I am indebted to Mason Remey, regarded by his followers as the faith's second guardian, who passed away February 4, 1974; to Charley O. Murphy, Remey's associate in the United States; to Joel B. Marangella, who claims the third guardianship; to A. S. Petzoldt; and to the National Bureau of the Orthodox Baha'i Faith of the United States and Canada through its secretary, Franklin D. Schlatter.

Last but by no means least, I mention my great debt to William McElwee Miller, author of a new book on Baha'i, which is a revision and updating of his earlier volume published in 1931. Rev. Miller served from 1919 to the end of 1962 as a Presbyterian missionary in Iran, where Baha'i originated. Rev. Miller read my original "pilot study", offered helpful comments, loaned me some materials from his personal library, and provided leads for further research. During the course of writing the dissertation, he also kindly made available to me the manuscript of his new book, which was therefore accessible to me as I wrote the latter chapters. Some references to Miller's new book were inserted in the revisions of the earlier chapters.

To all of the above mentioned persons, whose kind assistance helped make possible the present dissertation, and to numerous other unnamed persons who aided directly or indirectly in the research and production of the dissertation, I offer my sincere gratitude.

To avoid confusion, mention should be made that the reader will encounter in the dissertation various spellings of names and terms due to differences among writers in transliterating Persian and Arabic words. For example, Baha'u'llah is written variously as Beha Ullah, Baha Ullah, Baha-O-Llah, Baha'o'llah, Bahauallah, etc.

Baha'is today follow a uniform system of transliteration. This system is given in Marzieh Gail's *Baha'i Glossary*, which I have followed for the most part in transliterations in the text of the dissertation. In quotations from other material, however, I have spelled words as they appear in the texts being quoted. I refer in the bibliography to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl as Abul Fazl since the latter spelling appears on the title page of his work, but in the text of the dissertation the former spelling is used since it is the preferred spelling by Baha'is today.

To be consistent with this transliteration, 'Akka and Tihran are so spelled in the text rather than with more familiar spellings as Acre and Tehran or Teheran. The reader will discover other variations between words spelled in the dissertation's text and as spelled in quoted material, especially in quotations from earlier literature.

A few comments concerning style may be necessary. The dissertation follows as a general guide Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, third edition, revised (1967), which was specified for use when I began composing and typing the dissertation. On points not explicitly covered in Turabian's *Manual*, as in the capitalizations of words, the dissertation follows the University of Chicago's *A Manual of Style*, twelfth edition, revised (1969).

Quotations from the Qur'an are from Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall's *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran* unless otherwise indicated.

# Contents

Abstract .....	i
Preface .....	iii

## Part 1

### Introduction to the study of the Baha'i Faith

1. Introduction .....	1
Definition of the Baha'i Faith .....	3
Reasons for studying the Baha'i Faith .....	6
Reasons for studying the Baha'i transformations .....	29
Plan of work .....	36
2. Studies on the Babi-Baha'i Movement .....	48
Gobineau's history .....	48
Histories edited by E. G. Browne .....	50
Christian apologies .....	92
Later Baha'i histories .....	99

## Part 2

### The origin and early development of the Baha'i World Faith

3. The Bab and the abrogation of the Qur'anic dispensation .....	112
The religious background of the Baha'i Faith .....	112
'Ali-Muhammad, the Bab .....	124
The teachings of the Bab .....	149
The transforming character of the Babi religion .....	158

4. Baha'u'llah and the supersession of the Babi Dispensation .....	168
The period before Baha'u'llah's declaration .....	168
Baha'u'llah's declaration of His Mission .....	191
The period after Baha'u'llah's declaration .....	194
Baha'u'llah's transformation .....	199
5. 'Abdu'l-Baha and the prerogatives of "the servant" .....	229
Sketch of 'Abdu'l-Baha's life .....	230
Opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership .....	235
'Abdu'l-Baha's transformation .....	245
Part 3	
Modern Baha'i: The Faith as an institutionalized religion	
6. Shoghi Effendi and the institutionalizing of the Faith .....	269
Shoghi Effendi's appointment as Guardian .....	269
Shoghi Effendi's transformation .....	271
Opposition to Shoghi Effendi's transformation .....	299
7. The Universal House of Justice and the question of the Guardianship .....	323
The Faith under the leadership of the Guardians .....	325
The transformation by the Universal House of Justice .....	330
Mason Remey's opposition to the transformation .....	335
Baha'is under the Universal House of Justice .....	347
Developments in the Orthodox Baha'i Faith .....	355
The emergence of a third guardian .....	364
Conclusion .....	384
Summary of the transformations .....	384
Critical nature of the transformations .....	386
Seeds of the transformations .....	395
Tensions created by the transformations .....	397
The transformations and the question of schism .....	403
A final transformation? .....	409
Bibliography .....	415

Appendices

I	Letter from Muhammad 'Ali and Badi'u'llah to the President of the House of Justice .....	427
II	Letter from Muhammad 'Ali Bad'U'llah to the Society of Behaists .....	432

**PART I**  
**Introduction to the study of the Baha'i Faith**





# 1

## Introduction

Geoffrey Parrinder, in his book *The Christian Debate: Light from the East*, makes this surprising comment:

Christian theology teaches that the Incarnation is unique, in the sense that Christ came 'once for all'. But the Epistle to the Hebrews which invented this phrase, places Christ firm in the succession of prophets and angelic messengers. ... And according to the New Testament, the human life of Christ is not the only time that he will appear. ... It could at least be suggested that at his next coming Christ will be as hard to recognize as he was before.<sup>1</sup>

The Baha'is maintain that this is precisely what has happened. Christ, they say, has returned! The ancient message which the early Christians proclaimed across the known world of their time, that the long awaited Messiah had come, is being reasserted with all its original fervor in the Baha'i announcement that the expected Christ of the Christian faith has now appeared. Baha'is insist, moreover, that Christians, by their denial of Baha'u'llah, are making the same mistake, and often for similar reasons, which the Jews made in refusing to accept Jesus Christ.

Baha'is not only say that Baha'u'llah is the returned Christ of the Christian faith but also make the astounding claim that their prophet, Baha'u'llah, is the expected deliverer hoped for in all the revealed religions; he is the expected Lord of Hosts of the Jewish religion, the Fifth Buddha of Buddhism, the Shah Bahram of Zoroastrianism, the "Great

Announcement” of Islam, and the return of Krishna for the Hindus.<sup>2</sup> Since Baha'u'llah fulfills the hopes of all the world's true religions, Baha'is believe that the adherents of the diverse religions may at last be united in Baha'u'llah by one common devotion.

The Baha'is claim is be a uniting influence among the diverse peoples of the world finds some verification in actual practice, for in Baha'i gatherings one may find converts from Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Hinduism, and other religions, worshipping and serving together in their common loyalty to Baha'u'llah.

If Baha'u'llah is the return of Christ, if he is the expected deliverer of all the world's religions, if he is the hope for world peace and unity, then his appearance in the world is an event of unsurpassed importance, and to ignore him would be tantamount to a betrayal not only of one's own religious heritage but of all humanity.

The present study will examine the new religion which centers around Baha'u'llah and which is named after him—the Baha'i faith—in an attempt to trace its historical development at the points of its major alterations from previous forms, to clarify certain issues and focus on others which need clarification, and hopefully to lay the basis for profitable dialogue between Baha'is and non-Baha'is and in particular between Baha'is and Christians.

Certain preliminary questions will be dealt with in this introductory chapter: What is the Baha'i faith, why study this new religion, and why study the particular aspect of the faith selected for the present inquiry?

## Definition of the Baha'i Faith

Since the word “Baha’i” is not frequently used in many vocabularies, and since the present study will deal almost in its entirety with the Baha’i religion, some definition of Baha’i, it would seem, is in order, and one of the best definitions of the faith by a Baha’i is that given by Arthur Dahl:

The Baha’i World Faith is a new independent universal religion, whose goal is to revitalize mankind spiritually, to break down the barriers between peoples and lay the foundation for a unified society based upon principles of justice and love.<sup>3</sup>

Each of the four words at the beginning of Dahl’s definition—“new independent universal religion”—is important.

The Baha’i faith is a *new* religion. It originated a little more than a hundred years ago, in 1844, in Persia (or Iran), the birthplace of another great religion, Zoroastrianism, as well as of the lesser known movements of Manichaeism and Mazdakism.

The faith is an *independent* religion. Sometimes Baha’i is treated as a sect of Islam. It originated out of Shi’ah Islam in Persia, as Christianity originated within the context of Judaism and Buddhists within the framework of Hinduism, but as these religions in time became distinguished from their parent religions, so the Baha’i faith may now be distinguished from its parent faith, Islam. The Baha’i religion claims to be independent of Islam, and Islam refuses to recognize the Baha’i faith as having any connection with it. Therefore, it is best to see the Baha’i faith as the independent religion it claims to be and which, in fact, it is. Edward G. Browne, a leading authority on the early Babi-Baha’i movement, remarks:

The Babis are Muhammadans only in the sense that the Muhammadans are Christians or the Christians Jews; that is to say, they recognize Muhammad (Mohomet) as a true prophet and the Qur'an (Koran) as a revelation, but they deny their finality.<sup>4</sup>

Samuel Graham Wilson, in one of the earlier extensive studies on the Baha'i faith, argued that the Baha'i faith is a distinct religion from Christianity and further maintained: "It is not even a sect of Islam. It abrogates and annuls it."<sup>5</sup> Hamid Algar, in a more recent study, holds similarly that "Babism, at all stages of its doctrinal development, was of necessity opposed to Islam, for its claim to validity presupposed the supersession of Islam."<sup>6</sup> The Baha'i faith, which arose out of the Babi movement, should be seen properly as an independent religion.

The Baha'i faith, moreover, is a *universal* religion. It calls itself the Baha'i *World* Faith, and it has a right to this designation for at least three reasons: (1) it is located in centers around the world; (2) it concerns itself with world issues, as the equality of the sexes, international language, education for all; (3) and it has a world vision, aspiring to unify all races, nations, and creeds of men into one world brotherhood.<sup>7</sup>

The Baha'i faith is a *religion*. Some have seen the faith as being basically a social, ethical, or humanitarian movement and have failed to regard it as a religion. For example, John C. Wishard, who served as the director of the American Presbyterian Hospital in Tihiran, says of the Baha'i faith: "It is an ethical teaching, and not a religion."<sup>8</sup> That the faith inculcates high ethical principles within its members cannot be denied, and that the religion has definite social aims is clearly evident in the following Baha'i principles which are set forth as Baha'u'llah's teachings for this new age:

1. The oneness of mankind
2. Independent investigation of truth
3. The common foundation of all religions
4. The essential harmony of science and religion
5. Equality of men and women
6. Elimination of prejudice of all kinds
7. Universal compulsory education
8. A spiritual solution of the economic problem
9. A universal auxiliary language
10. Universal peace upheld by a world government<sup>9</sup>

These principles which are put forth as Baha'u'llah's essential teachings, however, express only the outward, social form of the faith's concerns and do not reveal the inner religious side of the faith, which is built around Baha'u'llah as God's spokesman for the modern age. Marcus Bach, sympathetic interpreter of the faith, appropriately maintains that the Baha'i concept of mankind's reconciliation to God through Baha'u'llah "places a much deeper perspective and implication on the Baha'i movement than a mere socially activist program for world union."<sup>10</sup> Alessandro Bausani, professor of Persian literature and Islamistics at Rome University, and himself a Baha'i, writes:

The Baha'i Faith declares itself a religion. Though its doctrines are so simple that some have taken it for a philosophical or humanitarian movement, the history of its founding and of its first historic period belies such an interpretation.<sup>11</sup>

The early history of this faith is bathed in the blood of some 20,000 martyrs who gave themselves in utter devotion to the Bab, the martyr-prophet, who foretold the coming after him of a greater one, whom Baha'is identify with Baha'u'llah. The Baha'i faith, indeed, is a religion which

centers in devotion to a person believed to be God's manifestation for the modern age; it demands unreserved acceptance of his person as God's latest revelation to the world and requires absolute submission to his every word and command.

Dahl's definition of the Baha'i faith is good, inasmuch as it touches the points elaborated on above and as it focuses on the religion's aims. For one, however, who has no prior acquaintance with the religion, and in the light of the above discussion, the following definition may be given: The Baha'i faith is a world religion founded in Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century A.D. which centers around the Persian seer, Baha'u'llah, as God's manifestation for the modern age and which aims, by being obedient to Baha'u'llah's teachings, to bring about the unity of all races, nations, and creeds of men in one world government and one common faith.

### **Reasons for studying the Baha'i Faith**

After the definition of Baha'i, a second question emerges: Why study the Baha'i faith? Is the religion worthy of the time and effort required for the writing of a doctoral dissertation on it? Could not one spend his time more profitably on some other subject? Actually, rather than being a subject on the periphery of vital concerns, it may be regarded as a subject of central importance, not only for the student of the history of religions but for anyone interested in world problems and proposals for their solution. Ernst Klienki, president of the Esperanto Society of Germany, said in his address delivered in Danzig in Esperanto on July 30, 1927:

Because of their cultural principles alone, Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha are worthy to be regarded among the highest Lights of all times, even by those who are not able to accept the religious part of their teachings.<sup>12</sup>

That the Baha'i faith is worthy of extensive study may be seen for the following reasons.

### ***Imposing claims***

The Baha'i faith, first of all, "by its stupendous claims compels attention."<sup>13</sup> It claims that the prophets of all true religions of the past have foretold the coming of Baha'u'llah and the golden age which would be ushered in by his coming. This claim is based on the word of Baha'u'llah himself, who declared:

*The Revelation which, from time immemorial, hath been acclaimed as the Purpose and Promise of all the Prophets of God, and the most cherished Desire of His Messengers, hath now, by virtue of the pervasive Will of the Almighty and at His irresistible bidding, been revealed unto men. The advent of such a Revelation hath been heralded in all the sacred Scriptures. Behold how, notwithstanding such an announcement, mankind hath strayed from its path and shut out itself from its glory.*<sup>14</sup>

Baha'is maintain that, as the Jews were blinded from accepting Jesus as the Messiah because of their preconceived ideas about the Messiah and about how the prophecies concerning him were to be interpreted, Christians are guilty of rejecting Baha'u'llah as the returned Christ because of preconceived interpretations of New Testament prophecies concerning Christ's return and the events connected with his coming. If Jesus has returned in Baha'u'llah, then that event is the most singularly important event since the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth, and for Christians to fail in recognizing him would be their most grievous sin.

William S. Hatcher, who was converted to the Baha'i faith while a student in the Divinity School at Vanderbilt University, testifies:

I met Baha'i for the first time as a freshman in college. During these four years of search I, like almost every other Christian, refused to consider seriously the claims of Baha'u'llah as the Promised One. The truly frightening thing is that Christian leaders simply refuse even to consider the claims of Baha'i. They are willing to study for years the detailed aspects of the Bible, historical and contemporary theological literature, and the history of the Christian church; yet they refuse to consider even the possibility that the claims of Baha'u'llah might be true.<sup>15</sup>

Hatcher mentions his study in the thought of such philosophers and theologians as Søren Kierkegaard, Karl Jaspers, Gabriel Marcel, Jean-Paul Sartre, Richard Niebuhr, Nels Ferré, and Paul Tillich and refers to his having been privileged "to know and talk with some of the greatest leaders of Christianity in the United States and, to some extent, in the world,"<sup>16</sup> through his college experience and through participation in religious activities, but he confesses:

In all of my activity, I have found nothing which is in any way comparable to the Baha'i Revelation either in the dynamic qualities of the Spirit or in the satisfaction of the intellect. When one finds such deep and lasting satisfaction in an age so fraught with error and anxiety, he can do nothing else but follow it. Indeed, he would be a fool to do otherwise! I pray that I may be able to say, as other Baha'is have said, "And if something else comes along which is more satisfying than this, then I will follow it." This is indeed the spirit of truth.<sup>17</sup>

Baha'is claim not only that Baha'u'llah is Christ returned but that in him is to be found the solution to the world's ills. When men put into action his teachings, then the world's millennium will become a reality, peace in the world will be achieved, and men will be able to live in harmony and unity with one another in one great world brotherhood. The religions of the world, moreover, will become united under the banner of Baha'u'llah. George Craig Stewart exclaims: "Of all the fantastic dreams that men have ever dreamed this religion is the most ambitious."<sup>18</sup>



Certainly, other religions have had great dreams and other religious figures have claimed to be the return of Christ, but Baha'u'llah's claims are not so easily dismissed. The faith has proved to some extent its ability to unite in its cause the members of various religions creeds and backgrounds, and this diversity in unity is evident in many Baha'i gatherings. Part of the Baha'i success is due to the fact that Baha'is accept other religions' founders as true messengers of God and their sacred books as authentic. Edward G. Browne, professor at Cambridge University who devoted a good portion of his life to the study of the early history of the Babi-Baha'i movement, related that he had often heard Christian ministers express wonder at the extraordinary success of Babi missionaries, as contrasted with the almost complete failure of their own<sup>19</sup> in Muslim lands, Browne believed the reason for this was that Western Christianity is "more Western than Christian, more racial than religious,"<sup>20</sup> but also because the Babi propagandist admitted, while the Christian missionary rejected, the prophetic function of Muhammad and the divine inspiration of the Qur'an.<sup>21</sup> What Browne observes as true of the Babi propaganda among Muslims is true also of the Baha'i approach to other religions of the world. The Baha'i accepts the divine founding of each religion, denies only its finality, and points to its fulfilment in the Baha'i revelation.

The Baha'i faith is not to be classed with the fad or freak religion which arise from time to time, gaining a small following among a certain class but having no real rootage and failing to make any lasting impression. The Baha'i faith has demonstrated its vitality and its seriousness by inspiring its members to suffer martyrdom by the

thousands, to leave family and friends in fostering the faith in distant lands, and to work courageously and tirelessly against difficult odds, and it has been successful in attracting to its banner a large host of men and women from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, social standings, and intellectual capacities.

Various persons testify to the strange power of the Baha'i spirit when it is encountered. Professor Browne, mentioned above, made two trips to Persia and was in intimate contact with the members of the movement. He wrote:

Persian Muslims will tell you often that the Babís bewitch or drug their guests so that these, impelled by a fascination which they cannot resist become similarly affected with what the aforesaid Muslims regard as a strange and incomprehensible madness. Idle and absurd as this belief is, it yet rests on a basis of fact stronger than that which supports the greater part of what they allege concerning this people. The spirit which pervades the Babís is such that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all subjected to its influence. It may appal or attract: it cannot to ignored or disregarded. Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if they will; but, should that spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion which they are not likely to forget.<sup>22</sup>

E. S. Stevens, who spent six months among the Baha'is, refers to how "this strange enthusiasm, this spiritual hashish ... sent men to martyrdom with smiles on their faces and joyous ecstasy in their hearts."<sup>23</sup>

### ***High praise by non-Baha'is***

Another reason the Baha'i faith is worthy of study is the high praise lavished upon the new faith by non-Baha'is. The adherents of a religion might naturally praise it highly and see great prospects for its future, but when non-Baha'i, many of distinguished merit, speak of the Baha'i faith in the terms they do, one's attention may properly be aroused.

Robert E. Speer, for some forty-six years the secretary of the Board of Foreign Missions, Presbyterian Church in the USA, a world traveller familiar with religious currents of the time, said of the Babi religion: "It is one of the most remarkable movements of our day."<sup>24</sup> Edward G. Browne, who translated various Baha'i works into English, called the Babi-Baha'i movement 'the greatest religious movement of the century'<sup>25</sup> and a system "whatever its actual destiny may be" which "is of that stuff whereof world-religions are made."<sup>26</sup>

Herbert A. Miller of the sociology department, Ohio State University, wrote: "What will be the course of the Baha'i Movement, no one can prophesy, but I think it is no exaggeration to claim that the progress is the finest fruit of the religious contributions of Asia."<sup>27</sup> A Christian theologian, Nels F. S. Ferré, admits: "I have been surprised at the depth and devotional character of the best in Baha'i scriptures as presented, for instance, in Townshend's *The Promise of All Ages*."<sup>28</sup>

Marcus Bach, formerly a professor of comparative religion, University of Iowa, an authority on numerous small or little known religious groups, says of the Baha'i religion: "Wherever I have gone to research the faith called Baha'i, I have been astonished at what I have found."<sup>29</sup> He mentions his astonishment when he visited the Baha'i World Center in Haifa, Israel, and stood on Mt. Carmel in the shadow of the golden-domed Shrine of the Bab and his equal astonishment at the Baha'i "Nine Year Plan" projected for the years 1964-1973. He then says:

But most of all, I am continually intrigued by the Baha'i people, close to a million of them representing the basic cultural

and ethnic groups around the world and embracing obscure and little known localities in far-flung lands where even Christianity has barely gone. ... I have met them in the most unexpected places, in a war-torn village in southeast Asia, in African cities, in industrial Mexico, in the executive branches of big industry in Iran, in schools and colleges on foreign campuses, in American cities and villages, wherever people dream of the age-old concept of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God, somewhere in the unfolding rapture of the phrase, the Baha'is are there.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Baha'is are a small and sometimes unnoticed presence amid the fast-moving, technological currents of the modern world, the historian, Arnold Toynbee, suggests something of the potential of the Baha'is when he observes how the Christian faith went largely unobserved, and little esteemed, by the cultured elite when it was only a century old:

In a Hellenizing World early in the second century of the Christian Era the Christian Church loomed no larger, in the sight of an Hellenically educated dominant minority, than the Baha'i and Ahmadi sects were figuring in the sight of a corresponding class in a Westernizing World mid-way through the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>

Toynbee feels that "syncretistic" religions constructed artificially from elements of existing religions have little chance of capturing mankind's imagination and allegiance because such attempts are made partly for utilitarian rather than religious reasons, such as the Emperor Akbar's attempt in India and the Roman Emperor Julian's attempt, but Toynbee says:

At the same time, when I find myself in Chicago and when, travelling northwards out of the city, I pass the Bahai temple there, I feel that in some sense this beautiful building may be a portent of the future.<sup>32</sup>

Such recognitions by non-Baha'i scholars of the importance and possible destiny of the Baha'i faith as a significant religious influence in the modern world require that the faith be given careful attention.

Baha'is claim that an American president, Woodrow Wilson, "was well read in the writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, whose books

he frequently perused at his bedtime reading hour.”<sup>33</sup> Stanwood Cobb asks:

Was his League of Nations, so similar to the plan of Baha’u’llah, derived from these readings in the Baha’i literature? Or was there already a plan forming in his own soul which these writings confirmed and strengthened?<sup>34</sup>

Marcus Bach reports that his students

were not unwilling to accept the Baha’i claim that Woodrow Wilson in his plans for the League of Nations was influenced by Baha’u’llah, that the steps toward world understanding might be the result of Baha’u’llah’s mystical presence, and that the development of the United Nations might be the substance of the imposing shadow cast by the Persian seer.<sup>35</sup>

Such recognition accorded to the faith by non-Baha’is is of a quality to indicate that the Baha’i story is deserving of serious study.

### ***Approximation to Christianity***

Another reason for studying the Baha’i faith, particularly for Christians and those in the Western part of the world, is its approximation to Christianity. “No religion,” one writer observes, “shows more strange parallels to Christianity.”<sup>36</sup> William A. Shedd, Christian missionary in Persia, reported: “For the most part the ethical ideals are Christian.”<sup>37</sup> When Edward G. Browne visited Persia in 1887–88, he was “much touched by the kindness”<sup>38</sup> of the Baha’is. When he mentioned this to his Baha’i companion, the latter responded by saying that the Baha’is were nearer in sympathy to Browne than were the Muslims:

To them you are unclean and accursed: if they associate with you it is only by overcoming their religious prejudices. But we are taught to regard all good men as clean and pure, whatever their religion. With you Christians especially we have sympathy. Has it not struck you how similar were the life and death of our Founder (whom, indeed, we believe to have been Christ Himself returned to earth) to those of the Founder

*of your faith? ... But besides this the ordinances enjoined upon us are in many respects like those which you follow.*<sup>39</sup>

Browne observed that few of the Muslims were conversant with the Christian Gospels, whereas the reverse was true of the Baha'is, many of whom, he noted, "take pleasure in reading the accounts of the life and death of Jesus Christ."<sup>40</sup>

Unlike many Muslims who believe that the Qur'an teaches that Jesus did not die on the cross,<sup>41</sup> Baha'is accept the Gospel accounts of Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross, and whereas Muslims refuse to regard Christ as more than merely a prophet or teacher from God, Baha'i profess him to be indeed the Son of God, a perfect manifestation of deity.

Regarding the similarities between the ministry of Jesus Christ and that of the Bab, Shoghi Effendi, great-grandson of Baha'u'llah, elaborated as follows:

The passion of Jesus Christ, and indeed His whole public ministry, alone offer a parallel to the Mission and death of the Bab, a parallel which no student of comparative religion can fail to perceive or ignore. In the youthfulness and meekness of the Inaugurator of the Babi Dispensation; in the extreme brevity and turbulence of His public ministry; in the dramatic swiftness with which that ministry moved towards its climax; in the apostolic order which He instituted, and the primacy which He conferred on one of its members; in the boldness of His challenge to the time-honored conventions, rites and laws which had been woven into the fabric of the religion He Himself had been born into; in the role which an officially recognized and firmly entrenched religious hierarchy played as chief instigator of the outrages which He was made to suffer; in the indignities heaped upon Him; in the suddenness of His arrest; in the interrogation to which He was subjected; in the derision poured, and the scourging inflicted, upon Him; in the public affront He sustained; and, finally, in His ignominious suspension before the gaze of a hostile multitude—in all these we cannot fail to discern a remarkable similarity to the distinguishing features of the career of Jesus Christ.<sup>42</sup>

In the distorted reports of their teachings and activities,<sup>43</sup> in the persecution to which they were subjected, in their religion's power to effect progressive social change and to inspire its followers to self-sacrifice and martyrdom, the Babi movement reminds one of essential features of early Christianity.

Early Christian appraisals of the Babi-Baha'i movement saw it as a stepping stone in reaching the Muslims with the Christian gospel. An early notice in *The Missionary Review of the World* reported that the new teaching

has opened the door to the Gospel as nothing else has done. Bible circulation is almost doubled every year. It is computed that in many towns and villages half the population are Babis. This is a clear indication that the people of Persia are already, in large measure, wearied with Islam, and anxious for a higher, holier, and more spiritual faith. Almost all through the country the Babis are quite friendly to Christians. The rise of this faith is in a large measure due to the spread of the Gospel, the best of their doctrines are borrowed from it, while they openly reverence our Scriptures and profess to be ready to reject any opinion they may hold when once proved to be contrary to the Bible.<sup>44</sup>

As late as 1925 Jules Bois wrote: "It is quite possible that Bahaism has a mission to pacify and spiritually quicken races and tribes which we have so far been unable to evangelize."<sup>45</sup> If Muslims could be won to an acceptance of the mission of Jesus as a divine revealer of God, perhaps they could eventually be won to a full acceptance of Christianity. This expectation, however, seems to have been premature, for instead of the winning of Baha'is to the gospel, Baha'is began winning converts from Christianity. Robert P. Richardson, a strong critic of the Baha'i religion, observed that "although so recent, this religion has spread from its birthplace, Persia, to the furthest ends of the earth"<sup>46</sup> and

noted with alarm that “Christians by the thousands have deserted the banner of Jesus for that of Baha’u’llah.”<sup>47</sup>

Christian converts to Baha’i, however, do not feel that they are deserting Jesus for Baha’u’llah but are reaching out to Jesus in his second coming. Just as Christians believe that if the Jews had actually believed Moses they would have believed in Jesus (John 5:46), so Baha’is believe that true Christians will accept Jesus in his returned form in Baha’u’llah. The Baha’i faith thus becomes, in Baha’i thought, a truer form—the modern form—of Christianity. Firuz Kazemzadeh, an eminent Baha’i and a professor of history at Yale University, in a recorded commentary on one of Baha’u’llah’s writings, says: “The Baha’i Faith ... encompasses all the previous faiths and is organically linked with them. ... The Baha’i Faith is Christianity today; the Baha’i Faith is Islam today.”<sup>48</sup> Because of the Baha’i approximation to Christianity, Samuel G. Wilson, Christian missionary to Persia, felt it necessary to stress that the Baha’i faith is “a distinct religion” from Christianity.<sup>49</sup> Since the Baha’i ethics also are similar to those in Christianity, the switch to Baha’i is an easy transition for some Christians. Be that as it may, the Baha’i approximation to Christianity affords another reason for studying this remarkable religion.

### ***Appeal to the modern age***

A further reason for studying the Baha’i faith is its appeal to many people in the modern age. Charles W. Ferguson, in his book *The Confusion of Tongues*, wrote that “no cult bears a gospel better suited to the temper of our times than the Baha’i.”<sup>50</sup> Indeed, Baha’is believe that the Baha’i message is God’s word to the present age just



as his word through prophets of the past was directed in a special way to the people of those former ages. Part of God's message through previous prophets, such as the requirement of love to God and man and the "Golden Rule", is eternal and is restated by succeeding prophets. But another part of the prophet's message is directed to the special needs of the time. It is at this point that the prophet employs his divine authority to annul previous laws and to issue new ones commensurable with the requirements of the new age. Baha'is feel, therefore, that in Baha'u'llah's teachings are to be found those divine laws, principles, and requirements which speak with special force to the present, modern age. Whether or not one subscribes to this religious philosophy, it is true that many of the Baha'i teachings deal with burning issues of the time, and this explains in part the Baha'i appeal to the modern age.

### **Appeal to modern issues**

The Baha'i teaching concerning race speaks to the current racial problem. The Women's Liberation Movement finds a friend in the Baha'i teaching of the equality of the sexes. The threat of nationalism, the problem of war, the hope for a durable peace, the efforts at international cooperation and arbitration by a "United Nations" tribunal, the modern friction between science and religion, the language barrier, the problem of poverty, the scandal of religious plurality—all of these burning issues of the modern period are dealt with (and the Baha'is would say, find their solution) in the Baha'i revelation.

No religion has addressed itself in such specific manner to so many of the major problems and issues of the age than has the Baha'i

World Faith. Arthur Dahl explains:

The Faith recognized that the major problem of our age is the resolution of a series of deeply ingrained conflicts which are interrelated and penetrate various levels of society: conflicts between ideologies, nations, religions, races and classes. Such conflicts, when combined with the weapons of annihilation our age has produced, threaten the future of civilization as we know it. They redirect the efforts of science and technology at a time when man is on the verge of discovering the mysteries of interplanetary space and harnessing new sources of power. They consume an inordinate proportion of our productive energies, and divert attention from the conquest of our natural enemies: ignorance, disease, hunger.<sup>51</sup>

Dahl continues:

What is needed is a new spiritual approach which will at once reconcile the basic contradictions in major religions beliefs, be consistent with modern scientific and rational principles, and offer to all peoples a set of values and a meaning to life that they can accept and apply. To meet this need the Baha'í World Faith presents a challenging set of teachings, founded on the concept of progressive revelation.<sup>52</sup>

At a time when Christians are seeking ways to make the gospel more relevant to the modern world, Baha'is feel they have already a gospel which speaks relevantly to the modern age in God's latest revelation to the world. Why, the Baha'is ask, should one seek to make a revelation which was directed to a previous age applicable to a later period, when God already has vouchsafed to modern men and women his new message which is specifically designed for the new age? Baha'is have for years been directing their energies toward certain modern problems which some segments of the Christian church, for example, are only now confessing their guilt in having encouraged.<sup>53</sup> This helps explain the appeal today of Baha'í over more traditional forms of religious expression in the West.

### **Appeal is a modern Ecumenical age**

The Christian Ecumenical Movement of the twentieth century

has been widely acclaimed as a trend which future historians may recognize as “the most significant event of the twentieth century.”<sup>54</sup> Henry P. Van Dusen, long time president of Union Theological Seminary in New York and a leader in the Ecumenical Movement, notes that for eighteen centuries the Christian Church affirmed the ideal of the unity of the church but contradicted that ideal in practice, that only in recent times has the church fulfilled Christian profession by actively working for Christian unity, and that it is in this latter sense that the Ecumenical Movement is a new and significant modern event.<sup>55</sup> Van Dusen further notes that the church actually was somewhat slow in responding to centripetal forces in the world at large, but he then observes that

the centripetal forces in the world’s life were superficial and ineffectual. Their end product is two global conflicts and humanity mortally lacerated and impotent. As I have earlier ventured to suggest, future historians may single out as one of the most significant features of this age the fact that, while the centripetal trends within Christendom originated in part from broader centripetal tendencies within the general culture, they *continued* with even more determined effort and significant result *after* the general cultural drift had suffered radical reversal and more powerful centrifugal forces than the earth had ever before witnessed were loosed upon mankind. It has been precisely while the nations have been falling apart that the leadership of the Christian churches of the world has been drawing closer and closer together.<sup>56</sup>

The Ecumenical Movement within Christianity no doubt has been one of the major events of modern times, but Floyd H. Ross says: “The great issue of the hour is not Christian ecumenism but *human* ecumenism.”<sup>57</sup> It is to this larger ecumenism that the Baha’i faith addresses itself. The Baha’is are concerned not simply with union within the existing religions but with the union of all the religions in one faith and the

union of all people in one universal brotherhood. The Baha'is, thus, represent a gigantic ecumenical movement. In an age when the distances which separate peoples and cultures of the world grow smaller every day, when events in one part of the world dramatically affect the entire globe, when the threat of total annihilation endangers all life forms on earth, and when man constantly searches for better and more effective means toward world understanding and cooperation, the worldwide Baha'i ecumenical program marks one more reason for this faith's appeal to men and women of the modern age.

### **Appeal to today's religiously disenchanting**

The modern world is justly described as a "post-Christian" and "secular" world.<sup>58</sup> However much some Christians may think these descriptions have been overplayed, the reality remains. Edmund Perry writes:

Respect for the Church is no longer axiomatic in the West and the norms of Christian behavior do not as formerly dictate the morals of Western culture. Indeed, Christian faith, the Church and Christian behavior have become quite unacceptable to the vast majority of folk in the West. Bishop Lesslie Newbigin has aptly characterized this loss of the Church's power and influence in the West by the phrase "the breakdown of Christendom."<sup>59</sup>

Not only has the secular man outside the church deemed the church irrelevant but a number of notable persons within the Church have left it in recent times because of its irrelevance to modern man. James Kavanaugh, the "modern priest" who took a look at his "outdated church"<sup>60</sup> and later decided to leave it, noted that "the most significant religious experiences are taking place outside or in spite of the institutional Church."<sup>61</sup>

It is too hard to convince an irrelevant institution that the world finds it intransigent and obsolete. It is hard to "go through channels" when the "channels" are more a vested interest than a reflection of an honest search for faith. A

*man can only abandon the institution and search for God on his own or with a few friends.*<sup>62</sup>

Without arguing for or against the merits of Kavanaugh's evaluation of the institutional church, it is sufficient for the present purpose to point out that the search for God outside the institutional church, of which Kavanaugh speaks, is being carried on by an increasing number of modern men and women, from the youthful "Jesus freaks" to experienced churchmen and trained theologians.<sup>63</sup>

Kavanaugh's indictment of the institutional church is quite similar to what the Baha'is are saying, but instead of looking at only one segment of the modern religious world—the Roman Church, as Kavanaugh did—the Baha'is have taken a look at Christianity as a whole and also at Buddhism, Hinduism, Islam and other religions and find them all outdated and irrelevant to the modern age.

In Baha'i thought, all religions go through an inevitable process of development and deterioration. For a time each religion continues to develop and to make a significant impact on the world but eventually begins to depart from the pure teachings of its founder and thus starts a decline in which it continuously loses its spiritual power and its relevance to the world. At an appropriate point, God sends a new revelation to renew and revitalize the religion and to make it better applicable to the religious and social needs of the time.

This revelation of God is continuous and progressive, determined by the world's needs and by man's ability to receive new revelation. The various religions are created because the followers of one revelation refuse to accept the succeeding one and continue instead to adhere

to the prophet who brought the revelation with which they are familiar. To the Baha'is, therefore, since God has sent his latest revelation through Baha'u'llah, all previous revelations and the religions which have been built around them have become obsolete, except for the eternal laws which deal with matters such as love, kindness, justice, and humility, and these are restated in the Baha'i revelation. The messages of previous prophets relating to religious institutions (rituals, sacraments, ordinances, religious laws pertaining to prayer, fasting, and pilgrimages) and laws directed to social needs are superseded.

To the person of the modern day who has grown weary of seemingly empty religious practices and teachings designed only to perpetuate the religious establishment regardless of whether or not it makes any meaningful contribution to society, the Baha'i faith, which claims to have no clergy or ordinances and a minimum of dogma but an important social message, makes a definite appeal. Marcus Bach points out that the "many Americans" who "were ready to accept Baha'u'llah as the mouthpiece of God" were "not people whom the churches had passed by; some of them had passed up the churches, feeling that creeds and sects were narrow and confining."<sup>64</sup>

### ***Its fertility for insights into religious development***

Another important reason for studying the Baha'i faith is the insight it may provide in studying other religions, in tracing and understanding the developments which religions experience. To focus today on the birth and rise of a world religion which is so close to one's own day at such an early stage in its development may reveal

in no small way important insights into the origin and development of religions of the past. James T. Bixby remarks:

To understand the source and nature of our own Christian religion there is no light so priceless as that which is supplied by studying at close range the rise and development of a new faith in our own age and among these Oriental peoples, where the Gospel of Christ originated.<sup>65</sup>

To be sure, each religion is unique in some respects, so that one could not always conclude that what is true of one is necessarily true of all others; but every religion as an historical and social phenomenon also shares certain common features with other religions, else one could not speak of the general category of “religions”. Every religion, for example, originates within a particular historical context, and it passes through certain stages of development and disintegration. Every religion possesses a body of “sacred” literature, which is regarded by the religion’s adherents as set apart from other literature in a special way. Scholars seek, in making critical investigations into religious development, to distinguish in a religion’s literature the various levels of tradition. Information on the development of the literature, dogma, and practices from a religion of such recent origin could provide valuable insights into developments which have taken place in older religions.

One thing which has made the study of religious origins difficult is a lack of unamended or unaltered material written in the earliest stage of the religion’s development. Existing documents were written almost always at a later stage in the religion’s development when later reflection and interpretation has already begun. The assurance that a document portrays the original events and doctrines

of a religion is difficult to obtain, and Edward G. Browne says that it

can only be obtained in its most satisfactory form when the early records pass within a short time after their compilation into the hands of strangers, who, while interested in their preservation, have no desire to alter them for better or worse. That this should happen at all obviously requires a very unusual combination of circumstances. So far as my knowledge goes, it never has happened save in the case of the Baha'í religion; and this is one of the facts which invest the history of this religion with so special an interest.<sup>66</sup>

The Babi-Baha'í movement provides the historian of religion with invaluable sources for studying its origin and development as with no other religion. There are at least two reasons for this. First, the religion is the most recent world faith. Other religions began hundreds and thousands of years ago. Of the so-called eleven major, living religions of the world, only Islam (seventh century CE) and Sikhism (sixteenth century CE) are centuries old; the others—Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, Taoism, Confucianism, Shinto, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and Christianity—date back into the thousands of years. The Baha'í faith originated only in the last century (CE 1844), and only since 1963 has it reached possibly the last phase of its formative development, which incidentally makes the present time most appropriate for making a study of that development. The Baha'í faith is, thus, a religion of modern times and is naturally more accessible for study and understanding.

A second reason that this faith is an excellent subject of study is because its origin coincided with the development of interest by Western scholars in the scientific and critical study of religion. James Arthur Gobineau and Edward G. Browne were two scholars who took



an academic and scientific interest in the religion, and the material they collected and their observations of the movement have placed all succeeding students of the faith in tremendous debt to them. Edward Browne, for example, had a number of interviews with Baha'u'llah, himself, the founder of Baha'i. He, moreover, talked with and corresponded with a number of leaders and laity in the movement and gained much valuable information.<sup>67</sup>

In spite of these researches, a number of important questions regarding the origin and early development of the movement remain unresolved, but the information which is available is considerably more than is available concerning the rise of any other major religion. As such, the Baha'i faith is important not only for its own significance but for the insights it may provide in understanding the manner in which other religions are born and develop.

### ***Its remarkable growth***

The Baha'i faith, moreover, deserves study because of its remarkable growth and extension around the world. Since its birth in 1844, the faith has spread from Persia to all parts of the world and is called quite appropriately today the Baha'i *World Faith*. The faith is reporting spectacular successes in more recent years. When William Miller wrote his first book on Baha'i, published in 1931, he said:

All impartial observers of Baha'ism in Persia are agreed that here in the land of its birth this religion, which once showed promise of capturing all Central Asia, is now steadily losing ground. Few converts are being made, many of the Baha'i leaders of yesterday have openly proclaimed their defection from the movement, and some have written able books exposing the errors which they formerly laboured to propagate. It is only a matter of time until this strange movement, like Manichaeism and Mazdakism before it, shall be known only to students of history.<sup>68</sup>

That description was written in the early 1930s. Much has happened since then. Miller, himself, was to note later, in 1940, that the number of Baha'í spiritual assemblies and the number of voting members had doubled in the decade from 1926 to 1936.<sup>69</sup> John Elder, in a review of Iran's spiritual situation, wrote in 1948:

Another movement that shows surprising vitality is the Baha'í movement. When, some twenty years ago, one after another of their own leaders turned against the faith, and wrote devastating exposés of the intellectual fallacies and moral perversions that characterize the movement, there were many of us who felt that Bahaimism was in its death throes.<sup>70</sup>

But Elder notes that the year 1944, the centennial of the Bab's declaration, was the signal for increased propaganda and that many Baha'ís at great personal sacrifice obeyed Shoghi Effendi's call to scatter forth in evangelistic efforts.<sup>71</sup> Edward B. Calverly, in 1955, remarked: "The Baha'í cause two decades ago was decreasing in influence in Iran, but is, at present, experiencing remarkable vitality."<sup>72</sup> Frank S. Mead reported that "since 1963, there has been a marked growth in membership."<sup>73</sup>

Baha'ís do not give statistics of their worldwide membership, but they do publish periodically information on the number of countries opened to the faith, the number of spiritual assemblies and Baha'í groups around the world, and other information. A look at the missionary extension of the Baha'ís in countries and territories during the periods of the faith's successive leaders reveals the rapidly developing outreach of Baha'í influence. During the Bab's ministry (1844–1850), Babis could be found in Persia and Iraq. By the end of Baha'u'llah's ministry (1892), Baha'ís had penetrated into fifteen

countries, and when 'Abdu'l-Baha passed away (1921), an additional twenty countries had opened to the faith.<sup>74</sup> The period of spectacular extension, however, began under the able administrative direction of Shoghi Effendi, guardian of the faith from 1921 until his death in 1957. At the time of Shoghi Effendi's passing, Baha'is had penetrated into 254 countries and dependencies.<sup>75</sup> Most of this extension occurred after 1953, when Shoghi Effendi launched the "Ten Year International Baha'i Teaching and Consolidation Plan". Achievements during this decade (1953-1963) included the following: the number of countries and territories where Baha'is reside more than doubled (from 128 in 1953 to 259 in 1963); the addition of 220 languages into which Baha'i literature is translated and printed more than tripled the previous figure; the number of national spiritual assemblies (the national governing bodies) quadrupled (forty-seven were formed in this period); seven new Baha'i publishing trusts were established; three new Baha'i temples were built (in Frankfurt, Germany; Sydney, Australia; and Kampala, Uganda, Africa);<sup>76</sup> and the acquisition of forty-six new temple sites more than quadrupled the original goal of eleven.

This Ten Year World Crusade was climaxed in 1963 by two important events: (1) the election by the members of fifty-six national spiritual assemblies convened at the Baha'i World Center in Haifa, Israel, of the first Universal House of Justice, composed of nine men, forming the highest administrative body in the Baha'i faith,<sup>77</sup> and (2) the convening of the first Baha'i World Congress in London, in England, where more than 6,000 Baha'is from around the world gathered for the

formal celebration of the “Most Great Jubilee” (April 21-May 2),<sup>78</sup> commemorating the centenary of Baha’u’llah’s declaration of his mission.<sup>79</sup>

The Universal House of Justice launched in 1964 the “Nine Year Plan” to be concluded in 1973. Goals for this period, which were set for the world Baha’i community and for each of the national assemblies, included raising the number of national spiritual assemblies from the sixty-nine in 1964 to a total of 108, increasing the number of local assemblies to over 13,700, raising the number of localities where Baha’is reside to over 54,000, adding four new Baha’i publishing trusts (one each in Brussels, Belgium; Rome, Italy; Karachi, Pakistan; and Tunis, Tunisia) to the then existing number of eight; and increasing the number of languages into which Baha’i literature is translated by 133 more languages, bringing the total to around 500 languages.<sup>80</sup> Goals for the continental United States (excludes Alaska) included establishing 600 new local assemblies and 3,000 additional localities in which Baha’is reside.<sup>81</sup>

The reported growth of Baha’i membership in the United States within this period is fantastic. The 62nd annual National Baha’i Convention held in Wilmette, Illinois, April 29-May 2, 1971, for example, reported that Baha’i membership doubled within the past one-year period. Some 20,000 new believers, mostly blacks in the rural South, were recruited, as well as hundreds of Spanish-speaking people and a good number of American Indians.<sup>82</sup> In a one-south period, 9,000 converts were won in a thirteen-county “teaching conference”

based in Dillon, South Carolina. *The Christian Century* observed that most of these converts are blacks but noted that “young whites, too, are attracted to the Baha’i religion, which emphasizes peace and eradication of racial prejudice.”<sup>83</sup>

From the few hundred centers in thirty-five countries in which Baha’is could be found when ‘Abdu’l-Baha passed away in 1921, the Baha’i faith has expanded today to more than 46,000 centers in more than 300 countries, islands, and territories of the world. The remark made by a Protestant minister to Marcus Bach that “if these Baha’is ever get going, they may take the country by storm” may be coming true today.<sup>84</sup> Such remarkable expansion of the Baha’i faith requires that it be given diligent attention.

## **Reasons for studying the Baha’i transformations**

Various facets of the Baha’i faith might be written about, but the present study will focus on the Baha’i transformations. Why write on the Baha’i transformations, and what is meant by the expression “Baha’i transformation”? Although the term “transformation” has been used in reference to a few major changes which have occurred in the religion, and although it is acknowledged by both Baha’is and non-Baha’is that great changes have taken place within the religion over the years, the expression “transformation” is not generally used in discussions and, thus, requires some definition or explanation.

The term “Baha’i transformations” will be used to refer to those changes in the Baha’i faith which have significantly altered previous forms of the faith. The thesis of the present work is that the Baha’i

faith has undergone a “transformation” within the ministries of each succeeding head of the religion. Each successive leader of the movement has had to face and overcome opposition to him by those who charged him with overstepping his legitimate authority and introducing changes in the religion contrary to its essential character. To whatever extent these charges are true or false, whether the succeeding leaders actually contrived to produce alterations in the faith or resigned themselves to an unavoidable cadence of events, the end result was that within each successive leader’s ministry there occurred in the religion a transformation of a highly *critical* nature, producing inner turmoil, causing notable—if not schismatic—departures from the new authority, and necessitating new adjustments by the faith’s adherents.

Baha’i transformations are important for at least three reasons:

1. because they form a characteristic feature of the Baha’i faith,
2. because they provide a key to a proper understanding of the religion,
3. because they throw light on some subsidiary questions in the study of the faith.

### ***Characteristic features of the faith***

All religions to some extent go through dramatic alterations in the course of their history. Kirtley F. Mather, Harvard University professor, once wrote:

The history of every great religion shows a definite development and modification of the theological and philosophical concepts which it cherishes, because no great religion could possibly be stationary. It must be moving forward, keeping abreast of the ever-moving current of human thought.<sup>85</sup>

Christianity, for example, has undergone great changes in the course of its almost 2,000-year history. Its earliest form was radically different from its form after it became an established religion within the Roman Empire. Likewise, the nature of Christianity after the Reformation was significantly altered from its previous form. The Ecumenical Movement, the Jesus Revolution, the modern charismatic revival, the church's efforts to minister in a secular society are all important trends which could dramatically alter tomorrow's form of the Christian faith.

Although all great religions undergo evolutionary alterations, both in their theologies and institutional structures, the Baha'i faith in particular has experienced extraordinary changes within a short 130-year span, in its evolution to its present stage of development, so much so that this evolutionary development marks a characteristic feature of the faith. Edward G. Browne, writing in 1910, said: "Few religions have undergone so rapid an evolution in the course of sixty-six years (CE 1844-1910) as that founded by Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab."<sup>86</sup> No less spectacular have been the developments in the religion since Browne made that statement in 1910.

Prefaces to revised Baha'i literature aptly illustrate the Baha'i awareness and acknowledgment of this evolutionary process. The Preface to the 1937 edition of J. E. Esslemont's popular introduction to the faith, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, first published in 1923, calls attention to the fact that "the author's views, some of them written prior to 1921 [when Baha'u'llah's son and successor in the faith,

'Abdu'l-Baha, passed away] no longer on certain aspects of the subject correspond to the evolutionary character of the Faith."<sup>87</sup> The Preface to the 1970 revised edition of that same work is not overstating the case when it mentions that since the 1937 edition "the diffusion and development of the Baha'í Faith ... have been tremendous."<sup>88</sup> The Preface to the 1966 edition of Horace Holley's *Religion for Mankind*, first published in 1956, indicates:

For the sake of preserving the integrity at the author's work, no alterations in his text have been introduced, but the reader will be able to appreciate, by reference to this editorial note, the continuing evolution and dynamic growth of the Faith of Baha'u'llah since 1956.<sup>89</sup>

The Preface points out that Holley died on July 12, 1960, before many of the new developments had taken place.<sup>90</sup> The year 1963, when the first Universal House of Justice was elected, marked a new epoch in the faith's history.

These prefaces all point up the significant fact of the faith's evolutionary character. Each stage in this development is connected with the ministries of the faith's succeeding leaders. Shoghi Effendi, Baha'u'llah's great-grandson and successor to 'Abdu'l-Baha, speaks of the four major periods of the Baha'í era's first century, corresponding to the ministries at the Bab, Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and the development of the Administrative Order, as "progressive stages in a single evolutionary process."<sup>91</sup> These stages are characterized by transformations of the religion, and their consistent reappearance in each stage marks a significant feature of the Baha'í faith.



### ***Key to understanding the Faith***

The Baha'i transformations actually provide an important key to understanding the Baha'i religion. Without a clear perception of the issues involved in the transformations and their effects upon the religion, one runs into various problems and seemingly irreconcilable features in his study of the faith. With such a characteristic evolution occurring in the religion, literature on the faith—both Baha'i and non-Baha'i—soon becomes obsolete on certain matters. While perhaps giving an accurate picture of the faith at the time it was written, earlier literature often gives a totally misleading or inaccurate presentation of the faith from the standpoint of its present teachings and policy. For example, often repeated statements that a Baha'i may be a member of the Baha'i community while retaining his membership in another religious faith or denomination, which earlier was a prime, non-Baha'i criticism of the faith, is totally inaccurate concerning present-day Baha'i policy, which requires complete severance from one's previous religious affiliation.

The problem of studying and properly understanding the Baha'i faith is increased by the reprinting and revising today of books originally published during earlier stages of the faith's evolution. Samuel Graham Wilson's *Bahatism and Its Claims*, for example, reproduced in 1970 by AMS Press, New York, while having some merits recommending its reproduction today, was nevertheless first published in 1915, while 'Abdu'l-Baha was still alive, and therefore reflects an early stage of Baha'i development. To take one instance, Wilson's statement that "to all intents and purposes, the Bab is as much as

obsolete prophet as Mani or Babak<sup>92</sup> is quite inaccurate of modern Baha'i. Revisions by Baha'is of popular Baha'i books, as noted above, run into difficulties and require notice in the prefaces about the continuing evolution of the faith. In spite of these notices and in spite of revisions in the texts, these volumes give evidence of having been composed in the atmosphere of previous periods in the faith's history.

Knowledge of the Baha'i transformations enables one to study the literature on the faith with a minimum of confusion. The reader may assign the various books and articles to their respective periods in the faith's evolution and evaluate them from the standpoint of the total evolutionary process. The literature thus becomes important in depicting the state of the faith at the time of its writing without being regarded as descriptive of the faith's present development. Awareness of the Baha'i transformations thus helps the student avoid possible confusion caused by contradictions between earlier and later written material and between literature which takes the transformations into account and literature which does not.

### ***Illumination on subsidiary questions***

The Baha'i transformations, moreover, throw light on some subsidiary questions in the study of Baha'i. For one thing, they help explain some tensions which presently exist in the faith, tensions which have resulted from the transformations. The reason for these resulting tensions is that Baha'is sometimes carry over into the next evolutionary stage teachings and attitudes from a previous period which contradict the teachings or policies of later periods. Tensions exist,

for instance, in defining the relationship between the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Is the Bab primarily a forerunner of Baha'u'llah or primarily an independent prophet? Does the Baha'i faith begin with the Bab or with Baha'u'llah? Are the Babi and Baha'i religions distinct faiths or are they different stages of the same religion? Tensions exist, moreover, between broad and narrow definitions of what constitutes being a Baha'i. May one who has never even heard the name of Baha'u'llah be a Baha'i because he is a lover of humanity, or is no one entitled to this name who is not an enrolled member of the Baha'i organization? The Baha'i transformations help answer these questions and explain other Baha'i tensions.

Another question the study of Baha'i transformations helps to illuminate is whether or not schism has occurred in the Baha'i religion. A conflict within the religion has occurred in connection with each transformation the religion has undergone. Non-Baha'i observers and critics often speak of schism within the movement, yet Baha'is continuously insist that conflicts have occurred in the faith but not schism and that the Baha'i religion, unlike all other religions, is divinely safeguarded from schism by the unique provisions vouchsafed to the religion by its inspired leaders. The question is immensely important, for the Baha'i religion claims to be God's instrument to bring about the ultimate unity of mankind. But if the faith cannot maintain unity and harmony within its own household, how can it expect to bring peace and unity to the whole world? Does the Baha'i religion present modern man with the paradox—if not the irony—of a religion aspiring to unify the whole of mankind which itself has split into various contending factions? A study of the Baha'i transformations, the conflicts they

aroused in the religion and the effects they produced, will help to clarify this important question.

## **Plan of work**

The purpose of the present study will be to trace and analyze the basic transformations which have occurred in the Baha'i World Faith in its short 130-year history with a view toward ascertaining the character of the religion and its present state of development and clarifying and explaining various matters which remain confusing and contradictory without a clear understanding of the Baha'i evolutionary transformations. The study's primary concern will be neither to prove nor disprove the faith's claims and teachings, neither to condemn nor to exonerate, but to present a statement of those issues which, for good or bad, have shaped the religion over the years into its present stage of development.

The work will be divided into three parts: part one dealing with introductory matters; part two treating the period of the faith's three central figures—the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and 'Abdu'l-Baha—a period called by the Baha'is the "Heroic Age"; and part three focusing on what Baha'is call the "Formative Age",<sup>93</sup> when the faith's administrative order unfolds. The distinction between these two periods of the faith's history is so marked that the faith in the latter period will be referred to in this study as "modern Baha'i", the form of the faith as organized and defined by Shoghi Effendi. The religion's doctrinal statement, historical understanding, and organization structure as established by Shoghi Effendi remain basically intact today, except for the important modification discussed in Chapter VII. The term

“modern Baha’i” is appropriate, therefore, in designating the faith today as heir to the labors and literature of Shoghi Effendi.

So distinct is modern Baha’i from the faith’s previous forms that literature on the faith by both Baha’is and non-Baha’is written before Shoghi Effendi’s transformation or which fails to take into account that transformation is presenting a now outdated, pre-modern form of the religion and should not be regarded as descriptive of present-day Baha’i teaching and policy. For example, most of the major non-Baha’i books, as those of Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahatism and Its Claims* (1915, reproduced 1970), John R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha’is* (1932), and Edward G. Browne, published in the late 1800s and the early 1900s, as valuable as they may be for treating the faith’s early development, were written before the modern Baha’i period or during its early phases and thus do not take into account the complete Shoghi Effendi transformation nor far-reaching developments since Shoghi Effendi’s passing in 1957. William McElwee Miller’s new volume, *The Baha’i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (1974), revises and updates his earlier study, *Baha’ism* (1931), thus helping to meet a need from the non-Baha’i perspective for a modern statement of Baha’i faith and practice. These earlier works should be read and evaluated in the light of the later transformations in the religion.

In Parts Two and Three, covering the faith’s history, a chapter will be devoted to each period of the faith in which a major transformation occurs. Since the transformations were affected by the various leaders in the faith during their successive ministries, the chapters

thus will be divided according to the ministries of the religion's leaders.

The chapters will deal basically with three concerns: (1) the respective leader's life. (2) the leader's teachings, and (3) the transformation in the religion which the events of that life and those teachings effected, with emphasis on the opposition it aroused, the tensions in the faith it produced, and the adjustments it necessitated. These concerns will not always be clearly distinguished in the discussions since they overlap at points. Some of the Bab's teachings, for example, have a direct bearing on the events of his life, and these events, such as his trial and execution, cannot be understood fully without recourse to his teachings. Similarly, the transformation effected by Baha'u'llah cannot be separated from his teachings which constitute the essence of much of that transformation. The three concerns, therefore, are not entirely exclusive and will not always be distinguished but will be in the background of thought as the discussions progress.

Briefly defined, the transformations to be dealt with in the present study, growing out of the transforming character of the Babi religion (Chapter III), are Baha'u'llah's transformation of the Babi religion into the Baha'i faith (Chapter IV); the transformation of the Baha'i faith into a more Western and socially oriented religion, as effected by 'Abdu'l-Baha, son and appointed successor of Baha'u'llah (Chapter V), the transformation of the faith from a small, loosely knit, inclusive religion into a tightly organized, precisely defined, exclusive world faith, as effected by Shoghi Effendi, grandson and

appointed successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha (Chapter VI), and the latest transformation from a religion under the guardianship of an appointed, living descendant of Baha'u'llah to a religion directed by a body of nine elected officials whose term of office is temporary (Chapter VII).

Although all the major periods in the faith's history will be dealt with in discussing the successive transformations, the work, almost needless to say, will not attempt to give a complete history of the Baha'i religion. Various important, historical matters which do not touch on the development of the Baha'i transformations, as important or interesting as they may be to a full understanding and appreciation of Baha'i history, will fall outside the scope of the present study. Nor will a full or systematic statement of Baha'i teaching be attempted. The treatment of such history and teachings as have bearing on the Baha'i transformations, however, should enable the reader to gain a basic grasp of Baha'i history and teachings so that he can explore with profit and understanding further aspects of the truly amazing religion of Baha'i.

### Notes: 1. Introduction

- 1 Geoffrey Parrinder, *The Christian Debates Light from the East* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1966), p. 72.
- 2 *One Universal Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.). Pamphlet with unnumbered pages.
- 3 Arthur Dahl, *Baha'i: World Faith for Modern Man* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 3. The text of this pamphlet also is printed in *The Baha'i World: An International Record*, XIII (Haifa, Israel, The Universal House of Justice, 1970), pp. 1174–80.
- 4 Edward G. Browne, "Babiism", *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., III, 95.
- 5 Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915), p. 35.
- 6 Hamid Algar, *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: the Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1969), p. 137.
- 7 These three points are modifications of W. Kenneth Christian's points in the pamphlet *Basic Facts of the Baha'i Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.): "First, Baha'is live in more than two hundred countries of the world. ... Second, the Baha'i Faith develops world-mindedness. ... Third, the Baha'i Faith offers a clear pattern of world order." Unnumbered pages.
- 8 John G. Wishard, *Twenty Tears in Persia* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1908), p. 163.
- 9 Listed in *Baha'i Teachings for a World Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1943), p. 3, in William Sears, *Convincing Answers* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1962, p. 4, and in various other Baha'i publications.
- 10 Marcus Bach, *Strangers at the Door* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), p. 88.
- 11 Alessandro Bausani, "The Religious Crisis of the Modern World", *World Order*, II (Spring, 1968), 13.
- 12 Ernst Klienke, "The Cultural Principles of the Baha'i Movement", tr Martha Root, *The Baha'i World, A Biennial International Record*, III (New York: Baha'i

Publishing Committee, 1930), p. 268.

- 13 Jean Masson, "The 'Bahai Revelation': Its Western Advance", *The American Review of Reviews*, XXXIX (Feb., 1909), 214.
- 14 Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1963), p. 5, and *Baha'i World Faith, Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha* (2d ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), p. 9.
- 15 William S. Hatcher and Thomas L. Thompson, *Power to Renew the World; A Challenge to Christians* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1965), p. 9.
- 16 idem, p. 6.
- 17 idem, p. 8.
- 18 George Craig Stewart, "The New Persian Temple in Illinois", *The Missionary Review of the World*, XLIV (Oct., 1921), 793.
- 19 Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, with an Introduction by Edward Granville Browne (New York: G. P. Putman's Sons, 1904), p. xi.
- 20 idem, p. xii.
- 21 idem, p. xv.
- 22 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Vol. II: English Tr. and Notes (Cambridge: The University Press, 1891), pp. xxxviii-xxxix.
- 23 E. S. Stevens, "Abbas Effendi: His Personality, Work, and Followers", *The Fortnightly Review*, LXXXIX, New Series (June 1, 1911), 1067.
- 24 Robert E. Speer, *Missions and Modern History* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1904), p. 121.
- 25 Edward G. Browne, "Babiism", in *The Religious Systems of the World* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., Limited, 1905), p. 350.
- 26 idem, p. 333.
- 27 Herbert A. Miller, "Religion in Asia", *World Unity*, ed. by John Herman Randall (Dec., 1930), p. 187.
- 28 Nels F. S. Ferré, *Strengthening the Spiritual Life* (London: Collins, 1956), p. 54.
- 29 Bach, *Strangers at the Door*, p. 74.
- 30 idem, pp. 75-76.
- 31 Arnold Toynbee, *A Study of History*, VIII (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 117.
- 32 Arnold Toynbee, *Christianity among the Religions of the World* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957), p. 104.
- 33 Stanwood Cobb, *Security for a Failing World* (Washington, DC, Avalon Press, 1934), p. 112.
- 34 ibid.
- 35 Marcus Bach, "Baha'i: A Second Look", *The Christian Century* LXXIV (April 10, 1957), 449.
- 36 E. E. Kellett, *A Short History of Religions* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1962), p. 362.
- 37 William A. Shedd, "Bahaism and Its Claims", *The Missionary Review of the World*, XXIV, New Series (Oct., 1911), 732.
- 38 Edward G. Browne, *A Year amongst the Persians* (3d ed.; London: Adam and



Charles Black, 1950), p. 235.

39 *ibid.*

40 *idem*, p. 235n.

41 The Muslim belief that Jesus did not die on the cross is based on an interpretation of a passage in the Qur'an which reads: "They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain, but Allah took him up unto Himself" (4:157-58). Various interpretations of these verses are given today by both Muslims and Christians. The traditional Muslim view is that some substitute, Judas Iscariot or some other, actually died on the cross in the "appearance" of Jesus. The more probable interpretation is that the Qur'an is denying any Jewish victory in Jesus' crucifixion since Jesus willingly laid down his life. Geoffrey Parrinder calls attention to a possible parallel to these verses in Surah 8:17 in reference to the Muslims who were taking credit for victory at Badr: "Ye (Muslims) slew them not, but Allah slew them" (Parrinder, *Jesus in the Qur'an*, New York: Barnes and Noble, Inc., 1965, p. 120). Ultimately the victory was the work of God. Similarly, the crucifixion was the work of God, who "gathered" (3:55; 5:117) Jesus to himself. cf. Julius Basetti-Sani, "For a Dialogue between Christians and Muslims", *The Muslim World*, LVII, No. 3 (July, 1967), p. 192.

42 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (4th printing, Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), pp. 56-57.

43 Among the "abominations" charged against the early Christians were infanticide, cannibalism, and incest (see Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church* [New York: Oxford University Press, 1960], p. 4). The charge of cannibalism was based on a misunderstanding or distortion of the Lord's Supper. Similarly, among charges against the Babis were that they held their wives and possessions in common, allowed the drinking of wine and other immoralities forbidden in Islam, asserted that a woman could have nine husbands, and gave enchanted dates or tea to those visiting them which caused them to become Babis (see Edward G. Browne, ed. and trans., *The Tarikh-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab*, by Mirza Husayn of Hamadan [Cambridge University Press, 1893], p. 25 and Appendix II, p. 322). The charge that the Babis allowed a woman to have nine husbands was based erroneously on Babi-Baha'i numerology which assigned a special importance to the numbers nine and nineteen.

44 "Babism in Persia", *The Missionary Review of the World*, II, New Series (Jan., 1898), 55.

45 Jules Bois, *The New Religions of America*, III—Babism and Bahaism," *The Forum*, LXXIV (July, 1925), 10.

46 Robert P. Richardson, "The Persian Rival to Jesus, and His American Disciples", *The Open Court*, XXVIII (No. 8), No. 711 (Aug., 1915), p. 460.

47 *ibid.*

48 Firus Kazemzadeh, "A Commentary on 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf'". Cassette tape (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust).

49 Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, p. 35.

- 50 Charles W. Ferguson, *The Confusion of Tongues* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Doran & Company, Inc., 1925), p. 231.
- 51 Dahl, *World Faith for Modern Man*, p. 3.
- 52 idem, pp. 4–5.
- 53 The more recent Chicago “Declaration of Evangelical Social Concern”, as one case in point, confesses the failure of evangelicals to demonstrate “the love of God to those suffering social abuses”, deplores “the historic involvement of the church in America with racism and the conspicuous responsibility of the evangelical community for perpetuating the personal attitudes and institutional structures that have divided the body of Christ along color lines”, urges the promotion of a “more just acquisition and distribution of the world’s resources”, acknowledges the need to “resist the temptation to make the nation and its institutions objects of near religious loyalty”, and acknowledges “that we have encouraged men to prideful domination and women to irresponsible passivity” (For the text of the “Declaration”, see *Christianity Today*, XVIII, No. 6 [Dec. 21, 1973], p. 38). The Chicago Declaration is similar to various social-concerns statements issued by Christian denominations over the past seven or eight years.
- 54 Henry P. Van Dusen, *World Christianity: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1947), p. 69; John Dillenberger and Claude Welch, *Protestant Christianity Interpreted through Its Development* (New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), p. 301.
- 55 Van Dusen, *World Christianity*, pp. 68–69.
- 56 idem, pp. 177–78.
- 57 Floyd H. Ross, “The Christian Mission in Larger Dimension”, in *The Theology of the Christian Mission*, ed. by Gerald H. Anderson (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1961), p. 214.
- 58 See, for example, Harvey Cox, *The Secular City: Secularization and Urbanization in Theological Perspective* (rev. ed.; New York: The MacMillan Co., 1966), Lesslie Newbigin, *Honest Religion for Secular Man* (London, SCM Press Ltd., 1966); Colin William, *Faith in a Secular Age*, Fontana Books (London: Collins, 1966).
- 59 Edward Perry, *The Gospel in Dispute: The Relation of Christian Faith to Other Missionary Religions* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., Inc., 1958), p. 1.
- 60 Kavanaugh is the author of *A Modern Priest Looks at His Outdated Church* (New York, Trident Press, 1967). Since leaving the institutional church, Kavanaugh has written *The Birth of God* (New York: Trident Press, 1969) in which he takes an additional step and looks at “the entire religious tradition of the Western World” and finds that “the religious phenomenon has affixed itself to our entire culture and has deprived man of the freedom that is his right and the maturity that is the hope of the world” (p. 8).
- 61 James J. Kavanaugh, *The Struggle of the Unbeliever* (New York: Trident Press, 1967), p. viii.
- 62 *ibid.*
- 63 Among notables who have left the institutional church or its ministry are the following:
- (1) Charles Davis, Britain’s leading Roman Catholic theologian, for sixteen

years Professor of Dogmatic Theology at St. Edmund's College in England, author of *Theology for Today* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1961) and other works, editor of *The Clergy Review*, who candidly presents his reasons for leaving the Church in his volume *A Question of Conscience* (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967). Borrowing a phrase from Harvey Cox, Davis has chosen and suggests for all Christians an attitude of "creative disaffiliation" (*A Question of Conscience*, p. 266, citing Cox, *The Secular City*, p. 230), which in Davis' thought may or may not entail renunciation of one's denominational membership but does require a recognition that "existing social structures of the Churches are inadequate and obsolete," that they are "limited in function, relative in value and essentially changeable" (*A Question of Conscience*, pp. 266–67).

(2) The controversial Bishop James A. Pike, whose career included serving as head of the Department of Religion at Columbia University, Dean of New York City's Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and Bishop in the Diocese of California, the author of numerous books, staff member of the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, for some ten years chairman for the California Advisory Committee to the U.S. Civil Rights Commission, and a teacher in three law schools and three theological seminaries, was the focus of heresy proceedings in the Protestant Episcopal Church (see William Stringfellow and Antony Towne, *The Bishop Pike Affair: Scandals of Conscience and Heresy, Relevance and Solemnity in the Contemporary Church* [New York: Harper & Row, 1967]), later resigned as Bishop of California, and established the Foundation for Religious Transition, renamed after his death the Bishop Pike Foundation, to aid others leaving the ministry of the institutional church. Bishop Pike held that "the growing disenchantment with the Church does not mean diffidence toward questions about ultimate meaning," for he notes that the "more people conclude—rightly or wrongly—that the Churches have been "tried and found wanting", the greater is the extent of searching via extra-ecclesiastical avenues" (Pike, *If This Be Heresy* [New York: Harper & Row, publishers, 1967], p. 21).

(3) An ordained Methodist minister and author of the highly humorous *How to become a Bishop without Being Religious* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday & Co., Inc., 1965), Charles Merrill Smith served for many years in Bloomington, Illinois, and later as minister of the First Congregational Church, Montclair, New Jersey. His humorous spoof at the religious profession turned out to be more serious than he may have intended, for Smith has since left the ministry, devoting himself now to writing and lecturing. In a section entitled "Do You Blame Me for Quitting the Ministry?" (addressed to God) in his book *How to Talk to God when You Aren't Feeling Religious*, (New York: Bantam Books, 1973: first published by Ward Books, Waco, Texas, 1971), he confesses his frustration in serving as a minister, his sense of futility, and his growing conviction that what he was doing was not very important anymore. "When a fellow feels this way," he says, "the only honest thing to do is quit" (p. 134, Bantam edition). He compares the churches as now organized to a 1932 Duesenberg. It was and still

is, he says, a handsome automobile, comfortable to ride in, mechanically way ahead of the times, but it was expensive to buy, the upkeep was horrendous, and it was awfully big. Smaller and cheaper automobiles drove the Duesenberg out of business. Today a Duesenberg is not bought for its original purpose of transportation but as a status symbol, an expensive toy. Smith says: "My suggestion is to let the people who want Duesenberg religion and are willing to pay for it go right on playing with the expensive Christian toy. After all, it's a free country, and they can't hurt anybody very much. But please send a revelation to some new Amos or Isaiah to call the community of faith to its true vocation" (pp. 45-6). Baha'is believe that these searches for God outside of the traditional religious structures can end in Baha'u'llah, in whom God has, as Smith prays for, sent another revelation in a new prophet.

- 64 Marcus Bach, *They Have Found a Faith* (Indianapolis: BobbsMerrill Co., 1946), pp. 190-91.
- 65 James T. Bixby, "What Is Behaism?", *The North American Review*, Vol. 196, No. DCLXXIX (June, 1912), 835.
- 66 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *The Tarikh-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab*, by Mirza Husayn of Hamadan (Cambridge: University Press, 1893), pp. xi-xii.
- 67 Browne's information is scattered through a number of important articles in journals and encyclopedias and in his introductions, notes, and appendices to his translations of Baha'i literature and in other material. No one has attempted to systematize Browne's material. He would often correct or add to previously given information. H. M. Balyuzi, an eminent Baha'i, whose father was one of Browne's correspondents, has written a significant study from the Baha'i standpoint of Browne and his writings and activities pertaining to the faith.
- 68 William McElwee Miller, *Baha'ism: Its Origin, History and Teachings* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 9.
- 69 William McElwee Miller, "The Bahai Cause Today", *The Moslem World*, XXX (Oct., 1940), 389.
- 70 John Elder, "The Spiritual Situation in Iran", *The Muslim World*, XXXVIII (April, 1948), 107.
- 71 *ibid.*
- 72 Edward B. Calverly, "Baha'ism", *Twentieth Century Encyclopedia of Religious Knowledge*, ed. Lefferts A. Loetscher (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), I, 104.
- 73 Frank S. Mead, *Handbook of Denominations in the United States* (4th ed.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1965), p. 32.
- 74 Hands of the Cause Residing in the Holy Land, comp., *The Baha'i Faith 1844-1963: Information Statistical & Comparative Including the Achievements of the Ten Year international Baha'i Teaching and Consolidation plan 1953-1963* (Printed in Israel, n.p., n.d.), p. 9.
- 75 *Baha'i World*, XIII, 342.
- 76 The Baha'i temple in Wilmette, Illinois, was dedicated on May 2, 1953.
- 77 Hands of the Cause, *The Baha'i Faith 1844-1963*, pp. 7-8.

- 78 This twelve-day period is the Baha'i Feast of Ridvan, which annually  
 commemorates Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission.
- 79 D. Thelma Jackson, comp., *Your Role in the Nine Year Plan* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i  
 Publishing Trust, 1909, p. 12; and J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*  
 (3rd ed., revised; New York: Pyramid Books, 1970), p. 234.
- 80 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–*  
*1986: The Third Epoch of the Formative Age* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing  
 Trust, 1996), chap. 14. A letter from the National Spiritual Assembly of the  
 Baha'is of the United States through its secretary, Glenford B. Mitchell,  
 September 19, 1974, to the author provides some information on present Baha'i  
 growth, "... there has been a tremendous increase in the number of National  
 Spiritual Assemblies, localities where Baha'is reside and in the number of  
 Baha'i schools and other institutions during the past year. For example, the  
 number of National Spiritual Assemblies now totals 115 with 16 more to be  
 established within the next five years."
- 81 Jackson, *Your Role in the Nine Year Plan*, p. 18.
- 82 "Baha'is Report Increased Assemblies, Doubling of Membership in the U.S.," *The*  
*Christian Century*, LXXXVIII (May 19, 1971), 616.
- 83 "Baha'i Faith Makes Gains among Rural Blacks in Southern U.S.," *The Christian*  
*Century*, LXXXVIII (March 24, 1971), 368.
- 84 Bach, "Baha'i: A Second Look", p. 449.
- 85 Kirtley F. Mather, *Science in Search of God* (New York: Red Label Reprints, 1918),  
 pp. 34–35.
- 86 Edward G. Browne, ed., *Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the*  
*Babis Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the years A.D. 1850 and*  
*1852* (Leiden: E. J. Brill; London: Luzac & Co., 1910), p. xlvii.
- 87 Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, 3d ed., revised, p. v. This edition  
 contains the Prefaces to the 1937 and 1950 editions.
- 88 idem, p. ix.
- 89 Holley, *Religion for Mankind* (1st American ed.: Wilmette, Ill.; Baha'i Publishing  
 Trust, 1966), p. 6. The first edition of this work was published in 1956 by  
 George Ronald, London, England.
- 90 ibid.
- 91 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xv.
- 92 Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, p. 15.
- 93 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xiii.





## 2

### **Studies on the Babi-Baha'i Movement**

Various studies on the Babi-Baha'i movement will be referred to in the present work. Since these studies are written from differing standpoints and since their relative value to the subjects under discussion must be judged in part by the perspectives from which they are written, the reader from the outset should have some orientation to them.

#### **Gobineau's history**

The first significant book by a European scholar to deal extensively with the Persian Babi movement is Joseph Arthur Gobineau's *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, first published in 1855.<sup>1</sup> Gobineau served in the French Legation in Tihran, the capital of Persia, from 1856 to 1858 as secretary, and from 1862 to 1863 as minister plenipotentiary.<sup>2</sup> Count Gobineau while in Persia had taken a keen interest in the Babi movement, which was then in early stages of its development, and collected a number of early Babi manuscripts, of which some of the more significant were acquired after his death at auction by the British Museum and the National Library in Paris.<sup>3</sup>

Although Gobineau's account of the Bab and his followers forms only part of a larger discussion, it occupies more than half of his volume. While having a significance in its own right, the book is also significant for being the volume which inspired Professor Edward



G. Browne of Cambridge University to undertake his travels in Persia and to begin his extensive research into the Babi-Baha'i cause. Browne speaks of the volume as the work

which first inspired my interest in and enthusiasm for the Babis, and which contains what must still be regarded as one of the best, most picturesque and most original accounts of the Bab and his disciples yet written.<sup>4</sup>

Browne elsewhere says:

I personally owe more to this book than to any other book about Persia, since to it, not less than to an equally fortunate and fortuitous meeting in Isfahan, I am indebted for that unravelling of Babi doctrine and history which first won for me a reputation in Oriental scholarship.<sup>5</sup>

As highly as Browne praises Gobineau's work, he was nevertheless conscious that the volume, which traces Babi history to CE 1852, needed to be supplemented by an appendix detailing more recent events.<sup>6</sup> That observation is even more applicable today in the light of developments since Browne's time, but rather than an appendix a major study is required to outline the major transformations in the religion since Gobineau's work.

The history by Gobineau deals with the earliest stage of the Babi religion, before Baha'u'llah declared his mission, and therefore reflects a situation which was radically changed even by the time Browne began his travels in Persia and which caused him no little distress in attempting to study the movement. Browne relates in the book which describes his travels in Persia in 1887-88:

It was the Bab whom I had learned to regard as a hero, and whose works I desired to obtain and peruse, yet of him no account appeared to be taken. I questioned my friend about this, and learned (what I had already begun to suspect at Isfahan) that

such had taken place amongst the Babis since those events of which Gobineau's vivid and sympathetic record had so strangely moved me. That record was written while Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Ezel ("the Morning of Eternity") was undisputed vicegerent of the Bab, and before the great schism occurred which convulsed the Babi community.<sup>7</sup>

The significance of Gobineau's work, therefore, is that it puts on record an account of the earliest phase of the Babi-Baha'i movement as that movement made its impression upon an objective non-Baha'i. Baha'is have some reservations regarding Gobineau's account from the standpoint of what they believe was the actual state of affairs within the movement, but Gobineau's work reveals how the religion was seen by an outsider in Persia at that early stage in its development.

### **Histories edited by E. G. Browne**

The Babi-Baha'i histories translated and/or edited by the Cambridge Orientalist Edward Granville Browne are in a class by themselves. Both Baha'is and non-Baha'is studying the faith acknowledge their debt to this distinguished scholar, who was the only Western historian to attain the presence of Baha'u'llah, founder of the Baha'i religion, and who in later years carried on a correspondence with Baha'u'llah's son and successor in the religion, 'Abdu'l-Baha, and with other leading Baha'is.

Robert P. Richardson, an outspoken critic of the Baha'i religion, refers to Browne as "the highest authority on the history of Babism and Baha'ism, and one who errs, if at all, only by a too sympathetic treatment of Baha."<sup>8</sup> Praise of Browne's works is repeated in succeeding non-Baha'i studies of the religion, and dependence upon him is freely acknowledged and clearly evident in these studies.

Correspondingly, H. M. Balyuzi, an eminent Baha'i, in his volume *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith* writes:

No Western scholar has ever equalled the effort of Edward Granville Browne in seeking and preserving for generations to come the story of the birth and the rise of a Faith which was destined, as he foresaw at the onset of his distinguished career, to have a significance comparable to that of the other great religions of the world. The Comte de Gobineau's classical work was gathering dust when Edward Browne took up his pen to write of a dawning Faith with zest and admiration. Many, there must have been, particularly in academic circles, on both sides of the Atlantic, who made their first acquaintance with that thrilling story in the writings of Edward Browne.

Baha'is undoubtedly owe to Edward Granville Browne a deep debt of gratitude. ... Despite some mistaken views, his well-merited fame is enduring.<sup>9</sup>

Browne's writings manifest a curious mixture of glowing praise and stringent criticisms of the Babi-Baha'i movement. Baha'is are fond of quoting his words of praise and appreciation and Christian apologists his comments which put the faith in questionable light. Balyuzi's study of Browne attempts from the Baha'i standpoint to deal with some of the problems raised in Browne's works concerning the faith. Balyuzi thus introduced Baha'is who had not read widely in Browne's works to some of Browne's more critical statements and opinions regarding the faith. Farhang Jahanpur, in a review of Balyuzi's book, comments that "there are few Baha'is who have not heard" of Edward Browne but that "what is not widely realized [among Baha'is],<sup>10</sup> however, is that some of Browne's writings were uncomplimentary to the Baha'i Faith."<sup>11</sup> This statement reflects the previous Baha'i focus only on Browne's favorable references to the faith.

If Baha'is in the past have avoided Browne's critical statements, non-Baha'is likewise have often avoided his tributes to the religion. Part of the reason for this mixture of praise and criticism in Browne's

writings is the fact that he was uncompromising in searching for truth and fearless in recording all points of view which he felt were pertinent to the subjects of his study.<sup>12</sup> This aspect of Browne's writings invests them with a special value for the objective student of the Baha'i religion.

The first three histories translated and/or edited by Edward G. Browne are called by him "the three chief histories composed in Persian by members of the sect."<sup>13</sup> They will be discussed in the order in which they were published by Browne.

### ***The Traveller's Narrative***

The first Baha'i history published by Browne was *A Traveller's Narrative*, which appeared in 1891 in two volumes. Volume I contains the Persian text and Volume II the English translation and notes. Browne was given a copy of the *Traveller's Narrative* during his second journey to Persia in the spring of 1890 by the Baha'is at Bahji, where Browne had interviewed the founder of the faith, Baha'u'llah.<sup>14</sup>

### **Browne's reasons for publishing the "*Traveller's Narrative*"**

As a scholar of Persian literature, Browne was conscious that many important Persian works remained unpublished, in the East as well as in Europe, and thus felt constrained to offer some explanation as to why he would publish so recent a Persian work, especially when the author was not even known. Browne felt that these reasons against the book's publication were inherent in the book's very nature and character. It was recent in origin because it dealt with an important new movement in Persia, and it was anonymous because of the persecution directed against the movement.<sup>15</sup>

Browne also saw the movement as having an importance to various disciplines of study:

Now it appears to me that the history of the Babi movement must be interesting in different ways to others besides those who are directly engaged in the study of Persian. To the student of religious thought it will afford no little matter for reflection; for here he may contemplate such personalities as by lapse of time pass into heroes and demi-gods still unobscured by myth and fable; he may examine by the light of concurrent and independent testimony one of those strange outbursts of enthusiasm, faith, fervent devotion, and indomitable heroism---or fanaticism, if you will---which we are accustomed to associate with the earlier history of the human race; he may witness, in a word, the birth of a faith which may not impossibly win a place amidst the great religions of the world. To the ethnologist also it may yield food for thought as to the character of a people, who, stigmatized as they often have been as selfish, mercenary, avaricious, egotistical, sordid, and cowardly, are yet capable of exhibiting under the influence of a strong religious impulse a degree of devotion, disinterestedness, generosity, unselfishness, nobility, and courage which may be paralleled in history, but can scarcely be surpassed. To the politician, too, the matter is not devoid of importance; for what changes may not be effected in a country now reckoned almost as a cypher in the balance of national forces by a religion capable of evoking so mighty a spirit? Let those who know what Muhammad made the Arabs, consider well what the Bab may yet make the Persians.<sup>16</sup>

The "paramount interest" which Browne had in the movement, however, and which he thought would be true of most others, lies, he said, in this:

that here is something, whether wise or unwise, whether tending towards the amelioration of mankind or the reverse, which seems to many hundreds, if not thousands, of our fellow-creatures worth suffering and dying for, and which on this ground alone, must be accounted worthy of our most attentive study.<sup>17</sup>

### **Author of the *Traveller's Narrative***

The *Traveller's Narrative* is written anonymously, and at the time of its publication Browne did not know who the author was, but he learned later that the author was Baha'u'llah's eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Baha, who became Baha'u'llah's successor after his death in 1892.<sup>18</sup> Baha'is acknowledge that 'Abdu'l-Baha is the author.<sup>19</sup>

### **Date of the *Traveller's Narrative***

Because of a statement in the *Traveller's Narrative* that “for nigh upon thirty-five years no action opposed to the government or prejudicial to the nation has emanated from this sect,”<sup>20</sup> Browne dates the work as having been written probably in the year 1886.<sup>21</sup> Elsewhere, he gives the date of writing as “in or about the year CE 1886.”<sup>22</sup> Browne counts thirty-five years from Shavval, AH 1268 (Muslim date corresponding to August, CE 1852), when a few Babis made a notorious and unsuccessful attempt on the life of the Persian shah, which action plunged the Babis into dire persecution. Thirty-five years from that date began in July, 1886.<sup>23</sup> The year 1886 may be accepted as the approximate date for the writing of the *Traveller's Narrative*.

### **Characteristics of the *Traveller's Narrative***

The *Traveller's Narrative* is the first Baha'i history to give prominence to Baha'u'llah and to the events connected with his dispensation as over against the Bab and his epoch, which are the focus of the earlier written *Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf and the New History*, to be discussed below. Although the *Traveller's Narrative* acknowledges that the Bab advanced the claim of being the *Mihdi* (or *Mahdi*), the Muslim expected deliverer,<sup>24</sup> it emphasizes his role as the *Bab* (“Gate”), the title he had earlier assumed and by which he is generally known today. It, moreover, presents his “Bab-hood” as meaning that “he was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections”,<sup>25</sup> evidently meant by the writer to refer to Baha'u'llah, though unnamed. The writer sees

the Bab as having "laid no claim to revelation from an angel",<sup>26</sup> as Muhammad had received the Qur'an from the angel Gabriel. Whether intentional or not, no mention is made of the Bab's *Bayan*, his book of laws to govern his dispensation as the Qur'an had governed Muhammad's. The Bab is presented, therefore, as a kind of John the Baptist, a forerunner preparing the way for the great revelation to come.

Mirza Yahya, whom Gobineau had regarded as the Bab's successor,<sup>27</sup> and who became Baha'u'llah's rival, is portrayed in contrast to Baha'u'llah's courage, judgment, and leadership ability.

A conciliatory attitude is taken toward the shah of Persia, who is exonerated from complicity in the persecutions against the Babis, and the Babi resistance to the government is explained on the basis of self-defense and ignorance of the Bab's true teachings by his followers.<sup>28</sup>

In the fashion of the earlier *New History*, the author, whom Baha'is acknowledge is 'Abdu'l-Baba, describes himself as a "traveller" (hence the title, *A Traveller's Narrative*) in all parts of Persia, who has sought out from those within and without the movement, from friend and strangers, the facts of the case regarding the Bab and his religion and who proposes to set forth briefly those points of the story upon which the disputants are agreed.<sup>29</sup> Actually, the history is a Baha'i apology setting out the new state of affairs in the Babi community after Baha'u'llah's declaration, defending his claims, and presenting the present policy regarding the Persian government, as against the prevailing attitude toward the movement by the government and by those outside the Baha'i division.

Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í estimates of the *Traveller's Narrative* have varied. Bahá'is, of course, highly esteem the *Traveller's Narrative* since it is written by no less an authority in the Bahá'í religion than Baha'u'llah's own son and successor. Non-Bahá'is have tended to approach the volume with some caution, taking into account its evident purpose of establishing the Bahá'í claims as over against the original Babi position and against Mirza Yahya, the Bab's own nominee for the leadership in the movement after his death. The importance of the *Traveller's Narrative*, however, as reflecting Bahá'í doctrine and outlook at the time of its composition by one at the forefront of the movement cannot be overstressed.

### ***The New History***

The first Bahá'í history written by a member of the religion after Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission is the *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, or *New History*, of which Browne published an English translation in 1893. *The New History*, however, focuses on the Bab and his dispensation rather than on Baha'u'llah, and this is one reason which necessitated the writing of the later Bahá'í history, the *Traveller's Narrative*.

### **Author of the *New History***

The work was written anonymously by one who describes himself as a traveller going to "all parts of Europe and India and observing the races and religions of those regions" and having "chanced to visit Persia",<sup>30</sup> where he met some members of the persecuted Babi sect. He



denies being of the Persian nation<sup>31</sup> and thanks God that he is not a Persian.<sup>32</sup> He speaks of Europeans as “my compatriots”<sup>33</sup> and refers to the French language as “my own language”.<sup>34</sup> He portrays himself as being neither a Muslim nor a member of the Babi religion and in one place refers to some acquaintances who “invited me to exchange the Christian faith for the religion of Muhammad.”<sup>35</sup>

Having become “fully cognizant of the history and doctrines of the Babis”, during his travels in Persia, the author says he felt “impelled by sympathy and common humanity to compose this book”<sup>36</sup> to dispel misconceptions about the Babis so that persecution of them might cease.<sup>37</sup>

Edward Browne, not knowing for sure who the author was, wrote in 1891:

Whoever the author or authors may have been the information set forth is so detailed and so minute that it must have been derived for the most part from persons who had conversed with actual eye-witnesses of the events described, if not from eye-witnesses themselves.<sup>38</sup>

During his first journey in Persia, Browne was told of the *New History*, and when he asked for the author's name, Haji Mirza Hasan replied:

“I know it but it is a secret which I am not entitled to divulge, though, as the writer is dead now, it could make little matter even were it generally known. I may tell you this much, that he was one of the secretaries of Manakji Sahib of Teheran.<sup>i</sup> When he began to write he was quite impartial, but as he went on he became convinced by his investigations of the truth of the matter, and this change in his opinions is manifest in the later portion of the work. ...”<sup>39</sup>

Browne was later given information on the authorship and production of the *New History*. In responding to a number of questions asked by Browne, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl composed a treatise entitled *Risaliy-*

---

<sup>i</sup> See [www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol2/jadid/jadid.htm](http://www.h-net.org/~bahai/arabic/vol2/jadid/jadid.htm).

*i-Iskandariyyih* (the Epistle of Alexander, or the Alexandrine Tract),<sup>40</sup> named in honor of a long time friend to whom it is dedicated, Alexander Toumansky of the Russian Artillery, a noted Orientalist, author, and the translator of Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas* into Russian. Four copies were written in Abu'l-Fadl's hand—one the author kept himself; one he sent to Toumansky; one to Baha'u'llah; and one to Browne. Abu'l-Fadl, in answering the question concerning the authorship of the *New History*, relates.

The writer and author of the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* was the late Mirza Huseyn of Hamadan. ... The aforesaid author, in consequence of the calligraphic and epistolary skill which he showed in drafting letters, was at first secretary to one of the ministers of the Persian Government. At the time of His Majesty Nasiru'd-Din Shah's first journey to Europe he too visited those countries in the Royal Suite. ... After his return to Persia, he was amongst those imprisoned in consequence of the troubles of the year A.H. 1291 (A.D. 1874). ...

After his release from the prison of Teheran, he obtained employment in the office of Manakji the Zoroastrian, well known as an author and writer. Manakji treated him with great respect, for had he not become notorious as a Babi, he would never have engaged in this work.<sup>41</sup>

Manakji, zealous in collecting books, would urge his acquaintances who were capable of writing books or treatises to compose works on suggested subjects. One night he, according to Abu'l-Fadl, "begged Mirza Huseyn to compile a history of the Babis."<sup>42</sup> Abu'l-Fadl continues:

Mirza Huseyn came to the writer [Abu'l-Fadl, the writer of the Tract] and asked his assistance, saying, 'Since hitherto no full and correct history has been written treating of the events of this Theophany, to collect and compile the various episodes thereof in a fitting manner is a very difficult matter. ...

To this I replied, "There is in the hands of the Friends a history by the late Haji Mirza Jani of Kashan, who was one of the martyrs of Teheran, and one of the best men of that time. But he was a man engaged in business and without skill in historiography, neither did he record the dates of the years and months. At most he, being a God-fearing man, truthfully set down the record of

events as he had seen and heard them. Obtain this book, and take the episodes from it, and the dates of the years and months from the *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh* and the appendices of the *Rawzatu's-Safa*; and, having incorporated these in your rough draft, read over each sheet to His Reverence Haji Seyyid Jawad of Kerbela (whose name has been repeatedly mentioned in these pages, for he, from the beginning of the Manifestation of the First Point [i.e. the Bab] until the arrival of His Holiness Baha'u'llah in Acre, accompanied the Friends everywhere in person, and is thoroughly informed and cognizant of all events. Thus diligently correct the history, in order that this book may, by the will of God, be well finished, and may win the approbation of the learned throughout the world."<sup>43</sup>

Abu'l-Fadl indicates that Musa Husayn asked him to write the introductory preface and thus open for him the path of composition, so Abu'l-Fadl, agreeing to this, wrote two pages at the beginning of the work, containing exhortations to strive after the truth.<sup>44</sup> Mirza Husayn intended to write two volumes, but his death in AH 1299 (CE 1881-1882)<sup>45</sup> prevented his writing the second volume. Mirza Husayn's first volume, according to Abu'l-Fadl's testimony, was not completed in the manner suggested by Abu'l-Fadl but was subjected to revision by Manakji:

Manakji's custom was to bid his secretary write down some matter and afterwards read the rough draft over to him. So first of all the secretary used to read over to him the rough draft which he had made in accordance with his own taste and agreeably to the canons of good style; and then, after Manakji had made additions here and excisions there, and had docked and re-arranged the matter, he used to make a fair copy. And since Manakji had no great skill or science in the Persian tongue, the style of most of the books and treatises attributed to him is disconnected and broken, good and bad being singled together. In addition to this defect, ignorant scribes and illiterate writers have, in accordance with their own fancies, so altered the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* that at the present day every copy of it appears like a defaced portrait or a restored temple, to such a degree that one cannot obtain a correct copy of it, unless it were the author's own transcript; otherwise no copy can be relied upon.<sup>46</sup>

The bulk of the *New History* purports to be the narrative of a Babi acquaintance whom the author met in Persia. Browne attributes the introductory and concluding sections of the history, before and after this narrative, to Manakji, the Zoroastrian agent in Tihran.<sup>47</sup> The statements about the author's not being a Persian, nor Muslim, nor Babi, and about the Persian language not being his mother-tongue, statements which occur in these sections, certainly would be true of Manakji.<sup>48</sup>

A reference to "a certain illustrious Seyyid", described as bring a 'holy and *beneficent* [translation of *javad* or *jawad*] being"<sup>49</sup> may be a reference to Haji Siyyid Javad of Karbila, to whom Abu'l-Fadl suggests that Mirza Husayn take the text of the *New History* for final review and correction<sup>50</sup> and may supply internal evidence of Haji Siyyid Javad's having some part in the production of the *New History*.<sup>51</sup> Browne originally questioned Siyyid Javad's having had a share in the production of the *New History* because of the ascription to Siyyid Javad of the authorship of the *Hasht Bihisht* (Eight Paradises), which has strongly marked Azali proclivities,<sup>52</sup> and because of Mirza Yahya's assurances to Browne that Siyyid Javad was one of his staunchest followers.<sup>53</sup> Browne obtained a copy of the *Hasht Bihisht*, which he calls "a hitherto unknown Ezeli controversial work,"<sup>54</sup> from "a learned Ezeli resident in Constantinople,"<sup>55</sup> to whom Browne refers in his writings as "Sheykh A\_\_\_,"<sup>56</sup> identified as Sheykh (or more preferably, Shaykh) Ahmad of Kirman (called Ruhi),<sup>57</sup> who was one of Mirza Yahya's sons-in-law and who was put to death in Tabriz in 1896.<sup>58</sup>

Shaykh Ahmad told Edward Browne that the *Hasht Bihisht* represented

the teachings and sayings of the illustrious Haji Seyyid Jawad of Kerbela, who was of the "First Letters of the Living," the earliest believers. ... But, inasmuch as during his latter days the strength of that illustrious personage was much impaired and his hands trembled, he was unable to write, wherefore he dictated these words, and one of his disciples wrote them down, but in an illegible hand and on scattered leaves. In these days, having some leisure time in Constantinople, I and this person exerted ourselves to set in order these disordered leaves. In short the original spirit of the contents is his [i.e. Seyyid Jawad's], though perhaps the form of words may be ours. Should you desire to mention the name of the author of these two books it is Haji Siyyid Javad.<sup>59</sup>

Browne later did mention the authorship of the *Hasht Bihisht*, saying that he had lately learned that "Aka Seyyid Jawad of Kerbela, a prominent member of the clergy at Kirman" was "the author of both volumes of the *Hasht Bihisht*".<sup>60</sup> Browne notes, however, that Abu'l-Fadl had categorically denied that Siyyid Javad was a follower of Mirza Yahya,<sup>61</sup> and if not an adherent of Mirza Yahya, his authorship of the *Hasht Bihisht* would be highly unlikely. In his article for the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, Browne identifies the author of the *Hasht Bihisht* as Shaykh Ahmad.<sup>62</sup> Still later, however, Browne says in reference to the *Hasht Bihisht*:

To Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi of Kirman we are indebted, at any rate so far as the final recension is concerned (far as to the original authorship some doubt prevails), for the only attempt with which I am acquainted to elaborate a comprehensive philosophy of the Babi doctrine, both theoretical and practical.<sup>63</sup>

Browne goes on to confess that "the book deserves a more detailed and systematic study than I have yet been able to give it," but says, "I am disposed to think that the author has imparted into it a system

and a number of ideas peculiar to himself and foreign to the Bab's thought."<sup>64</sup> It is possible, then, and perhaps probable, if Siyyid Javad is not the author of the *Hasht Bihisht*, that he had some part in the production of the *New History*, as internal evidence may imply.

The evidence would seem to indicate, therefore, that at least four known persons had a share in the production of the *New History*: Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, who wrote the opening two pages and suggested its method of composition; Mirza Husayn of Hamadan, author of the book in its original form; Siyyid Javad, who may have helped in some revision; and Manakji, largely responsible for the opening and closing sections which enclose the historical narrative and for the overall form. But the *New History* as it exists today gives evidence of even further revision and interpolation.

### **The two manuscripts collated by Browne**

Browne admitted that two manuscripts of the *New History* which he collated for publication had a "multitude of variants and divergences."<sup>65</sup> Browne was informed by Sidney Churchill on December 14, 1887, that he had obtained a manuscript of the *New History* for the British Museum Library and invited Browne to examine it on his return to England. Browne next heard of the existence of this history at Shiraz on March 30, 1888, from some of his Babi acquaintances.<sup>66</sup> He was given eventually a copy of the history while in Persia by the Babis (actually Baha'is) in Shiraz. Browne returned to England in the autumn of 1889 and made considerable use of the history in his two articles on the Babis for the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic*

*Society*.<sup>67</sup> Browne made another trip to Persia in the spring of 1890 before examining the British Museum Library copy of the *New History*. On this second experience in Persia, Browne had been admitted into the presence of Baha'u'llah and had acquired also a copy of 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Traveller's Narrative*, the publication of which upon his return to England occupied most of his life. He did manage, however, to go to London for three weeks during the Easter vacation of 1891 and examined for the first time the text of the British Museum Library's copy of the *New History*. He then detected the many variants between this copy and his own copy and several long episodes not in his manuscript. The work of collating the two manuscripts thus proved more laborious than he had intended. Browne also made a more careful effort to be as accurate as possible with the English translation of the *New History* because, due to costs, he did not plan to publish the Persian text as he had with the earlier published *Traveller's Narrative*.<sup>68</sup>

In the published translation of the *New History*, material found only in the British Museum Library copy (which Browne labels L. for London Codex) is enclosed in single square brackets, and material found only in his copy (which he labels C. for Cambridge Codex) is enclosed in double square brackets. Browne speaks of the London Codex as "superior in accuracy, neatness, and calligraphy" to his own copy,<sup>69</sup> and since it was transcribed in Rajab AH 1298 (June, 1881), it was written during Mirza Husayn's lifetime and, Browne believes, possibly under his supervision.<sup>70</sup>

The fact that each of the two manuscripts contains material peculiar to itself reveals that at least two additional revisers have

interpolated material into the original text. Browne holds that, whereas in the case of classical or ancient texts, which are principally of literary interest, scholars detecting interpolations by ingenious copyists over the ages would excise such additions to produce a more accurate, text, rather in the case of interpolations in the *New History*, which has an interest more historical than literary,

the interpolations may be just as valuable as the original text, for no one but a Babi would copy the book, and such a one might well add from his own knowledge new and important facts of which the authors were not cognizant. Indeed, as a matter of fact, some of the most interesting portions of the *Tarikh-i-Jadid* are evidently interpolations of this sort, several of them being actually introduced by the words "thus says the reviser of this history," or "thus says the transcriber."<sup>71</sup>

In one passage in C., "the reviser of this history" even identifies himself by name as "Nabil, a native of Alin".<sup>72</sup>

### **Date of the *New History***

As to the date of the *New History's* original composition, Browne writes:

The allusion to the *Ikan*<sup>73</sup> on p. 26 proves that the *New History* was written subsequently to that work, which was composed in A.D. 1858; the allusion to Baha'u'llah's "Manifestation" on p. 64 carries the date down to A.D. 1866;<sup>74</sup> while the reference to the Shah's tour in Europe (presumable the first)<sup>75</sup> on p. 181 brings it down to A.D. 1873. This last date would in any case be the earliest admissible, for on p. 174 the Babis are said to have endured nearly thirty years of persecution, while on p. 321 this number is raised to thirty-five by one manuscript.<sup>76</sup>

Since the London Codex was transcribed in June, 1881, the *New History* had to have been written no later than that date and, according to Browne, no earlier than September 6, 1873, when Nasiru'd-Din Shah returned from Europe, to which the writer refers. According to Abu'l-Fadl, it was written



after Mirza Husayn's release from the imprisonment due to the troubles in AH 1291 (CE 1874) and after his employment in the office of Manakji, who urged Mirza Husayn to write his history.<sup>77</sup> Also according to Abu'l-Fadl, after Mirza Husayn had completed the first volume of the projected two volumes of his history, "fate granted him no further respite, for he died in the city of Resht is the year AH 1299 [= CE 1881-2].<sup>78</sup> Browne assigns 1880 as the date for the writing of the *New History*.<sup>79</sup>

### **Characteristics of the *New History***

The *New History* is the first Baha'i history written by a follower of Baha'u'llah after Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission. The history, however, gives no prominence to Baha'u'llah and events connected with his ministry as does the later written *Traveller's Narrative*. The focus of the *New History* is on the Bab and his dispensation, covering events from before the Bab's declaration through the Bab's martyrdom and the retrieval of his mutilated body by his followers. A few references to Baha'u'llah occur in which he is portrayed in an exalted light, but mention is made that "the mystery of whose real nature was still hidden within the veils of the divine Wisdom."<sup>80</sup>

The author does indicate his intention of writing a second volume, and Mirza Abu'l-Fadl believed that he intended the first volume to center on events connected with the Bab's ministry and the second to focus on "the circumstances of the Most Holy and Most Splendid Dawn",<sup>81</sup> that is, on Baha'u'llah. According to the author's account, however, the planned second volume was to present

particulars of their [the religion's] principles and observances, explanations of certain points of transcendental philosophy, and a detailed description of their virtues, their ethics and rules of conduct, and the sincerity and singleheartedness, which I have myself observed in them.<sup>82</sup>

The second volume seems, therefore, to have been contemplated not as a continuation of the history but as a volume of Babi-Baha'í principles, philosophy, and ethical requirements to serve evidently as a companion volume to the historical account.

The *New History* was sent to the Baha'í chiefs in 'Akka but failed to win their full approval, partly because, whether it was due to the principal author's death or otherwise, the volume cuts short the history at the point of the Bab's martyrdom and thus does not cover what Baha'ís consider the more important events connected with the later manifestation of Baha'u'llah. One of the Baha'ís whom Browne met in Persia said of the *New History*:

It is not altogether good. The author devotee too large a portion of his work to abuse of the Muhammadan doctors and reflections on the Persian Government, while, on the other hand, he omits many events of real importance. Besides that, I do not like his pretence of being a French traveller; for we all know, and indeed anyone who reads his book can see, that he was not a European.<sup>83</sup>

Haji Mirza Hasan added the comment that the book was sent to the Supreme Horizon [to Baha'u'llah at 'Akka], but was not altogether approved there, and I believe that another and more accurate history is to be written. However, you will learn a good deal from this one."<sup>84</sup> The history being prepared to replace the *New History* is, of course, the *Traveller's Narrative*.

Since the *New History* did not meet the complete approval of Baha'i leaders in 'Akka, who proceeded to prepare another volume, the *New History* should not be regarded as official Baha'i teachings and outlook, and criticism against the Baha'is because of the tenor of the *New History* is not fully justified. The volume, however, does have value in throwing light on various historical events and in enabling the student of Baha'i history better to trace the developing tradition.

### ***The Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf***

Browne knew of the existence of an older Babi history from reading the *New History*, which contains numerous quotations from the earlier work. After repeated disappointments trying to obtain a copy or to learn if any copies still existed, Browne finally concluded that the work probably was no longer extant.<sup>85</sup> While on a short stay in Paris during the Easter vacation of 1892, however, Browne examined five Baha'i manuscripts acquired by the Bibliothèque Nationale which had once been owned by Count Gobineau, whose study of Central Asian religions and philosophies, as noted above,<sup>86</sup> had first inspired Browne's interest in the Babi religion. One of the manuscripts, identified in the National Library as *Suppl. Persan 1071*, was a history of the Babi religion, and another of the manuscripts, *Suppl. Persan 1070*, contained the *Persian Bayan* and the first third of the same history with no break between the end of the *Bayan* and the beginning of the history.<sup>87</sup> Browne sent a description of the five manuscripts to Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal) and

regarding the history, Mirza Yahya wrote on May 3, 1892, that “the history to which you allude must by certain indications, be by the uplifted<sup>88</sup> and martyred Hajji [Mirza Jani],<sup>89</sup> for none but he wrote [such] a history.”<sup>90</sup>

Browne considered the *Kitab-i-Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* (the Book of the Point of K) to be unsurpassingly important to an accurate understanding of the origin and development of the Babi religion. He calls the work “perhaps the most important document which exists for the history of the early Babis,” being “the oldest and most authentic account of the stirring events of the years CE 1844–1851 or 1852, presented from the Babi point of view, which we possess.”<sup>91</sup> Elsewhere Browne calls it “the most interesting book, perhaps, in the whole range of Babi literature.”<sup>92</sup>

Browne did not discover the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* until his translation of the *New History* was already completed and arrangements made for its publication, but Browne believed the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* to be the much more important book. Browne now came to believe that it was “a most fortunate circumstance” that the Syndics of University Press, Cambridge, were reluctant to incur the great expense of publishing the text of the *New History* when accepting the English translation,<sup>93</sup> for Browne was now more eager to publish the Persian text of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* than that of the *New History*. Browne published the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in 1910 as Volume IV of the E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, consisting of important and rare Turkish, Persian, and Arabic works.

By comparing the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* with the *New History*, Browne believed that he had caught the Baha'is, apparently to his own shock

and disappointment, in a grand scheme of "suppression and falsification of evidence."<sup>94</sup> The *New History*, he discovered, omitted and altered sections of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* which were detrimental or unfavorable to the changes being effected under Baha'u'llah's leadership. With all pertinent material of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* being transferred into the *New History* by quotation or restatement, Browne believed the Baha'is then conspired to suppress and destroy completely the original history. He writes:

This fact is very instructive in connection with the history of other religions, for it is hard for us, accustomed to a world of printed books and carefully-guarded public libraries, to realize that so important a work as this could be successfully suppressed; and equally hard to believe that the adherents of a religion evidently animated by the utmost self-devotion and the most fervent enthusiasm, and, in ordinary every-day matters; by obvious honesty of purpose, could connive at such an act of suppression and falsification of evidence. The application of this fact, which, were it not established by the clearest evidence, I should have regarded as incredible, I leave to professional theologians, to whom it may not be devoid of a wider significance. Of this such I am certain, that the more the Baha'i doctrine spreads, especially outside Persia, and most of all in Europe and America, the more the true history and nature of the original Babi movement is obscured and distorted.<sup>95</sup>

The importance which Browne attached to the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is fully justified if the document is the history of Mirza Jani, who was martyred in 1852, because it then would give the earliest account of the Babi community which is available and would reveal those features of the faith prior to the rivalry between Baha'u'llah and Subh-i-Azal.

The gravity of the question is all the more apparent in the consideration that non-Baha'i studies have followed Browne in regarding the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* as the earliest history of the Babi movement and it is used as a basis for attacking the character of the later

developing Baha'i movement, which is then seen as being engaged in suppression and falsification of evidence which the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* has brought to light. J. B. Richards, for example, writes:

The discovery by the late Prof. E. G. Browne, of a copy of the "Nuqtatu'l-Kaf" in the National Library, Paris, in the spring of 1892 was an event of far-reaching importance to all students of Baha'ism. It is to this discovery that we owe the fact that to-day we are in a position to trace the development of the Babi-Baha'i movement from its very beginning. The writer of the book was Mirza Jani, a native of Kashan in Persia, who was himself martyred in the year 1268 A.H. (A.D. 1852), two years after the death of the Bab. He had been acquainted with all the leading Babis, including Mirza Yahya Subh-i Ezel, Qurratu'l-'Ayn, Baha'u'llah and the Bab himself, and was therefore well qualified to write the history of the movement. Writing at a time when Babism was as yet undivided, and suppression of the truth was unnecessary, Mirza Jani is our one authority for the history of the movement up to the death of the Bab, and the events of the two years that immediately followed. Its importance cannot be exaggerated, for ... the histories which succeeded it so alter and amend the facts that they cannot be regarded as histories, and must be classed as polemical works.<sup>96</sup>

### **The position of H. M. Balyuzi**

H. M. Balyuzi, in his study on Edward G. Browne, attempts to rescue the Baha'i reputation by maintaining that the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* "was not what it was supposed to be, and what Browne believed it to be." Browne's "outlook was profoundly affected," he says, once Browne convinced himself of the book's supreme importance and uniqueness, and "on the basis of that conviction he built a monumental and impressive case."<sup>97</sup> But Balyuzi questions whether the manuscript discovered by Browne was actually the Mirza Jani history and raises some other questions concerning the manuscript and the importance Browne attached to it. Since one's understanding of the character and early history of the faith will be largely determined by their answers, the questions raised by Balyuzi require some attention.

**The question of authorship:** The first question Balyuzi raises is whether the manuscript Browne found in the National Library is “the same chronicle” as that written by Mirza Jani of Kashan, who was martyred in 1852.<sup>98</sup> Balyuzi admits that Mirza Jani wrote a history of the faith and repeatedly stresses that no one has questioned, denied, or ever tried to conceal this fact. He notes that the *New History* refers to Mirza Jani’s book, that Mirza Abu’l-Fadl clearly stated that the *New History* was based on Mirza Jani’s work, and that Mirza Abu’l-Fadl had even added information concerning where it was written, in Shah ‘Abdu’l-Azim,<sup>99</sup> five or six miles south of Tihiran. ‘Abdu’l-Baha, in a tablet addressed to the hands of the cause, Balyuzi indicates, states that “the martyr, Haji Mirza Jani, had written a few chapters, brief and incomplete, on the history of the Faith.”<sup>100</sup> But Balyuzi says, after Browne published the *Nuqtatu’l-Kaf* in 1910, Mirza Abu’l-Fadl in a treatise “unhesitatingly condemned it as a forgery.”<sup>101</sup> Abu’l-Fadl, according to Balyuzi, maintained that the title *Nuqtatu’l-Kaf* (the Point of K, for Kashan, the home of Mirza Jani) was selected to mislead in identifying the real author.<sup>102</sup>

Balyuzi maintains that Mirza Abu’l-Fadl’s pronouncement after the publication of the *Nuqtatu’l-Kaf* that it is a forgery “carries weight” because “Mirza Abu’l-Fadl must have personally seen both the histories” of Mirza Jani and Mirza Husayn, for he admits that the *New History* is based on Mirza Jani’s history and “had also pointed out that Manakji had shaped Mirza Husayn’s history to his own liking, and copyists had introduced their own embellishments.”<sup>103</sup>

**The question of the *History's* value:** “The crucial point,” Balyuzi believes, “is not the authorship of *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, but the value that Edward Browne attached to it.”<sup>104</sup> Balyuzi asks whether or not the work merited such high consideration. He points out that Mirza Jani was “a man of the mart, not closed cloisters”,<sup>105</sup> or in Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's words, as translated by Browne, “a man engaged in business and without skill in historiography.”<sup>106</sup> Balyuzi writes:

A chronicle composed by a merchant who was neither a historian, nor a scholar and man of letters, and whose association with the Founder of the Faith was confined to a matter of days, could not be the sole document to preserve a valid doctrine and tradition.<sup>107</sup>

Balyuzi here refers to the Bab's stay in the home of Mirza Jani in Kashan for two days and nights,<sup>108</sup> and he implies that the history fell into oblivion, not because of any overt acts at suppression, as Browne charges, but simply because its quality was not such as to guarantee its preservation.

**The question of tampering with the text:** Another question Balyuzi raises is whether someone may have tampered with the original Mirza Jani history. He points out that Mirza Jani had two brothers, one of whom, Haji Muhammad-Isma'il known as Dhabih, was a staunch follower of Baha'u'llah, but the other, Haji Mirza Ahmad, was a supporter of Subh-i-Azal and was eventually murdered by an Arab in Baghdad. Balyuzi asks:

Did this Haji Mirza Ahmad, involved as he was with the supporters of Subh-i-Azal, have a hand in tampering with the text of the fragmentary history written by his martyred brother [Mirza Jani]?<sup>109</sup>



Balyuzi then acknowledges: "One can pose this question, but to find an answer is well-nigh impossible. No documentary evidence exists."<sup>110</sup>

**Balyuzi's summations:** Balyuzi gives a summary statement of his theory to account for some of the problems and questions which he has discussed:

To sum up, there have been two books—one an incomplete history by a devout and courageous merchant who perished in the savage massacre of 1852, the second a distortion ascribed to the same devoted man whose voice had already been silenced when the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* was given the stamp of his name.<sup>111</sup>

Since the value one attaches to the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in giving an accurate description of conditions in the Babi community prior to the Baha'i-Azali division will be determined largely by their answers, the questions Balyuzi raises and his theory require some response before proceeding to the historical sections of the present work.

### **Response to Balyuzi's position**

Balyuzi's study on Edward G. Browne marks the first extensive attempt to deal critically with issues presented in the writings of Edward G. Browne, whose conclusions non-Baha'is generally have accepted. Balyuzi's approach from the Baha'i perspective, therefore, is to be commended, for wrestling with such issues as Balyuzi has done will be necessary to any profitable dialogue between Baha'is and non-Baha'is. Balyuzi has made some corrections in Browne's information, noted some inconsistencies, and pointed to some of his weaker arguments. A response to all of Balyuzi's findings is beyond the scope of the present study, but his questions regarding the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* are crucial to the study of the faith's early history.

**Author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*:** Balyuzi's theory that the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* published in 1910 is a distortion of an earlier work written by Mirza Jani is an attempt to reconcile statements that Mirza Jani had in fact, written a history, which 'Abdu'l-Baha describes, according to Balyuzi, as "a few chapters, brief and incomplete" with Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's pronouncement that the 1910 published history is a forgery.<sup>112</sup>

Balyuzi does not indicate the context in which 'Abdu'l-Baha's statement is made, nor does he indicate the date of the statement, whether made before or after Browne's publication of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*; he merely indicates that it appears in a tablet addressed to the hands of the cause, high ranking defenders of the faith, and presumably a tablet not available to the public. Nor does Balyuzi identify the treatise in which Abu'l-Fadl's pronouncement is made. His theory rests largely on these two statements.

Admittedly, Mirza Jani's history would be incomplete from the Baha'i perspective in not covering the later events connected with the ministry of Baha'u'llah, but what evidence is there that Mirza Jani's history was *complete* from the standpoint of covering Babi history to its date of writing? First, there is the testimony of Abu'l-Fadl, himself, who tells how the *New History* came into being. When Mirza Husayn came to him saying, "Hitherto no full and correct history has been written treating of this Theophany", Mirza Abu'l-Fadl calls his attention to the fact that "there is in the hands of the Friends a history by the late Haji Mirza Jani of Kashan" and

advises him to use that history as the basis for his own. He does not speak of Mirza Jani's history as being incomplete but refers only to the fact that Mirza Jani had not dated the events of his history. He indicates, therefore, that Mirza Husayn would need to get the dates for the events from other sources.<sup>113</sup>

But added to this is the testimony of the author of the *New History* (evidently in this instance, Mirza Husayn, who may be taken as largely responsible for the historical narrative within the *New History*), who had seen the Mirza Jani history, for he used it as the basis of his own work. These are his words:

The late Haji Mirza Jani, one of the most respected of the inhabitants of Kashan, who was remarkable for his self-devotion, virtue, and purity of heart, who had with his own eyes witnessed all the most important events of the Manifestation, and who for his zeal finally suffered martyrdom (whereof he foretold all the circumstances some while before their occurrence to certain of his acquaintance), wrote a book describing the course of events and setting forth arguments in support of the faith. In the work he recorded all that he was able to ascertain [from first to last, by diligent enquiries most carefully conducted,] about each of the chief disciples and believers.<sup>114</sup>

The statement that Mirza Jani "wrote a book" in which he "recorded all that he was able to ascertain about each of the chief disciples and believers" sounds as if the history was a rather full account.

As to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's pronouncement after the publication of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in 1910 that it was a forgery, one wonders with what copy Mirza Abu'l-Fadl was making his comparison with Browne's edition, for few copies purporting to be Mirza Jani's history have been produced. Since Mirza Jani did write a history, as is known, the burden of evidence would be upon those who deny that the history

which Browne discovered in the Paris National Library is the lost history. The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is not in the class of those works which sometimes appear pretending to give reality to fictitious or legendary works. Mirza Jani had written a history. Various persons testify to this. The *New History* is based upon it. The manuscript Browne discovered had for many years been out of circulation, first in Count Gobineau's possession and then in the holdings of the National Library, and thus escaped the oblivion which, for whatever reason, overtook nearly all the other copies.

Manuscripts of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* at an earlier period were extremely rare, even Subh-i-Azal's supporters, as Balyuzi points out, seemingly possessed no copy of the history,<sup>115</sup> which Browne maintains supplied them with "a most powerful weapon not of defence only, but of attack" against the Baha'is,<sup>116</sup> and Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, himself, although aware of the history's existence, had no copy to make available to Mirza Husayn, for he tells him to "obtain this book" (sometime prior to 1881 or 1882, when Mirza Husayn died),<sup>117</sup> and he also indicates, when writing in October, 1892, in the Alexandrine Tract, that he still had no copy:

But of this history I, the writer, cannot now procure a copy; for from Samarkand to Teheran is very far, and fortune frowns on the People of Baha, and is beyond measure jealous of them.<sup>118</sup>

When Abu'l-Fadl pronounced the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* of 1910 a forgery, was he, therefore, drawing upon recollections of even earlier years when the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* was more available? Much had happened in the Babi-Baha'i movement between the time when Mirza Jani wrote his history

(CE 1651) and when Browne published the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* (1910) to cause changes in one's perspective.

**Value of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*:** But even if the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is the Mirza Jani history, Balyuzi questions whether it would merit the high value which Browne places upon it. Balyuzi does not think Mirza Jani was qualified to write a chronicle which might preserve a valid doctrine and tradition, for he was "neither a historian, nor a scholar and man of letters" and his "association with the Founder of the Faith was confined to a matter of days."<sup>119</sup>

If Mirza Jani is the author, as Browne believed, he would according to Browne be well qualified to write such a history:

He appears to have been personally acquainted not only with the Bab, Subh-i-Ezel, and Baha'u'llah, but with Haji Suleyman Khan, Mulla Muhammad 'Ali of Zanjan, Seyyid Yahya of Darab, Mulla Sheykh 'Ali "Jenab-i-'Azim," Kurratu'l-'Ayn, "Hazrat-i-Kuddus," and almost all the early apostles of the Babi religion. Finally, in company with twenty-seven of his co-religionists, he suffered martyrdom for the faith at Teheran on September 15th, 1852. he was therefore heart and soul a Babi; he had the best possible opportunities for obtaining detailed and accurate information about every event connected with the movement during the first eight years of its existence (A.D. 1844-1852); and he enjoyed a high reputation for truthfulness, intelligence, and integrity.<sup>120</sup>

The author of the *New History*, as indicated above, stated that Mirza Jani "had with his own eyes witnessed all the most important events of the Manifestation,"<sup>121</sup> and Mirza Abu'l-Fadl said, although indicating that Mirza Jani had no skill in historiography, which meant especially that he had not recorded dates of events, that "he, being a God-fearing man, *truthfully* set down the record of events as he had seen and heard then."<sup>122</sup>

The difference in evaluating the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* between Balyuzi and the others quoted above is due in part to a difference in approach to the history. Balyuzi is stressing that the work would present no valid statement of Babi doctrine and tradition, and one must concede that the history does not now receive, and perhaps has never received, any stamp of official recognition or approval by the Babi or Baha'i communities. But as an historical record of events by a member of the Babi religion who, although being no professional or experienced historian, was, according to published testimony, an eyewitness to most of the events connected with the Babi dispensation, who, as a devout member of the movement, knew personally many of the leading personages in that drama, who held a high reputation for integrity, and who, it is said, truthfully recorded what he had seen and heard, and as a document, if written by Mirza Jani, would necessarily date from a very early period in the movement's history, it would hold a certain fascination for the historian and would likely be highly valued by him.

Further, if that historian believes, as Browne did, that the Baha'is attempted to destroy completely all trace of the history and that only by a remarkable coincidence of events had it been preserved and by chance discovered in a European library, its believed value would be heightened.

Whether the Baha'is actually contrived so to suppress the history, as Browne maintains, perhaps cannot be answered. All that

can be said with certainty is that (1) Mirza Jani had, according to various testimony, composed a history before his martyrdom in 1852; (2) the *New History*, according to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's testimony, was at his suggestion based upon the Mirza Jani history, to which it refers and often quotes, (3) Edward G. Browne "made many enquiries amongst the Babis in different parts of Persia for Mirza Jani's history" but "found no trace of its existence," and the Babis (Baha'is) whom he met even "generally feigned complete ignorance of the very name and existence of Subh-i-Azal;"<sup>123</sup> (4) not even Subh-i-Azal's followers seem to have had a copy; (5) Browne discovered in the Paris National Library a history bearing the title of *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in the spring of 1892; (6) based on Browne's description, Subh-i-Azal identified the work as Mirza Jani's history; (7) the manuscript had once belonged to the Comte de Gobineau, who was stationed in Tihran from 1856 to 1858 and later from 1862 to 1863, and after his death was acquired by the National Library in 1884; (8) by comparing the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* with the *New History*, Browne observed that, although much material from the former is transferred into the latter, certain material is omitted or substituted for other material in the *New History*, thus giving Browne the basis for the theory he advances; (9) after the publication of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in 1910, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, a Baha'i scholar, condemned it as a forgery, according to H. M. Balyuzi; (10) Balyuzi believes two works existed, Mirza Jani's history, brief and incomplete, and the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, a distortion of the former.

The differences which Browne detected between the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* and the *New History* he summarizes under four headings: (1) the former contains "a much less metaphysical and more rationalistic" introduction than that in the latter; (2) the former's conclusion, which deals with Subh-i-Azal and events immediately following the Bab's death, does not occur in the latter; (3) all mention of Subh-i-Azal in the former is omitted in the latter; (4) "incidents and expressions not in accordance with later Baha'i sentiment or calculated to create an unfavourable impression on the general reader" are "toned down or suppressed" in the latter.<sup>124</sup>

Browne, believing the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* to be Mirza Jani's history, advanced the view that the Baha'is set out to suppress Mirza Jani's history by the production of the *New History*:

To suppress it and withdraw it from circulation, at any rate while those on whom had been thrown the glamour of the young Shirazi Seer and of the beautiful Kurratu'l-'Ayn, the martyred heroine and poetess of Kazvin, constituted the majority of the faithful, was almost impossible; to let it continue to circulate in its present form would be disastrous. Only one plan offered any chance of success. Often in the literary history of the East has the disappearance and extinction of works both valuable and of general interest been brought about, either accidentally or intentionally, by the compilation from them of a more concise and popular abridgement which has gradually superseded them. As the Biography of the Prophet Muhammad composed by Ibn Is-hak was superseded by the recension of Ibn Hisham, so should Mirza Jani's old history of the Bab and his Apostles be superseded by a revised, expurgated, and emended "NEW HISTORY" (*Tarikh-i-Jadid*), which, while carefully omitting every fact, doctrine, and expression calculated to injure the policy of Beha, or to give offence to his followers, should preserve, and even supplement with new material derived from fresh sources, the substance of the earlier chronicle.<sup>125</sup>



Balyuzi challenges Browne's hypothesis on the point of when the suppression is supposed to have happened:

Let us note the date at which this covert suppression by recasting is supposed to have taken place; at least a quarter of a century later. By then there would have been no need at all for such a stratagem. The Babi community almost in its entirety had recognized Baha'u'llah as the Manifestation of God Whose Advent the Bab had foretold.<sup>126</sup>

Balyuzi notes that "the *New History* was composed not earlier than 1877 and not later than 1880."<sup>127</sup>

In Browne's view, however, the need for such a suppression would not have arisen until after Baha'u'llah's public declaration of his mission (1866) and the division of the Babis into Baha'is and Azalis. Admittedly, by the time the *New History* was written, most of the Babis had become Baha'is. The Baha'i effort to win over the remaining Babis, however, had by no means ceased, as evidenced, for example, by Baha'u'llah's admonitions in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (written sometime between 1873 and 1888) to the "multitude of al-Bayan" (believers in the Bab's *Bayan*, i.e., the Babis) to accept his manifestation. A footnote on this passage reads: "One gets the impression that there were many unbelieving Babis."<sup>128</sup> Browne writes in the *Traveller's Narrative*, published in 1891, in reference to Subh-i-Azal: "Even now the number of his followers, though small in comparison to the Beha'is, is considerable."<sup>129</sup> Balyuzi mentions "a number of Babis who had refused to give their allegiance either to Baha'u'llah or Subh-i-Azal" who "called themselves Bayanis, after the Book revealed by the Bab," saying "to this day there are remnants of these—passive, aloof and disinterested."<sup>130</sup>

The date for writing the *New History*, some eleven to fourteen years after Baha'u'llah's public declaration, would fit within the period when the Baha'is is were attempting to win over the remaining Babis to the cause of Baha'u'llah, and the destruction of an early history which gave Subh-i-Azal an importance contrary to Baha'u'llah's claims and the subsequent writing of a history from the Baha'i perspective would not be so strange within this period.

In favor of the Baha'is, however, is the information of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, which Browne accepted, about the manner in which the *New History* came into being. Oddly enough, Browne quotes Abu'l-Fadl's information in the same introduction in which he outlines his view concerning the Baha'i suppression of Mirza Jani's history. Browne not only accepts Abu'l-Fadl's information and uses it in identifying Mirza Husayn as the author of the *New History* on the title page of his English translation of that work but regrets that Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, who was

capable of writing so clear, succinct, and pertinent a statement had not a larger share in the compilation of the *Tarikh-i-Jadid*, which would undoubtedly have gained much more from the co-operation of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl than it has from that of Manakji,<sup>131</sup>

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's information may be accepted as essentially correct, for it helps explain some internal problems in the text of the *New History*, and it was written in October, 1892, before the publication of Browne's views of the Baha'i recasting of Mirza Jani's work into the *New History*, which views appear in the Introduction to the *New History* (1893). Abu'l-Fadl's treatise, therefore, would not have been written as a reaction or refutation of Browne's thesis.

If Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's statement is correct, and Browne accepted it, then the Baha'i chiefs—Baha'u'llah and those closely connected with him in 'Akka—had nothing to do with instigating the writing of the *New History*. Rather, the *New History* was written at the imploring of the non-Baha'i Zoroastrian agent in Tihiran, Manakji, and rather than being composed from the desire to recast the Mirza Jani history, its writing was proposed first and its being based on Mirza Jani's history was at the subsequent suggestion of Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, to whom Mirza Husayn came for assistance. Not only did the Baha'i chiefs not instigate the writing of the *New History*, but when, having been sent a copy, they did not fully approve of it and set about to produce a history, in Browne's words, "more in accordance with the views entertained by those chiefs."<sup>132</sup>

### **The text of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf***

If the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is the Mirza Jani history, then the value attached to it in providing information about the earliest stages of the Babi-Baha'i movement is justified, but Balyuzi also questions whether the text of that original history may have been tampered with and suggests one possible candidate, the Azali brother of Mirza Jani, Haji Mirza Ahmad.

It the supporters of Subh-i-Azal had had the book in their possession to tamper with it for purposes of undermining Baha'u'llah's authority, though, surely they would have taken care to preserve it. Balyuzi noted, however, that seemingly "even the supporters of

Subh-i-Azal did not have a copy of this book",<sup>133</sup> and he says of Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ruhi, one of Subh-i-Azal's sons-in-law, that if anybody could have had a copy of that book and would have carefully preserved it, it would have been that inveterate antagonist of Baha'u'llah."<sup>134</sup> Moreover, Balyuzi observes that divergences "are very noticeable",<sup>135</sup> between the *Hasht Bihisht*, of which Shaykh Ahmad is the "full or part author", and the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, which in Balyuzi's view is the distorted account of Mirza Jani's history. He notes, further, that Mirza Abu'l-Fadl

pointed to one particularly glaring case of inconsistency: the claim made for Subh-i-Azal, which flatly contradicted the thesis of his supporters, as quoted by Edward Browne in his Introduction. Azalis had always insisted that 'He Whom God shall make manifest' would not appear before the expiration of a long period of time which might extend from 1511 to 2001 years, whereas on page 244 of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* it was emphatically stated, 'By He Whom God shall make manifest to come after Him [the Bab] His Holiness Azal is intended, and none but him, because two Points there cannot be at the use time'.<sup>136</sup>

The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* evidently, then, was not produced by the Azalis, who seem not to have possessed a copy, nor the text tampered by them, for the text contradicts their viewpoints. The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* gives evidence of having been written at a time distant from the Baha'i-Azali confrontations.

### **The date of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf***

More important actually than the question of who wrote the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is when was it written. Even though knowing that Mirza Jani was not a skilled historian, Browne attached great importance to the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, believing it written by Mirza Jani.<sup>137</sup> The

importance of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, evidently written by a Babi, is due to the fact that, if written by Mirza Jani, who was martyred in 1852, it would have had to have been composed prior to that date and would, thus, supply the student of Babi-Baha'i history a very early record of events and viewpoints pertaining to the Babi movement by a member of the Babi community. If Mirza Jani did not write it, an early date for its composition would still render it highly valuable as a source of information and insights into the Babi movement at an early stage in its development.

When was the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* written? A clue to this question occurs in a passage in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* which reads "To day, when one thousand two hundred and seventy-seven years have elapsed since the [commencement of the] Mission of God's Apostle ...," and Browne points out "the Babis generally date not from the *hijra* or Flight of the Prophet, but from his Call (*ba'that*), which they place ten years earlier," so that "this date corresponds to AH 1267,"<sup>138</sup> or CE 1850–1851. The date of the Bab's declaration, for example, is generally given in the *Bayan* as the year 1270 of Muhammad's manifestation.<sup>139</sup> William McElwee Miller, a former Presbyterian missionary in Persia, claims that he "saw a manuscript copy of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in the library of Dr Sa'id Khan of Teheran" which was "dated AH 1268 [CE 1852], the very year in which the author died for his faith in Teheran."<sup>140</sup>

The passage in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* to which Abu'l-Fadl points indicates that the history was not the product of the Azalis, with whose

position it is inconsistent; nor would the Baha'is have produced the history; it bears traces of having been written at a different time of Baha'i history. H. M. Balyuzi, who maintains that the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* "could not have been the original work of Haji Mirza Jani",<sup>141</sup> nevertheless, speaks of the work as bearing traces of the period when Mirza Jani is said to have written his history. Balyuzi says:

The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is a reflection of the anarchy of the darkest days of the Babi Faith, and bears the indelible mark of that nihilism which did for a time overtake the community of the Bab.<sup>142</sup>

He points out that

Edward Browne himself had written that extravagant speculation 'threatened, especially during the two or three years succeeding the Bab's martyrdom (1850-1853), to destroy all order and discipline in the young church by suffering each member to become a law unto himself, and by producing as many "Manifestations" as there were Babis.' The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is the mirror of that menace.<sup>143</sup>

Balyuzi maintains:

The speech attributed to Quddus in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* is by itself a clear reflection of the confused thoughts of the Babi community in the years immediately following the martyrdom of its Founder.<sup>144</sup>

That the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, whether or not written by the martyred Mirza Jani, reflects the state of the Babi church in the years immediately after the Bab's martyrdom, therefore, is acknowledged. Part of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf's* value is in helping the student of the religion to trace the phases through which the religion has passed. One would also expect that the Babi author of such an early written document would be able to give information and insights which would be lost at later stages in a rapidly developing religion. That the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* appears to be a far cry from present-day Baha'i thought is

part testimony to the extensive transformations the religion has undergone. The book, however, was written at a rather chaotic time in the history of the faith and should be approached, therefore, with some caution, but as a testimony by an individual Babi at an early stage of Babi-Baha'i history the volume has an indispensable value.

### ***Summary of the three chief histories***

The three histories treated above have been discussed in the order in which they were published by Edward G. Browne. This order is exactly the opposite to the order in which these histories were originally written. So that the reader might understand better how these histories are related to one another in the context of Babi-Baha'i history, a summary of the major points thus far discussed concerning the histories will be given in the order in which the histories were written. A brief statement will then be given concerning the basis upon which the present study will proceed regarding the reliability and relative values of these three works.

The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* was written sometime in the years immediately following the Bab's martyrdom (1850), and if written by Mirza Jani, would have been written before 1852 when he suffered martyrdom. It reflects conditions in the faith at a rather unstable period in its history.

This history assigns an important position to Subh-i-Azal, Baha'u'llah's rival, whom the author regards as not only the Bab's successor but as "Him whom God shall manifest", whose coming the Bab heralded and who Baha'u'llah later claimed to be.

No English translation of this work has yet been made, but Browne edited and published the Persian text in 1910. The English reader, however, may gain some familiarity with the essential features of this work from Browne's extensive English introduction (pages xiii-lxiii) to the Persian text and from Appendix II of Browne's publication of the *New History* (pages 327–96), where Browne discusses the history with special reference to passages suppressed or modified in the *New History*. Included in this Appendix is a full translation of the important section pertaining to the Bab's nomination of Subh-i-Azal as his successor and of Subh-i-Azal's relations to his half-brother, Baha'u'llah (pages 374–82).

The *New History* (*Tarikh-i-Jadid*) was written sometime between 1877 and 1880. Browne assigns 1880 as the date. According to Abu'l-Fadl, the *New History* was written by Mirza Husayn of Hamadan with Abu'l-Fadl's assistance and under the supervision of Manakji, the Zoroastrian agent in Tihiran. The two manuscripts collated by Browne for publication also give evidence that a number of revisers had added material. By comparing the earlier *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* with the *New History*, Browne observed that the introduction to the *New History* is "less metaphysical and more rational" than the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf's* introduction and that all mention of Subh-i-Azal is omitted from the *New History* except in one clearly interpolated passage in the London Codex (L.).<sup>141</sup>

The *New History* did not win the full approval of the Baha'i chiefs in 'Akka, probably because of its abuse of the Muslim clergy, certain reflections about the Persian Government and the Persian people, its length, and especially because its focus is on the Bab and his dispensation rather than on Baha'u'llah and events of the later era, which Mirza



Adu'l-Fadl believes was intended to have been included in a second volume of the *New History* which Mirza Husayn was prevented from writing because of his death in the city of Rasht in AH 1299 (CE 1881–1882).

Like the *New History*, the *Traveller's Narrative* is written anonymously by one who describes himself as a traveller in Persia who desires to set forth an account of the Bab and his religion. Browne was informed after the publication of the *Traveller's Narrative*, and Baha'is now acknowledge, that the author is 'Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'u'llah's son and successor in the religion. Unlike both the earlier histories, the *Traveller's Narrative* gives its major attention to Baha'u'llah, his words, and events connected with his ministry as over against the Bab and his epoch; and unlike the *New History*, which makes no mention of Subh-i-Azal, it takes note of this rival to Baha'u'llah but depicts him as having enjoyed only a nominal supremacy, disparages his courage and judgement, and contrasts him in these respects with Baha'u'llah. The Bab is set forth as a harbinger of Baha'u'llah and a more favorable attitude is taken toward the Shah of Persia. The *Traveller's Narrative* was written in or around 1886.

Of these three histories, non-Baha'is generally have considered the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, the earliest written, as having more credence in presenting an unbiased record of the religion's earliest stages and have regarded the two latter histories, especially the *Traveller's Narrative*, as "manufactured" histories to give more favor to Baha'u'llah. Baha'is however, give special importance to the *Traveller's Narrative*, since it was written by one whom they regard as essentially infallible, and look

upon the earlier histories as unofficial and the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in particular as having been written during a confused period of the faith, as possibly having been tampered with, and as essentially unreliable. This difference in perspective helps explain the wide divergences often found between Baha'i and non-Baha'i accounts of the faith's earlier history.

For the reasons stated above in this chapter, the present study will proceed on the basis that the three histories, written by members of the Babi or Baha'i communities, have each a respective value in enabling the student of the religion to trace the stages of its development. The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, whether or not written by Mirza Jani, reflects conditions and viewpoints in the faith in the years immediately following the Bab's martyrdom as observed or understood by one member of that faith. The possibility of its having been tampered with by Subh-i-Azal's supporter's is minimal, since it shows divergences from their thought and, according to Abu'l-Fadl, is inconsistent with their position regarding "Him Whom God Shall Manifest," and since the manuscript discovered by Browne was out of circulation for a long number of years, its chances of having been tampered with are greatly lessened.

The *New History*, since it did not meet with the full approval of the Baha'i chiefs, should not be given such importance as presenting the official Baha'i viewpoint, but it does have some value, excluding those features mentioned earlier as probably reasons for its lack of full approval, in throwing light upon over all trends within the movement. The *Traveller's Narrative*, although it should be approached with some caution due to its evident purpose, is nevertheless highly

important as an official statement of the Baha'i position at the time of its writing by a recognized leader of the religion.

### ***Mirza Javad's historical epitome***

In Edward G. Browne's last book on the Baha'i faith, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, consisting of materials which continued to flow into Browne's hands, appears his English translation of a short historical epitome of Babi and Baha'i history, written originally in Arabic by Mirza Muhammad Javad (or Jawad) of Qazvin (or Qazwin). The original manuscript was sent by the author to Browne for his investigation. Browne never met the author, but his son, Mirza Ghulam'llah, visited Browne at Cambridge for several days in January, 1901, on his way to the United States. Browne gives a good summary of what can be learned about the author from the text of the history:

From incidental remarks in the narrative we learn that the author, Mirza Muhammad Jawad, was at Baghdad (p. 15) about 1862 or a little earlier, shortly before the removal of the leading Babis thence to Adrianople; that he was with them at Adrianople (pp. 25, 27, 28) for rather more than a year before Baha'u'llah was transferred thence to 'Akka in August, 1868; that he was Baha'u'llah's fellow-passenger on the steamer which conveyed him from Gallipoli to Haifa (p. 32); that he was at 'Akka in January, 1872 when Sayyid Muhammad of Isfahan and the other Azalis were assassinated (pp. 54-5) and also at the time of, or soon after, Baha'u'llah's death on May 28, 1892, when he was one of the nine Companions chosen by 'Abbas Efendi 'Abdu'l-Baha to hear the reading of the "Testament" or "Covenant", (p. 75). We also learn (pp. 35-6) that he was one of several Babis arrested at Tabriz about the end of 1866 or beginning of 1867, when, more fortunate than some of his companions, he escaped with a fine. This is the only mention he makes of being in Persia, and it is probable that from this date onwards he was always with Baha'u'llah, first at Adrianople and then at 'Akka, where ... his son Mirza Ghulamu'llah was born and brought up.<sup>145</sup>

As to the date of the narrative's composition, in one place the author speaks of twelve years having passed since Baha'u'llah's

“ascension” (death) in AH 1309 (May 28, 1892),<sup>146</sup> which would place the date about 1904, and at the end of the narrative, these words occur: “Finished in the month of Safar, AH 1322 (April, 1904), written and compiled by Muhammad Javad of Qazvin, the Persian, at ‘Akka.”<sup>147</sup> Yet, in another place, the author refers to an event in Safar, AH 1326 (March, 1908)<sup>148</sup> and speaks of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s message “proclaimed in public in America”,<sup>149</sup> which would be in 1912. The author, therefore, evidently wrote portions of the history at different times or did some revision before sending the manuscript to Browne.

The author belonged to a section of Baha’is who after Baha’u’llah’s death refused to give their allegiance to Baha’u’llah’s appointed successor, ‘Abdu’l-Baha, and who style themselves “Unitarians” but are called by their opponents “Covenant-breakers”. The term “Covenant-breakers”, however, is not restricted to them.

This history is important for the numerous dates it gives and for covering later events not included in the earlier histories, but most important for setting forth the position of those who refused to accept ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s leadership and thus for throwing light on the conflicts between ‘Abdu’l-Baha and his brothers after the “ascension” of Baha’u’llah.

## **Christian apologies**

Around the turn of the century, Baha’i influence began to be felt in the West and was given wide publicity during ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s travels in Egypt, Europe, and the United States (1910–1913) after his release in 1908, when, because of the Young Turk Revolution,

all religious and political prisoners in the Ottoman Empire were set free. Between 1915 and 1932, three Christian apologetical works by missionaries in Persia made their appearance.

### **Wilson's *Bahaism and Its Claims***

Samuel Graham Wilson, a missionary of the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions, USA, was for thirty-two years resident in Persia and in close contact with members of the Babi-Baha'i movement. In 1915, Wilson's *Bahaism and Its Claims* was published, much of which had originally appeared in various magazines and journals. A reproduction of Wilson's book, long out of print, was made available by AMS Press, New York, in 1970.

The relationship between the Babi religion and the Baha'i faith was not clearly defined. Even Browne continued to speak often of Baha'is as Babis and in his Introduction to Myron H. Phelps' *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi* refers to "the Babi (or, if the term be preferred, Beha'i) faith."<sup>150</sup> Wilson, however, drew a sharp distinction between the Babi and Baha'i religions, feeling that "the term Babi is not appropriate to the religion of Baha nor to his followers." He says at the beginning of his study that Babism in reality "is dead and I do not treat of it, except as it throws light on the history and doctrines of Baha'ism."<sup>151</sup> To define better the relationship between the Babi and Baha'i religions will be one of the concerns of the present study.

Wilson also felt that H. H. Jessup's comparison of the Baha'i faith with the town clock in Beirut was very apt. The face towards

the Muslim quarter told the hour by Oriental reckoning whereas the face towards the Christian quarter gave time in the European way.<sup>152</sup> Wilson then says that his concern is with the Baha'i "face towards the Christians" but adds that "historical facts are the same and the main doctrines taught in the West have no essential difference from those of Persian Baha'ism",<sup>153</sup> a viewpoint not shared by the following two writers.

Wilson's book is not strictly a history of the Baha'i faith, although some of its chapters deal with historical matters. Its primary focus is on the claims made by the faith and a refutation of them from the standpoint of Christianity. As such, it is an able refutation of some Baha'i claims still being made, but is, as might be expected, far out of date on some matters from the standpoint of present Baha'i belief and policy and of course has nothing to say about the Shoghi Effendi administration and other important developments since it was written.

### **Miller's *Baha'ism***

A number of significant events had occurred in Baha'i history between the publication of Wilson's volume (1915) and the appearance of William Miller's *Baha'ism: Its Origin, History, and Teachings* in 1911. 'Abdu'l-Baha had died in 1921, and a young Oxford University student, Shoghi Effendi, then only twenty-four years old, had become the new authoritative head of the religion. William McElwee Miller visited the newly appointed successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1923 and gives a brief account of that visit in his book, describing the new leader as "very pleasant and courteous" and "quite humble".<sup>154</sup>

A number of defections from the faith also had occurred, notably Niku, a Baha'i for fourteen years, who, after his defection, published in two volumes his *Filsifa-i-Niku* (Philosophy of Niku) in Tihiran in 1928, attacking the faith, and 'Abdu'l-Husayn Avarih, a respected Baha'i historian, the author of *Al Kavakebu'd-Durriyih* (1923), considered for a time as official Baha'i history, who after leaving the faith published his *Kashfu'l-Hiyal* in 1928, in which he gives an account of his life as a Baha'i and his reasons for leaving the faith.<sup>155</sup> Miller makes use of these works, especially the latter, in his assessment and descriptions of the faith's character.

William McElwee Miller, a missionary of the Presbyterian Church, USA, was stationed at Mashhad, Persia, the capital of Khurasan, and a great shrine city, where he was daily in contact with Shi'ah Muslims visiting the shrines of Gauhar Shad and of the Imam Rida, the eighth Imam of the Ithna-'Ashariyyih sect of Shi'ah Islam, predominant in Persia. Travelling over northeastern Persia, he also inevitably came in contact with Baha'is, whose teachings and practices came under his study and observation.

Some four years before Miller wrote his book, he was in Geneva, Switzerland, and, while looking in the show window of an attractive bookstore, was surprised to see a large, beautiful scroll enumerating the Baha'i principles and a number of Baha'i books and magazines for sale. After having had a pleasant conversation with the bookstore's owner, who was inclined toward the Baha'i faith, believing that "in Baha'u'llah the Spirit of Christ had again

appeared on earth", Miller read in *The Baha'i Magazine* that he had purchased about the owner of a well-known bookshop in Geneva being attracted to the Baha'i cause, with this hope expressed: "Let it be our earnest prayer that in this important world-centre the Divine Oriflame may grow with increasing radiance."<sup>156</sup> The bookshop owner, Miller says, admitted to him that she had not studied carefully Baha'i history and asked his suggestions for some books she might consult. Miller remarks that "it is not surprising" that she "knew nothing of Baha'i history, for the Baha'is take but little interest in the history of their 'cause'."<sup>157</sup> What did seem strange to Miller and others in Persia, he says, was to see people of the West taking up this Persian religion."<sup>158</sup>

This glimpse of "Baha'i propaganda while in Geneva" convinced Miller of the need for a brief book on the Baha'i faith "which would make available in a convenient form the scholarly researches" of Browne and other writers.<sup>159</sup> Miller proposed, therefore, to present the results of his own investigations and supply his readers with material concerning the faith from important out-of-print volumes.<sup>160</sup> He also drew upon the works of more recently published Persian works attacking the faith.

Miller believed in 1931 that he was writing about "a dying movement" and said that he would not have attempted to write about it "were it not for the activity of the Baha'is in Europe and America in carrying on their campaign of propaganda."<sup>161</sup> Miller, who now



lives in Pennsylvania, has completed a revision of his book, to be published in the next few months.<sup>162</sup>

### **Richards' *The Religion of the Baha'is***

In the year after Miller's book appeared, *The Religion of the Baha'is* by J. R. Richards, a missionary of the Christian Missionary Society, stationed at Shiraz, Persia, was published. Miller and Richards were good friends on their missionary field in Persia. Both had many encounters with Baha'is in their missionary work, and both felt the need of a brief non-Baha'i introduction to the faith for non-Baha'is. Richards read the manuscript of Miller's book while in its last stages of publication, but, although sharing certain viewpoints, the two books differ in their approach to the subject.

Whereas Miller is concerned about Baha'i propaganda in Europe and America and desires to place before his readers, presumably primarily interested persons in the West, the essential facts concerning the Persian religion, Richards writes his book "with a view to the needs of missionaries who are in daily contact with Baha'is" in the East.<sup>163</sup>

Unlike Miller who used Niko's and Avarih's volumes attacking the faith, Richards avoids their use, saying:

The only books available in Persian are totally unfit to use, consisting as they do of attacks on the personal lives and characters of Baha'i believers. However much truth there may be in these books, it is grossly unfair to argue from the particular to the general, and, in any case, no religion can be judged by the lives of its adherents, unless we choose to judge it by its best representatives, and even then our judgement will not be fair. I have, therefore, ignored all such books, and though the historical portion of this book must, and does, contain narratives which show the Baha'i leaders in an unpleasant

light, I have sought to omit all but those that have a bearing on the historical development of the movement.<sup>164</sup>

Unlike Wilson, who said that the “main doctrines taught in the West have no essential difference from those of Persian Baha’ism”,<sup>165</sup> Richards maintains that “Western Baha’ism is totally distinct from that of the East.”<sup>166</sup> Richards regards Eastern Baha’i as the authentic form of the faith and Western Baha’i as a perverted form, bearing “a distinct Christian influence”.<sup>167</sup> This approach to the faith leads Richards to conclude that certain teachings by Western Baha’is are not Baha’i teachings. For example, Richards concludes from certain teachings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha that ‘Abdu’l-Baha does not believe in a personal God”<sup>168</sup> and makes the sweeping statement later that “there is no belief in a personal God in Baha’ism.”<sup>169</sup> After quoting an American Baha’i writer who in his discussion quotes words attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Baha that “prayer should spring from love; from the desire of the person to commune with God,” Richards comments: “If God is not a personal God, then communion with Him is impossible, and this quotation in no way represents the Baha’i teaching about prayer.”<sup>170</sup> One who is wanting a statement of Baha’i teaching as presented in the West, therefore, should approach Richards with some caution, for he is concerned with what he understands as original and authentic Baha’i as over against later and Western expressions of the faith. The above conclusion, however, would not only be unacceptable to Western Baha’is but to modern Baha’is in both East and West.

As Miller had reported that the Baha’i faith in Persia was “steadily losing ground” and would eventually “be known only to

students of history".<sup>171</sup> Richards maintains that "Baha'ism is on the wane in Western countries, and census statistics show that its day is past."<sup>172</sup> The expectation that trends would continue and that the faith eventually would die, however, was not realized. The Baha'i faith is very much alive today.

### **Later Baha'i histories**

Of the Babi-Baha'i histories discussed earlier, only the *Traveller's Narrative* received any official sanction, although the *New History* was used provisionally for a time. An edition of the *Traveller's Narrative* was published by the Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York, in 1930. Baha'is later published two important histories, Shoghi Effendi's translation of *The Dawn-Breakers* and Shoghi Effendi's own history, *God Passes By*.

### **Nabil's *The Dawn-Breakers***

In 1932, the year after Miller's book in which he said that "the Baha'is take but little interest in the history of their 'cause'",<sup>173</sup> (which may have appeared to be the case at that time) was published, Baha'is in the United States published the 685-page Shoghi Effendi translation of *The Dawn-Breakers*, covering the early days of the movement up to Baha'u'llah's expulsion from Persia.

Nabil's history is the most extensive coverage of the Bab's ministry accepted by Baha'is as an accurate presentation of those early days. Shoghi Effendi calls Nabil Baha'u'llah's "Poet-Laureate. His chronicler and His indefatigable disciple."<sup>174</sup> Balyuzi refers to him as "the prime historian and chronicler of the Ministry of the Bab and of Baha'u'llah."<sup>175</sup>

Muhammad-i-Zarandi, who was given the title *Nabil-i-A'zam* by Baha'u'llah in a tablet addressed to him,<sup>176</sup> was born in the village of Zarand on the eighteenth of Safer, AH 1247 (July 29, CE 1831), as he, himself, indicates in *The Dawn-Breakers*.<sup>177</sup> He first heard of the Bab in AH 1263 (CE 1847) and was led to recognize the new revelation by Siyyid Isma'il-i-Zavari'i, surnamed Dhabih, one of Mirza Jani's brothers, in AH 1265 (CE 1848), at the age of eighteen.<sup>178</sup> He would have set out from Tihiran with Siyyid Isma'il for Mazindaran to join the Babis in the struggle at the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi when news arrived that the Babis there had been treacherously massacred.<sup>179</sup> He just missed seeing the Bab when the Bab stayed for a few days in the home of Mirza Jani and Siyyid Isma'il in Kashan.<sup>180</sup>

After the Bab's martyrdom in 1850, he was one of a good number of Babis who advanced claims of being the one foretold by the Bab,<sup>181</sup> but after Baha'u'llah's declaration he became his devoted follower. Shoghi Effendi says that he was throughout his life closely associated with the leaders of the Cause."<sup>182</sup> He was a close friend for many years of the Bab's amanuensis, Musa Ahmad-i-Qazvini, and when beginning his chronicle, had the personal assistance of Baha'u'llah's brother Mirza Musa, Aqay-i-Kalim. According to Shoghi Effendi, the manuscript was begun in 1888 and completed in about a year and a half, and parts were reviewed and approved by either Baha'u'llah or 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The original work carries the history to Baha'u'llah's death in 1892, but the Shoghi Effendi English translation covers only the first half of the original, ending with Baha'u'llah's expulsion from Persia.

The value Baha'is attach to Nabil's chronicle can be seen in statements by George Townshend, a former Christian minister, sometime canon of St. Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin, and archdeacon of Clonfert, who became a convert to the Baha'i cause:

No detached observer or scholar, however inquisitive or industrious, could be in so favourable a position as this trusted Babi for collecting detailed and intimate information concerning the early believers and their doings. He stood close to the heart and centre of the Movement; he presented it with sympathy and understanding.<sup>183</sup>

Amid the great and ever-growing library of works on the Bab, the Chronicle of Nabil's holds a most conspicuous place. ... It has in the fullest degree the character of a Babi Gospel. If we possessed an authorised and large scale account of the Acts of Jesus Christ written by one of the Twelve and preserved in the form in which it came from the author's pen, we would have a Christian Gospel as authentic in its sphere as this of Nabil's is in its.<sup>184</sup>

Nabil, no doubt, as Townshend points out, was in a position to gather much firsthand information which would not have been easily accessible to one outside the faith, and as such it is a valuable record. It is, however, a Baha'i—not a Babi—account and represents a later stage in the developing tradition.

Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal) is taken note of in the chronicle, but the claims advanced for him are considered as ill-founded,<sup>185</sup> and Mirza Yahya himself is described as utterly unworthy of the position claimed for him.<sup>186</sup>

As a record of Babi-Baha'i history as Baha'is today accept it, Nabil's chronicle is indispensable.

## Shoghi Effendi's *God Passes By*

In 1944, the centenary of the Bab's declaration, there was published Shoghi Effendi's *God Passes By*, a review of the faith's first century. Although Peter Berger dismisses the volume as containing "nothing new",<sup>187</sup> the importance Baha'is attach to it as an authoritative account of Baha'i history written by the "Guardian of the Faith", Baha'u'llah's great grandson and 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointed successor, is unexcelled. Ruhyyih Khanum refers to it as

that unique exhaustive and marvelous review of the highlights of 100 years of Baha'i history, in which every factor receives its due importance in relation to every other, a labor no one but the Guardian could ever be qualified to do.<sup>188</sup>

Amelia Collins speaks of it as "the finest flower of his [Shoghi Effendi's] mind",<sup>189</sup> and Horace Holley calls it "the authentic historical survey of the evolution of the Faith from its origin."<sup>190</sup>

Shoghi Effendi did not intend for the volume to be a detailed history; rather it is a dramatized account of historical high points up to Shoghi Effendi's own ministry and of the beginnings of the administrative order under his direction. The guardian intends to give Baha'is the perspective from which the various events of their history may be viewed. He stresses the evolutionary character of the faith and delineates its major periods. In terms of literary beauty, the history is a most masterful presentation, and as a statement of Babi-Baha'i history as the Baha'is, themselves, understand it, the volume is the prime source.

### Notes: 2. Studies on the Babi-Baha'i Movement

- 1 Joseph Arthur Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (2ème ed.; Paris: Didier et Cie, 1866).
- 2 William McElwee Miller, *Baha'ism: Its Origin, History, and Teachings* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 11 (hereinafter referred to as *Baha'ism*); H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith* (London: George Ronald, 1970), p. 63 (hereinafter referred to as *Browne*).
- 3 Edward G. Browne, ed., *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Years A.D. 1850 and 1852*, edited from the Unique Paris Ms. Suppl. Persan 1071 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910. London: Luzac & Co., 1910), pp. xiii-xiv (hereinafter referred to as *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*).
- 4 idem, p. xiii.
- 5 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. IV: Modern Times (1500-1924) (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 153.
- 6 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Vol. II: English Translation and Notes (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), pp. x-xi (hereinafter referred to as *Traveller's Narrative*).
- 7 Edward G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (3d ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950), pp. 328-29 (hereinafter referred to as *Year*). Browne's last sentence regarding Mirza Yahya should be evaluated in the light of later

discussion in the present work. Regarding the changed state of affairs, Browne says elsewhere: "It took me some time fully to grasp this new and unexpected position of affairs, and perhaps I should not have succeeded in doing so had it not been for the knowledge of the former state of things which I had obtained from Gobineau's work, and the acquaintance which I subsequently made in Kirman with five or six persons who adhered to what I may call the 'old dispensation' and regarded Mirza Yahya '*Subh-i-Ezel*' as the legitimate and sole successor of the Bab" (*Traveller's Narrative*, p. xvi).

8 Robert P. Richardson, "The Persian Rival to Jesus and His American Disciples", *The Open Court*, XXIX (Aug., 1915), 467.

9 Balyuzi, *Browne*, pp. 121-22.

10 Brackets mine.

11 Farhang Jahanpur, "Setting the Record Straight", review of *Edward Grenville Browne and the Baha'i Faith*, by H. M. Balyuzi, in *World Order*, V (Winter, 1970-71), 47.

12 See E. Denison Ross, "Edward Granville Browne, a Memoir", in Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, p. xv.

13 Edward G. Browne, "Bab, Bahia", *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), II, 300.

14 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. xlii.

15 idem, pp. vii-viii.

16 idem, pp. viii-ix.

17 idem, p. ix.

18 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *The Tarikh-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab*, by Mirza Husayn of Hamadan (Cambridge: University Press, 1893), pp. xiv, xxxi (hereinafter referred to as *New History*).

19 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 10, n. 1; and Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 28.

20 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 67.

21 idem, p. vii.

22 Browne, *New History*, p. xxxii.

23 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 67, n. 1.

24 idem, p. 20.

25 idem, p. 3.

26 idem, p. 4.

27 See above, the quotation at top of p. 51.

28 cf., Browne's list of characteristics, *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. xlv-xlvi, and Wilson's summary of Browne's points (Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahatism and Its Claims* [New York, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915], p. 184, n. 2).

29 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 2.

30 Browne, *New History*, p. 3.

31 idem, p. 23.

32 idem, p. 17.

33 ibid.

34 idem, p. 318.

35 idem, p. 3.

36 idem, p. 23.

37 idem, p. 28.

38 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note A, p. 194.

39 Browne, *Year*, pp. 344–45.

40 Balyuzi, *Browne*, pp. 65–66; Browne, *New History*, p. xxxiv.

41 Browne, *New History*, pp. xxxvii–xxxviii. The last statement about Mirza Husayn's being a Babi (Baha'i) before beginning to write the *New History*, which is more likely, contradicts Haji Mirza Hasan's statement to Browne (quoted above, p. 58) that the author was converted while engaged in his writing.

42 idem, p. xxxviii.

43 idem, pp. xxxviii–xxxix.

44 Browne points out that according to Baron Rosen's letter cited in *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. XXI (1889), 442, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's portion of the *New History's* Preface extends from the beginning to line three of page three of Browne's English translation (*New History*, p. xl, n. 1).

45 Browne, *New History*, p. xl.

46 idem, pp. xl–xli.

47 idem, p. 313, n. 1.

48 See Browne, *New History*, p. 315, n. 1, and p. xxxvii, n. 3, where Browne indicates that Manakji "appears to have come to Persia from India in 1854 (cf. the author's statements concerning travels in Europe and India, *New History*, p. 3), that he had written an account of which a Persian translation was published at Bombay in AH 1280 (CE 1863) of his travels in Persia (cf. the author's description of himself as a traveller who had come to Persia), and that according to a footnote in an article by F. Justi (Z.D.M.D., Vol. XXV [1881], p. 328n), "Manakji acted for a while as French consul at Yazd" (cf. the author's references to the French language, *New History*, p. 318). If Manakji, who was not a Baha'i, is the author of these opening and closing sections of the *New History*, the force of Wilson's criticism of the *Traveller's Narrative* and the *New History* is somewhat lessened. "We might excuse their being anonymous, to avoid possible persecution, but to make pretense that the authors are travellers who have come from afar ostensibly to investigate, and into whose mouths are put praises of the religion, is but part of the insincerity noticeable in other things" (Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, pp. 82–83).

49 Browne, *New History*, p. 313; italics and brackets mine.

50 See above, quotation at top of page 60.

51 Browne, *New History*, p. 313, n. 1.

52 The Azalis were followers of Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal), Baha'u'llah's rival.

53 Browne, *New History*, pp. xlii–xliii; Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 342, n. 2.

54 Browne, *New History*, p. 351.

55 *ibid.*

56 See, for example, Browne, *New History*, p. 421.

57 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 18, and Browne, "Bab, Babis", 308.

58 Browne, "Bab, Babis", 303.

59 Edward G. Browne, "Catalogue and Descriptions of 27 Babi Manuscripts", *The*



*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXIV (1892), p. 684, cited by Balyuzi, Browne, p. 20.

60 Browne, *New History*, p. 200, n. 4.

61 idem, p. xxiv, n. 1.

62 Browne, "Bab, Babis", 303.

63 Edward G. Browne, comp., *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1918), p. 225. This volume was reprinted by Cambridge University Press in 1961 (hereinafter referred to as *Materials*). Shaykh Ahmad, incidentally, was an accomplished scholar and writer and was the translator into Persian of Morier's *Hajji Baba*, [James Morier: *The Adventures of Hajji Baba of Ispahan*, 1824, 2005] which Browne points out was widely used as a textbook for colloquial Persian (*Materials*, p. 221).

64 idem, pp. 225–26.

65 Browne, *New History*, p. xli, n. 1.

66 idem, pp. xlili–xliv.

67 Edward G. Browne, "The Babis of Persia, I. Sketch of Their History, and Personal Experiences amongst Them; II. Their Literature and Doctrines," *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXI (July and October, 1889), 485–526, 881–1009.

68 Browne, *New History*, pp. xlv–xlvi.

69 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note A, p. 193.

70 Browne, *New History*, p. l (Roman numeral); Mirza Husayn died in AH 1299 (CE 1881–1882).

71 idem, pp. xlviii–xlix.

72 idem, p. 293.

73 Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Iqan*, written before the "Manifestation", or declaration of his mission.

74 The date here refers to Baha'u'llah's public declaration Baha'is generally date Baha'u'llah's declaration in 1863 when he privately "announced to several of His followers" that he was the one foretold by the Bab (J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* [3d ed., rev.; New York: Pyramid Books, 1971], p. 43).

75 Nasiru'd-Din Shah's first journey to Europe extended from April 20 to September 6, 1873 (*New History*, p. 181, n. 1).

76 Browne, *New History*, pp. xxx–xxxii.

77 See above, p. 59.

78 Browne, *New History*, p. xl.

79 idem, p. xxxii.

80 idem, p. 64.

81 idem, p. xl.

82 idem, pp. 318–19.

83 Browne, *Year*, p. 344.

84 idem, p. 345.

85 Browne, *New History*, p. xxx.

86 See above, pp. 49–50.

87 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. xiv–xv.

88 In the phraseology of the early Babis "uplifted" or "elevated" means "deceased".

- It is, of course, only used of believers. (E.G.B.)
- 89 Brackets are Browne's.
- 90 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xvi.
- 91 idem, p. xix.
- 92 Browne, *New History*, p. xxviii.
- 93 idem, pp. xxx–xxxi.
- 94 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xxxv.
- 95 ibid.
- 96 J. R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932. New York: The Macmillan Co., 1932), p. 12.
- 97 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 62.
- 98 idem, p. 63.
- 99 idem, p. 69; citing Browne, *New History*, p. xli.
- 100 idem, p. 65.
- 101 idem, p. 70.
- 102 idem, p. 72.
- 103 idem, p. 70.
- 104 idem, p. 63.
- 105 idem, pp. 65–66.
- 106 Browne, *New History*, p. xxxix; see above, p. 59.
- 107 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 71.
- 108 Browne, *New History*, p. 214.
- 109 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 64.
- 110 idem, pp. 64–65.
- 111 idem, p. 88.
- 112 See above, p. 72.
- 113 See above, pp. 59–60.
- 114 Browne, *New History*, p. 34; also quoted in Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 65. The material in single brackets is from the London Codex (L.).
- 115 Balyuzi, *Browne*, pp. 72, 77.
- 116 Browne, *New History*, p. xxviii.
- 117 idem, pp. xxxix–xl.
- 118 idem, xlii.
- 119 See above, p. 73.
- 120 Browne, *New History*, p. xv.
- 121 See above, p. 76. The truthfulness or accuracy of this statement, however, is somewhat called into question by the fact that elsewhere the author of the *New History* says that “Haji Mirza Jani gives in his book a full description of all the wonderful things which they witnessed in those two days and nights,” when the Bab stayed in the house of Mirza Jani, whereas, as Browne points out all that Mirza Jani actually records is that in Kashan he abode two days and two nights. Wondrous and marvellous signs were shewn by that Sun of Truth. A full description of these would form a book by itself” (Browne, *New History*, p. 214 and note 1).
- 122 Browne, *New History*, p. xxxix, italics mine; see above, p. 76.
- 123 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xxxiv.

- 124 idem, p. xxxvi; more detailed comparisons are given in Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. xxxvii–liii, and in Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, pp. 327–56.
- 125 Browne, *New History*, p. xxix.
- 126 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 72.
- 127 idem, p. 72, n. 1.
- 128 Earl E. Elder and William McElwee Miller, tr. and ed., *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas, or The Most Holy Book* by Mirza Husayn 'Ali Baha'u'llah, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series Vol. XXXVIII (London: Published by The Royal Asiatic Society and sold by its Agents Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 71 and n. 1.
- 129 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note V, p. 350.
- 130 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 77.
- 131 Browne, *New History*, p. xlii.
- 132 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 195.
- 133 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 77.
- 134 idem, p. 72.
- 135 ibid.
- 136 idem, pp. 72–73.
- 137 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xix.
- 138 Browne, *New History*, p. xix, n. 3.
- 139 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. lxxxiii; in Nicolas' French translation of the *Bayan*, for example, the Bab refers to the date of his manifestation: "C'est cela ce que Dieu a promis dans le Qoran et le commencement (de ce jugement dernier) est à deux heures onze minutes de la nuit du 5 Djemadi el ewel [Jumádá al-Awwal] de l'année 1260 qui est l'année 1270 à dater du jour où fut suscité Mohammed" (Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab, *Le Beyan Persan*, traduit du Persan par A.-L.-M. Nicolas, [4 vols; Paris: Librairie Paul Geuthner, 1911–1914], I, 69).
- 140 Miller, *Baha'ism*, p. 196, n. 28.
- 141 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 84.
- 142 idem, p. 73.
- 143 Browne, *New History*, pp. 246–47.
- 144 Browne, *Materials*, p. ix.
- 145 Browne, *Materials*, p. ix.
- 146 idem, pp. 61–62.
- 147 idem, p. 112.
- 148 idem, p. 90.
- 149 idem, p. 77.
- 150 Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, Introduction by Edward G. Browne (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, 1904), p. viii.
- 151 Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, p. 15.
- 152 idem, pp. 15–16; the reference is to Henry Harris Jessup, "The Babites", *The Outlook*, LXVIII (June 22, 1901), 456.
- 153 Miller, *Baha'ism*, pp. 150, 152.
- 154 Miller, *Baha'ism*, pp. 150, 152.
- 155 See Miller, *Baha'ism*, pp. 163–64.
- 156 Miller, *Baha'ism*, p. 10.
- 157 idem, pp. 10–11.

- 158 idem, p. 9.
- 159 idem, p. 15.
- 160 ibid.
- 161 idem, p. 9; see above, p. 25.
- 162 So indicated in a letter to the author from Rev. Miller, dated March 22, 1974. This work now has been published.
- 163 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. iv.
- 164 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. iv.
- 165 See above, p. 95.
- 166 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 186. A similar statement by Richards appears on page 117.
- 167 ibid.
- 168 idem, p. 123.
- 169 idem, p. 186.
- 170 idem, p. 187.
- 171 Miller, *Baha'ism*, p. 9; see above, p. 25.
- 172 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 117.
- 173 Miller, *Baha'ism*, pp. 10–1.
- 174 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 130.
- 175 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 44.
- 176 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 176.
- 177 Nabil-i-A'zam (Muhammad-i-Zarandi), *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 318.
- 178 idem, p. 120.
- 179 idem, p. 322.
- 180 idem, p. 320.
- 181 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 357 and note 5.
- 182 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. xxxiv.
- 183 George Townshend, *The Mission of Baha'u'llah and Other Literary Pieces* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1952), p. 22.
- 184 idem, pp. 40–41.
- 185 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 317.
- 186 idem, p. 323.
- 187 Peter L. Berger, "From Sect to Church: Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement" (Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, 1954), p. 56, n. 20.
- 188 Ruhyyiyh Khanum, *Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1948), p. 24.
- 189 Amelia Collins, *A Tribute to Shoghi Effendi* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.), p. 10.
- 190 Horace Holley, *Religion for Mankind* (1st American ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1966), p. 60.





**Part 2**  
**The origin and early**  
**development of the Baha'i World Faith**

### 3

## **The Bab and the abrogation of the Qur'anic dispensation**

Baha'is date the beginning of their faith from the Bab's declaration of his mission on May 22, 1844. The exact moment of that declaration is preserved as two hours and eleven minutes after sunset on the fifth day of Jamadiyu'l-Avval in the year AH 1260.<sup>1</sup> To Baha'is, this date, indeed the very hour, is of inestimable importance, for, as Shoghi Effendi expresses it, "with this historic Declaration the dawn of an Age that signalizes the consummation of all ages had broken",<sup>2</sup> marking "the opening of the most glorious epoch in the greatest cycle which the spiritual history of mankind has yet witnessed."<sup>3</sup> According to Nabil, the Bab declared: "This night, this very hour will in the days to come be celebrated as one of the greatest and most significant of all festivals."<sup>4</sup>

But to understand the significance of this declaration, the excitement it aroused, and the context in which it was made requires a look at the religious background of the Babi-Baha'i movement.

### **The religious background of the Baha'i Faith**

Baha'is sometimes insist that their faith is not and has never been a sect or offshoot of Islam or any other religion. John Ferraby, for example, maintains that although the Babi and Baha'i faiths



originated in a Muslim country,

they constitute independent religions stemming neither from the Muslim teachers of religion nor from the Prophet Muhammad himself, but from God. They have no more and no less in common with the teachings of Muhammad than with those of Jesus, or Moses, or any other Founder of a great religion. They come from the same family as all, they repeat the basic truths revealed by all, but they do not belong to any one religion more than to another; they are independent.<sup>5</sup>

That the Baha'i faith is now an independent religion may be readily acknowledged, but that it stemmed from no parent faith to which it is more closely related than to other religions can hardly be maintained in the light of historical facts.

Even if Ferraby's contention that the Baha'i religion is "from God" were granted, this would not necessarily mean that the religion had no birth historically from another religion or that it arose in isolation from a particular historical and religious milieu.

That the religion did in fact grow out of the parent religion of Islam is confirmed by no less a Baha'i authority than Shoghi Effendi, whose writings Baha'is believe are essentially infallible. Shoghi Effendi speaks of the Baha'i faith as having "sprung from Shi'ih Islam",<sup>6</sup> and refers to Shi'ih Islam as "its parent religion".<sup>7</sup> Shoghi Effendi elsewhere charges those participating in their faith's teaching campaign throughout America and Canada to "strive to obtain, from sources that are authoritative and unbiased, a sound knowledge of the history and tenets of Islam—the source and background of their faith."<sup>8</sup> If the Baha'i faith is no more closely related to Islam than to any other religion and if it does not share more common features with it than with other faiths, then Shoghi Effendi's charge to study in particular

the history and tenets of Islam would be without meaning. In the Foreword to his *God Passes By*, Shoghi Effendi traces in one sentence the religious pedigree of the Baha'i faith when he speaks of "these momentous happenings" which "transformed a heterodox and seemingly negligible offshoot of the Shaykhi school of the *Ithna-Ashariyyih* sect of Shi'ah Islam into a world religion."<sup>9</sup> In this one sentence, Shoghi Effendi traces the Baha'i faith from its parent religion Islam through the *Shi'ah* (or Shi'ih) form of Islam (as against the *Sunni* form), through the *Ithna-Ashariyyih* division of Shi'ah Islam (the "Twelver Sect" as against the "Seveners" and other divisions of Shi'ites), through the *Shaykhi school* (one of the schools or divisions of the "Twelver Sect"), and through a "heterodox ... offshoot of the Shaykhi school" (the Babi religion).

### ***The Islamic Background of the Baha'i Faith***

The Baha'i faith, springing from Islam, bears various recognisable traces of its parent religion. The five basic Muslim doctrines are belief in God, his angels, his prophets, the Scriptures, and the last day. The doctrine of angels has little place in Baha'i thought, the manifestations or prophets as the intermediaries of God having largely removed their need, and the last day is given allegorical interpretations, but the other three doctrines have indelibly stamped themselves in Baha'i theology, with some distinctive modifications, so that the Baha'i teachings on these three doctrines cannot adequately be understood without a knowledge of the Muslim background.

#### **The doctrine of God**

The Muslim doctrine of God underscores God's absolute unity or singleness and his utter transcendence. Islam is radically monotheistic.

God is one; one in essence, having no peer nor second; one in attributes, utterly insusceptible to division into parts. The greatest of all sins is *shirk* ("association"), the giving to anyone or anything a share in God's sovereignty. The essential and absolute difference between Creator and creature is unquestionably maintained. Islam, therefore, rejects not only polytheism, idolatry, and all forms of nature worship but Christian Trinitarianism as well, believing the concept of the Trinity to be a basic infringement on God's absolute unity.

The Baha'i faith is heir to this strong monotheistic emphasis in Islam. Throughout Baha'u'llah's writings references are made to the "one true God".<sup>10</sup> "No God is there save Thee," Baha'u'llah declares, "the Ever-Forgiving, the Most Generous."<sup>11</sup> "No God is there but Thee, the Most Powerful, the Most Exalted, the Help in Peril, the Most Great, the One Being, the Incomparable, the All-Glorious, the Unrestrained."<sup>12</sup> This unrelenting emphasis on God's unity, his incomparability, and his sovereign power is the direct contribution of Islam to the Baha'i faith.

### **The prophets of God**

Since God in his utter transcendence is beyond the comprehension of man, knowledge of God and of his laws, according to both Islam and the Baha'i faith, must be communicated to man by revelation. In Islam, this communication with man is made possible by a series of human messengers, or prophets, to whom God makes known his will. The Qur'an, the sacred book of Islam, declares emphatically: "There is not a people but a warner has gone among them" (Qur'an 35:24; 1:47). The exact number of these prophets of God is not known, but they extend into the

hundreds of thousands. Less than thirty are called by name in the Qur'an. The six greatest—Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, 'Isa (Jesus), and Muhammad—brought new dispensations.<sup>13</sup>

Baha'is continue the Muslim belief that God has sent his prophets among the various peoples of the world through the ages, but they depart from traditional Muslim belief about the prophets on at least three points: (1) whereas Muslims believe that God's progressive revelation ended with Muhammad, the last or "Seal of the Prophets", Baha'is believe that the stream of revelation continues through Muhammad to the more recent prophets of the Bab and Baha'u'llah and will be continued in other prophets in the future; (2) modern Baha'is add to the list of prophets Zoroaster and the Buddha; (3) whereas in Muslim thought the prophets are merely human instruments chosen by God according to his own inscrutable will, Baha'is allow for a certain sense in which the Prophets, or "Manifestations", as they also call them, may be spoken of as divine, inasmuch as they "mirror" God to men and reveal his will. The sharp Muslim distinction between God and his creatures is maintained in Baha'i thought, for the manifestations are not incarnations of God's essence, yet to know them is to know God and to submit to them is to submit to God, for they represent God among men.

### **The doctrine of scripture**

Muslims believe that each of the major prophets brought a book of his words, containing the laws for his dispensation. Thus, Moses' book was the *Taurat*, or Torah, the law; Jesus left the *Injil*, or Gospel, the original of which is lost, but the teachings of which

remain, though not in pure form in the four Christian gospels. The Qur'an charges Christians with altering the texts of their scripture (2:75-78). Muhammad left the Qur'an, regarded by Muslims as the climactic and perfect revelation. Muslims believe the Qur'an is the only scripture with a pure text. It is word for word as it was given to Muhammad, and the word "say" at the beginning of his revelations indicates that he is merely reporting what he was told to say. The Qur'an is regarded as the one outstanding miracle which proves the validity of its contents. The challenge is put forward to any who doubt its divine nature to produce any other book that can compare with it (Qur'an 2:23). The Qur'an's conclusion is: "If men and jinn should combine together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it" (17:88).

Baha'is follow in this tradition, holding that each prophet of the past revealed a book of law for his dispensation. The Bab added his *Bayan* and Baha'u'llah his *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. The same claim is advanced that the verses themselves are their own verification. The Bab, especially, appealed to his "verses" as the one irrefutable proof of his mission, the 'idea being that no mere human being could produce words of such compelling power and beauty, that such words would have to flow from a divine source using the human agent as a mere channel or instrument for their outpouring. The Babis and Baha'is also looked upon the speed of composition and the quantity of output of the verses as further signs of their divine character. Various converts to the Bab—as Siyyid Yahya-i-Darabi (Vahid)<sup>14</sup> and the *Imam-Jum'ih*—became convinced of the Bab's mission by his speed of producing verses.<sup>15</sup>

The stamp of the Islamic background on the Baha'i faith is never more clearly seen than in Shoghi Effendi's appraisal of the Qur'an as being "apart from the sacred scriptures of the Babi and Baha'i Revelation ... the only Book which can be regarded as an absolutely authenticated Repository of the Word of God."<sup>16</sup>

### ***The Shi'ah Islamic background of the Baha'i Faith***

The Baha'i faith, however, is a product not simply of Islam but of the Shi'ah form of Islam, which is predominant in Persia. In his Introduction to *The Dawn-Breakers*, Shoghi Effendi speaks of "the shi'ahs out of whose doctrines the Babi Movement rose."<sup>17</sup>

When Shoghi Effendi refers to "the illegitimacy of the institution at the Caliphate, the founders of which had usurped the authority of the lawful successors of the Apostle of God",<sup>18</sup> he is expressing a judgment and joining sides with Shi'ah Islam in a contention which split Islam into two rival factions after the death of Muhammad, the founder of Islam. That God sent his succeeding revelation through the Bab, who was himself a descendant of the Imams of Shi'ah Islam, is to Shoghi Effendi the evident demonstration of the error of Sunni Islam, which in refusing to recognize Muhammad's rightful successors produced such a grievous schism in Islam from the very beginning.<sup>19</sup>

The issue which divides Islam into the Sunnis and the Shi'ahs pertains to Muhammad's successor. Muhammad had no son, and so, according to the Shi'ahs, appointed as his successor his cousin, 'Ali ibn Abi Talib, who was also his son-in-law by marriage to Fatimih (or Fatima), Muhammad's daughter. The Shi'ahs believe that 'Ali's rightful place was usurped in

turn by Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and 'Uthman—the first three Caliphs (or rulers) in Islam after Muhammad. 'Ali was finally elected Caliph after 'Uthman but was assassinated after a short and troubled reign of five years. 'Ali's eldest son, al-Hasan, regarded by the Shi'ahs as the second rightful successor to Muhammad (the second "Imam"), abdicated his reign five or six years after his father's death to the contender for leadership, Umayyad Mu'awiya, The third Imam, al-Husayn, the younger brother of al-Hasan, tried unsuccessfully to regain the leadership and perished in October 10, CE 680, a day celebrated with weeping in Shi'ah communities, especially in Persia. None of the remaining Imams ever regained the leadership, although they were highly revered among the Shi'ahs.

Unlike the Caliph, whose authority was given to him by the consent of the Muslim community and who needed not be a descendant of Muhammad, the Imam was a descendant of Muhammad, each one appointed by his predecessor.<sup>20</sup>

According to the Shi'as, they have had virtues and attributes which have been superior to those of anyone in their times they were endowed with greatness and the ability to perform miracles; they were infallible and innocent; each one was introduced by the previous Imam as his immediate successor.<sup>21</sup>

The Imam, in other words, functioned for the Shi'ahs much as the prophet Muhammad did in his day; he was the divinely appointed voice of God to whom all the Shi'ahs looked for infallible direction. This infallible guidance was guaranteed because each Imam was appointed to his position by the divinely guided Imam who preceded him, and the line went all the way back to the Prophet Muhammad himself, who had appointed 'Ali as the first Imam.

The Shi'ahs, moreover, rejected entirely the principle or doctrine of *ijma* ("Consensus of the Community"), whereby Traditions could be established, holding to the contrary that only the Imams could rightly decide on questions of Muslim Law.<sup>22</sup>

### ***The Ithna-Mashariyyih sect of Shi'ah Islam***

With the passage of time, Shi'ites divided into various groups over the number and identification of the Imams.

#### **The Zaidites**

The Zaidi sect considers Zaid as the fifth Imam rather than Muhammad al-Baqir and through him trace a line of Imams which continues to the present. The Zaidis believe that the fourth Imam forfeited the imamate for failing to fight against the Umayyads. They more closely approximate the Sunnite position than other Shi'ite sects and have maintained a dynasty in Yemen (South Arabia) since the ninth century.<sup>23</sup>

#### **The Isma'ilis**

The Isma'ilis acknowledge seven Imams, holding that the seventh and last was Isma'il, brother of Musa al-Kazim, whom the Ithna-'Ashariyyah sect regards as the seventh Imam. Isma'il was the first son of Ja'far-i-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, and was designated by his father as the next Imam, but the Ithna-'Ashariyyih sect (the "Twelvers") believes that he disqualified himself as Imam when he was charged with drunkenness. The Isma'ilis refuse to believe the accusation, holding that since he was the Imam-designate, he was already infallible and sinless and could not have been guilty of drunkenness. The Isma'ilis were excited further by the report that Isma'il had died (CE 760) five years before his



father (CE 765), and therefore could not have been Imam in succession to his father. The doctrine developed among the Isma'ilis that Isma'il was not dead, but only hidden, and that he would return one day as the Mihdi. Some Isma'ilis admitted that he had died but said that he had left a son, Muhammad ibn-Isma'il, who "disappeared" in India, and he would return as Mihdi. The concept of a "hidden Imam" who would reveal himself one day as the Mihdi, or Qa'im ("he who ariseth"), was later employed usefully by the Twelvers Sect.<sup>24</sup>

### **The Ja'faris**

The most important of the Shiite sects is the Ithna-'Ashariyyt sect, or the Ja'faris, named after the sixth Imam, Ja'far-i-Sadiq, who provided the basis of much of the Shi'ah law. This is the sect 'Abdu'l-Baha refers to in the *Traveller's Narrative* as "the Church of Ja'far".<sup>25</sup>

The Ja'faris are characterized by their belief in twelve Imams, beginning with 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law, and ending with Muhammad al-Muntazar. The twelfth Imam mysteriously disappeared shortly after his father's death in CE 874 (AH 260). Refusing to believe that the divinely instituted line of Imams had come to a close (the twelfth Imam having left no issue, being himself only about five years old), the Twelvers maintain that the twelfth Imam "disappeared" or "withdrew" into "concealment" (in the cave of the great mosque at Samarra) from whence, at the appointed time, he will emerge as the Mihdi and will usher in a period of justice in all the earth prior to the end of the world and the last judgment.<sup>26</sup>

A development important to the study of the Babi-Baha'i movement occurred with the disappearance of the twelfth Imam in AH 260.

Unwilling to believe that God's guidance through the appointed Imams had come to an end with the disappearance of the twelfth Imam, the Ja'faris believed that the twelfth Imam still continued to communicate his word to his followers through an agent known as a *bab*, meaning a "gate" or "door" and indicating that the way of communication between the Imam and his followers was still open. The first *bab* was appointed by the eleventh Imam as the regent or guardian of his son, the twelfth Imam. Three other *babs* followed in succession, each being appointed by his predecessor. The fourth *bab*, however, refused to appoint a successor, saying that the matter was now in the hands of God, and thus introduced a period of silence known as the "Major Occultation", when there is no *bab* to communicate the twelfth Imam's message to his followers.<sup>27</sup>

### ***The Shaykhi school of Shi'ah Islam***

The two outstanding figures of the original Shaykhi school are Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i (d. AH 1242 = CE 1826-1827), the founder, and his disciple, Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti (d. AH 1259 = CE 1843-1844), who had attained such eminence that upon the death of the former he was unanimously recognized as the new leader of the Shaykhi school.

The Shaykhis are distinguished from other Shi'ites in that they reduced the Shi'ah's five "Supports", or essential principles of religion, to only three and added to these a "Fourth Support" not included in the original five. As explained to Edward G. Browne by Mulla Ghulam Husayn, a Shaykhi doctor of Kirman with whom he conversed in June, 1888, the five "Supports" of Shi'ah Islam are (1) belief in the unity of God; (2) belief in the justice of God; (3) belief in

prophethood; (4) belief in the Imamate; (5) and belief in the resurrection. But the Shaykhis believed that principles two and five are included in number three, for if one believes in the prophet he believes in his "book" which sets forth belief in the apostles of God, as well as the mercy, wisdom, power and other attributes of God, and belief in the resurrection. To the remaining three principles, the Shaykhis added a "Fourth Support", namely, that there must always be among the Shi'ahs a "Perfect Shi'ite" to serve as "a channel of grace" between the absent twelfth Imam and his followers. Since four supports are necessary for stability, more than these are unnecessary.<sup>28</sup>

The "Fourth Support" which as explained above is a principle or doctrine, became a term for the "Perfect Shi'ite", at least outside of the Shaykhs circle among the Babis and other Shi'ites.<sup>29</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha in the *Traveller's Narrative* refers to "some divines of the Sheykhi party" who were "ever seeking for some great, incomparable, and trustworthy person" whom they called the "Fourth Support".<sup>30</sup>

Before Siyyid Kazim died, according to the author of the *New History*, he began to speak of his approaching death and of "the Truth" that should appear after his passing.<sup>31</sup> When he died, his disciples scattered in search of the expected one who would be the "channel of grace" between the hidden Imam and his people. For some of the Shaykhis, this search ended when 'Ali Muhammad declared in 1844 that he was the *Bab*, 'the Gate of the hidden Imam'.<sup>32</sup> A considerable number of Shaykhis, however, refused to accept 'Ali Muhammad's claims, following instead Haji Muhammad Karim Khan of Kirman, and became the Babis bitterest

opponents. Several Shaykhis were among those who heaped insults on the Bab at his first examination in Tabriz and who ratified his death-warrant two years later. The Bab stigmatized Karim Khan as “the Quintessence of Hell-fire”, and the latter wrote at least two treatises, one entitled “The Crushing of Falsehood”, denouncing the Babi doctrines. Edward G. Browne testifies to the “bitter enmity” existing between the Shaykhis and the Babis which he observed during the two months he spent at Kirman in the summer of 1888.<sup>33</sup> The conflict between the Bab and Karim Khan is only a foreshadowing of conflict to follow in Babi-Baha'i history. The future, however, belonged not to Karim Khan's followers but to the Babis who centered around 'Ali-Muhammad.

### **'Ali-Muhammad, the Bab**

Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad, who later assumed the title of the “Bab”, was born in Shiraz, Persia, on the first of Muharram, in the year—according to 'Abdu'l-Baha in the *Traveller's Narrative*—AH 1235,<sup>34</sup> which would be October 20, 1819. He was a *Siyyid*, a descendant of the Prophet Muhammad. His father, a merchant in Shiraz, died when 'Ali Muhammad was quite young, and he was placed in the care of his maternal uncle, Haji Siyyid 'Ali.

### ***The Bab's education***

One question arising from the Bab's early years is whether or not he received a formal education. 'Abdu'l-Baha says:

*It was universally admitted by the Shiites that he had never studied in any school, and had not acquired knowledge from any teacher, all the people of Shiraz bear witness to this. Nevertheless, he suddenly appeared before the people, endowed with the most complete erudition.*<sup>35</sup>

The Bab, himself, however, refers in the *Bayan* to “Muhammad” his “teacher”, and J. E. Esslemont was to admit later that “in childhood He learned to

read, and received the elementary education customary for children”, and Esslemont on this point quotes in a footnote “a historian” who remarks:

The belief of many people in the East, especially the believers in the Bab (now Baha'is) was this that the Bab received no education, but that the Mullahs, in order to lower Him in the eyes of the people, declared that such knowledge and wisdom as he possessed were accounted for by the education he had received. After deep search into the truth of this matter we have found evidence to show that in childhood for a short time He used to go to the house of Shaykh Muhammad (also known as 'Abid) where He was taught to read and write in Persian. It was this to which the Bab referred when He wrote in the book of Bayan: “O Muhammad, O my teacher! ...”

The remarkable thing is this, however, that this Shaykh, who was his teacher, became a devoted disciple of his own pupil.<sup>36</sup>

The view that neither the Bab nor Baha'u'llah had formal educations, or that they received little training, is to be seen against the background of the Muslim belief that Muhammad was an illiterate. Baha'u'llah, in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* uses this expression in reference to himself: “We have not entered schools. We have not perused the arguments. Hear that by which this Illiterate One (*al-ummi*) calls you to God.”<sup>37</sup>

The Muslim belief that Muhammad was illiterate is based on a passage in the Qur'an when Muhammad is referred to as “*al-nabi al-ummi*” (8:156-57), “the illiterate Prophet”, as rendered by Sale and Palmer,<sup>38</sup> traditionally understood by Muslims to mean that Muhammad could not read nor write, and thus translated freely by Pickthall in his “explanatory translation” as “the Prophet who can neither read nor write”.<sup>39</sup>

Modern studies, however, have called into question the traditional understanding of this expression, as Pickthall points out: “Some modern criticism, while not denying the comparative illiteracy of the

Prophet, would prefer the rendering 'who is not of those who read the Scriptures' or 'Gentile'."40 Rodwell explains in a footnote in his translation of the Qur'an.

The word *ummi* is derived from *ummah*, a nation, and means Gentile; it here refers to Muhammad's ignorance, previous to the revelation of Islam, of the ancient Scriptures. It is equivalent to the Gr. *laic*, ethnic, and to the term *gojim*, as applied by the Jews to those unacquainted with the Scriptures.<sup>41</sup>

The verse, then, referring to Muhammad as *al-nabi al-ummi* would not be referring to an inability to read and write but to the fact of his being a Gentile and unversed in the Jewish scriptures, illiterate in reference to previous holy books. This understanding is supported by other verses in the Qur'an, as where reference is made to "unlettered folk who know the Scripture not except from hearsay" (2:78). Their illiteracy has special reference to their not having read the scripture. Muhammad is addressed in one verse of the Qur'an with these words:

Thou (O Muhammad) wast not a reader at any scripture before it [the Qur'an], nor didst thou write it with thy right hand, for then might those have doubted, who follow falsehood.<sup>42</sup>

This verse is denying that Muhammad had read or copied any portions of the books of previous revelations, which would then lessen the miracle of the Qur'an and cause these who "follow falsehood" to deny the originality or authenticity of Muhammad's revelation.

A better rendering than "illiterate" for *ummi* in these verses in its context would be "unversed".

Baha'u'llah's use of the word in reference to himself would seem to be for the purpose of placing himself in the same category with Muhammad, and the Baha'i interest in claiming that the Bab and Baha'u'llah had little formal education seems to stem from the traditional

Muslim belief that Muhammad was illiterate and the philosophy that such a view strengthens the claim that their revelations proceeded from divine rather than human wisdom. But although the claim of the basic illiteracy of the Bab and Baha'u'llah stem from the Muslim belief in Muhammad's illiteracy, the Baha'i claim has undergone a modification. It does not mean that the Bab and Baha'u'llah could not read nor write, for both were able to read and write, and Baha'is preserve to this day tablets written in their own handwriting; it does not mean that they were unversed in previous Scriptures, for Baha'u'llah's writings in particular give evidence of his being well versed in the Qur'an, the *Bayan*, and the Christian gospels; nor does it mean that they had no formal education, for as noted above, the Bab received an elementary education customary for Persian children of his time. What then is meant? Seemingly, simply that the Bab and Baha'u'llah received no *extensive* formal education. The same Muslim desire to signify the prophets revelation by contrasting it with the prophet's "illiteracy" reasserts itself in the claim made for the Bab and Baha'u'llah, but the Baha'i claim no longer signifies what the Muslim claim means.

### ***The Bab's later youth***

At the age of seventeen, the Bab moved from Shiraz to Bushihr, where he engaged in business pursuits with his uncle and later on his own. The Bab was so engaged for five years.<sup>43</sup> At about age twenty-two, the Bab married, and from this union one child was born, named Ahmad, who died in 1843.<sup>44</sup>

The Bab increasingly gave himself to religious devotions, and according to the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* spent about a year in the neighborhood of

Karbila and Najaf (important Shrine sites),<sup>45</sup> about three months of this time at Karbila, occasionally attending the lectures of Siyyid Kazim. The author, however, explains that his visits were not for the purpose of study, for Siyyid Kazim was "helped" by time presence of the Bab.<sup>46</sup> Babi-Baha'i sources indicate that Siyyid Kazim made some indications that 'Ali Muhammad (the Bab) could be his successor. The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* gives the testimony of one of Siyyid Kazim's disciples, who said:

"One day we were in the company of the late Seyyid Kazim when some one asked about the manner of the Manifestation which was to succeed him. "After my death," replied he, "there will be a schism amongst my followers, but God's affair will be clear as this rising sun." As he spoke he pointed to the door, through which streamed a flood of sunlight, and, at that very moment, Mirza 'Ali Muhammad crossed the threshold and entered the room. "We did not, however," continued the narrator, "apprehend his meaning until His Holiness was manifested".<sup>47</sup>

A variation of this story appears in *The Dawn-Breakers*, making it even more emphatic that 'Ali Muhammad was intended by Siyyid Kazim. According to this account, the Bab:

sat close to the threshold, and ... listened to the discourse of the Siyyid. As soon as his eyes fell upon that Youth, the Siyyid discontinued his address and held his peace. Whereupon one of his disciples begged him to resume the argument which he had left unfinished. 'What more shall I say?' replied Siyyid Kazim, as he turned his face toward the Bab. 'Lo, the Truth is more manifest than the ray of light that has fallen upon that lap!' I immediately observed that the ray to which the Siyyid referred had fallen upon the lap of that same Youth whom we had recently visited. ... I Saw the Siyyid actually point out with his finger the ray of light that had fallen on that lap, and yet none among those who were present seemed to apprehend its meaning.<sup>48</sup>

According to the testimony of Mirza Husayn-i-Bushru'i, the first to believe in the Bab, as quoted from Mirza Jani's history by the author of the *New History*, Mirza Husayn was one of Siyyid Kazim's followers who observed the Bab during his few months stay in Karbila.<sup>49</sup> If Siyyid Kazim



did give some indications to his followers that 'Ali Muhammad (the Bab) was to be his successor, it would explain why Mulla Husayn and other of Siyyid Kazim's followers after his death set out for Shiraz in search of 'Ali Muhammad. It is likely, however, since the sources quoted above indicate that Siyyid Kazim's disciples did not originally apprehend his meaning in reference to 'Ali Muhammad that they did not see 'Ali Muhammad as the new leader until after his declaration. Still, 'Ali Muhammad appears to have been a very impressive and winsome figure, and he understandably may have attracted some of the late Shaykhi leader's followers to himself and to Shiraz in their search for the new leader. According to Mirza Jani's account as quoted in the *New History*, Mulla Husayn upon reaching Shiraz sought out the abode of 'Ali Muhammad because of their previous friendship.<sup>50</sup> According to Babi-Baha'i accounts, Mulla Husayn was the first to hear the Bab's declaration of his mission and the first to believe in the Bab.

### ***The Bab's declaration of His Mission***

The Bab's declaration of his mission on May 22, 1844, as noted earlier, cannot be overstressed: for this moment marks for the Baha'i not only the beginning of the faith with which he stands identified but the beginning of a new prophetic era, for which all previous dispensations were merely preparatory and before which the glory of all past ages fades into a pale glimmer.

**The date of the Declaration:** A little confusion exists concerning the date of the Bab's declaration. Sometimes the date is given as May 23, 1844, and sometimes as May 22, 1844. Baha'is list the anniversary date as May 23,<sup>51</sup> yet the actual date by the Gregorian calendar, as Baha'is

sometimes point out, would be May 22, 1844. The reason for this confusion is a difficulty in transferring the date from the Muslim calendar into the Gregorian system. The Bab in the *Bayan* gives the date of his declaration as the fifth of Jumadiyu'l-Avval, which corresponds for the most part with May 23, 1844. The Muslim day, however, began at sunset rather than at midnight, and the Bab's declaration by his own testimony was made two hours and eleven minutes after sunset on the fifth of Jumadiyu'l-Avval.<sup>52</sup> The Bab's declaration thus was made on a day the beginning hours of which overlap with the closing hours of the previous day by the Gregorian system, in other words, the Bab made his declaration on the fifth of Jumadiyu'l-Avval, which with the exception of the few hours from sunset to midnight, corresponded with May 23 of that year but the declaration was made during those evening hours, which by the Gregorian calendar, would to the evening of May 22.

There is some indication that the Bab, even before May 22, 1844, was accorded a high station by some acquaintances. Richards points out that Avarih claims that he discovered in the course of his research a letter written by the Bab to his uncle, bearing the date of 1259 A.H. (1843) in which he writes:

The Cause is not yet ripe (of age), and the moment has not yet arrived, therefore should anyone attribute to me opinions contrary to the usual doctrines and beliefs of Islam both I and my immaculate ancestors will be displeased with him, both here and in the next world.<sup>53</sup>

Nabil quotes from one of the Bab's writings in which he indicates that in the year prior to his declaration he felt himself possessed of God's Spirit and enlightened on divine mysteries:

The spirit of prayer which animates My soul is the direct consequence of a dream which I had in the year before the declaration of My Mission. In My vision I saw the head of the Imam Husayn, the Siyyidu'sh-Shuhada', which was hanging upon a tree. Drops of blood dripped profusely from his lacerated throat. With feelings of unsurpassed delight, I approached that tree and, stretching forth My hands, gathered a few drops of that sacred blood, and drank them devoutly. When I awoke, I felt that the Spirit of God had permeated and taken possession of My soul. My heart was thrilled with the joy of His Divine presence, and the mysteries of His Revelation were unfolded before My eyes in all their glory.<sup>54</sup>

The Bab, however, did not declare his mission until May 22, 1844. The year has special significance, for it was exactly 1,000 years from the time of the twelfth Imam's disappearance in AH 260.<sup>55</sup> The year 1844 corresponds to the Muslim year AH 1260. The period of the Imam's "Occultation" was thus broken exactly 1,000 years from its commencement. The Bab's declaration in this year is seen as the fulfilling of Revelation 11:2 about the Holy City being trodden under foot for forty and two months until the time of the Gentiles is fulfilled (forty-two times thirty equals 1,260). The Millerites also had predicted, based on calculations from the Bible, that Christ would return in 1844. Baha'is believe that the Millerites were accurate as to the date but wrong as to the manner of his coming.<sup>56</sup>

**The circumstances of the declaration:** Babi-Baha'i sources differ in giving the particulars of the Bab's declaration. The *Traveller's Narrative*, oddly enough, passes over this most important event with merely stating that in AH 1260, at the age of twenty-five, the Bab "began to speak and to declare the rank of Bab-hood" and gives a short statement of the meaning of the term "Bab".<sup>57</sup> The earliest Babi-Baha'i account of the declaration is Mirza Jani's account. The author of the *New History*, when coming to the Bab's declaration, merely quotes the Mirza Jani account.

Although both the Mirza Jani account and Nabil's account purport to be based on the testimony of Mulla Husayn, to whom the Bab first declared his mission,<sup>58</sup> they differ on various points. A comparison of these differences gives some insight into the developing tradition concerning the Bab's declaration. Baha'is today accept Nabil's account as the accurate record of the Bab's declaration.

In Mirza Jani's account, as quoted in the *New History*, Mulla Husayn upon reaching Shiraz, to which he went from Karbila "in the hope of benefiting a palpitation of the heart" which he suffered, seeks out the abode of 'Ali Muhammad (the Bab) because of their previous friendship on a journey together to the Holy Shrines of Karbila and Najaf. One reference is made to Mulla Husayn's having not observed any special signs of knowledge in 'Ali Muhammad during his two months abode at Karbila, indicating that he was in Karbila during the time that the Bab was there. According to Nabil's account in *The Dawn-Breakers*, however, Mulla Husayn is portrayed as not knowing 'Ali Muhammad and as being away on a mission during the time that 'Ali Muhammad was in Karbila. The circumstance of his being drawn to Shiraz is thus given a more miraculous nature.

In Mirza Jani's account, Mulla Husayn himself seeks out the Bab's abode, knocks on the door of his house, and 'Ali Muhammad in person opens the door. The L. Codex of the *New History* heightens the drama of this event by inserting that before the Bab opened the door or had seen Mulla Husayn, he calls out: "Is it you, Mulla Husayn?" This element of having expected Mulla Husayn is heightened more so in Nabil's account which has the Bab meeting Mulla Husayn outside the gate of the city, embracing

him tenderly, and leading him to his house, where the Bab knocks upon the door and is admitted entrance by an Ethiopian servant.

The time from Mulla Husayn's arrival at 'Ali Muhammad's house until his conversion, in Mirza Jani's account, extends over a period of some three or four days, whereas in Nabil's chronicle Mulla Husayn is converted on his first evening with the Bab. The dialogue between 'Ali Muhammad and Mulla Husayn in both accounts is similar, yet striking differences occur. In the Mirza Jani account, 'Ali Muhammad asks Mulla Husayn whom the Shaykhis now recognized as their-master to "take the place occupied by the late Seyyid Kazim?"<sup>59</sup> Upon hearing that they as yet recognized no one, 'Ali Muhammad asks what manner of man he must be, and after Mulla Husayn enumerates certain qualifications and characteristics, he asks: "Do you observe these in me?" Mulla Husayn replies: "I see in you none of these qualities." These words, as might be expected, are omitted by the later Nabil chronicle. Towards evening, in the Mirza Jani narrative, several learned Shaykhis and merchants informed of Mulla Husayn's arrival in Shiraz come to see him. With 'Ali Muhammad's support, they succeed in getting him to promise to deliver a lecture on the following day. But when he attempted to carry out his promise the next morning, he found that he was as though tongue-tied and so unable to speak. The same thing happened the next day and again a third time. 'Ali Muhammad then took Mulla Husayn alone to his house, again asking him the sign by which his master might be recognized, causing Mulla Husayn to wonder why 'Ali Muhammad so persistently introduced this topic. It was on this evening some days after Mulla Husayn's arrival in Shiraz that 'Ali Muhammad began revealing verses explaining various problems and questions in the mind of Mulla Husayn which caused him to recognize the station of 'Ali Muhammad. When 'Ali Muhammad

finished revealing seventy or eighty verses, Mulla Husayn rose up to flee as “some delinquent might flee from before a mighty king”, but ‘Ali Muhammad constrained him to sit down and remain, saying: “Anyone who should see thee in this state would think thee mad.”

In *The Dawn-Breakers*, Mulla Husayn is converted during his first evening with the Bab. ‘Ali Muhammad asks him: “Whom, after Siyyid Kazim, do you regard as his successor and your leader?” He then asks for ‘the distinguishing features of the promised One,” and after being told characteristics concerning his youth, physical features, and innate knowledge, ‘Ali Muhammad responds: “Behold, all these signs are manifest in Me!” He then demonstrates how each of the signs is applicable to him. As soon as he finishes speaking Mulla Husayn is seized with great fear. After the Bab reveals the first chapter at his commentary on the Surih of Joseph, Mulla Husayn begs permission to depart, but ‘Ali Muhammad says: “If you leave in such a state, whoever sees you will assuredly say: ‘This poor youth has lost his mind.’”

The first chapter of the Bab’s commentary on the Surih of Joseph,<sup>60</sup> in Nabil’s account, was revealed in the presence of Mulla Husayn on the night at his declaration, the Bab writing down the words as he recited them aloud to Mulla Husayn. In the earlier Mirza Jani account, however, the Bab on a day following his declaration showed Mulla Husayn his commentary on the Surih of Joseph which he had written in response to Mulla Husayn’s question of some days previous on why this Surih is called “the Best of Stories”. The Bab at that time had said that it was not the proper time to answer his question and thus produced the written

commentary some days later, allowing the Bab time to reflect on the matter. Perhaps to avoid any suggestion that the Bab reflected on the matter, the later Baha'i history, *The Dawn-Breakers*, departed from the account in the earlier histories by recounting that the Bab without being solicited and seemingly without forethought recited the significant first chapter of that commentary in the very presence of Mulla Husayn on the evening of his declaration.<sup>61</sup>

Strangely enough, the Baha'i histories give no account of the actual declaration of the Bab on May 22, 1844. The closest record of an actual declaration is given in Nabil's history of 'Ali Muhammad's words to Mulla Husayn spoken on the following days "O thou who art the first to believe in Me: Verily I say, I am the Bab, the Gate of God, and thou art the Babu'l-Bab, the gate of that Gate."<sup>62</sup>

**The content of the declaration:** Some uncertainty exists concerning the meaning of the title "the Bab" which 'Ali Muhammad assumed, and probably some progression of meaning occurred from the time that 'Ali Muhammad first called himself by this title. The word is used in pre-Fatimid times, but its exact meaning as used then is uncertain.<sup>63</sup>

During the Fatimid period (CE 910–1171), Badr al Jamali, the prime minister of the Imam Mustansir was designated his Bab, and al Musiyad sometime after his admittance to the court of al Mustansir in AH 439/CE 1648 rose to the rank of Bab, presumably after Badr al Jamali's death.<sup>64</sup>

Within the Isma'ili community existed a well-organized hierarchy of religious teachers, which J. N. Hollister reconstructs as follows:

(1) Prophet, (2) Asas, (3) Imam, (4) Bab, (5) Hujjat, (6) Da'i al madhun, (7) Da'i al mukasir, and (8) Da'i al mustajib. A da'i (Isma'ili missionary) could work up from the lowest position to that of a *Bab*.<sup>65</sup>

In the system of the Nusayri sect of northern Syria, God manifested himself seven times in human form in the persons of Abel, Seth, Joseph, Joshua, Asaph, Simon Peter, and 'Ali, Muhammad's son-in-law. Each of these is called *Maana*, the reality of all things, and each has associated with him two other figures called the *Isma*, the name or veil, by which the *Maana* conceals its glory and by which it also reveals itself to man, and the *Bab*, Gate or Door, by which entrance to the knowledge of the former two is made possible. The seven *Isms*, respectively, are Adam, Noah, Jacob, Moses, Solomon, Jesus, and Muhammad; and the seven *Babs*, respectively, are Gabriel, Yayeel, Ham ibn Cush, Daw, Abdullah ibn Simaan, Rezabah, Salman el Farizee. These form the seven trinities of the Nusayri sect.<sup>66</sup>

The title of "the Bab" was also assumed by Abu Ja'far Muhammad (known as Ibn Abi Asakir), who was killed under the Khalifah (Caliph) Ar-Radhi for taking the title and for teaching new and heretical doctrines. As explained by one of his followers, Ibn Abdus, the title signified "the door which led to the expected Imam". The followers of Abu'l-Kazim al-Husayn ibn Ruh, a contemporary of ash-Shalmaghani (d. AH 326/CE 937-938), regarded him as one of the "doors leading to the *Lord of the Age*", the *Sahibu'z-Zaman*.<sup>67</sup>

The more direct influence upon 'Ali Muhammad in his use of the title, however, would appear to be its use in Shi'ah Islam in reference



to the four agents of the hidden twelfth Imam, discussed earlier.<sup>68</sup> 'Ali Muhammad in the *Bayan* refers to the four *babs* who have returned to the earth (1:16–19),<sup>69</sup> meaning evidently the four *babs* of the twelfth Imam. Elsewhere in the *Bayan*, the Bab writes"

For God hath assimilated refuge in Himself to refuge in His Apostle [Muhammad], and refuge in His Apostle to refuge in His execution (i.e., the Imams), and refuge [in His executors to refuge] to the Gates (Abwab or Babs)<sup>70</sup> of His executors. ... For refuge in the Apostle is identical with refuge in God, and refuge in the Imams is identical with refuge in the Apostle, and refuge in the Gates is identical with refuge in the Imams.<sup>71</sup>

The persons intended as returns of the four gates may have been Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti, referred to by 'Ali Muhammad in his commentary on the Surih of Joseph as the "two Gates, Ahmad and Kazim" sent "in the former time," 'Ali Muhammad, himself, who took this title, and Mulla Husayn (the Babu'l-Bab) upon whom 'Ali Muhammad bestowed his former title "the Bab" when he assumed the more lofty title of the *Nuqta*, or "Point".<sup>72</sup>

When the Bab was asked at his first examination at Tabriz the meaning of "Bab," he replied that it meant the same as the word "Bab" in the tradition where Muhammad says: "I am the City of Knowledge and 'Ali is its Gate."<sup>73</sup> This may lend support to the view that 'Ali Muhammad claimed the full station of an Imam in his use of the title "Bab," since 'Ali was the first Imam, or it may indicate some progression of meaning in 'Ali Muhammad's own thought, but more likely in his use of this tradition he was thinking not of identifying himself with the Imam 'Ali but of describing his function as the Bab. As 'Ali was a gateway to the knowledge of Muhammad, so he was a gateway to the hidden Imam.

### The Bab's advancing claims

'Ali Muhammad's original meaning, therefore, in claiming to be the Bab was that he was the "Gate" of the hidden twelfth Imam and was thus the successor of Siyyid Kazim, the "Fourth Support", for whom the Shaykhis were searching. That 'Ali Muhammad's claim to be the "Bab" was made to a member of the Shaykhi school is not without significance, and in both the histories discussed earlier 'Ali Muhammad inquires of Mulla Husayn whom the Shaykhis regarded as the successor of Siyyid Kazim and what his qualifications should be, with the aim of getting Mulla Husayn to recognize in him those signs.<sup>74</sup>

'Ali Muhammad, thus, was originally claiming to be merely the new Shaykhi leader, the "Perfect Shi'ite," the channel of grace between the hidden Imam and his people. During this early period of the Bab's ministry, he was still working within the framework of the religion of Islam, but greater claims were forthcoming. 'Ali Muhammad's claims appear to have gone through at least three stages: his claims to be (1) the Bab, (2) the *Zikr* ("Reminder") or *Mahdi* and *Qa'im*, expected deliverers, and (3) a "manifestation" on an equality with the prophet Muhammad.

The *New History* indicates that the Bab first advanced his claim of being the *Qa'im* while at Chihriq:

It was during his sojourn at Chikrik, too, that the Bab, having due regard to the exigencies of the time, the dictates of expediency, and the capacity of men, declared himself to be the Ka'im; though some think that he made this declaration during the latter days of his residence at Maku.<sup>75</sup>

This new claim appears to have been first publicly advanced by 'Ali

Muhammad at his examination before the 'Ulama at Tabriz toward the end of 1847 or beginning of 1848.<sup>76</sup>

In 'Abdu'l-Baha's account of the Bab's examination at Tabriz in the *Traveller's Narrative*, he says: "They asked him concerning the claims of the Bab. He advanced the claim of Mahdi-hood; whereon a mighty tumult arose."<sup>77</sup> The statement apparently means that he advanced a new claim beyond his previous claim to Babhood and that it startled his hearers. J. E. Esslemont, in his popular introduction to the Baha'i faith, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, still highly regarded by Baha'is, calls attention to the Bab's advancing claims. At the age of twenty-five, Esslemont points out, 'Ali Muhammad claimed the station of Babhood, then Esslemont says: "The hostility aroused by the claim of Babhood was redoubled when the young reformer proceeded to declare that He was Himself the Mihdi (Mahdi) Whose coming Muhammad had foretold."<sup>78</sup> Although Esslemont does not indicate when the second claim was made, he does allow for a lapse of time between the claims for the development of hostility to arise against 'Ali Muhammad's first claim. Esslemont then says:

But the Bab did not stop even with the claim of Mihdihood. He adopted the sacred title of "Nuqtiyiula" or "Primal Point". This was a title applied to Muhammad Himself by His followers. Even the Imams were secondary in importance to the "Point," from Whom they derived their inspiration and authority. In assuming this title, the Bab claimed to rank, like Muhammad, in the series of great founders of religion.<sup>79</sup>

According to these sources, then, 'Ali Muhammad first claimed to be (1) the Bab or gate to the hidden Imam, whom the Shi'ahs identified with the Mahdi, (2) then to be the Imam, or Mahdi, himself, (3) and then to be the "Point" to whom even the Imams were secondary, thus putting himself on an equality with the prophet Muhammad.<sup>80</sup>

In this understanding, the claim to be Qa'im or Mahdi marked a second stage in the Bab's advancing claims. Some interpreters, however, as Peter Berger, believe that the full meaning of the later titles was involved in 'Ali Muhammad's claim to be the Bab and was so understood by his followers.<sup>81</sup> William McElwee Miller takes this position in his new book on Baha'i. Support for this position is provided in *The Dawn-Breakers*, for Nabil portrays Mulla Husayn as being on a search to find the promised Qa'im, and Mulla Husayn believes that he has found him when 'Ali Muhammad advances his claim to be the Bab. Possibly, however, Nabil is reading back into the Bab's first claim the meaning contained in the Bab's later claims.

Shoghi Effendi, in describing Mulla Husayn's interview with the Bab, says that the Bab by his replies to his guest "established beyond the shadow of a doubt His claim to be the premised Qa'im."<sup>82</sup> This statement would seem to indicate Shoghi Effendi's belief that the meaning of being the Qa'im was involved in 'Ali Muhammad's claim of being the Bab which he made in the presence of Mulla Husayn. Yet, elsewhere Shoghi Effendi says of 'Ali Muhammad that he "did not content Himself with the claim to be the Gate of the Hidden Imam" but "assumed a rank that excelled even that of the Sahibu'z-Zaman."<sup>83</sup> Seemingly, Shoghi Effendi is saying here that 'Ali Muhammad did, in fact, first claim to be the Bab in the traditional Shi'ite sense of "the Gate of the Hidden Imam" but, not being content with this claim, proceeded to advance even higher claims.

The matter is somewhat inconclusive, but the evidence is strong that, whatever the Bab meant by his first claim of being the Bab, he proceeded to assume titles, which popularly understood, were advanced claims.

The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* indicates that the Bab first announced himself as the Qa'im in a letter to Mulla Shaykh 'Ali (Jinab-i-Azim).<sup>84</sup> Browne notes, however, an inconsistency between the time when this letter is supposed to have been written, after the death of Muhammad Shah, and the accounts which indicate that the Bab advanced his claim of being the Qa'im at his examination in Tabriz, which occurred during Muhammad Shah's lifetime.<sup>85</sup> Though the time element may be wrong, the author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* does reveal that the Bab's claim to be Qa'im was made subsequent to his claim of being the Bab. The *New History* and the *Traveller's Narrative* agree with the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* on that point.

One unusual feature of early Babi history is that, when 'Ali Muhammad assumed the title of "the Point", he conferred his title of the Bab on Mulla Husayn, who was formerly the Babu'l-Bab, Gate of the Gate.<sup>86</sup> This would also seem to indicate that the meaning of the titles were distinct, with the Point carrying a higher meaning than the Bab, yet 'Ali Muhammad still sometimes refers to himself in the *Bayan* by his former title of the Bab but seems no longer to have been the exclusive holder of it.

### Later events

Within a relatively short time the Bab gained the allegiance of eighteen disciples, whom he called "Letters of the Living" (*Hurufat-Hayy*) and whom he sent forth to proclaim his message. The Bab then set out on a pilgrimage to Mecca, where he openly proclaimed himself. From Mecca, the Bab proceeded to Bushihr, where he landed in August, 1845. The movement was meeting with such success that by September, 1845,

measures to secure the Bab's arrest were taken. The house of the Bab's uncle was broken into, and the Bab and his uncle were taken to Shiraz; the governor examined the Bab, declared him to be a heretic, confiscated his property, and committed him into the custody of the chief constable, 'Abdu'l-Hamid Khan.

When a plague broke out in the city, the Bab either managed to escape or, according to Baha'i sources, was released by 'Abdu'l-Hamid Khan after the Bab had miraculously saved the life of his son, who had been attacked by the plague.<sup>87</sup> The Bab proceeded to Isfahan, where he stayed about a year under the protection of Manuchihr Khan, the governor of the province. When, however, Manuchihr Khan died early in 1847, his successor Gurgin Khan sent the Bab with mounted guards toward Tihiran, the capital. It is during this journey that the Bab is believed to have stopped for two or three days in the house of Mirza Jani in Kashan. According to the *New History*, after leaving Kashan, the Bab travelled to Khanlik, where he was visited by many persons of note, among whom was Mirza Husayn 'Ali, known later as Baha'u'llah.<sup>88</sup> Some Baha'is, however, maintain that no definite evidence exists that Baha'u'llah ever met the Bab. *The Dawn-Breakers* contains no record of this meeting but instead refers to a messenger from Baha'u'llah who brought the Bab a sealed letter and certain gifts from Baha'u'llah, which brought joy to the Bab, during the Bab's encampment near the village of Kulayn.<sup>89</sup>

Mohammad Shah seems to have desired to see the Bab, but the minister, Haji Mirza Aqasi, perhaps fearing that if the Bab were brought into the capital he might either win the shah's support or incite the

populace to rebellion, prevailed upon the shah to have the Bab transferred to the remote fortress of Maku.

The Bab remained at Maku for about six months and then was transferred to stricter confinement at the fortress of Chihriq.

Various opinions of the Bab circulated. Some regarded him as insane and considered his writings as the products of such madness. Others, however, believed that 'Ali Muhammad did not claim to be the Bab, that Mulla Husayn was the actual claimant, and that the writings in question issued from the pen of the latter.<sup>90</sup> So the Bab was summoned to Tabriz for a hearing to determine the matter. The Muslim and Baha'i accounts of the proceedings, agreeing on some of the questions asked, differ in presenting the Bab's deportment. Muslim sources present the Muslim clergy as getting the best of the Bab, asking him questions in the areas of medicine, grammar, and rhetoric and the meaning of certain Muslim traditions and picturing the Bab as unable to answer the questions. Baha'i sources show that the Bab was the subject of ridicule but present him as boldly meeting his adversaries.<sup>91</sup>

According to the account attributed to Amir Arslan Khan, maternal uncle to Nasiru'd-Din Shah, who was at the time of the Bab's interrogation crown prince, the Bab at the conclusion of the interrogation "apologized, recanted, and repented of and asked pardon for his errors, giving a sealed undertaking that henceforth he would not commit such fault."<sup>92</sup> Browne published in his *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* a document purporting to be the Bab's recantation, which may or may not be the one

referred to above. This unsigned and undated document, which Browne says “is apparently in the Bab’s handwriting”, declares:

Never have I desired aught contrary to the Will of God, and, if words contrary to His good pleasure have flowed from my pen, my object was not disobedience, and in any case I repent and ask forgiveness of Him. This servant has absolutely no knowledge connected with any [superhuman] claim. I ask forgiveness of God my Lord and I repent unto Him of [the idea] that there should be ascribed to me any [Divine] Mission. As for certain prayers and words which have flowed from my tongue, these do not imply any such Mission (amr), and any [apparent] claim to any special vicegerency for His holiness the Proof of God<sup>93</sup> (on whom be Peace!) is a purely baseless claim, such as this servant has never put forward, nay, nor any claim like unto it.<sup>94</sup>

Another account portrays the Bab as making a public recantation in the Vakil mosque in Shiraz, saying: “What has been attributed to me is a false accusation. Even if anything of the kind has emanated from me, I now repent and ask for (God’s) pardon.” Having made this confession, he kissed the hand of the Imam-Jum’ih, chief of the Muslim clergy, and descended from the pulpit.<sup>95</sup>

**The conference of Badasht:** Far distant from where the Bab was held in confinement, an important conference at Badasht was convened by the Babi leaders. One purpose of this conference was to consider means by which the Bab might be set free from his confinement in Chihriq.<sup>96</sup> This objective was unsuccessful, but the meeting, which oddly enough the *New History* and *Traveller’s Narrative* pass over in silence, marks the open break by the Bab’s followers with the religion of Islam. Nabil records that “each day of that memorable gathering witnessed the abrogation of a new law and the repudiation of a long-established tradition.”<sup>97</sup> One dramatic sign of the new order of things, which some of the Babis were unprepared to accept, was the appearance of Qurratu’l-Ayn (“Consolation of the Eyes”), the only woman included



in the Bab's "Letters of the Living", with the veil removed from her face. The Babis considered her the return of Fatimih, the Prophet Muhammad's daughter, "the noblest emblem of chastity in their eyes", and her appearance before them in such manner threw the meeting into turmoil. One Babi, so gravely shaken, cut his own throat and fled blood-stained from her presence.<sup>98</sup>

The Babis assembled at the Badasht Conference also took new names. Mirza Husayn 'Ali, who seems to have supported financially the conference, took the title "Baha", meaning "Glory" or "Splendour",<sup>99</sup> which title was expanded later into "Baha'u'llah", the Glory of God (Baha Allah). Baha'is maintain that Baha'u'llah was actually the unobtrusive guide behind the course of the entire conference,<sup>100</sup> although, Nabil remarks, "few, if any, dimly surmised that Baha'u'llah was the Author of the far-reaching changes which were being so fearlessly introduced."<sup>101</sup>

**Babis in arms:** The king of Persia, Muhammad Shah, died on September 4, 1848. The following months were to witness what Shoghi Effendi calls "the bloodiest and most dramatic" period "of the Heroic Age of the Baha'i Era."<sup>102</sup> A number of upheavals with Babis fighting against the royalist forces occurred in various parts of Persia—in the east at the fort of Shaykh Tabarsi, in the south in Nayriz, and in Zanjan in the northwest. Baha'is today insist that the Babis were merely protecting themselves against the efforts of the government to suppress the movement after the Bab's bold and open declaration at Tabriz of being the promised Qa'im. The taking up of arms to overthrow the secular government was, however, in the minds of the masses

an expected part of the awaited Mahdi's program of establishing justice in all the earth,<sup>103</sup> and whether or not the Babis took up arms for this purpose, as Browne points out,

in Khurasan, Mazandaran and elsewhere armed bands of his [the Bab's] followers roamed the country proclaiming the Advent of the expected Mahdi and the inauguration of the Reign of the Saints, and threatening those sanguinary encounters between themselves and their opponents which were at once precipitated by the king's death and the ensuing dislocation and confusion.<sup>104</sup>

The Bab envisioned a Babi state in Persia, and the letter written by Quddus to the prince given in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, which Browne notes is "shorter and more forcibly worded" than the version in the *New History*, gives some support to the view that the Babis intended taking over the government. "We," he writes, "are the rightful rulers, and the world is set under our signet-ring", and in the concluding passage of the letter, he admonishes, "Be not thou, O Prince, misled by worldly glory and the pride of thy youth; know that Nasiru'd-Din Shah is no true king, and that such as support him shall be tormented in hell-fire."<sup>105</sup>

The battles at Shaykh Tabarsi, which began in October, 1848, lasted some eleven months before the Babis were subdued. Half of the Bab's "Letters of the Living", including Mulla Husayn and Quddus, were killed. The Zanzan battles also lasted for about a year. Some 3,000 Babis were engaged in the fighting, but the number was gradually reduced by deaths or desertions until only 500 remained at the end. On the day of their surrender, seventy-four were bayoneted to death, and four were blown from cannons, and 150 or 200 persons, including some children seven or eight years old, were imprisoned.<sup>106</sup>

**The Bab's execution:** While the Zanjan siege was in progress, yet another Babi rising occurred in Nayriz. Although, as Edward Browne points out, the Bab "could not, indeed, be considered as directly responsible for the attitude of armed resistance assumed by his followers", the Persian government, nevertheless, regarded him as 'the fountain-head of those doctrines which had convulsed the whole Persian Empire,'<sup>107</sup> and steps were taken to halt the movement by the execution of the Bab.

According to Nabil's account, a regiment of soldiers ranged itself in three files. Each file consisted of 250 men with rifles, awaiting the order to fire. Nabil gives the time as noon, Sunday, the twenty-eighth of Sha'ban, AH 1266 (July 9, 1850).<sup>108</sup> The Bab and one of his devoted followers, Aqa Muhammad 'Ali, were led to the barrack square and suspended by ropes before the gaze of a large multitude who had assembled to witness the event. The order was given to open fire. Then occurred "a most dramatic incident which came near contributing to history one of the most astounding and best-accredited miracles in the annals of religion."<sup>109</sup> When the smoke from the rifles cleared, the Bab had not been hit. The bullets only severed the rope which held him suspended, thus freeing him. Sources, while agreeing on this point, differ as to whether Aqa Muhammad 'Ali also was unharmed. Some accounts record that the Bab's disciple was killed by the first volley of shots.<sup>110</sup> The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* and the C. Codex of the *New History* indicate that the first volley was fired only at Aqa Muhammad 'Ali.<sup>111</sup> In *The Dawn-Breakers*, which gives the account of the Bab's martyrdom as accepted by Baha'is today, both the Bab and his disciple escaped the first shots unharmed.<sup>112</sup>

The Bab was again suspended, and this time the execution was successful. The Bab's body was riddled with bullets but his face was unharmed. By a strange coincidence, the place where the Bab was killed was called the Square of the *Sahibu'z-Zaman*, "the Lord of the Age".<sup>113</sup> The Babis managed to gain possession of his body, which was later transferred to Mount Carmel in Haifa, Israel, where today exists the beautiful golden-domed Shrine of the Bab.

The Baha'i John Ferraby says that the account of the Bab's martyrdom might sound like legend, but he refers to document F.O. 60/153/88 in the archives of the Foreign Office at the Public Records Office in London, an official letter dated July 22, 1850, from Sir Justin Sheil, Queen Victoria's envoy extraordinary and minister plenipotentiary in Tihiran to Lord Palmerston, secretary of state for foreign affairs, which reads in part as follows:

The founder of the sect has been executed at Tabreez. He was killed by a volley of musketry, and his death was on the point of giving his religion a lustre which would have largely increased his proselytes. When the smoke and dust cleared away after the volley, Bab was not to be seen, and the populace proclaimed that he had ascended to the skies. The balls had broken the ropes by which he was bound ....<sup>114</sup>

Some writers point out that, had the Bab asserted his claims in the excitement following his unexpected deliverance, he might have rallied the people behind him and been hailed as the Mahdi,<sup>115</sup> but perhaps the manner of his death has proved as advantageous, for he became a martyr to his followers after the manner of Christ. Esslemont refers to the event as "a second Calvary";<sup>116</sup> the *New history* calls him "that Jesus

of the age on the cross";<sup>117</sup> and Mary Hanford Ford writes: "He was two years younger than Jesus when he gave his life in the same sacrifice for the salvation of the world."<sup>118</sup>

The impact of the Bab's death in the West is referred to by Jules Bois' article in *The Forum* in 1925: "all Europe was stirred to pity and indignation." Bois recalls that "among the *litterateurs* of my generation, in the Paris of 1890, the martyrdom of the Bab was still as fresh a topic as had been the first news of his death."<sup>119</sup>

## The teachings of the Bab

The Bab's holy book, which in his dispensation corresponds to the Qur'an of the Muhammadan era, is the *Bayan* ("Exposition" or "Utterance"). The word refers in a general sense to all the Bab's writings, as the Bab, himself, acknowledges (Bayan 3:17). The Bab, however, classified his writings according to certain grades, depending on the style or nature of their writings, and preferred to restrict the primary reference of *Bayan* to his *verses* (poetic utterances in the style of the Qur'an); other forms were entitled to the word in the following descending order: *supplications* (prayers), *commentaries*, *scientific treatises*, and *Persian words* (discourses written in the Persian language (3:17)).<sup>120</sup> Subh-i-Azal, in a letter to Edward G. Brown, said that, whereas the Bab's earlier writings were given specific names, all of his later writings were included under the designation of *Bayan*.<sup>121</sup>

The word *Bayan* as generally used refers to the Bab's book of laws. But there are at least two *Bayans*—an *Arabic Bayan*, written in

Arabic as a cogent proof of his mission for Muslims (2:14),<sup>122</sup> and a *Persian Bayan*, the longer and more important of the two. The *Bayan* was written while the Bab was a captive in the castle of Maku.<sup>123</sup>

The Bab proposed that the *Bayan* would have nineteen sections, which he called *unities*, which in turn would divide into nineteen sub-divisions called *babs*.<sup>124</sup> The Bab, however, wrote only eleven of the unities, leaving the remaining eight to be written by his successor.<sup>125</sup> Browne wrote in 1910 that “part, but not the whole” of the remaining unities “was written by Subh-i-Azal.”<sup>126</sup>

The following résumé of some of the teachings in the Persian *Bayan* will give some idea of the Bab's doctrines.<sup>127</sup>

### ***The abrogation of the Qur'an***

The Bab declares: “Le Bényân est la balance de Dieu jusqu'au jour du jugement dernier qui est le jour Celui que Dieu doit manifester.”<sup>128</sup> Obedience is to be given to the *Bayan*, not the Qur'an (2:6). The Bab maintains that both the Qur'an and the *Bayan* are from the same “Tree of Truth” (2:7), and he laments the fact that men read the Qur'an but fail in gathering its fruit, which is belief in the *Bayan* (3:3). The Bab, thus, sees his religion as a continuation of the revelation given by God in Islam but a later stage in that revelation which supersedes Islam as Islam superseded Christianity. Of the Bab, Shoghi Effendi writes:

He Who communicated the original impulse to so incalculable a Movement was none other than the promised Qa'im (He who ariseth), the Sahibu'z-Zaman (the Lord of the Age), Who assumed the exclusive right of annulling the whole Qur'anic Dispensation.<sup>129</sup>

### **The *Bayan's* witness to itself**

Similar to the Qur'an's statement that "if men and jinn should combine to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like of it" (17: 88), the *Bayan* declares that all creatures working together could not produce the like of the *Bayan* (2:1). The *Bayan's* value is incomparable (3:191; 6:8), and it is identical in essence with the Qur'an (2:1) and the Gospel (2:15).

### **The *Bayan's* witness to the Bab**

A number of statements in the *Bayan* provide some factual information about the Bab and set forth the Bab's understanding of his own mission. The *Bayan* indicates that the Bab was born in the "Land of Fa", i.e. Fars, or Shiraz (4:16; 7:15; 7:17) and claims that he was devoid of formal learning (2:1; 4:10). He was twenty-four years old when beginning his mission (2:1), and the date of his manifestation is given as the fifth of Jumada I, AH 1260 (2: 7), which was 12,210 years after the manifestation of Adam (3:3) and 1,270 years after that of Muhammad (2:7).

On the one hand, the Bab calls himself God (2:11), but on the other hand, he claims to be only a "servant" and indicates that he will die (9:1). He explains that as the manifested *Nuqta*, he has two stations, that of Divinity and that of Servitude (4:1).

Verily I have created thee, and I have established two degrees for thee. The first of those two degrees is that which belongs peculiarly to me, and in this degree no one can see anything in thee except myself. Therefore it is that thou sayest on my authority, "I am God; there is no God beside me, the Lord of the universe; in the second degree thou dost glorify me, praise me, confess my unity, adore me, thou art of those who bow down before me."<sup>130</sup>

The Bab claims to be identical with Christ, Muhammad, and all preceding and succeeding prophets of God (2:12, 15; 3:13; 4:121; 8:2). Salvation is obtained by faith in him (V, 11); whoever approaches him approaches God (2:1, 4), and whoever denies him and declines to take refuge in him is destined for “the Fire” (2:4).

He declares himself to be the promised Qa'im (1:15), the Mahdi (8:17; 2:3), and the Prophet Muhammad (8:2), and his family is to be revered (9:6), similarly as Muhammad's family is revered by the Shi'ahs.

### ***God and His Manifestations***

God is incomprehensible (3:7; 4:2; 5:17); nothing exists but God and his names and attributes (4:4); God created all things by his volitions, and his volitions by himself (3:6). This volition is identified with the *Nuqta* or “Point” (3:13), which manifests itself in the prophets of God. God neither begets nor is he born, and he alone is worthy of all praise (7:19).

Since no one can directly encounter the most holy essence of God, he manifests himself through a series of *Zuhurs*, or “Manifestations” of the “Primal Volition”, (3:9; 4:2) or “Point” (3:13). Each manifestation is specially related to God in the sense that meeting with God, knowledge of God, and refuge with God are equivalent, respectively, with meeting the prophet, knowledge of the prophet, and refuge with the prophet of the age (2:4, 7, 17; 3:7; 4:2; 6:13).

As revelations of the Primal Point, the manifestations are identical with one another: so Jesus is identical with Muhammad (2:15;



3:13), and the *Nuqta-i-Furqan* (Muhammad) is identical with the *Nuqta-i-Bayan* (the Bab, himself) (1:15; 8:2). The Bab compares the successive manifestations with the same sun which arises day after day (4:12; 7:15; 8:1), an illustration often used in later Baha'i writings. Previous revelations find their fulfilment in succeeding ones, so that the gospel is perfected and fulfilled in Muhammad (4:13) and the fruit of Islam is belief in the Bab's manifestation (2:7). Former manifestations are revealed in succeeding ones; so the Bab says that all the prophets are seen in Muhammad (4:6) and all manifestations are created for the last one who appears (4:2). This cumulative understanding of revelation is compared to a boy in advancing stages of growth (3:13, 15; 5:4; 8:2).

Those who truly believe in one manifestation believe also in all preceding ones (3:15) and in all succeeding ones (2:9). The belief of those, however, who accept an earlier revelation but reject a subsequent one becomes null and void (4:2). The Bab says that Christians who have not accepted the Qur'an have not actually believed in Christ (2:9).

### ***The doctrine of Return***

Connected somewhat with the doctrine of the reappearing manifestations is the doctrine of *raj'at* or "return". The whole first unity is devoted to the view that certain figures of the Islamic era have returned to the world in the Bayanic dispensation. The doctrine theoretically is distinguished from reincarnation, although Browne points out that the doctrine did at times approach closely a concept of transmigration of souls, or metempsychosis, as when Siyyid Basir, according to

the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, refers on one occasion to a howling dog as the “return” of a certain person whom God had punished for his sins.<sup>131</sup> In the strict sense of the doctrine, however, the same individual does not return but the type or qualities of that person. In this sense, the eighteen “Letters of the Living” are the return of the “four Gates” and the fourteen “Holy Souls” (Muhammad, Fatimih, and the twelve Imams) and will reappear also in the manifestation of “Him whom God shall manifest” (1:1). The types of those who accept and who reject previous manifestations also return in the ministries of succeeding manifestations.

### ***Eschatology***

Like the Shaykhis, the Bab denies that the resurrection means the raising of the physical body. The resurrection is the appearance of the new manifestation (2:7; 8:3; 9:3). From the external standpoint the resurrection day is like any other day, it passes by with many unaware of it. The Bab uses traditional eschatological terminology but often gives an allegorical interpretation. Many, while trying to cross the “Bridge of Sirat, will fall into “the Fire,” the Bab says, but he explains that “the Bridge of Sirat”, which Muslims believe must be crossed successfully to enter Paradise, means God’s manifestations (2:12), indicating apparently that the manifestation of the age separates believers and unbelievers by their response to him.

### ***The Bab’s attitude toward Christians***

The Bab took a more positive approach to Christians than did the Muslims of his day. The Bab applauds the cleanliness of Christians and commends their clear and legible writing (4:2; 3:17). Gifts

from Christians are pure and Babis say accept them (5:7). He compares Christians to stars shining between the day of Christ and that of Muhammad (8:1), but when Muhammad appeared, they should have believed in his (7:2), and he maintains that the true Christians did believe in Muhammad (2:9). But though Christians possess all good qualities, they are of "the Fire" (4:4), and those who have not accepted the Qur'an have not really believed in Christ (2:9).

### ***The Bab's laws***

A manifestation in both Babi and Baha'i thought is a lawgiver. Moses gave various moral, ceremonial, and civil laws to his people. Jesus insisted that he had not come to destroy the law; and he, in turn, set out certain commandments which his followers were to obey and which were to be the test of their love for him. Muhammad, also, gave laws to govern his people. Interspersed throughout the *Bayan*, the Bab sets forth the laws for his dispensation.

Some of the Bab's laws are quite radical. In one passage (4:10), the Bab prohibits the study of jurisprudence, logic, philosophy, dead languages, and grammar (except as it is necessary for understanding the *Bayan*). All Muslim books except the Qur'an are to be destroyed (6:6), and only those books which elucidate the *Bayan* may be studied (4:10).

The destruction of books and the prohibition against the study of certain subjects may be seen in part against the Babi concept that all the arts and sciences are as folly compared with the revelation of a manifestation of God and that all true philosophy and science and, in fact, all the advance of civilization are derived from the manifestation's

influence upon his age and are his gifts to it. Why yearn for secular knowledge when the higher divine knowledge has been given? The Babi poet, Mirza Na'im of Sidih, expressed this feeling quite well in a poem written in the spring of 1885:

Hearken not to the spells of Philosophy, which from end to end is folly; the theses of the materialist and the cynic are all ignorance and madness.

Behold manifest today whatever the Prophet hath said, but whatsoever the philosopher hath said behold at this time are discredited! All their sciences are [derived] from the Prophets, but imperfectly; all their arts are from the Saints, but garbled.<sup>132</sup>

Equally radical is the Bab's stipulation that only believers could inhabit the five Persian provinces of Fars, 'Iraq, Azarbayjan, Khurasan, and Mazandaran.<sup>133</sup> European merchants and other Europeans with useful trades and professions, but these only, may dwell in territories of the believers (7:16). Kings who adopt the Babi religion are to seek to spread the faith and to expel unbelievers from their lands (7:16; 2:2).

The Bab prohibited long and wearisome prayers (8:19) and does not allow congregational prayer except prayers for the dead at funerals (2:9; 1:9). The most acceptable worship, the Bab says, is to make others happy (5:19). Men are to worship God not from fear nor hope but out of pure love (7:19). The Bab also forbids selling and buying in the precincts of the House of God (4:17).

A number of laws relating to the dead are established. The dead may not be transported to distant shrines (4:8). Stone coffins must be used (5:12). Rose water should be used, when possible, to

wash the dead for burial (8:11). Rings with a specified inscription written on them are to be placed on the hand of the departed (8:11). Every believer is to leave to his heirs nineteen rings inscribed with the names of God (8:2).

Other laws are that children are to honor parents (4:19). Marriage is obligatory for all believers (8:15), but marriage with unbelievers is unlawful (8:11). Unbelievers are to be treated justly and are not to be killed (4:5), but their property may be confiscated (5:5; 8:15). Men are allowed to speak with women (8:10). Women may not go on pilgrimages but may go to the mosque for their devotions at night (4:18, 19). Forbidden is the use of wine (4:8), tobacco (4:7), and opium (4:8). Merchants, however, may sell opium and alcohol to those in need of them (2:8). Animals are to be treated kindly, not injured (5:14) and not overworked (6:6).

The Bab's laws extend to a number of minute personal matters. The hair of the body is to be removed by depilatories every four, eight, or fourteen days (8:6). Letters are not to be read without permission, and they are to be answered (6:18, 19). One is to wash completely every four days, and bathing should be by pouring water, not by plunging into a tank (6:2).

### ***“He Whom God Shall Manifest”***

An important part of the Bab's teachings, especially for understanding the subsequent development of the Baha'i movement, pertains to the person whom the Bab designates as *Man-yuzhiruhu'llah*, “He whom God shall manifest”. As noted earlier, the *Bayan* is authoritative until the time of “He whom God shall manifest.” Interspersed throughout

the *Bayan* in the context of various subjects are references to this coming figure. The following are some of the teachings about him.

The *Bayan* revolves around the Word of “Him whom God shall manifest” (2:19). All men are to embrace his religion when he appears (7:5). Only God knows the day of his advent (4:5; 6:3; 7:10), although the Bab gives some indications of when he will appear, which will be discussed in the next chapter. To understand one of his verses, the Bab says, is better than knowing the entire *Bayan* (4:8). One of his verses is better than a thousand *Bayans* (5:8; 6:6; 7:1). Belief in God without belief in him avails nothing (3:15). Repentance can be made only before God or before “Him whom God shall manifest” (7:14).

He is intended by every good name in the *Bayan* (2:5), and he is the origin of all the names and attributes (2:9). Children are not to be beaten so as not to grieve him (6:11). A vacant place is to be reserved in every assembly for him (4:9). The Bab maintains that no one could falsely claim to be “Him whom God shall manifest” (6:8) and points out that there will be other manifestations to follow “Him whom God shall manifest” (4:9). The eighteen “Letters of the living” will be raised up by him in the time of his manifestation (2:11). All previous manifestations were created for him (4:8).<sup>134</sup> The first month of the Babi calendar is named *Baha* in honor of him (5:3).

### **The transforming character of the Babi religion**

The later far-reaching transformations in the Baha'i religion are based in and are, in a sense, the continuation of the radical transforming character of the Babi movement. The Bab's religion was, as

Browne correctly observed, "nothing less than the complete overthrow of Islam and the abrogation of its ordinances."<sup>135</sup> The Bab understood his ministry as superseding that of Muhammad as Muhammad's ministry had superseded Christ's. In the *Bayan*, he sets out his laws which are to replace those of the Qur'an. Although basic attitudes and other traces of Muslim influence may be detected in the Babi religion, the Bab saw his faith, at least in its latest stages of development, not as a reformation of Islam by a sect within it but as the next manifestation of the one evolutionary religion which was to supersede Islam. This does not mean that the Bab saw his movement in competition with or necessarily opposed to Islam, for Islam and the other religions were true for their day and were authentic expressions of the one true religion. But for the Bab, Islam's day was past.

This basic abrogation of Islam was the central thrust of the Babi movement, but the religion contained also many radical subsidiary characteristics. The Bab's command to burn all Muslim books except the Qur'an, his prohibition against reading books of logic and philosophy, and his depreciation of the sciences were calculated in effect, if not in intent, to produce an iconoclastic spirit among his followers. In this sense, the nature of the Babi movement itself contributed the basic transforming impulse to the various phases in the succeeding Baha'i religion.

Not only did the radical character of the Babi religion contribute to its own supersession but within the movement were planted the seeds for its near immediate supersession. A major part of the Bab's

message concerned the future, incomparable figure of “Him whom God shall manifest”, whose ministry and glory would far surpass the Bab’s own ministry. The Bab urged his followers to watch for him, and if they entertained any doubts about him, the Bab insisted, it would be better to accept him than to reject him. He maintained that no one could falsely claim to be “Him whom God shall manifest”. These teachings left the door wide open for the supersession of the Bab’s own religion in the near future, awaiting only some majestic figure who could put forward that claim. The overwhelming allegiance given to Baha’u’llah after he claimed to be “Him whom God shall manifest”, may be explained by Baha’u’llah’s charisma, coupled with the Bab’s extensive efforts to prepare his disciples for the expected coming. How could those who were so loyal to the Bab have so soon turned from the Bab to Baha’u’llah? Only because in turning to Baha’u’llah, the Babis saw themselves as obedient to the Bab’s teachings about accepting the awaiting manifestation when he appeared. In their thinking, they were not deserting the Bab for Baha’u’llah but were being the more faithful to the Bab in accepting Baha’u’llah.

### Notes: 3. The Bab and the abrogation of the Qur’anic dispensation

- 1 Persian *Bayan* II, 7; see above p. 111, n. 137.
- 2 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 7.
- 3 idem, p. 5.
- 4 Nabil-i-A’zam (Muhammad-i-Zarandi). *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha’i Revelation*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (London: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 42.
- 5 John Ferraby, *All Things Made New* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 22.
- 6 Shoghi Effendi, *The Faith of Baha’u’llah* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1959), p. 6.
- 7 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xii.
- 8 Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1963), p. 41.
- 9 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xii.
- 10 *Baha’i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 9.
- 11 idem, p. 82.
- 12 idem, p. 86.
- 13 See James Norman Dalrymple Anderson, ed., *The World’s Religions* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1957), pp. 50–51.
- 14 Edward G. Browne, ed. and trans., *The Tarikh-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza ‘Ali Muhammad the Bab*, by Mirza Huseyn of Hamadan (Cambridge: University Press, 1893), p. 112 (hereinafter referred to as *New History*).
- 15 idem, pp. 208–9.
- 16 Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 41.
- 17 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. xxvii.
- 18 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha’u’llah* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1965), p. 178.



- 19 ibid.
- 20 Kenneth W. Morgan, ed., *Islam—The Straight Path: Islam Interpreted by Muslims* (New York: Ronald Press Co., 1958), pp. 124–25.
- 21 idem, p. 201.
- 22 H. A. R. Gibb, “Islam”, in *The Concise Encyclopaedia of Living Faiths*, ed. by R. C. Zaehner (London: Hutchinson & Co., 1964), p. 182.
- 23 John B. Noss, *Man’s Religions* (3d ed., New York: Macmillan Co., 1967. London: Collier-Macmillan Limited, 1967), pp. 769–64; Morgan, *Islam—The Straight Path*, p. 229.
- 24 John B. Noss, *Man’s Religions*, pp. 765–66.
- 25 Edward G. Browne, ed. and trans., *A Traveller’s Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Vol. II: English Translation and Notes (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), pp. 24, 26 (hereinafter referred to as *Traveller’s Narrative*).
- 26 See Noss, *Man’s Religions*, p. 765.
- 27 See Richard N. Frye, “Islam in Iran”, *The Muslim World*, XLVI, No. 1 (Jan., 1956), pp. 6–7; Edward G. Browne, “Bab, Babis”, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1955), II, 300; Dwight M. Donaldson feels that the fourth *Bab* may have thought that the Imam was about to appear as a reason for not appointing a succeeding *Bab*, or he may have become disillusioned with his own position (*The Shi’ite religions: A History of Islam in Persia and Irak* [London: Luzac and Co., 1933], p. 257). Mahzood Shehahi states that the fourth *Bab* was given in a letter news of the twelfth imam’s bodily death and that the Imam would have no *Bab* after his death (Morgan, *Islam—The Straight Path*, p. 201). The “Minor Occultation” extends from the disappearance of the twelfth Imam to the death of the fourth Bab. The “Major Occultation” began with the fourth Bab’s death.
- 28 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, Note E, pp. 242–43.
- 29 idem, pp. 243–44.
- 30 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 4.
- 31 Browne, *New History*, p. 31.
- 32 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 10.
- 33 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, Note E, pp. 241–42. One of Karim Khan’s treatises was written allegedly at the request of Nasirī’d-Din Shah (see Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 91, and Hamid Algar, “Babism, Baha’ism, and the Ulama”, Chapter VIII of *Religion and State in Iran 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period* [Berkeley: University of California Press, 1969], pp. 149–50).
- 34 ‘Abdu’l-Baha in the *Traveller’s Narrative* gives the Bab’s birth as the first of Muharram, AH 1235 (October 20, 1819), which date the Baha’is accept as accurate; Edward G. Browne believed, however, that the date must be the first of Muharram, AH 1236, rather than AH 1235, because of passages in the Bab’s writings where the Bab refers to his age at the time of his manifestation on the fifth of Jamadiyu’l-Avval (May 22, 1844). In one passage in the *Bayan* (II, 1), the Bab refers to himself as “one from whose life [only] twenty-four years had passed,” and in the *Seven Proofs*, he describes himself as “of an age which did not exceed five and twenty”. Browne reasoned from this that the Bab was “over

- twenty-four and under twenty-five years of age". Subh-i-Azal, also, told Browne that the Bab at the beginning of his mission was "twenty-four and entering on his twenty-fifth year" (Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note C, pp. 219–21). If the Bab was twenty-four in AH 1250, then he would have been born in AH 1236 (the first of Muharram is the first day of the Muslim year). The first of Muharram, AH 1236, would be CE October 9, 1820. Nabil, however, records that "twenty-five years, four months and four days had elapsed since the day of His birth, when he declared his mission (*The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 51).
- 35 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 30.
- 36 J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* (3d ed., revised; New York: Pyramid Books, 1970), p. 27 and note 1.
- 37 Earl E. Elder and William McE. Miller, tr. and ed., *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*, by Mirza Husayn 'Ali Baha'u'llah, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series Vol. XXXVIII (London: Published by The Royal Asiatic Society and sold by its Agents Luzac & Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 52.
- 38 George Sale, tr. *The Koran: Commonly Called the AlKoran of Mohammed* (New York: American Book Exchange, 1880), p. 160; E. H. Palmer, *The Koran (Qur'an)*, "The World's Classics," 328 (London: Oxford University Press, n.d.), pp. 140–41.
- 39 Mohammed Marmaduke Pickthall, *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*, A Mentor Religious Classic (New York and Toronto: The New American Library; London: The New English Library Limited, n.d.), p. 133.
- 40 idem, p. 133, n. 1.
- 41 J. M. Rodwell, tr., *The Koran*, "Everyman's Library," No. 380 (London: Dent; New York: Dutton, n.d.), p. 307, n. 1.
- 42 Qur'an 29:48, in Pickthall translation, p. 287.
- 43 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, p. 344.
- 44 See J. R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; New York: Macmillan Co., 1932), pp. 17–18; and Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 52–53.
- 45 Karbila is the site of the martyrdom and sepulchre of the Imam Husayn, and Najaf, to the south of Karbila, is one of the Shi'ah's two holiest shrines (Marzieh Gail, *Baha'i Glossary* [Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957], pp. 25, 38).
- 46 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, pp. 342–43.
- 47 idem, pp. 340–41.
- 48 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 21–22.
- 49 Browne, *New History*, p. 35.
- 50 idem, p. 34.
- 51 Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, p. 187; and Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 282.
- 52 See above, p. 111, n. 137.
- 53 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 17, citing Avarih, *Al-Kavakebu'd-Durriyyih* (Cairo, 1923), p. 36.
- 54 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p.177.
- 55 See above, p. 124.
- 56 Thornton Chase, *The Baha'i Revelation* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1919), p. 31. For a Baha'i evaluation of the Millerite movement, see

Billy Rojas, "The Millerites: Millennialist Precursors of the Baha'i Faith", *World Order*, IV, No. 1 (Fall, 1968), pp. 15-23.

57 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 3.

58 Mirza Jani bases his account on Mulla Husayn's testimony as related to him by 'Abdu'l-Wahhab of Khurasan, who had enquired after the manner of his conversion (*New History*, p. 34); Nabil's account is based on Mulla Husayn's testimony as given to him by Mirza Ahmad-i-Qazvini, the martyr, who on several occasions heard Mulla Husayn telling the early believers of his historic interview with the Bab (*The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 38).

59 Browne, *New History*, p. 34.

60 The Surih of Joseph is the twelfth Surih, or chapter (entitled "Joseph"), of the Muslim Qur'an.

61 The above comparisons are drawn from Browne, *New History*, pp. 34-39, and Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 38-43.

62 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 44.

63 B. Lewis, "Bab", *The Encyclopaedia of Islam*, ed. by H. A. R. Gibb, et al. (London: Luzac and Co., 1960), I, 832.

64 idem, and John Noreen Hollister, *The Shi'a of India* (London: Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1953), p. 249. The term *Bab al abwab* (Gate of Gates) also was used early in the Fatimid period for the chief da'i, noting his superiority over all other dais (Hollister p. 249); the title which 'Ali Muhammad conferred on Mulla Husayn was *Bab'ul-Bab* (Gate of the Gate), which in this case, however, indicated one inferior to the Bab.

65 Hollister, *The Shi'a of India*, p. 260.

Ecclesiastical hierarchy: 1. The Prophet 2. The Foundation (Asas) 3. The Imam 4. The Gate (Bab) 5. The Proof (Hujja) 6. The Missionary of the Message (Da'i al-Balagh) 7. The Missionary General (Da'i Mutlaq) 8. The Missionary Limited (Da'i Mahsur) 9. The Legate General (Ma'dhun Mutlaq) 10. The Legate Limited (Ma'dhun Mahsur)

Al-Kirmani, H., *Rahat al-'aql*. eds. M. K. Hussein and M. M. Hilmy, Brill, Leiden and, Cairo, 1953, pp. 134-5.

66 Henry Harris Jessup, "The Babites," *The Outlook*, LXVIII, No. 8 (June 22, 1901), p. 452. A condensed version of this article appears in *The Missionary Review of the World*, XV, No. 10 New Series (Oct., 1902), pp. 771-76.

67 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note D, p. 229.

68 See above, p. 125.

69 See Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note D, p. 232, and Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab, *Le Beyan Persan*, traduit du Persan par A.-L.-M. Nicolas (4 vols; Paris: Librairie Paul Gauthner, 1911-1914), I, 29-30.

70 *Abwab* is the plural of *Bab*.

71 Browne's translation from the *Bayan* (*Traveller's Narrative*, Note D, pp. 233-34).

72 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note D, pp. 232-331; Browne, *New History*, Appendix III, p. 398 and Appendix II, pp. 335-36.

73 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note M, p. 280 and n. 1.

74 See above, pp. 136-37.

75 Browne, *New History*, p. 241. This passage is quoted by Browne in the

- Traveller's Narrative, Note N, p. 292.
- 76 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note N, p. 291.
- 77 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 20.
- 78 Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, p. 29.
- 79 idem, p. 30.
- 80 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 10.
- 81 Peter Ludwig Berger, "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement". (Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, 1954), pp. 9–10.
- 82 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 5.
- 83 idem, p. 10.
- 84 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, pp. 368–69.
- 85 idem, p. 368, n. 4.
- 86 idem, pp. 335–36.
- 87 See Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 142–43.
- 88 Browne, *New History*, pp. 216–17.
- 89 Browne, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 161–62.
- 90 Browne, *New History*, p. 285. 'Ali Muhammad, as noted earlier, had bestowed upon Mulla Husayn his former title of the Bab.
- 91 See the Muslim accounts in Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note M, pp. 277–90, and Edward G. Browne, *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (2nd ed.; Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 249–55 (hereinafter referred to as *Materials*); for Baha'i accounts, see Browne, *New History*, pp. 285–88 and Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 229–31.
- 92 Browne, *Materials*, p. 255.
- 93 i.e., the Twelfth Imam or Imam Mahdi (E.G.B.)
- 94 Browne, *Materials*, p. 258.
- 95 Khan Bahadur Agha Mirza Muhammad, "Some New Notes on Babiism", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, Series 3 (July, 1927), p. 454.
- 96 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 31.
- 97 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 211.
- 98 idem, pp. 212–13. See also Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, pp. 355–60.
- 99 Marzieh Gail, *Baha'i Glossary* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), pp. 11, 54.
- 100 John Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 193, and Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 68.
- 101 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 211.
- 102 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 35.
- 103 George Foot Moore, *History of Religions*, Vol. II, *Judaism, Christianity, Mohammedanism*, International Theological Library (Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1920), 243.
- 104 Edward G. Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, Vol. IV. *Modern Times (1500–1924)* (Cambridge: University Press, 1953), p. 151.
- 105 Browne, *New History*, Appendix III, p. 362.
- 106 See Edward G. Browne, trans., "Personal Reminiscences of the Babi

- Insurrection at Zanzan in 1850, Written in Persian by Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ahad-i-Zanjani, and Translated into English by Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.R.A.S.", *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXIX (1897), pp. 761–827.
- 107 Edward G. Browne, "Babiism", in *The Religious Systems of the World* (London, Swan Sonnenschein and Co., Limited, 1905), p. 343.
- 108 The C. Codex of the *New History* gives the Bab's execution as Thursday, the twenty-seventh Sha'ban (July 8, 1850), which, Browne correctly points out, fell, however, on a Monday. Browne also says Subh-i-Azal's statement corroborates the *New History* (Browne, *New History*, p. 307 and note 1). Subh-i-Azal's statement in Appendix III of the *New History* (p. 411) gives, however, the twenty-eighth of Sha'ban as the date of the Bab's martyrdom. Both 'Abdu'l-Baha in the *Traveller's Narrative* (Vol. I, p. 57; Vol. II, p. 44) and Nabil give the twenty-eighth of Sha'ban as the date, and this date is followed by Baha'is today. A footnote in Esslemont's *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, however, gives the twenty-eighth of Sha'ban as a Friday rather than a Sunday as Nabil has it. Both are wrong. The twenty-eighth of Sha'ban (July 9, 1850) was a Tuesday.
- 109 James T. Bixby, "What Is Behaism?", *North American Review*, Vol. 196, No. DCLXXIX (June, 1912), 845.
- 110 Edward G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* (3d ed.; A. and C. Black, 1959), p. 69; Browne, "Babiism," in *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 346; Mary Hanford Ford, *The Oriental Rose, or the Teachings of Abdu'l-Baha which Trace the Chart of "the Shining Pathway"* (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1910), p. 55; M. Clément Huart, *La Religion, de Bab: Réformateur Persan du XIXe Siècle*, Bibliothèque Orientale Elzévirienne, Vol. LXIV (Paris: Ernest Leroux, 1889), pp. 3–4; A.-L.-M. Nicolas, *Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab* (Paris: Dujarric et Cie, 1905), p. 375; and Subh-i-Azal's testimony in Browne, *New history*, Appendix III, p. 412.
- 111 Browne, *New History*, p. 301 and n. 1.
- 112 Nabil, *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 375.
- 113 Browne, "Babiism," *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 346. See also Ford, *The Oriental Rose*, pp. 54–55.
- 114 Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 199.
- 115 See Browne, "Babiism", *Religious Systems of the World*, p. 346; and William McElwee Miller, *Baha'ism: Its Origin, History and Teachings* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 53.
- 116 Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, p. 31.
- 117 Browne, *New History*, p. 303.
- 118 Ford, *The Oriental Rose*, p. 57.
- 119 Jules Bois, "The New Religions of America: Babism and Bahatism", *The Forum*, LXXIV (July, 1925), 4.
- 120 See also Bayan VI, 1; for Browne's translation and discussion of these passages, see *Traveller's Narrative*, Note U, pp. 344–45.
- 121 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 345
- 122 Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab, *Le Bèyân Arabe: le Livre Sacré du Bâbysme de Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab*, traduit de l'arabe par A.-L.-M. Nicolas (Paris:

- Ernest Leroux, 1905).
- 123 Abul Fazl, *Hujaj'ul Behayyeh (the Bahai Proofs)*, trans. by All Kuli Khan (New York: J. W. Pratt Co., 1902), p. 43; Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 230, 274, 292.
- 124 The standard collection of Muslim hadiths (traditions) of al-Bukhari is divided into ninety-seven "books" subdivided into 3,450 Chapters called *babs* (H. A. R. Gibb, *Mohammedanism: An Historical Survey*, Mentor Books [New York: New American Library, 1955], pp. 65-66).
- 125 Edward G. Browne, ed., *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Year's A.D. 1850 and 1852*, edited from the Unique Paris Ms. Suppl. Persan 1071 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1910. London: Luzac & Co., 1910), pp. xix, xxxi; Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, p. 381; Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 353.
- 126 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xcv.
- 127 The following résumé is based on Browne's Index to the *Bayan*, published in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. liv-xcv, and Nicolas's French translation of the Persian *Bayan*. For a more detailed coverage, see Samuel Graham Wilson, "The Bayan of the Bab," *The Princeton Theological Review*, XIII, (Oct., 1915), 633-54.
- 128 Mohammed, *Le Béyan Persan*, I, 65. Baha'is believe the person here referred to is Baha'u'llah. See below, the section on "He Whom God Shall Manifest".
- 129 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 4.
- 130 Moore, *History of Religions*, II, pp. 513-14.
- 131 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, p. 338.
- 132 Browne, *A Literary History of Persia*, IV, p. 211.
- 133 These provinces are designated as (1) the Land of Fa, (2) the Land of 'Ayn, (3) the Land of Alif, (4) the Land of Kha, (5) and the Land of Mim.
- 134 This, in a sense, could be said of any one of the manifestations after the first one.
- 135 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note A, p. 187.



## 4

# **Baha'u'llah and the supersession of the Babi Dispensation**

The period from the Bab's martyrdom to the "ascension" (death) of Baha'u'llah (1850–1892) is marked at various stages by terrible persecution, intrigue, rivalries, suppression and distortion of literature, and even murder. This troublesome period witnesses the gradual transformation of the Babi religion into the Baha'i faith. The scene of action shifts from Persia to Baghdad, Constantinople, Adrianople, and to the penal colony at 'Akka, Syria. The period divides distinctly into two sub-periods: (1) before Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission and (2) after Baha'u'llah's declaration.

## **The period before Baha'u'llah's declaration**

What was actually taking place within the period before Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission is somewhat obscure because of the distorted literature and the different claims and interpretations advanced. Edward G. Browne calls this time the period of Subh-i-Azal's supremacy<sup>1</sup> and sees it as a period when Baha'u'llah gradually wins over the faithful to himself by subverting the legitimate authority of Subh-i-Azal. This interpretation is followed generally by non-Baha'i studies of the faith.



Baha'is generally maintain, however, that Subh-i-Azal held only a nominal authority and that Baha'u'llah, even in this period before his declaration, was the true, though veiled, leader of the movement.

### ***The question of the Babi successor***

The issue revolves largely around the question of whether or not the Bab appointed Subh-i-Azal as his successor, and if so, for what purpose, that either Subh-i-Azal might actually serve as the leader of the movement or serve merely as a blind for Baha'u'llah. Baha'is, on the one hand, refer to "the pretensions of Subh-i-Azal", how "in Baghdad he tried to get the friends to acknowledge him as their leader" but "they paid scant attention to him, and just laughed at his haughty airs."<sup>2</sup> John Ferraby charges Mirza Yahya with "corrupting the text of the Bab's writings to make it appear that the Bab had named him as successor."<sup>3</sup> H. M. Balyuzi, on the other hand, says that "the Baha'is have never questioned the fact that immediately after the execution of the Bab, leadership, even it nominal, was accorded to Mirza Yahya", and quotes Shoghi Effendi that Mirza Yahya was the "recognized chief of the Babi community."<sup>4</sup> Shoghi Effendi also refers to Mirza Yahya as "the nominee of the Bab Himself",<sup>5</sup> presumably, the Bab's nominee as his successor.<sup>6</sup> But elsewhere, Shoghi Effendi speaks of "Mirza Yahya, who claimed to be the successor of the Bab."<sup>7</sup>

Were the claims of Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal) mere pretentious and was he attempting to wrest the leadership of the movement from Baha'u'llah, or was he in fact the Bab's appointed successor and the recognized leader of the Babi community until Baha'u'llah declared himself as He

whom God shall manifest"? The answer to this question will throw much light on the period between the Bab's martyrdom and Baha'u'llah's declaration.

### **Edward G. Browne's position**

Browne was certain that the Bab had appointed Subh-i-Azal as his successor:

In my opinion it is proved beyond all doubt that the Bab ere his death chose him as his successor ... and that during the period which elapsed from the Bab's death till the advancement of Baha'u'llah's claim ..., he was recognized by all the Babis as their spiritual chief.<sup>8</sup>

Browne's conviction was based on a number of considerations. First, early European accounts of the Babi movement portray Subh-i-Azal as the Bab's successor. Gobineau, for example, says that Mirza Yahya was recognized as divinely designated as the Bab's successor and that all the Babis acknowledged his election.<sup>9</sup> Second, Baha'is whom Browne met during his first visit to Persia in 1887-88 admitted to him that the Bab, shortly before his martyrdom at Tabriz, had designated Mirza Yahya as his successor and that his supremacy was acknowledged, at least nominally, by the Babis during the eleven years of the Baghdad period.<sup>10</sup> Third, the early written *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, which Browne discovered in the Paris National Library in 1892, contains a section on Subh-i-Azal prior to the account of the Bab's martyrdom in which the author speaks of the "rising of the Moon of Ezel" as "the Sun of 'the Reminder'" (the Bab) began to decline. The account also indicates that the Bab before his death "wrote a testamentary deposition, explicitly nominating" Subh-i-Azal "as his successor", admonished him to write the eight unwritten *Vahids* (Unities) of the

*Bayan*, and sent to him “his own personal effects, as his pen-cases, paper, writings, his own blessed raiment, and his holy rings.<sup>11</sup> Fourth, Browne believed that a passage in Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Iqan*, written during the Baghdad period, showed that Baha'u'llah in this period was submissive to the authority of Subh-i-Azal.<sup>12</sup> This point will be discussed later in this chapter. And fifth, Browne was given a copy of the actual document in the possession of Subh-i-Azal which Azal claims is the Bab's nomination of him as his successor. This document reads as follows:

God is Most Great with the Uttermost Greatness. 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 unto God.”

This is a letter from Ali before Nabil, God's Reminder unto the Worlds, unto him whose name is equivalent to the Name of the One [Wahid = 28 = Yahya, Subh-i-Azal's name], God's Reminder unto the Worlds.

Say, “Verily all originate from the Point of Revelation.” O Name of the One, keep what hath been revealed in the Bryan, and what hath been commanded, for verily thou art a Mighty Way of Truth.<sup>13</sup>

Balyuzi, in commenting on this tablet, says: “The question is not whether this Tablet is genuine or not. The point is that nowhere in this document is there any mention of successorship.”<sup>14</sup> Balyuzi raises a pertinent question. Does this document prove or support Subh-i-Azal's claim of being the Bab's appointed successor? That Subh-i-Azal was early regarded as the Bab's successor is clearly evident from the first European accounts of the Babi movement; the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* reports that the Bab nominated Subh-i-Azal as his successor; if the Bab sent a letter of nomination to Subh-i-Azal, the latter would likely have carefully preserved it.

Had Mirza Yahya manufactured the document, he likely would have made the appointment—as strategic as it was to his claim—more explicit in the text. Browne saw no reason to question its authenticity, and he examined the original document during his second journey to Persia.<sup>15</sup> Balyuzi admits that a recently published facsimile of the document is in a handwriting “closely resembling the handwriting of the Bab.”<sup>16</sup>

Admittedly, the document seems to contain no explicit reference to the succession, but why should Subh-i-Azal and Edward G. Browne give such importance to the document as proving Azal’s claims? Is there something in the document which escapes notice on the first reading, something which would not escape the notice of one familiar with the character of the early Babi movement?

Likely, the answer to this question lies in the cryptic style of Babi writings and in the concepts of succession as held by the Shaykhi school and other divisions of Shi’ah Islam. In such concepts, the holder of a title, as “Imam” or “Bab”, before his death nominated a successor who would carry on his ministry. One might naturally expect, therefore, that the Bab would continue in this tradition of appointing successors, as was practiced in the later developing Baha’i religion. As to the cryptic nature of the Babi writings, Browne, in the introductory section of Appendix IV of his edition of the *New History*, in which appendix is found the Bab’s letter of nomination and three other letters, writes:

Almost all Babi writings, save those intended for circulation beyond the limits of the Babi church, are sore or less obscure. This obscurity, especially in the case of their Arabic writings, arises in part from a certain want of dexterity in the manipulation of the language, but it is in large measure intentional, and is designed to prevent the uninitiated reader from penetrating the true sense of the words he reads. In the case of letters such as those which I now publish the difficulty is enormously increased

by our total ignorance of the particular circumstances under which they were written; for whereas a general epistle would presumably at least be comprehensible to any learned Babi, a private letter might easily contain expressions and allusions which none could understand save the person addressed, or such as were intimately familiar with his condition and circumstances.<sup>17</sup>

Although the circumstances of the Bab's letter of nomination are better known than those concerning the other three letters in this section, the veiled character is noticeable in the letter to Mirza Yahya, for the sender identifies himself as "Ali before Nabil" and the recipient of the letter is identified as "the Name of the One". What is involved in these identifications is a cabalistic practice, known as *gematria*,<sup>18</sup> which consists of converting letters of words into their numerical equivalents and substituting for them other words of the same value. The words Nabil and Muhammad each total ninety-two in the *abjad* system, so that 'Ali before Nabil means 'Ali Muhammad, the Bab's name. Similarly, the numerical value of *Wahid* ("One") is twenty-eight, which is also the value of *Yahya*, so "the Name of the One" means Mirza Yahya, or Subh-i-Azal.

Are there other cryptic meanings in this letter to throw light on the question of the successorship? One may notice throughout the letter that the Bab equates Mirza Yahya with himself. The first equation is an equation of *identity*, "a letter on the part of God ... to God." The words "all originate from God. ... All return unto God", suggest a transfer of "all" things from God ('Ali Muhammad) to God (Mirza Yahya). The second equation is an equation of *position*. The sender of the letter who has been known as "God's Reminder unto the Worlds" now designates Mirza Yahya as "God's Reminder unto the Worlds". In the following sentence, the Bab avoids calling Subh-i-Azal the "Point" since in Babi

doctrine two "Points" cannot exist at the same time, but the statement "all originate from the Point of Revelation", paralleling the earlier statement that "all originate from God" and "return unto God", suggests that upon the Bab's death Mirza Yahya will become the new "Point". The writer of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* understood that Mirza Yahya had become the "Point" because he uses the argument that there cannot be two "Points" at the same time to uphold Mirza Yahya's claim as against any other claimants.<sup>19</sup> In this cryptic manner, the Bab seems to commission Subh-i-Azal to become after his "God's Reminder unto the Worlds" and "the Point".

Browne believed also that Mirza Yahya was the "fourth in the Babi hierarchy", consisting of the Bab and his eighteen "Letters of the living". The Bab held first rank; next came Mulla Muhammad 'Ali of Barfurush (Quddus), the last to be enrolled in the "Letters" but who held primacy among them; third was Mulla Husayn, the first to believe in the Bab; and fourth was Mirza Yahya, according to his testimony. Browne believed that after the deaths of Quddus and Mulla Husayn and the martyrdom of the Bab, himself, Mirza Yahya then became automatically "the chief of the sect".<sup>20</sup> Baha'is, however, deny that Mirza Yahya was one of the "Letters of the Living".<sup>21</sup> Nabil's list of the names of the "Letters of the Living" does not include the name of Mirza Yahya.<sup>22</sup> Either the Baha'is have effaced the name of Mirza Yahya, "the Judas of Baha'i history",<sup>23</sup> from the names of the Bab's disciples or Mirza Yahya gave false information to Edward Browne. The question of whether or not Mirza Yahya was the fourth in the Babi hierarchy is a minor question, however, for other evidence is strong apart from this that the Bab in fact did appoint

Subh-i-Azal as his successor, and Baha'i writings give evidence that he was accorded a high station.

### **The Baha'i Position**

When Edward G. Browne visited Persia in 1887–88, he expected to find Mirza Yahya, if still alive, in the leadership of the movement, but he says “the Babis whom I met generally feigned complete ignorance of the very name and existence of Subh-i-Azal.”<sup>24</sup> The Baha'is whom Browne met at Shiraz, however, indicated to him that at the time Baha'u'llah took up residence in Baghdad, Mirza Yahya was “recognized as the Bab's successor, having been designated as such by the Bab himself, shortly before he suffered martyrdom at Tabriz”, that “his supremacy was recognized, at least nominally, by all the Babis during the eleven years' sojourn of their chiefs at Baghdad”, but that “even then Beha took the most prominent part in the organization of affairs.”<sup>25</sup> Browne, puzzled by the fact that the Baha'is in Shiraz regarded Mirza Yahya as then having little importance, asked for an explanation. Haji Mirza Hasan responded:

Yes, it's true that he was one of the early believers, and that at first he was accounted the successor and vicegerent of the Bab. But he was repeatedly warned not to withhold his allegiance from “Him whom God shall manifest”, and threatened that if he did so he 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.<sup>26</sup>

According to this account, then, the Baha'is admit that Mirza Yahya was at first regarded as the Bab's successor but that he lost his position in the movement when he refused to admit Baha'u'llah's claim to be “He whom God shall manifest”.

The above view gives some indication of how the Baha'is regarded Mirza Yahya prior to the publication of 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Traveller's Narrative*, since the Baha'is in Shiraz inform Browne that another history (the *Traveller's Narrative*) is being prepared to replace the earlier New History.<sup>27</sup> The *New History* ignores Mirza Yahya, except in one clearly interpolated passage.<sup>28</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha in the *Traveller's Narrative* advances a view which would place Baha'u'llah in the leadership of the movement from the Bab's death. The high position accorded to Mirza Yahya is seen as due to arrangements made in part by Baha'u'llah himself. In this account, because of agitation among the doctors, the aggressiveness of most of the people of Persia, and the irresistible power of the Amir-Nizam, by which the Bab and Baha'u'llah were in danger, it was considered expedient that "some measure should be adopted to direct the thoughts of men toward some absent person, by which Baha'u'llah would remain protected from the interference of all men."<sup>29</sup> The choice fell on Baha'u'llah's brother (actually half-brother), Mirza Yahya.

By the assistance and instruction of Baha'u'llah, therefore, they made him notorious and famous on the tongues of friends and foes, and wrote letters, ostensibly at his dictation, to the Bab. And since secret correspondences were in process the Bab highly approved of this scheme. So Mirza Yahya was concealed and hidden while mention of him was on the tongues and in the mouths of men. And this mighty plan was of wondrous efficacy, for Baha'u'llah, though he was known and seen, remained safe and secure, and this veil was the cause that no one outside [the sect] fathomed the matter or fell into the idea of molestation.<sup>30</sup>

According to this view, then, the high position accorded to Mirza Yahya was a blind for the protection of Baha'u'llah, so that he might administer the affairs of the faith unhindered and unmolested.



This view, however, runs into certain problems. For one thing, it opens Baha'u'llah to the charge of exposing his own brother to danger to insure his own safety.<sup>31</sup> Bahijiyah Khanum, Baha'u'llah's daughter, attempts to meet this problem by saying that it was Subh-i-Azal's "own arrogance which prompted him to seize the leadership" and "moreover, he could be relied upon to hide himself very effectively when danger threatened, till it should be overpast!"<sup>32</sup> Subh-i-Azal's adeptness in running from danger, however, would still provide no real excuse for exposing him to such danger. The view is also somewhat out of character with the Baha'i picture of Baha'u'llah's always boldly advancing to meet danger when it threatened and needing no one to shield him from it. Baha'u'llah, who in his prayers welcomes "however calamitous, the pains and sorrows" he is made to bear; who delights in his afflictions; who thanks God that he has offered him up "as a sacrifice" in his path; who acknowledges that there is "no protection" except God's protection<sup>33</sup> seems inconsistent with a Baha'u'llah who arranges to screen himself from danger by setting up his brother as a blind for him.

The Baha'i scholar, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, seemed to have some difficulty with this view. He writes:

Some believe that the appointment of Mirza Yahya as a successor, had been decided between the Bab and Beha-Ullah; because, in the beginning of Nasser'ud-Din-Shah's reign, the object of Mirza-Taki-Khan was to arrest the original source of this movement, and stop the water at the fountain-head. Therefore, after consulting together, they made Ezel appear as the Bab's successor, through Mirza-Abdul-Karim of Kazwin, who was employed to manage and forward the Epistles of the Bab. In this manner they preserved the Center of the Cause, Baha-Ullah, from the interference of Mirza Taki-Khan.<sup>34</sup>

Then Abu'l-Fadl indicates:

But-according to the author's belief, it was the appearance of different claimants from various places which kept Him from being recognized as the Center of the Community, and protected Him from the interference of the Prime Minister; and that thus the source of this movement was concealed.<sup>35</sup>

The account in the *Traveller's Narrative* also seem to place the Baha'is in the awkward position of berating Mirza Yahya, as they are fond of doing, for slipping into hiding when danger was near, yet holding that such concealment was according to the plan and approval of the Bab and Baha'u'llah to effect Baha'u'llah's unmolested leadership in the movement. Historically, the view runs into the problem of portraying Baha'u'llah before the Bab's death as arranging for his protected leadership in the faith before he receives his call, which according even to Baha'i sources did not occur until Baha'u'llah's imprisonment in the Siyah-Chal in 1852.<sup>36</sup>

One passage in the *Traveller's Narrative* inadvertently adds support to the view that Yahya was the Bab's successor, 'Abdu'l-Baha quotes certain "mischief-makers" as inciting Yahya with these words: "You are really the chief support and acknowledged successor: act with authority, in order that grace and blessing may become apparent."<sup>37</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha, admittedly, is not himself calling Mirza Yahya the Bab's successor but is quoting Yahya's supporters as not urging him to make a claim but chiding him for not acting with authority in *view of his acknowledged successorship*.

Shoghi Effendi, expressing the modern Baha'i viewpoint, acknowledges Mirza Yahya's being "the nominee of the Bab, and the recognized

chief of the Babi community.”<sup>38</sup> This would appear at first to be an admission that Mirza Yahya was the Bab's nominated successor, the expression “nominated successor” or “appointed successor” meaning basically the same thing, as when Browne says that “the Bab, before his death (9th July 1850), had nominated as his successor a youth nineteen years of age named Mirza Yahya, and entitled Subh-i-Azal (“the Dawn of Eternity”).”<sup>39</sup> The document Browne published in Appendix IV of the *New History* on which Mirza Yahya based his claim to being the Bab's successor is entitled by Browne: “Nomination of Subh-i-Azal as the Bab's Successor.”<sup>40</sup> Yet Shoghi Effendi elsewhere explicitly denies that the Bab nominated a successor:

A successor or viceregent the Bab never named, an interpreter of His teachings He refrained from appointing. So transparently clear were his references to the Promised One, so brief was to be the duration of His own Dispensation, that neither the one nor the other was deemed necessary. All he did was, according to the testimony of 'Abdu'l-Baha in “A Traveller's Narrative”, to nominate, on the advice of Baha'u'llah and of another disciple, Mirza Yahya, who would act solely as a figure-head pending the manifestation of the Promised One, thus enabling Baha'u'llah to promote, in relative security, the Cause so dear to his heart.<sup>41</sup>

Shoghi Effendi apparently is attempting to maneuver through a delicate matter, wanting to affirm on the one hand that Mirza Yahya became after the Bab's death “the recognized chief of the Babi community”, for which the historical evidence is strong, yet seeking to avoid admitting that the Bab had appointed his as successor. By calling Mirza Yahya the Bab's “nominee”, Shoghi Effendi is admitting that some kind of deputation took place, whereby, at least to outward appearance, Mirza Yahya became the new chief of the community.

This leadership of the community fell to Mirza Yahya upon the Bab's death. Shoghi Effendi refers at one point to the Bab who had succumbed "to the volleys of a firing squad leaving behind, as titular head of a well-nigh disrupted community, a mere figurehead," meaning, of course, Mirza Yahya. But although Mirza Yahya became "the recognized chief of the Babi community", Baha'is maintain that Baha'u'llah was "the real Leader".<sup>42</sup> Elsewhere, Shoghi Effendi speaks of Mirza Yahya's "mounting jealousy" over "the ever deepening attachment of the exiles to Baha'u'llah and of their amazing veneration for him" and of how Baha'u'llah's "popularity had risen in Baghdad".<sup>43</sup>

This rise in Baha'u'llah's popularity during the Baghdad period is important to underscore and helps place in proper perspective the probable flow of events in the transition of leadership in the new religion from Mirza Yahya to Baha'u'llah. Mirza Yahya, although nominated by the Bab as the next Babi chief, largely secluded himself and left the more practical, organizational aspect of the faith to his elder half-brother, Baha'u'llah. The latter moved more openly among the Babis, manifesting those qualities of leadership which were not as evident in Mirza Yahya, and increasingly rose in the esteem of the exiled Babis.

That Mirza Yahya was at first the recognized chief of the Babis after the Bab's death is given strong support for the reasons which led Browne to that conclusion<sup>44</sup> and is admitted by the Baha'is themselves. Since the writing of the *Traveller's Narrative*, however, Baha'is follow

the view advanced by 'Abdu'l-Baha that the position conferred by the Bab upon Mirza Yahya, by which he became famous both within and without the Babi community, was in name only and that Baha'u'llah was the real leader behind the scenes. This view, however, encounters various problems, as noted earlier,<sup>45</sup> finds no confirmation outside of Baha'i writings themselves, and apparently was introduced into Baha'i thought after the Baha'i-Azali controversy as a way of undermining the position as Babi chief previously held by Subh-i-Azal and making Baha'u'llah's leadership in the community retroactive from the time of the Bab's death.

The question of the successorship to the Bab, however, is not determinative for the Baha'i position, for Baha'u'llah claimed to be "He whom God shall manifest", the next manifestation, and Baha'u'llah thus assumed an authority which would be immensely greater than any intermediary authority between the two manifestations. That the Bab intended Mirza Yahya's authority to be only provisional until the manifestation of "Him whom God shall manifest" is confirmed in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, which indicates that, when the Bab nominated Mirza Yahya as his successor, he added, "Write the eight [unwritten] *Vahids* of the *Bayan*", showing that the Bab considered Mirza Yahya's ministry as falling within the Bayanic or Babi dispensation, and admonished him to abrogate the *Bayan* "if 'He whom God shall manifest' should appear in His power in thy time",<sup>46</sup> showing that Mirza Yahya's ministry was to be in force only until the coming of the greater dispensation. This passage of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* clearly is not an interpolation into the text after Baha'u'llah's declaration by Azal's supporters, else the stipulation to abrogate the *Bayan* upon

the coming of “Him whom God shall manifest” would not have been quoted, for this would have only strengthened the Baha'i position. The Bab's admonition to Mirza Yahya to abrogate the *Bayan* should “He whom God shall manifest” appear in Mirza Yahya's lifetime apparently indicates that the Bab, himself, did not identify Mirza Yahya with the coming manifestation. That the author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* makes that identification does not suggest that he is advancing a counterclaim to Baha'u'llah's claim but reveals that he also was caught up in that spirit which overtook the Babi community for a time after the Bab's death when so many Babis advanced claims of being the promised manifestation. Gobineau's early history indicates that some Babis thought that Azal was “He whom God shall manifest” and others thought he was a “return” of the Bab.<sup>47</sup>

### ***The question of Baha'u'llah's call***

Related to the question of the Bab's successor is the question of when Baha'u'llah began to conceive of himself as the one foretold by the Bab. Two views may be distinguished. One view would see Baha'u'llah as functioning as a loyal Babi, submissive to Mirza Yahya's authority, and deciding only at a later stage to put forward a claim of his own and thereby take full control of the movement. This appears basically to be Edward G. Browne's position. Browne holds that at the time of Baha'u'llah's release from his 1852 imprisonment and for some years later “Beha'u'llah was, as his own writings prove, to all appearance as loyal a follower of Subh-i-Ezel as he had previously been of the Bab.”<sup>48</sup> Browne points to the firm guidance which was needed to control the exiled Babi community and maintains:

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. Even while at Baghdad he lived a life of almost complete seclusion, leaving the direction of affairs in the hands of his half-brother Beha'u'llah, a man of much more resolute and ambitious character, who thus gradually became the most prominent figure and the moving spirit of the sect. For a considerable time Beha'u'llah continued to do all that he did in the name, and ostensibly by the instructions of Subh-i-Ezel; but after a while, though at what precise date is still uncertain, the idea seems to have entered his mind that he might as well become actually as he already was virtually, the Pontiff of the Church whose destinies he controlled.<sup>49</sup>

That Baha'u'llah for a time did, at least to outward appearance, act in the name of Subh-i-Azal is confirmed in the *Traveller's Narrative*, where 'Abdu'l-Baha says that Baha'u'llah "wrote letters ostensibly at his [Subh-i-Azal's] dictation, to the Bab."<sup>50</sup> In Browne's view, this situation continued until Baha'u'llah decided to assume open control of the faith and then seemingly for awhile after that until the Babis had been at Adrianople for two or three years, when Baha'u'llah

threw off all disguise, publicly proclaiming himself to be "Him whom God shall manifest", and called upon Subh-i-Azal and all the Babi Churches throughout Persia, Turkey, Egypt and Syria, to acknowledge his supreme authority, and to accept as God's Word the revelations which he forthwith began to promulgate, and continued till his death on May 16th of last year (1892) to publish.<sup>51</sup>

In this view, references to Baha'u'llah's awareness of his mission or of his open control of the movement during the earlier part of the pre-declaration period would be seen as predating events or reading back into the earlier period the developments of a later time, when Baha'u'llah did become the leader of the faith.

Another view would be that Baha'u'llah at a very early date planned eventually to put forward a claim and that during his pre-declaration days he was laying the foundation for assuming full control of

the movement. The *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* reports that, while the Bab and Quddus were still alive, Baha'u'llah "fell under suspicion, and it was said that he not improbably harboured designs of setting up a standard" of his own.<sup>52</sup> According to the Baha'is, Baha'u'llah first came to an awareness of his mission in the Siyah-Chal in Tihiran (1852) but for "a period of no less than ten years" only hinted "in veiled and allegorical language, in epistles, commentaries, prayers and treatises" that "the Bab's promise had already been fulfilled," and that only "a few of His fellow-disciples ... perceived the radiance of the as yet unrevealed glory."<sup>53</sup>

### ***The Baghdad period***

The historical circumstance which forced the Babi community into exile in Baghdad was an attempt on the life of the Persian shah on August 15, 1852, by persons belonging to the Babi religion. Some see this event as a definite Babi plot to assassinate the king. Browne points out that the *Nasikhu't-Tawarikh*, "which gives the most circumstantial account of the occurrence; indicates that Mulla Shaykh 'Ali (Jenab-i-Azim) first proposed the attempt and that of the twelve who volunteered, only three carried out the plan, namely, Sadiq of Zanzan (or Milan),<sup>54</sup> Mulla Fathu'llah of Qum, and Mirza Muhammad of Niriz.<sup>55</sup> According to information given to Professor Browne by "the nephew of one of the three Babis actually engaged in the plot", seven were involved in the original conspiracy, but four withdrew from the effort at the last moment.<sup>56</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the event as perpetrated by "a certain Babi", whom he calls "this madman", with "one other person being his accomplice."<sup>57</sup> Shoghi Effendi seems to follow 'Abdu'l-Baha in regarding the act as the deed of only two Babis, "a fanatical and irresponsible Babi" named "Sadiq-i-Tabrizi, an assistant in a



confectioner's shop in Tihran", and "his accomplice, an equally obscure youth named Fathu'llah-i-Qumi."<sup>58</sup> Ruhiiyyih Khanum refers to the Babis involved in the attempt as 'three half-crazed, insignificant fools.'<sup>59</sup>

Regardless of the number or the mental condition of those involved in the attempt, Baha'is maintain that the act was done without the knowledge or sanction of the Babi leadership. Baha'u'llah denies having had anything to do with the attempt.<sup>60</sup> Professor Browne agrees that "so far as can be ascertained, it was utterly unauthorized on the part of the Babi leaders" and "was caused by the desperation to which the Babis had been driven by a long series of cruelties, and especially by the execution of their Founder in 1850."<sup>61</sup>

At any rate, the attempt to assassinate the king by members of the Babi faith was sufficient to provoke the unleashing of horrible persecution against the movement. Peter Avery regards the shah's drastic measures toward the Babis after the attempt on his life as indicative of the influence of the movement at that time, The Babi propaganda had spread over Persia and had revealed its power to attract a wide variety of social types. The shah considered that drastic action was necessary.<sup>62</sup>

A letter dated August 29, 1852, by an Austrian officer, Captain von Goumoens, employed in the shah's service, which was published in a German or Austrian newspaper on October 17, 1852 (a copy of which was sent to Edward G. Browne), gives a graphic account of the cruelties unleashed upon the Babis:

But follow me my friend, you who lay claim to a heart and European ethics, follow me to the unhappy ones who, with gorged-out eyes, must eat, on the scene of the deed, without any sauce, their own amputated ears; or whose teeth are torn out with inhuman violence

by the hand of the executioner; or whose bare skulls are simply crushed by blows from a hammer; or where the *bazar* is illuminated with unhappy victims, because on right and left the people dig deep bores in their chests and shoulders and insert burning wicks in the wounds. I saw some dragged in chains through the *bazar*, preceded by a military band, in whom these wicks had burned so deep that now the fat flickered convulsively in the wound like a newly-extinguished lamp.

Not seldom it happens that the unwearying ingenuity of the Orientals leads to fresh tortures. They will akin the soles of the Babís' feet, soak the wounds in boiling oil, shoe the foot like the hoof of a horse, and compel the victim to run. No cry escaped from the victim's breast; the torment is endured in dark silence by the numbed sensation of the fanatic; now he must run; the body cannot endure what the soul has endured; he falls. Give him the coup de grace! Put him out of his pain! No! The executioner swings the whip, and—I myself have had to witness it—the unhappy victim of hundred-fold tortures runs! ... The more fortunate suffered strangulation, stoning or suffocation; they were bound before the muzzle of a mortar, cut down with swords or killed with dagger thrusts, or blows from hammers and sticks. ... At present I never leave my house, in order not to meet with fresh scenes of horror.<sup>63</sup>

Among those who fell victims in this persecution were Mirza Jani and Qurratu'l-'Ayn, the celebrated Babi poetess and member of the Bab's "Letters of the Living". Baha'u'llah was cast into prison, in the Siyah-Chal, where he remained for four months but was finally released due in part to the intercession on his behalf, or at least to testimony as to Baha'u'llah's character, by the Russian Ambassador in Persia,<sup>64</sup> and to his family's wealth and position.<sup>65</sup> Baha'u'llah's father had been, according to state papers preserved by the Cyprus government, chief secretary of state to the Persian shah.<sup>66</sup>

After Baha'u'llah's release from imprisonment, he made his way to Bagdad, arriving there, according to some accounts, before Mirza Yahya,<sup>67</sup> and according to others, after Mirza Yahya.<sup>68</sup>

The persecuted Babis made their way to Baghdad, where they enrolled themselves as Turkish subjects and thus obtained a certain degree of freedom and protection. For about eleven years the Babis were relatively unmolested, and the period proved most fruitful in terms of the new religion's literary production.<sup>69</sup> Three important works by Baha'u'llah were written in Baghdad—the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, the *Seven Valleys*, and the *Hidden Words*.

Although relatively safe from outside persecution, the Babi community, however, was beset by inner dissension. A number of Babis put forward claims of being the promised manifestation, each winning a certain following and, according to Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, thus "subdividing the community into different sects."<sup>70</sup> The author of the *Hasht Bihisht* says that "the matter came to such a pass that everyone on awakening from his first sleep in the morning adorned his body with this pretension."<sup>71</sup>

One of the claimants was Janab-i-Dayyan, a prominent Babi. The picture of the peace-loving, gentle Mirza Yahya which Browne presents in his introduction to the *New History*<sup>72</sup> is not entirely accurate, for Browne was later to point out that Mirza Yahya in one of his writings not only reviles Dayyan "in the coarsest language, but expresses his surprise that his adherents 'sit silent in their places and do not transfix him with their spears,' or 'rend his bowels with their hands.'"<sup>73</sup> Dayyan was later drowned by the Babis. A tract entitled *Risaliy-i-'Armmih*, "the Aunt's Epistle" or "the Aunt's Treatise", written to support Subh-i-Azal's claims, admits and even condones Subh-i-Azal's responsibility for Dayyan's murder.<sup>74</sup>

After Baha'u'llah had been in Baghdad for one year, he suddenly departed from Baghdad on April 10, 1854, destined to wander in the wastes of Kurdistan for a period of two years.<sup>75</sup> Baha'is regard the period as a time of preparation for Baha'u'llah's future ministry: "There for two years, as Christ in the wilderness, as Buddha in the Indian forest, as Muhammad in the fiery hills of Arabia, he became prepared for his task."<sup>76</sup>

In the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, written after Baha'u'llah's return to Baghdad, he mentions that the object of his retirement was to avoid becoming a subject of discord among the faithful.<sup>77</sup> According to the *Hasht Bihisht*, Baha'u'llah was tending to relax some the severer code of the *Bayan* and had gathered about him some Babis who were sympathetic with his innovations. Certain other Babis, however, presented a rigorous protest, whereupon Baha'u'llah suddenly left Baghdad.<sup>78</sup> Subh-i-Azal charges that Baha'u'llah simply "got angry".<sup>79</sup> Baha'u'llah's statement that he left Baghdad to avoid being "a subject of discord" would indicate that some kind of dispute was in progress centering around himself.

No one seems to have known where Baha'u'llah was for two years. When Subh-i-Azal learned where he was, he wrote a letter requesting that he return.<sup>80</sup> Browne believed that a passage in the *Iqan* proved that Baha'u'llah was submissive to the authority of Mirza Yahya.<sup>81</sup> The passage in question is Baha'u'llah's acknowledgment that he contemplated no return to Baghdad

*until the hour when, from the Mystic Source, there came the summons bidding Us return whence We came. Surrendering Our Will to Him, We submitted to His injunction.*<sup>82</sup>

If Baha'u'llah means Subh-i-Azal by the expression "*the Mystic Source*", or "*the Source of Command*", as it is rendered in the earlier translation of the *Iqan* by Ali Kuli Khan,<sup>83</sup> and is referring to Subh-i-Azal's letter as the "*summons*" to return, then the passage reveals that Baha'u'llah acted in submission to Subh-i-Azal's will and was thus acknowledging, at least to outward appearance, Subh-i-Azal's authority in the community. Baha'is, however, finds Brown's interpretation of "the Mystic Source" to be "grotesque".<sup>84</sup> Balyuzi says that the Babi who sought out Baha'u'llah, on behalf of the Babis in Baghdad who knew that the success of the movement depended on Baha'u'llah, was Shaykh Sultan.

True, Mirza Yahya had also written to ask Baha'u'llah to return, but it was a request, not a 'summons'. The 'Mystic Source' which Baha'u'llah mentions in *The Book of Certitude*, from whence the summons came, is obviously the Godhead.<sup>85</sup>

That the "Mystic Source" or "Source of Command" could refer to one who bore the "Divine influences" is seen in the references in the *New History* to Baha'u'llah as "the Source of Command".<sup>86</sup> In Babi thought, God's emissaries represented God, and the author of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* understands that the Bab, who calls Subh-i-Azal God, meant for the "Divine influences" to pass upon Subh-i-Azal after the Bab's death.<sup>87</sup> When Baha'u'llah declared himself "Him whom God shall manifest", he became for the Babis who accepted him "the Source of Command". But until then, "the center provisionally appointed pending the manifestation of the Promised One"<sup>88</sup> was Mirza Yahya. Baha'u'llah, in yielding to the will of Mirza Yahya, perhaps wanted to achieve two purposes: (1) show himself a loyal Babi by being obedient to the center appointed by the Bab to dispel the suspicions creating the disturbance leading to his departure from Baghdad, (2) and regain his

position in the community whereby he could gradually lead it out of its present difficulties.

Some insight into Baha'u'llah's outlook during the Baghdad period is provided by the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, revealed within this period.<sup>89</sup> The *Iqan* reveals that its author is a devout and loyal Babi, well versed in the Babi doctrines and an able defender and exponent of the Babi position. He argues that, when the Bab made his appearance, the people should have accepted him because of the fulfilment of the predictions concerning him. Even the year of his manifestation was given in the traditions as the year "sixty" (AH 1260),<sup>90</sup> yet people shunned the truth by ignoring these explicit indications of the Bab's station. He calls the Babi movement "this wondrous and most exalted Cause" and refers to the Bab as "God's wondrous Manifestation".<sup>91</sup> Of the Bab, Baha'u'llah says: "*His rank excelleth that of all the Prophets, and His Revelation transcendeth the comprehension and understanding of all their chosen ones.*"<sup>92</sup> "*No day is greater than this Day, and no revelation more glorious than this Revelation,*" Baha'u'llah declares.<sup>93</sup> The Bab's book, the *Qayyumu'l-Asma*, he calls "*the first, the greatest and mightiest of all books.*"<sup>94</sup> So utterly devoted to the Bab and his cause, Baha'u'llah even longs for the opportunity to die as a martyr in the Bab's services "*Perchance, through God's loving kindness and His grace, this revealed and manifest Letter may lay down His life as a sacrifice in the path of the Primal Point.*"<sup>95</sup>

The picture of Baha'u'llah which emerges in the *Iqan* is of one utterly convinced of the unsurpassed greatness of the Babi revelation, of one absorbingly engaged in expounding, defending, and exalting

the truth of the Day of God centering in the figure of the Primal Point, of one whose greatest desire is to give his life in love for “*that Quintessence of Light*”;<sup>96</sup> the Bab.

Baha'u'llah's references to the coming Manifestation have led some interpreters to believe that Baha'u'llah is contemplating advancing a claim at this time.<sup>97</sup> His references, however, to the coming of “Him whom God shall manifest” would not necessarily mean or imply that Baha'u'llah thought of himself as that resplendent figure. The teaching of the coming of “Him whom God shall manifest” and the need to recognize him when he came is basic Babi doctrine. Baha'u'llah need be doing no more than merely reiterating the basic Babi teaching on this point, which figured so prominently in the Bab's doctrine. Certainly no true exposition of Babi teaching would overlook that most prominent subject. Yet, those passages, when coupled with other curious statements in the *Iqan*, leave an impression that Baha'u'llah may indeed be considering advancing a claim to be “He whom God shall manifest.”<sup>98</sup>

### **Baha'u'llah's declaration of His Mission**

The continued flow of Babi literature and propaganda into Persia and the growing strength of the movement prompted the Persian government to request that the Babi community be removed from Baghdad further into the interior of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>99</sup> For twelve days before the departure from Baghdad, Baha'u'llah resided in a tent in the garden of Ridvan outside the city. Here Baha'is say Baha'u'llah openly announced to a few of his friends that he was the promised manifestation. The twelve-day “Feast of Ridvan” (April 21-May 2) is held annually by Baha'is

in commemoration of Baha'u'llah's declaration on this occasion. Some little confusion occurs in connection with Baha'u'llah's declaration. Nabil's chronological poem places Baha'u'llah's declaration in the year AH 1283 (CE 1866–1867), when Baha'u'llah was fifty years old.<sup>100</sup> This was, however, Baha'u'llah's public declaration made later in Adrianople, referred to in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* as “the land of the Secret” because the secret of Baha'u'llah's being a new manifestation was divulged in Adrianople.<sup>101</sup>

Baha'is insist, however, that an earlier declaration to only a few was made before the departure from Baghdad. Bahiyyih Khanum, daughter of Baha'u'llah, maintains that the claim was made only to 'Abdu'l-Baha and four close disciples.<sup>102</sup> Some evidence is available supporting an earlier declaration in the Garden of Ridvan. Richards points out that Baha'u'llah in a tablet to 'Ali Naqqi wrote:

Blessed art thou in that thou was privileged to be present in the Garden of Rezvan, on the Festival of Rezvan, when God the Merciful, showed forth His glory to the world.<sup>103</sup>

In the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, also, Baha'u'llah writes:

All things were dipped in the Sea of Cleansing on the First of al-Ridwan when we appeared in glory to him who is in (the realm of) the possible with our Most Beautiful Names and our most high attributes.<sup>104</sup>

The passage appears to be a reference to Baha'u'llah's declaration of himself on the first day of the twelve days in the Garden of Ridvan and means that all things became clean at that time.<sup>105</sup> Later in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*, Baha'u'llah refers to the “two great feasts” of his dispensation, the festival of his declaration when the “Merciful was revealed to those (in the realm) of the Possible by His most beautiful Names and



His highest Attributes” and the festival of “the day on which We sent Him who should tell the people the Good News of this Name by which the dead are raised” (the day of the Bab’s declaration).<sup>106</sup>

Although Baha’is date the beginning of their faith from the Bab’s declaration, Baha’u’llah’s declaration marks for them the occasion when, as George Townshend expresses it, “Jesus Christ ascended His throne in the power of God the Father.”<sup>107</sup> Townshend, thus, remarks: “Surely this Day must be the greatest day in the history of mankind.”<sup>108</sup>

Baha’u’llah’s later public declaration resulted in the division of the Babis into two groups, the greater number following Baha’u’llah and eventually becoming known as Baha’is and a smaller number who continued to follow Subh-i-Azal and becoming known as Azalis.

One issue between the Baha’is and Azalis concerned the time when the next manifestation was to appear. Azalis insisted that “He whom God shall manifest” would not appear until 1,511 to 2,001 years had passed.<sup>109</sup> These figures are derived from the numerical values of the words *Ghiyath* and *Mustaghath*. The Bab had suggested that “He whom God shall manifest” might appear “in the number of *Ghiyath*” or might “tarry until [the number of *Mustaghath*” (Persian Bayan 2:17), but he hoped that “He will come ere [the number of] *Mustaghath* (3:15).<sup>110</sup> These figures suggest that a long duration would occur before the coming of the next manifestation.

The Bab also had compared the coming of the manifestations to a boy in successive stages of growth. Adam, whose coming the Bab placed at 12,210 years before his ministry, is compared to the embryo; Jesus, Muhammad, and the Bab, himself, are compared to the boy at ages ten, eleven, and twelve, respectively, showing that the Bab thought of

each year in the boy's life as roughly representing 1,000 years. The Bab saw "Him whom God shall manifest" as the boy at age fourteen (*Bayan* 3:12) or age nineteen (3:15; 5:4), suggesting that the next manifestation would not appear before 2,000 to 7,000 years had passed.<sup>111</sup>

Baha'is, however, insist that the Bab pointed to the year "sixty-nine" (AH 1269/CE 1852–1853) as the year when the next manifestation would reveal himself.<sup>112</sup> Baha'u'llah is said to have received his call at this time and began hinting in his writings that he was the expected manifestation but did not openly disclose himself until ten years later.<sup>113</sup>

What opens the door to the making of an early claim by someone, however, is that the Bab had said that no one could falsely claim to be "Him whom God shall manifest" and told Mirza Yahya to abrogate the *Bayan* if "Him whom God shall manifest" should appear in his lifetime, opening the way for someone then living to advance the claim.

The Bab also had named the first month of the Babi year *Baha* ("Splendour") in honour of "Him whom God shall manifest" and had indicated in the *Bayan* that "Baha'u'llah" was the "best of Names" (5:6). This would appear to be a strong argument in favour of Baha'u'llah were it not for the Azali claim that the title "Baha'u'llah" was originally one of Subh-i-Azal's titles.<sup>114</sup>

### **The period after Baha'u'llah's declaration**

Baha'u'llah left on his journey to Constantinople on May 3, 1863. Baha'is describe the day as one of great weeping and lamentation by those grieving over his departure.<sup>115</sup>

### ***The Adrianople period***

Baha'u'llah, his family, and certain followers (in all about seventy persons)<sup>116</sup> arrived in Constantinople, the capital of the Ottoman Empire, on August 16, 1863, where they resided for four months until further orders came for their removal in the cold winter months to Adrianople in the extremities of the empire, referred to by Ruhyyih Khanum as "the political Siberia of the Turkish Empire."<sup>117</sup>

The Adrianople period was to witness the first open efforts to transform the Babi religion into a more acceptable and universal faith. The period is significant for at least four reasons.

First, Baha'u'llah in Adrianople cast aside the veil and openly declared that he was the bearer of a new message. The Tablet, the *Suriy-i-Amr*, formally announced his claims, being read first to Mirza Yahya and then to the other Babis, calling them to a decision.

Second, the Babis in Adrianople, as a result of Baha'u'llah's declaration, split into two rival parties, those following Baha'u'llah and those following Mirza Yahya. This division resulted in both sides charging the others with tampering with the texts of previous writings to support their own claims and position, in different versions being given to the same incident from this time on, and in actual murders by the two groups. One incident involved an attempt at poisoning. Azalis maintain that Baha'u'llah attempted to poison Mirza Yahya, whereas Baha'is say that Mirza Yahya tried to poison Baha'u'llah.<sup>118</sup>

Third, Baha'u'llah began in Adrianople sending tablets to the world's religious and political heads, calling them to a recognition of "the King of Kings", admonishing them to deal justly, and warning them

of heedlessness. Among those thus addressed were Napoleon III of France, Nasiri'd-Din Shah of Persia, the Sultan 'Abdu'l-Aziz of Turkey, Czar Alexander II of Russia, Queen Victoria of England, and Pope Pius IX.<sup>119</sup> Baha'is see Baha'u'llah as thus formally declaring his cause to the world, and they attribute the later mysterious fall of the dynasties and the decline of religious institutions as predicted in these communications as the direct outcome of the heedlessness of many of the world's rulers to Baha'u'llah's message.

A fourth significance of the Adrianople period which has bearing on Baha'u'llah's religion is that Baha'u'llah during the five years of residence in Adrianople first came in touch with European civilization and Western ideas. Non-Baha'is, therefore, attribute the concepts in Baha'u'llah's message having affinities with Western thought to the experience in Adrianople.<sup>120</sup> The Baha'i, Horace Holley, makes this observation:

The effect of residence at Adrianople was to bring Baha'o'llah into relationship with European civilization, thus uniting his intuitive wisdom with that stock of scientific and sociological experience which so completely differentiates the personal problems of life in West and East. Without this contact and assimilation, Baha'o'llah's revelation might have remained Oriental in its statement and expression, and, conditioned by the incomplete social experience which that implies, might have reached our Western consciousness only through the medium of an intervening personality—a St. Paul, that is, whose interpretation would have lessened fatally the prophet's power to unite. Happily for both hemispheres alike, this contact of intuition and social experience did take place, and, as a result, Europe and America enter equally with the Orient into this prophetic station.<sup>121</sup>

This is a rather remarkable statement, for Holly admits the conditioning effect of Western civilization and ideas upon Baha'u'llah's revelation, or at least upon its expression, and sees this as necessary in giving that message its uniting power.

Other Baha'is may not be inclined to make Holley's admission, but his outlook fits perfectly with Baha'i philosophy that the prophets' messages are conditioned by the times and social state of the people among whom they appear, Baha'u'llah's experience touched both East and West, and his message, therefore, is directed to both hemispheres, thereby uniting the two within his one revelation.

The exact reasons for the removal of the Baha'is and Azalis from Adrianople are difficult to ascertain because of conflicting stories, but the event seems to here resulted from a combination of a number of factors: internal dissension, the circulation of various reports about what the Babis were planning and teaching,<sup>122</sup> one report being that they planned on taking over the city of Constantinople and disposing of the Turkish officials who refused to embrace the religion,<sup>123</sup> and the possible detection of a fresh attempt at propaganda.<sup>124</sup>

Mirza Yahya and certain followers were banished to Cyprus, where they arrived on August 20, 1868.<sup>125</sup> Baha'u'llah, his family, and companions, numbering about seventy, were exiled to 'Akka, where they arrived on August 31, 1868. Four Baha'is were sent with the Azalis, and a certain number of Mirza Yahya's adherents were sent with the Baha'is. These were intended to serve as spies.

### ***The 'Akka period***

The Baha'is in 'Akka were confined for two years in the military barracks, a fortress built of rocks, and endured much hardship and suffering, but in October, 1870, in the course of the war between

Russia and Turkey, the barracks were needed for Turkish soldiers, and the Baha'is were moved into houses within the city walls. In 1879, Baha'u'llah moved into the Palace of Bahji, where he was residing when Professor Edward Browne of Cambridge University was permitted four interviews with him in April, 1890. Browne tells of that experience in the introduction to the *Traveller's Narrative*:

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 on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable 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!<sup>126</sup>

One incident during the 'Akka period which has brought criticism upon the movement is the murder of the Azalis who had accompanied the Baha'is to 'Akka. The Azalis had given the Baha'is a good bit of trouble, particularly by reports which they spread after they and the Baha'is moved from the barracks into the city. Certain Baha'is decided to end the mischief. According to Shaykh Ibrahim's account given to Edward Browne, the number of Azalis who accompanied the Baha'is to 'Akka were seven, five of whom are named. Twelve Baha'is, acting without instructions from Baha'u'llah, went armed with swords and daggers to the house where the Azalis were living. After they knocked on the door, Aka Jan answered and was killed immediately. The Baha'is then entered the house and slew the other six.<sup>127</sup>

Bahiyih Khanum gives a different account, according to which, only three Baha'is and three Azalis were involved. The Baha'is proceeded

to the house of the Azalis, calling them outside. The Azalis fiercely attacked the Baha'is with clubs and sticks; a general fight followed in which one Baha'i and two Azalis were killed.<sup>128</sup>

Balyuzi, however, admits that "it is a fact that three Azalis were murdered by a few Baha'is in 'Akka," but maintains, "that shameful deed brought great sorrow to Baha'u'llah."<sup>129</sup> As far as can be determined, the murderers were not acting on Baha'u'llah's orders.<sup>130</sup> Browne believed, however, that a passage in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* shows that Baha'u'llah "regarded this event with some complaisance."<sup>131</sup> "God has taken the one who seduced thee," Baha'u'llah writes, addressing himself presumably to Mirza Yahya, in reference to Haji Siyyid Muhammad Isfahani, one of the Azalis killed in 'Akka and a prime supporter of Mirza Yahya.<sup>132</sup> Balyuzi considers Browne's allegation that "those responsible for that odious deed were freed from goal by 'Abdu'l-Baha's intercession" as a "novelty".<sup>133</sup>

Baha'u'llah passed away at the hour of dawn on the 2nd of Dhi'l-Qa'dih, AH 1309 (May 29, 1892), in his seventy-fifth year.<sup>134</sup> That Baha'u'llah's life was not cut short by a Roman cross, a Persian firing squad, or by some other means, is significant for Baha'is, for "Baha'u'llah was not slain nor prevented from giving His full message."<sup>135</sup> "What the Bab suffered for six years only, as Christ had suffered for three years, Baha'u'llah, like Moses and Muhammad, suffered to the very end of a long life."<sup>136</sup>

### **Baha'u'llah's transformation**

Shoghi Effendi, as noted earlier, speaks of "those momentous happenings" which "transformed a heterodox ... offshoot of the Shaykhi

school ... into a world religion.”<sup>137</sup> The dominating figure behind those momentous happenings and the person primarily responsible for that transformation of the Babi religion into a world faith was Baha'u'llah, believed to be “descended from the line of kings of the Sassanian dynasty of Persia” and also from “the line of Zoroaster Himself.”<sup>138</sup> Being from an early date a wealthy and influential supporter of the Babi movement in Persia and the elder half-brother of the Bab's own nominee for leadership in the movement after his death, Mirza Yahya, who had left the more practical affairs of this faith to the administration of his half-brother, Baha'u'llah had gradually risen to the forefront of the movement through his writings and able administration during the Baghdad period. When in Adrianople he openly proclaimed himself the promised one, “He whom God shall manifest”, the next manifestation, he won the overwhelming support of the majority of the Babi community.

The problem facing Baha'u'llah is compared to that facing the Apostle Paul in Christianity. Edward Browne refers to a comment made to him by Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, a British minister at Tihran, who had recently returned to England, who said:

The question here was not a mere question of historical rights or documentary evidence, but the much greater question as to whether Babiism was to become an independent world-religion, or remain a mere sect of Islam. In the struggle between Subh-i-Ezel and Baha'u'llah we see a repetition of the similar conflict which took place in the early Christian Church between Peter and Paul. The former was in closer personal relations with Christ than the latter; but it is owing to the victory of the latter that Christianity is now the religion of the civilized West, instead of being an obscure sect of Judaism.<sup>139</sup>

Baha'u'llah intended to remove from the Babi religion those elements which he realized would keep it from being more widely accepted and to



establish the religion as a spiritual rather than political movement aiming at the betterment of the world.

No sooner was Beha firmly established in his authority than he began to make free use of the privilege accorded by the Bab to "Him whom God shall manifest" to abrogate, change, cancel, and develop the earlier doctrines. His chief aim seems to have been to introduce a more settled order, to discourage speculation, to direct the attention of his followers to practical reforms pursued in a prudent and unobtrusive fashion, to exalt ethics at the expense of metaphysics, to check mysticism, to conciliate existing authorities, including even the Shah of Persia, the Nero of the Babi faith, to abolish useless, unpractical, and irksome regulations and restrictions, and, in general, to adapt the religion at the head of which he now found himself to the ordinary exigencies of life, and to render it more capable of becoming, what he intended to make it, a universal system suitable to all mankind.<sup>140</sup>

Baha'u'llah incorporated into his teachings the basic theology, eschatology, and hermeneutics of the earlier Babi religion.<sup>141</sup> The *Kitab-i-Iqan*, which especially presents the basic Babi teaching, and other writings of Baha'u'llah before his declaration are accepted by Baha'is as part of the revelation for the new age, thus indicating the essential relatedness and compatibility of the Babi and Baha'i outlook. Baha'u'llah, in a sense, was acting as a reformer within the Babi religion, but to establish the kind of reforms he deemed necessary, which involved changing certain Babi laws, required that Baha'u'llah assume the role of the coming manifestation, who alone would have the authority to initiate such basic changes in the religion. Baha'is still date the beginning of their religion with the Bab's declaration, not with Baha'u'llah's.

These considerations raise the question of whether the Baha'i faith is a distinct faith from the Babi religion or whether Baha'i is an advanced and reformed stage of the Babi movement. If Baha'u'llah is a

reformer within a movement which began with the Bab's declaration, then Baha'i is only a reformed and later stage of that movement; if Baha'u'llah is the next manifestation, then in Babi-Baha'i thought, he is the founder of a distinct religion. Actually, Baha'u'llah is both. He is a reformer within an already founded religion, as can be seen in the Baha'i dating of the faith from the Bab, not Baha'u'llah, and also in the fact that Baha'u'llah built upon an already established doctrinal outlook. Baha'u'llah let fall to the wayside certain characteristic yet non-essential elements of the Babi religion which he felt were deterrents to the religion's wider acceptance, incorporated into and amplified in his teachings certain other elements of Babi doctrines, directly abrogated some laws, and added to the faith his own characteristic teachings, particularly those inspired by his touch with Western civilization. Baha'u'llah is also, in the belief of Baha'is and according to his own claim, an independent manifestation. Only with this authority was he able to make the reforms he desired to make. Theoretically, then, Baha'u'llah's religion is as distinct from the Babi religion as it is from other previous faiths. This distinction is not sharply made, however, for two reasons. Historically, the proximity of the religions and their evident relatedness keep them from being sharply distinguished. Doctrinally, Baha'is uphold the two religions as being essentially related, in that the former is seen as uniquely preparatory for the latter. This is especially true in the claim that the Bab is a forerunner of Baha'u'llah. Baha'u'llah's dual role, therefore, as reformer and independent manifestation, while constituting the faith centering in him an independent religion, makes it nevertheless a transformation of the earlier Babi religion. This transformation produces a certain tension

within the Baha'i faith in defining and understanding the precise relationship existing between the Babi and Baha'i religions and between the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Baha'u'llah's transformation of the Babi religion into the Baha'i faith is seen particularly in three areas: (1) Baha'u'llah's shifting of the religion's central focus from the Bab to himself; (2) the redirecting of Babi aspirations from military to spiritual conquests; (3) and the general widening of the religion's outlook to more practical concerns, which involved abrogating certain Babi laws and establishing new laws and teachings which would be more universally appealing.

### ***The religion's new central focus***

Baha'u'llah, in claiming to be "He whom God shall manifest", foretold by the Bab, was claiming a station infinitely superior to the Bab or to any of the prophets who preceded him. The Bab's *Bayan* was to be in force only until the appearing of this coming manifestation. Baha'u'llah was faced with two basic questions concerning the Bab and his revelation: (1) why should the Bab's dispensation be so short, and (2) what would be the purpose in a major manifestation coming to inaugurate a dispensation which would be superseded so quickly.

Baha'u'llah seems to have relegated the answer to the first question to the realm of God's mysteries. Shoghi Effendi quotes Baha'u'llah as saying:

That so brief an interval should have separated this most mighty and wondrous Revelation from Mine own previous Manifestation is a mystery such as no mind can fathom. Its duration had been foreordained.<sup>142</sup>

Baha'u'llah may also be referring to this matter when he writes in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*:

Order (al-nazm) has been disturbed by this Most Great Order, and arrangement has been made different through this innovation, the like of which the eye of invention has not seen.<sup>143</sup>

Baha'u'llah had a more ready answer to the second question of the Bab's purpose. The close proximity of Baha'u'llah's revelation to that of the Bab and the Bab's emphasis given to the coming of "Him whom God shall manifest" placed the Bab in the category of a forerunner to Baha'u'llah.

Edward G. Browne and those following his interpretation have misunderstood this aspect of Baha'i teaching, seemingly believing that Baha'is do not regard the Bab as a major prophet, or manifestation. Browne writes in this respect:

It must be added that the theory now advanced by the Baha'is that the Bab considered himself as a mere herald or fore-runner of the Dispensation which Baha'u'llah was shortly to establish, and was to him what John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ, is equally devoid of historic foundation. In his own eyes, as in the eyes of his followers, Mirza 'Ali Muhammad inaugurated a new Prophetic cycle, and brought a new Revelation, the Bayan, which abrogated the Qur'an as the Qur'an had abrogated the Gospels, and the Gospels the Pentateuch. ... But it is not true that the Bab regarded himself as a fore-runner of "Him whom God shall manifest" in any narrower sense than that in which Moses was the forerunner of Christ, or Christ of Muhammad, or Muhammad of the Bab.<sup>144</sup>

Baha'u'llah, however, does acknowledge the Bab's being a major manifestation, not only in the *Kitab-i-Iqan*, which so exalts the Bab's dispensation, but also in Baha'u'llah's later books and tablets written after his own declaration, in which he sometimes refers to the Bab as his previous manifestation and he regards the Bab's *Bayan* as God's laws to be followed until his abrogation of them.

It is precisely the Bab's being a major manifestation which makes the short Interval between his dispensation and that of Baha'u'llah such an impenetrable mystery. Baha'u'llah does, however, see the Bab's role as being his "Forerunner"<sup>145</sup> or "Precursor".<sup>146</sup> But Baha'u'llah sees the Bab as having a dual role and thus refers to him as "*My Previous Manifestation and Harbinger of My Beauty.*"<sup>147</sup>

The close proximity of Baha'u'llah's dispensation to the Bab's and the more exalted station of Baha'u'llah over the Bab led Baha'is to begin referring to 'Ali Muhammad by the first title he assumed (the Bab)—the title by which he is generally known today—rather than by his later, higher designations and led them to see in that title a new meaning.

In Shi'ite thought the *bab* was the station of one who served as a "channel of grace" between the hidden Imam and his community, but the Shi'ites also believed that the hidden, twelfth Imam would one day appear as the Qa'im, so that one could possibly see in this term the meaning of "the Gate" to the coming Qa'im.<sup>148</sup> This possible future reference of the term allowed 'Abdul-Baha to interpret its meaning in the following manner:

Now what he intended by the term Bab [Gate] was this, that he was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by whose will he moved, and to the bond of whose love he clung.<sup>149</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha later remarks that some supposed that the Bab

claimed to be the medium of grace from His Highness the Lord of the Age (upon him be peace); but afterwards it became known and evident that his meaning was the Gate-hood [Babiyyat] of another city and the mediumship of the graces of another person whose qualities and attributes were contained in his books and treatises.<sup>150</sup>

The Bab later openly professed to be the Qa'im himself, thus seemingly becoming the very person of whom he had previously declared

to be merely the gate. It is to the Qa'im, or to the hidden Imam in his future revelation, that the term "Bab" had any future reference. The Baha'is, however, by referring to 'Ali Muhammad by his first title, the Bab, and by emphasizing the title's future reference and connecting it with the Bab's prominent doctrine concerning the future manifestation, "He whom God shall manifest," were able to shift the reference from the coming Qa'im, whom the Bab himself later claim[s] to be, to the coming manifestation. Thus, for Baha'is the term "Bab" took on the meaning of "gateway" to Baha'u'llah. Ferraby writes:

He was indeed a Gate, but not to a hidden Imam; He was the Gate to the new age, to the Baha'i era, the Gate to the Promise of All Ages, the Gate to the Glory of God, Baha'u'llah.<sup>151</sup>

In considering Baha'u'llah as the religion's new central focus, a question emerges of whether or not Baha'u'llah claimed to be God. The *Hasht Bihisht* charges that Baha'u'llah claimed "to be, not only 'He whom God shall manifest,' but an Incarnation of the Deity Himself."<sup>152</sup> This is a rather strange charge, for the Bab had already explained that a manifestation has two stations, identity with and distinction from God. But J. R. Richards holds that Baha'u'llah never claimed to be God:

Whilst there is such in his writings which would at first seem to justify the belief that Baha'u'llah did claim to be God, a careful study serves to show that he did not actually make any such claim. It is a mistake to take the sayings of Baha'u'llah out of their setting, and to interpret them literally. It should also be borne in mind that there is a vast difference between Western thought, with its background of Christian teaching, and Eastern thought, with an Islamic background, and Christian ideas should never be read into words of Baha'u'llah.<sup>153</sup>

Again, Richards holds that Baha'u'llah's "followers did come to regard Baha'u'llah as God, but their belief was based on a wrong interpretation of the claims he made."<sup>154</sup>

Some passages in Baha'u'llah's writings would seem to bear out Richards' interpretation. In responding to the attribution of divinity to himself, Baha'u'llah explains: "*This station is the station in which one dieth to himself and liveth in God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicateth My complete and absolute self-effacement.*"<sup>155</sup> Again, Baha'u'llah says:

*Certain ones among you have said: "He it is Who hath laid claim to be God." By God! This is a gross calumny. I am but a servant of God Who hath believed in Him and in His signs, and in His Prophets and in His angels.*<sup>156</sup>

Certainly, Baha'u'llah does not claim to be an incarnation of God in the Christian sense. Baha'u'llah emphatically declares, "*Know thou of a certainty that the Unseen can in no wise incarnate His essence and reveal it unto men.*"<sup>157</sup> In Babi-Baha'i thought, the manifestations are "mirrors" of God; they are essentially distinct from God, yet God reveals his attributes in them. Baha'u'llah says:

*The beauty of their countenance is but a reflection of His image, and their revelation a sign of His deathless glory. ... By the revelation of these Gems of Divine virtue all the names and attributes of God, such as knowledge and power, sovereignty and dominion, mercy and wisdom, glory, bounty, and grace, are made manifest.*<sup>158</sup>

God could never be known were it not for his manifestations,

*He Who is everlastingly hidden from the eyes of men can never be known except through His Manifestation, and His Manifestation can adduce no great proof of the truth of His Mission than the proof of His own Person.*<sup>159</sup>

God, Baha'u'llah says, has ordained the knowledge of his manifestations to be identical with knowledge of himself:

*Whoso recognizeth them hath recognized God. Whoso hearkeneth to their call, hath hearkened to the Voice of God, and whoso testifieth to the truth of their Revelation, hath testified to*

*the truth of God Himself. Whoso turneth away from them, hath turned away from God, and whoso disbelieveth in them, hath disbelieved in God.*<sup>160</sup>

In this sense, the manifestation, though essentially distinct from God and in no sense an incarnation of God, say be spoken of as God. "These manifestations of God have each a twofold station."<sup>161</sup> One is the station of unity with God, inasmuch as they reflect God, and one the station of distinction from God.

*Were any of the all-embracing Manifestations of God to declare: "I am God," He, verily, speaketh the truth, and no doubt attacheth thereto. ... And were they to say, "We are the Servants of God", this also is a manifest and indisputable fact.*<sup>162</sup>

*By virtue of this station they have claimed for themselves the Voice of Divinity and the like, whilst by virtue of their station of Messengership, they have declared themselves the Messengers of God.*<sup>163</sup>

Richards, therefore, is correct in saying that Baha'u'llah did not claim to be God in the Christian sense of an incarnational Christology; but he is wrong if he disallows any sense in which Baha'u'llah claimed to be God, for Baha'u'llah clearly claimed, in the Babi-Baha'i understanding, to be God.

As Jesus is called the "Son of God", Baha'u'llah claims to be "*the father*". "*He Who is the Father is come,*" Baha'u'llah declares.<sup>164</sup> Baha'is understand the Christian teaching that Christ will come again in "the glory of his Father" (Mark 8:38) as referring to the coming of Baha'u'llah ("the Glory of God"). When Edward G. Browne first heard this teaching from the Baha'is in Shiraz, he was astonished, wondering if the Baha'is meant to equate Baha'u'llah with God Himself.<sup>165</sup> This does not appear to be the meaning, however, for the manifestations are not identified with the Essence of God. The term as applied to Baha'u'llah



does mean that Baha'u'llah stands in a superior relation to previous manifestations, not that he is innately superior, for the manifestations are all the same inasmuch as they reflect the same God, but the intensity or fuller measure of Baha'u'llah's revelation, coming as it does at the stage of man's maturity, renders his station superior.

In some passages, Baha'u'llah seems to propose a finality for his revelation:

*It is evident that every age in which a Manifestation of God hath lived is divinely ordained, and may, in a sense, be characterized as God's appointed Day. This Day, however, is unique, and is to be distinguished from those that have preceded it. The designation "Seal of the Prophets" fully revealeth its high station. The Prophetic Cycle hath, verily, ended. The Eternal Truth is now come. He hath lifted up the Ensign of Power, and is now shedding upon the world the unclouded splendor of His Revelation.<sup>166</sup>*

The expression "Seal of the Prophets" is used by Muslims to mean that Muhammad was the last of the prophets. Baha'u'llah here applies this term to his own revelation. Elsewhere, Baha'u'llah writes:

*In this most mighty Revelation all the Dispensations of the past have attained their highest and final consummation. Whoso layeth claim to a Revelation after Him, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor.<sup>167</sup>*

The Bab, however, had indicated that there would be other manifestations to follow "*Him whom God shall manifest*" (Bayan 9:9). Baha'u'llah declares, however, that another manifestation will not appear for 1,000 years: "*Who layeth claim to a Revelation direct from God, ere the expiration of a full thousand years, such a man is assuredly a lying impostor.*"<sup>168</sup> Baha'is believe the manifestations to come after Baha'u'llah will be, however, in the shadow of Baha'u'llah,<sup>169</sup> meaning that their revelations will not be as resplendent.

The Bab's basic teaching concerning God and God's revelation through the successive manifestations is fully incorporated into Baha'u'llah's teaching, as well as other Babi concepts. The important difference is that Baha'u'llah, in claiming to be the greater manifestation foretold by the Bab, shifted the Babi loyalty from the Bab as God's spokesman of the age to himself and substituted for the Bab's *Bayan* his own holy book, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*.

### ***The new emphasis on spiritual conquests***

Another aspect of Baha'u'llah's transformation was the redirecting of Babi aspirations from military to spiritual conquests. Since the Babi episodes with the shah's troops, which had convulsed Persia for several years, resulting in the deaths of thousands of Persians (Babi and non-Babi), and the later open attempt to assassinate the shah by confessed members of the Babi religion, the Babi movement had gained the reputation of being an enemy to the government and aiming at its overthrow, thus subjecting the movement to severe persecution and political suspicion.

Baha'u'llah determined to [counter] and [reduce] both the persecution and the political suspicion by (1) explaining the reason behind the Babis' military exploits, (2) by setting forth the spiritual concerns of the Baha'is under his leadership, (3) and by stressing the Baha'i loyalty to government.

### **The Babis' military exploits**

The primary defense of the Babi uprisings is that the Babis were ignorant of the Bab's teachings. Baha'u'llah, in his conciliatory letter to the Persian shah, as quoted by 'Abdu'l-Baha, wrote that

*“sedition hath never been nor is pleasing to God, and that which certain ignorant persons formerly wrought was never approved,”* for Baha'u'llah held that it is better to be slain for God's good pleasure than to slay.<sup>170</sup> This position is generally followed by Baha'is. Mirza Abu'l-Fadl explains the Babis' military exploits in this manner:

These people who had just embraced the Baha'i religion were formerly Babis, and during the time of “Fitrat” (interval between two prophets or the time between the martyrdom of the Bab and the rise of Baha'u'llah) they had frequently departed from the limit of moderation, owing to the evil training of different leaders. Thus they had grown to consider many censurable actions as allowable and justifiable, such as disposing of men's property and pillaging the defeated. This latitude and laxity of principle likewise extended to the conflict and bloodshed permitted by their former religion, Islam. The Babis generally were ignorant of the ordinances of the Bab and supposed them to be similar to the doctrines of the Shi'ites, which they considered the source of the Babi religion. This ignorance was due to the fact that the Babis were strictly prohibited by the Persian rulers from holding intercourse with or visiting the Bab, while the latter was in prison. Thus they had been deprived of the opportunity of seeing Him and receiving instructions in His laws and ordinances. Warfare and pillage were absolutely violations of the fundamental basis of the Religion of Baha'o'llah, which was established for the express purpose of spreading universal brotherhood and humanity.<sup>171</sup>

Mirza Abu'l-Fadl, in defending the Baha'is in his audience before the governor of Tihiran and Mazandaran and the commander-in-chief of the Persian army, maintains that the Baha'is ought not to be punished or persecuted because of the former actions of the Babis, because he holds that the two religions are distinct:

Although some unseemly actions which proceeded from the Babis at the outset of the Cause can by no means be denied, nor can they be excused in any way, yet to arrest the Baha'is for the sins committed by the Babis is, in fact, the greatest error and oppression upon the part of the Government. For punishing an innocent one in lieu of the sinner is far from equity and justice. These unfortunate ones who are now subjected to the wrath and anger of the great Prince, have no connection with the Babis, nor are they of the same

religion and creed; nor have they ever seen any of those Babis who fought against the Government. ... Had the Bahais approved the conduct of the Babis and behaved accordingly they would not have become subject to their hostility and rancor.<sup>172</sup>

That the Babis were ignorant of the Bab's teachings may have some basis of fact, for the Bab in the *Bayan* had ruled that unbelievers were not to be killed, that anyone slaying another person was not to be considered one of the believers (4:5).

The intercourse between the Bab and his followers was not as restricted as is sometimes maintained, however,<sup>173</sup> but the swiftness of events connected with the Bab's ministry, his imprisonment for much of the period of his ministry, the dispersion of his believers in various parts of Persia, and the cataclysmic nature of the events of the latter part of his ministry were not calculated to render any wide diffusion or dissemination of his teachings practical.

### **The Baha'is' spiritual concerns**

Baha'u'llah ruled that his followers were not to take up arms against the government: "*Know thou that We have annulled the rule of the sword, as an aid to Our Cause, and substituted for it the power born of the utterance of men.*"<sup>174</sup> "*The sword of a virtuous character and upright conduct,*" Baha'u'llah declares, "*is sharper than blades of steel.*"<sup>175</sup>

Again, he says:

*Beware lest ye shed the blood of any one. Unsheathe the sword of your tongue from the scabbard of utterance, for therewith, ye can conquer the citadels of men's hearts. We have abolished the law to wage holy war against each other.*<sup>176</sup>

More pointedly, Baha'u'llah declares: "*By the assistance of God, the sharp swords of the Babi community have been returned to the scabbards*

*through good words and pleasing deeds.*"<sup>177</sup> The reason Baha'is need not take up arms, according to Baha'u'llah, is because their mission is the reconstruction, not the destruction, of the world:

This people need no weapons of destruction, inasmuch as they have girded themselves to reconstruct the world. Their hosts are the hosts of goodly deeds, and their arms are the arms of upright conduct, and their commander the fear of God.<sup>178</sup>

In books and tablets, by deeds, and testimony before public officials, the Baha'is under Baha'u'llah's leadership attempted to manifest that the real nature of their movement was concerned with spiritual rather than military or political interests.

### **Baha'i loyalty to the government**

Closely connected with Baha'u'llah's interest in directing his followers to spiritual rather than political concerns was his interest in establishing the character of the religion centering in his person as being entirely loyal to governmental powers. Baha'u'llah's teachings, similar to those of the Apostle Paul in Christianity, stress the right of those who govern as established by God and the need to render submission to their authority. Baha'u'llah quotes with approval from Paul's Epistle to the Romans that "every soul" is to "be subject to the higher powers".<sup>179</sup> In the spirit of Paul, Baha'u'llah in his *Kitab-i-'Ahd* writes:

*Kings are the manifestors of God's power and the source of His majesty and affluence. Pray ye in their behalf. The government of the earth has been vouchsafed unto them. But the hearts of men He decreed unto Himself.*<sup>180</sup>

Elsewhere, Baha'u'llah decrees: "To none is given the right to act in any manner that would run counter to the considered views of them who are in authority."<sup>181</sup>

### ***New laws and teachings***

All the writings of Baha'u'llah are accepted by Baha'is as Scripture, but one small volume, the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* ("Most Holy Book"), is considered as "the brightest emanation of the mind of Baha'u'llah, as the Mother Book of His Dispensation, and the Charter of His New World Order."<sup>182</sup> This book is Baha'u'llah's book of laws, corresponding to the Qur'an, the *Bayan*, and sacred books of previous dispensations. The work was written in 'Akka. A reference to the visit of "the king of Austria" to "the furthest Mosque" (*al-masjid al-aqsa*), an expression used in the Qur'an (17:1) to denote Jerusalem, is a reference to the Emperor Francis Joseph's visit to Jerusalem in 1869. An allusion to Napoleon III of France who had "returned with great loss to the dust" would bring the books date to 1873, when Napoleon III died.<sup>183</sup> That the work was composed before the spring of 1888 is known because Edward Browne at that time learned of its existence and later was given a copy of it.<sup>184</sup> A printed edition with a Russian translation by Captain Toumansky was published at St. Petersburg in 1899.<sup>185</sup>

No English translation of this most important work has yet been published-by Baha'is, although Shoghi Effendi delineates some of its basic features,<sup>186</sup> and the Baha'is lately have published a codified summary of its contents. An English translation by non-Baha'is, however, is available, and the following summary of some of its features is based on that translation. Shoghi Effendi has indicated that the laws of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* are "absolutely binding" on Baha'is and Baha'i institutions in both the East and the West "whenever practicable and not in direct conflict with the Civil Laws of the land."<sup>187</sup>

### Provisions of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*

Baha'u'llah abrogates a number of Muslim and Babi laws and regulations. The Bab had ordained that house furnishings were to be renewed every nineteen years, but Baha'u'llah says that God will exempt the one unable to do this. The Bab's prohibition against travelling to foreign lands is rescinded. The study of other languages is permitted. An important abrogation concerns the destruction of books:

*God has excused you from what was sent down in al-Bayan regarding the destruction of books. And we have permitted you to read of the learning (of the Islamic doctors) what is useful to you, but not that which results in controversy in speech.*<sup>188</sup>

Baha'u'llah reduces the number of daily prayers from five, in Muslim practice, to only three, in the morning, at noon, and in the late afternoon. The *qibla* (direction to face when praying) is established as wherever the manifestation may be. All things previously considered ceremonially unclean are declared to be clean. Baha'u'llah sanctions the use of gold and silver vessels, which was forbidden by Muslim law.<sup>189</sup> The wearing of silk, forbidden in Islam, is permitted.

Among the laws established by Baha'u'llah for his followers are the following: Marriage is made obligatory, but Baha'u'llah warns against having more than two wives, and he declares it better to have only one. Baha'u'llah goes beyond the Bab's law concerning marriage, which required only the consent of the bride and groom, to require also the consent of the parents. Baha'u'llah follows the Islamic marriage custom of requiring that a dowry (*mahr*) be paid by the husband to the wife, fixing the value between nineteen and ninety-fire *mithqals* of

gold for urbanites and the same amount in silver for villagers.<sup>190</sup> The dead are to be buried in coffins of crystal, rare stones, or beautiful hard woods, and engraved rings are to be placed on their fingers. The dead body is to be wrapped in five garments of silk or cotton, but for those unable to provide five, one is sufficient. Incumbent on everyone is the writing of a will in which one's belief in the unity of God and his manifestation is confessed. Fathers are to educate their sons and daughters. Worship and fasting are required of every boy and girl after reaching maturity (age fifteen). Made incumbent upon everyone is the engaging in some occupation.

As was true with the Bab, Baha'u'llah's laws extend even to minute personal matters. Baha'u'llah enjoins his followers concerning the paring of nails and taking a bath every week in water that covers the body and in water not previously used by someone else. The pouring of water over the body rather than getting into water is declared the better practice. Baha'is are to wash their feet every day in summer and once every three days in winter.

Baha'u'llah also forbids certain practices. The body of the dead may not be carried for burial farther than one hour's distance from the city. The confession of sins before anyone but God is not permitted. Prohibited also are the kissing of hands as an act of homage, the mounting into pulpits, the carrying of arms except in times of necessity, the worship of anyone but God, begging and giving to beggars, the opposing and killing of another person, the buying and selling of maid servants and



youths, the overloading of animals with more than they can carry, the use of opium, and engaging in gambling. Divorce is not permitted until after a year, allowing time for a possible marital reconciliation.

Baha'u'llah sets out the penalties for certain crimes. The penalty for killing someone by mistake is payment of 100 *mithqals* of gold. Adulterers and adulteresses must pay a fine to the House of Justice of nine *mithqals* of gold. One who burns a house intentionally is to be burned as punishment and one who kills another intentionally should be killed, but it is allowable that these only be condemned to perpetual imprisonment. Thieves are to be punished by banishment and prison. A third offense requires a sign placed on the forehead so that thieves may be identified and kept out of "the cities and provinces of God."<sup>191</sup>

Baha'u'llah also in the *Aqdas* sets out various requirements concerning the manner of worship and who may be exempted under certain circumstances. Also a complicated tax of inheritance is set forth.<sup>192</sup>

### **The emphasis on unity**

Baha'u'llah's primary emphasis is on the note of unity, the unity of God, the unity of religion, and the unity of mankind. He saw himself as the figure predicted in all the sacred Scriptures of past ages who would usher in mankind's golden age of peace and unity.

*He Who is the Unconditioned is come, in the clouds of light, that He may quicken all created things with the breezes of His Name, the Most Merciful, and unify the world, and gather all men around this Table, which hath been sent down from heaven.*<sup>193</sup>

He attempted to annul through his words all the laws and teachings of past ages which served only to divide man,<sup>194</sup> he urged his followers

to “consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship”,<sup>195</sup> and he saw religion as a mighty force in molding men together and in thus bringing about the unity of the world.<sup>196</sup> Transforming the Babi religion into a religion centering in his own person, he was thus in a position to make further modifications, directing his followers from their more militant past to spiritual conquests, abrogating past laws and teachings which he felt were hindrances to his broader concerns, and adding his own teachings which were motivated throughout by a passionate desire to bring harmony and unity to the world. Baha'u'llah believed that he had created a religion destined to unite mankind in one universal faith and one world order. But he also saw that religion could be used to defeat the very purposes for which it existed: “*The religion of God is to create love and unity; do not make it the cause of enmity and discord.*”<sup>197</sup>

#### 4. Baha'u'llah and the supersession of the Babi Dispensation

- 1 Edward G. Browne, “Bab, Babis”, *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, ed. by James Hastings (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1955), II, 301.
- 2 Lady Blomfield (Sitarieh Khanum), *The Chosen Highway* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1967), p. 50.
- 3 John Ferraby, *All Things Made New* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 215.
- 4 H. M. Balyuzi, *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith* (London: George Ronald, 1970), p. 39 (hereinafter referred to as *Browne*). The quoted words are from Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 163.
- 5 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 112.
- 6 cf. Browne's statement that the Bab “had nominated as his successor” Mirza Yahya (Edward G. Browne, *A Year Amongst the Persians* [3d ed.; A. and C. Black, 1959], p. 226, n. 2 [hereinafter referred to as *Year*]).
- 7 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 114.
- 8 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, Vol. II; English Translation and Notes (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), Note W, p. 350 (hereinafter referred to as *Traveller's Narrative*). See also Edward G. Browne, ed. and trans., *The Tarikh-i-Jadid or New History of Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab*, by Mirza Husayn of Hamadan (Cambridge: University Press, 1893), pp. xviii-xix (hereinafter referred to as *New History*), and Browne, “Bab, Babis”, p. 307.
- 9 Joseph Arthur Gobineau, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale* (Paris: Didier et Cie, 1866), p. 277; see Samuel Graham Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims* (New York: Fleming A. Revell Co., 1915), p. 184, n. 3.
- 10 Browne, *Year*, p. 352; see also pp. 366–67.
- 11 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, p. 381; see also Edward G. Browne, ed., *Kitab-i-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Years A.D. 1850 and 1852*, edited from the Unique Paris Ms. Suppl. Persan 1071 (Leiden, E. J. Brill, 1910. London: Luzac & Co., 1910), pp. xxxi-xxxii (hereinafter referred to as *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*).
- 12 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xxxii.

- 13 Browne published both the text and translation of the document in his article  
 “The Babis of Persia”, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain  
 and Ireland*, XXI (October, 1889), 996–97. The English translation also appears  
 in Appendix IV of the *New History*, p. 426.
- 14 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 39.
- 15 Edward G. Browne, tr., “Personal Reminiscences of the Babi Insurrection at  
 Zanzan in 1850, Written in Persian by Aqa ‘Abdu’l-Abad-i-Zanjani, and  
 Translated into English by Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.R.A.S.”, *The Journal of the  
 Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXIX (1897), 763 (hereinafter  
 referred to as “Personal Reminiscences”); cited by Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 39.
- 16 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 39, n. 4.
- 17 Browne, *New History*, Appendix IV, pp. 422–23.
- 18 See Richard Cavendish, *The Black Arts* (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1967),  
 pp. 117–21.
- 19 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, p. 381.
- 20 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 95, n. 1; see also p. xxiv and Note W, p. 374.
- 21 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 51; Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 49.
- 22 Nabil-i-A’zam (Muhammad-i-Zarandi), *The Dawn-Breakers, Nabil’s Narrative of  
 the Early Days of the Baha’i Revelation*, tr. by Shoghi Effendi (London: Baha’i  
 Publishing Trust, 1953), p. 55.
- 23 The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the British Isles, *The  
 Centenary of a World Faith, The History of the Baha’i Faith and Its Development  
 in the British Isles* (London: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 10.
- 24 Browne, *Nuqtatu’l-Kaf*, p. xxxiv.
- 25 Browne, *Year*, p. 352.
- 26 idem, pp. 366–67.
- 27 idem, p. 345.
- 28 Browne, *New History*, Appendix II, pp. 346–47; see also Appendix II, p. 388 and  
 p. 64, n. 1.
- 29 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 62.
- 30 ibid.
- 31 See Wilson, *Baha’ism and Its Claims*, p. 42.
- 32 Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 50.
- 33 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha’u’llah*, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette,  
 Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1963), p. 90 (hereinafter referred to as *Gleanings*);  
*Prayers and Meditations by Baha’u’llah*, comp. and tr. by Shoghi Effendi  
 (London: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1957), pp. 107, 117, 140.
- 34 Mirza Abul Fazl, *Hujaj’ul Bahiyyeh (the Baha’i Proofs)*, tr. by Ali Kuli Khan (New  
 York: J. W. Pratt Co., 1902), p. 52 (hereinafter referred to as *Proofs*).
- 35 idem, pp. 52–53.
- 36 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 101–102.
- 37 Browne, *Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 98.
- 38 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 63.
- 39 Browne, *Year*, p. 226, n. 2.
- 40 Browne, *New History*, Appendix IV, p. 426.
- 41 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 28–29.

- 42 idem, p. 90.
- 43 idem, p. 164.
- 44 See above, pp. 175–80.
- 45 See above, pp. 182–83.
- 46 Browne, Appendix II, p. 381.
- 47 Gobineau, *Les Religions*, II, 72–73, cited by William McElwee Miller, *Baha'ism: Its Origin, History, and Teachings* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1931), p. 72.
- 48 Browne, *New History*, p. xx.
- 49 idem, p. xxi.
- 50 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 63.
- 51 Browne, *New History*, p. xxii.
- 52 idem, Appendix II, p. 380.
- 53 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 103.
- 54 Shoghi Effendi identifies him as Sadiq-i-Tabrizi (*God Passes By*, p. 62).
- 55 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 53, n. 1.
- 56 idem, Note T, p. 322.
- 57 idem, p. 50.
- 58 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 62.
- 59 Ruhyyih Rabbani, *Prescription for Living* (London: George Ronald, 1960), p. 161.
- 60 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1962), p. 21; see also Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 52–53.
- 61 Browne, *Year*, p. 111. The “master” whose martyrdom Sadiq was grieving was, according to Abu'l-Fadl, not the Bab but Sadiq's master, a prominent Babi to whom he was devotedly attached (Abu'l-Fadl, *Proofs*, p. 46).
- 62 Peter Avery, *Modern Iran* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1965), p. 65.
- 63 Edward G. Browne, comp., *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 267–71.
- 64 Abul Fazl, *Proofs*, pp. 50–51; Browne, *New History*, Note W, p. 376.
- 65 Ruhyyih Khanum, *Prescription for Living*, p. 162.
- 66 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 380.
- 67 idem, p. 375. According to Mirza Yahya's own testimony, he arrived a few days after Baha'u'llah.
- 68 idem, p. 355; see also Browne, *New History*, p. xx.
- 69 Edward G. Browne, “Babiism”, *Religious Systems of the World* (London: Swan Sonnenschein and Co., 1905), p. 350.
- 70 Abul Fazl, *Proofs*, p. 51.
- 71 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 358.
- 72 Browne, *New History*, p. xxi; see above, p. 188.
- 73 Browne, *Materials*, p. 218. The followers of Dayyan (Mirza Asadu'llah of Khuy) called themselves Asadiyyun, or Asadis (*Materials*, p. 219).
- 74 idem, p. 227; Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 44.
- 75 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 120; Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 64.
- 76 David Hofman, *Renewal of Civilization*, Talisman Books (London: George Ronald, 1960), p. 21.
- 77 Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*, tr. Shoghi Effendi

- (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 251.
- 78 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, pp. 356–57.
- 79 idem, p. 357, n. 1.
- 80 idem, p. 357.
- 81 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xxxii; Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 78.
- 82 Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Iqan*, p. 251.
- 83 Baha'u'llah, *The Book of Ighan*, tr. Ali Kuli Khan, assisted by Howard MacNutt (2d ed.; Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1907), p. 180.
- 84 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 78.
- 85 idem, p. 79.
- 86 Browne, *New History*, pp. 315–16.
- 87 idem, Appendix II, p. 381.
- 88 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 127.
- 89 Baha'is date the *Kitab-i-Iqan* as written in 1862. Browne wrote in the *Traveller's Narrative* (p. 27, n. 1) that it was written in Baghdad in AH 1278 (CE 1861–1862) but in a later article assigns the date as about 1855–1859 (Browne, “Bab, Babis”, p. 307). J. R. Richards maintains that the work was written in AH 1274 (CE 1857–1858) (*The Religion of the Baha'is* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932. New York: Macmillan Co., 1932], p. 56).
- 90 Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Iqan*, p. 253.
- 91 idem, p. 201.
- 92 idem, p. 244.
- 93 idem, p. 143.
- 94 idem, p. 231.
- 95 idem, p. 252.
- 96 idem, p. 253.
- 97 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 56; Miller, *Baha'ism*, p. 78.
- 98 One such passage is the following: “By God! This Bird of Heaven, now dwelling upon the dust, can, besides these melodies, utter a myriad songs, and is able, apart from these utterances, to unfold innumerable mysteries. Every single note of its unpronounced utterances is immeasurably exalted above all that hath already been revealed, and immensely glorified beyond that which hath streamed from this Pen. Let the future disclose the hour when the Brides of inner meaning, will, as decreed by the Will of God, hasten forth, unveiled, out of their mystic mansions, and manifest themselves in the ancient realm of being.” (Baha'u'llah, *Kitab-i-Iqan*, pp. 175–76)
- 99 Browne, *Materials*, pp. 275–87.
- 100 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 55, n. 3; Browne, “Bab, Babis”, p. 302; Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xxxiii. Baha'u'llah was born in 1817.
- 101 E. E. Elder and William McE. Miller, tr. and ed., *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*, by Mirza Husayn 'Ali Baha'u'llah, “Oriental Translation Fund”, New Series Vol. XXXVIII (London: Published by the Royal Asiatic Society and sold by its Agents Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1961), p. 34 and n. 4 (hereinafter referred to as *Aqdas*).
- 102 Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, 1904), p. 30.

- 103 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 59, citing *Suratu'l-Haykal* (AH 1308), p. 172f.
- 104 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 45.
- 105 idem, p. 45, n. 2.
- 106 idem, p. 58.
- 107 George Townshend, *Christ and Baha'u'llah* (London: George Ronald, 1963), p. 77.
- 108 idem, p. 78.
- 109 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 73.
- 110 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. xvii; Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. lxx, xxv-xxvi [xvii].
- 111 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. xxvii-xxviii; William McElwee Miller, "The Baha'i Cause Today", *The Moslem World*, XXX (Oct., 1940), 381.
- 112 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 55 and n. 3; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 98.
- 113 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 103.
- 114 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 353; Browne, *New History*, p. 301, n. 4.
- 115 Browne, *Materials*, p. 117; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 155.
- 116 Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 59.
- 117 Ruhyyih Rabbani, *Prescription for Living*, p. 173.
- 118 For the Azali version, see Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, pp. 358-59; for a Baha'i version, see Bahyyih Khanum's account in Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, p. 40. See also Phelps' reasons for believing the Azali version is a "transparent fabrication" (p. 42, n. 1) and Wilson's objections to Phelps' reasons (*Baha'ism and Its Claims*, pp. 226-27).
- 119 See *The Proclamation of Baha'u'llah to the Kings and Leaders of the World* (Haifa, Israel: Baha'i World Centre, 1967); William Sears, *The Prisoner and the Kings* (Toronto, Canada: General Pub. Co., 1971); Firuz Kazemzadeh, "Baha'u'llah's Call to the Nations", *World Order*, II (Winter, 1967), 10-14; and Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 171-76.
- 120 See Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, p. 76.
- 121 Horace Holley, *Bahaism: The Modern Social Religion* (New York: Mitchell Kennerly, 1913), p. 164.
- 122 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 98.
- 123 idem, Note W, p. 360; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 360.
- 124 idem, p. 100n.
- 125 idem, p. 102n.
- 126 idem, pp. xxxix-xl.
- 127 Browne, *Year*, pp. 558-61. Browne believes these numbers exceed the actual number of those involved (*Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 370).
- 128 Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, pp. 73-75.
- 129 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 34.
- 130 E. Denison Ross, "Babism", *Great Religions of the World* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1912), p. 209n; Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 370.
- 131 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 370.
- 132 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 73; see also Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 93, n. 1.

- 133 Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 82. The information that 'Abdu'l-Baha interceded for the Baha'is involved in the murders was given to Browne by the Baha'i, Shaykh Ibrahim (*Year*, p. 561).
- 134 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 221.
- 135 Horace Holley, "A Statement of the Purpose and Principles of the Baha'i Faith", *Baha'i Year Book*, Vol. I (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1916), p. 13.
- 136 Ruhyyih, *Prescription for Living*, p. 178.
- 137 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xii; see above, p. 117.
- 138 William Sears, *The Wine of Astonishment*, Talisman Books (London: George Ronald, 1963), p. 90. The Shah Bahram, the Zoroastrian Messiah, whom Baha'is identify with Baha'u'llah was to be a descendent of Hurmuz, the son of the last Sassanian king, Yazdagird III (d. CE 651), whose rule was brought to a close by the Muslim invasions of Persia (*Browne, Year*, p. 484).
- 139 Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*, pp. xxiv-xxv; see also Browne, "Bab, Babis", p. 303.
- 140 Browne, *New History*, pp. xxiv-xxv.
- 141 Samuel Graham Wilson, *Modern Movements among Moslems* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1916), p. 124.
- 142 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 92.
- 143 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 72 and n. 1.
- 144 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, pp. xxiv-xxv.
- 145 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, pp. 141, 142, 158.
- 146 *Baha'i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), p. 202, hereinafter referred to as *Baha'i World Faith*).
- 147 *Gleanings*, pp. 244-45.
- 148 W. M. Miller, however, in his new book favors the view that the Bab did not use the term with the traditional Shi'ite meaning.
- 149 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 3.
- 150 idem, p. 3.
- 151 Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 202.
- 152 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, Note W, p. 359.
- 153 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 81.
- 154 idem, p. 82.
- 155 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 41.
- 156 *Gleanings*, p. 228.
- 157 idem, p. 49.
- 158 idem, pp. 47-48.
- 159 idem, p. 49.
- 160 idem, p. 50.
- 161 Bahá'u'lláh in *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 21.
- 162 idem, p. 24.
- 163 idem, p. 25.
- 164 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 57.
- 165 Browne, *Year*, p. 340.
- 166 *Gleanings*, p. 60.

- 167 idem, p. 224.
- 168 idem, p. 346.
- 169 Ferraby, *All Things Made New*, p. 304.
- 170 Browne, *Traveller's Narrative*, p. 115. See also 'Abdu'l-Baha's comments in the *Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 35, 65.
- 171 Abul Fazl, *Proofs*, p. 66.
- 172 idem, pp. 77–78. Abu'l-Fadl apparently means by the "Babis" in this last sentence the supporters of Subh-i-Azal; cf. Balyuzi, *Browne*, p. 26.
- 173 Ruhyyiyh Khanum, widow of Shoghi Effendi, indicates that at Mah-Ku the Bab was allowed walks and that pilgrims "from the corners of the land" were "freely permitted to enter his presence". She further refers to how the Bab in Chihriq was "at first rigorously confined" but how he gradually won over many who oppressed him, and the official in charge "would in spite of emphatic instructions he had received, deny no one access to the Bab, for whom he had conceived a deep attachment; on the contrary, large assemblies of pilgrims, seekers and local inhabitants would be permitted to gather, and to hear, spellbound, His public discourses." (Ruhyyiyh, *Prescription for Living*, pp. 141–44)
- 174 *Gleanings*, p. 303.
- 175 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 29.
- 176 idem, p. 25.
- 177 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 173.
- 178 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 74.
- 179 idem, p. 91.
- 180 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 209.
- 181 *Gleanings*, p. 241.
- 182 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 213.
- 183 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 48, n. 2. Shoghi Effendi says that the work was "revealed soon after Baha'u'llah had been transferred to the house of 'Udi Khammar" about 1873 (*God Passes By*, p. 213).
- 184 Browne, *Year*, pp. 328, 344.
- 185 Browne, "Bab, Babis", p. 307.
- 186 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 213–16.
- 187 See *The Baha'i World: A Biennial International Record*, Vol. VI (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1937), p. 71.
- 188 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 45.
- 189 idem, p. 37 and n. 2.
- 190 "A *mithqal* is approximately five grammes or one-seventh of an ounce" (Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 38, n. 1).
- 191 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 37.
- 192 idem, pp. 24–31. See also Shoghi Effendi's summary of the *Aqdas* (*God Passes By*, pp. 213–16).
- 193 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 46.
- 194 idem, pp. 33–34; *Gleanings*, p. 95.
- 195 *Gleanings*, p. 95.
- 196 *Baha'i World Faith*, pp. 180–98, 201; Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p.



28.

<sup>197</sup> *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 209.







**'Abdu'l-Baha and the  
prerogatives of "the servant"**

Baha'u'llah before his "ascension" provided that his eldest son would become his successor in the leadership of the Baha'i religion. He had written in his *Kitab-i-Aqdas* that after his passing the believers were to turn to "*the one who is a Branch from this ancient Root*",<sup>1</sup> indicating by the word "Branch" that one of his sons was to succeed him, though he is here unnamed. In Baha'u'llah's will, the *Kitab-i-'Ahd*, however, that son is identified as "*the most great Branch*", a title of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

*God's Will and Testament enjoins upon the branches, the twigs, and the kinsfolk, one and all, to gaze unto the most great Branch. Consider what we have revealed in my Book of Aqdas, to wit:*

*"When the sea of My Presence is exhausted and the Book of Origin hath reached its end, turn you unto him ('Abdu'l-Baha) who is desired by God—he who is issued from this ancient Root."*

*The purpose of this sacred verse is the most great Branch. Thus have we declared the matter as a favor on our part, and we are the gracious, the beneficent!*

*God hath, verily, decreed the station of the great Branch next to that of the most great Branch.*<sup>2</sup>

In the translation of the *Kitab-i-'Ahd* as here given, "*the most great Branch*" refers to 'Abdu'l-Baha and "the great Branch" to 'Ali Muhammad, the eldest son of another of Baha'u'llah's wives, yet younger than 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Another passage in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* reads:

*O people of Creation, whenever the dove flies from the forest of praise and makes for the furthestmost hidden goal, then refer what you did not understand in the Book to the Bough which branches from the Self-Subsistent Stock.*<sup>3</sup>

Richards renders this passage “refer what you do not know from the Book to the Branch that springeth forth from this upright Stock” and says that the

passage is ambiguous, for whilst it can be read to mean that ‘Abdu’l-Baha has the right of interpreting the book, it can also be read to mean that all matters not dealt with in the book are to be referred to him.<sup>4</sup>

Richards feels that “it is therefore a matter of doubt whether he really had the right to interpret the ‘Aqdas’.”<sup>5</sup>

The point of the matter is that Baha’u’llah appointed ‘Abdu’l-Baha as his successor to whom the believers were to turn for guidance after his passing, and ‘Abdu’l-Baha, therefore, was in a position to make whatever decisions or modifications in the religion he considered necessary or expedient. But were there limits to the modifications which ‘Abdu’l-Baha might legitimately make? Could ‘Abdu’l-Baha overstep the prerogatives which were his as Baha’u’llah’s appointed successor? The question of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s prerogatives became the burning issue in the stage of the Baha’i religion’s development centering in the figure of ‘Abdu’l-Baha.

### **Sketch of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s life**

Baha’is give the birth of Abbas Effendi (who later took the title of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, “*the Servant of Baha*”) as May 23, 1841, the very evening when the Bab declared his mission.<sup>6</sup> Bahiyyih Khanum, ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s sister, indicates that he was born in Tihiran “in the spring of 1844, at midnight following the day upon which, in the evening, the Bab made his declaration”, so that he was eight and she was five in August, 1852, when the attempt was made on the Shah’s life.<sup>7</sup> Thorton Chase, a Baha’i, later wrote that ‘Abdu’l-Baha was born “at the very hour while the Bab was uttering in Shiraz

his declaration of the fullness of the times and the coming of the Great Revealer."<sup>8</sup> Still later, J. E. Esslemont, in his popular introduction to the Baha'i faith, wrote that "the exact hour" of 'Abdu'l-Baha's birth "has not been ascertained",<sup>9</sup> but elsewhere in the volume he gives his birth as "shortly before midnight on the 23rd May, 1844, in the very same hour in which the Bab declared His mission."<sup>10</sup> If 'Abdu'l-Baha was born near midnight, then he would not have been born in the very hour when the Bab declared his mission, which is given as two hours and eleven minutes after sunset. Baha'is seem to have abandoned the view that 'Abdu'l-Baha was born in the hour of the Bab's declaration. The British *Centenary* volume, celebrating the Bab's declaration, gives 'Abdu'l-Baha's birth as May 23, 1844, and points out that "only a few hours earlier, the Bab had revealed His mission".<sup>11</sup> And the third revised edition (1970) of Esslemont's *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* changes the words "the very same hour" to "the very same night".<sup>12</sup>

According to a list of descendants of Mirza Buzurg of Nur, Baha'u'llah's father, which was sent to Edward Browne by an Azali scribe of Isfahan living in Tihiran, 'Abdu'l-Baha was born in AH 1259/ CE 1841. The original of this list is in the handwriting of a certain Mirza Ibrahim Khan, the son of the niece of Mirza Buzurg's daughter, Shah Sultan Khanum, Baha'u'llah's half-sister.<sup>13</sup>

According to this account, 'Abdu'l-Baha would have been eleven years old in 1852 when his father was imprisoned. From this time until the "Young Turk" revolution in 1908, 'Abdu'l-Baha was subjected to exile and sometimes imprisonment as was his father until his death in 1892. As a result of this revolution, all religious and political prisoners held under

the previous regime were released. Shoghi Effendi sees the three years of 'Abdu'l-Baha's travels in Egypt, Europe, and America which began in 1910 as marking

a turning point of the utmost significance in the history of the century. For the first time since the inception of the Faith, sixty-six years previously, its Head and supreme Representative burst asunder the shackles which had throughout the ministries of both the Bab and Baha'u'llah so grievously fettered its freedom.<sup>14</sup>

In September, 1910, 'Abdu'l-Baha sailed for Egypt, remaining at Port Said for about a month, and set out for Europe but was prevented from going further due to ill health. But on September 4, 1911, 'Abdu'l-Baha arrived in London, England, and on September 10 he delivered his first public address before a Western audience in the City Temple in Holborn. This was the beginning of numerous speaking engagements in Christian churches and before Jewish, Muslim, and other religious groups.<sup>15</sup>

From London, 'Abdu'l-Baha went to Paris, where he stayed for nine weeks, delivering various addresses as well as short talks each morning in the salon of his apartment at 4 Avenue de Camoëns.<sup>16</sup> He returned to Egypt in December, 1911, and spent the winter in Ramleh.

According to H. M. Balyuzi, it was suggested to 'Abdu'l-Baha that he might travel to the United States in the *Titanic*, which was about to make her maiden voyage, but 'Abdu'l-Baha preferred a long sea journey on a slower boat and so sailed on the *S. S. Cedric* from Alexandria on March 25, 1912, arriving in New York on April 11.<sup>17</sup> Just before midnight on April 14, 1912, the *Titanic* on its maiden voyage from Southampton to New York crashed into an iceberg and sank.

'Abdu'l-Baha's historic tour of the United States extended from April 11 to December 5, 1912. He travelled from the East to the West coast,



visiting such cities as Buffalo, Washington, DC, Philadelphia, Chicago, Omaha, Denver, Sacramento, and Los Angeles. He delivered more than one hundred eighty addresses in Christian churches of various denominations, in Jewish temples and synagogues, on university campuses, in homes, and before various interest groups.<sup>17</sup> One significant event connected with 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to the United States was the dedication of the temple grounds of the *Mashriqu'l-Adhkar*, "Dawning-place of the Praises of God", the Baha'i house of worship in Wilmette, Illinois, a suburb of Chicago, on May 1, 1912. 'Abdu'l-Baha, himself, laid the foundation stone,<sup>18</sup> giving to the Wilmette temple the distinction of being not only the first Baha'i temple in the West (hence its designation, "Mother Temple of the West") but of being the only Baha'i temple whose foundation stone was laid by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The publicity given to 'Abdu'l-Baha in newspapers and magazines proved a great boon for the Baha'i movement, for many were attracted to the religion through these notices. The glamour of a religious prisoner being set free and touring the world in the name of world peace was seized upon by the press. James T. Bixby referred to 'Abdu'l-Baha in these terms:

As an international ambassador of peace, the first one of the acknowledged primates of a considerable Church to exhibit public and conspicuous activity in opposing war, the presence of this head of the Bahai faith to co-operate to the establishment of "the Most Great Peace," and the bringing together of all the nations in harmony, under treaty agreements, to submit their differences to the judicial decision of Arbitration Boards is both a notable and a helpful event.<sup>19</sup>

The *Literary Digest* wrote: "It is not necessary to accept Abbas Effendi as a veritable prophet, or to fall at his feet in adoration, in order to recognize in him one of the great religious thinkers and teachers of the time."<sup>20</sup>

Notice was given to how within a week of his arrival in England, where 'Abdu'l-Baha was almost unknown, he delivered an address in the City Temple, "being introduced by its rector as the leader of one of the most remarkable religious movements of this or any other age," and how after his arrival in the United States similar invitations to speak in churches were extended to him by various ministers.<sup>21</sup> Some Christians were appalled by the welcome reception given to 'Abdu'l-Baha during his travel in the United States. Robert M. Labaree wrote:

The effect of this reception was most unfortunate. It gave to Abbas Effendi a larger hearing than he ever could have won for himself, and it created an unwarranted presumption in his favor.<sup>22</sup>

Ruth White, who authored *Abdul-Baha and the Promised Age* and other books on the Baha'i movement, was first attracted to Baha'i by a photograph of 'Abdu'l-Baha appearing in a newspaper. She speaks of the "remarkable photograph in the paper which a newsboy thrust toward me. It was a photograph of Abdul Baha, gazing at me with benign serenity and the wisdom of the ages written on his face."<sup>23</sup> Most of the photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha which may be seen today are from the period of his world travels.

After leaving the United States, 'Abdu'l-Baha returned to England, from whence he proceeded to Paris, Stuttgart, Budapest, Vienna, back to Stuttgart, then to Paris again, back to Egypt, and then returned to Haifa, Israel, thus concluding his travels on December 5, 1913.<sup>24</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha arrived back in Haifa shortly before the outbreak of World War I. The war years were a time of literary production for 'Abdu'l-Baha. The important Tablets of the Divine Plan were revealed from March 26, 1916, to March 8, 1917.<sup>25</sup> During these trying years 'Abdu'l-Baha also had

certain Baha'i properties cultivated, and the food was used in the relief of famine. For this latter work, 'Abdu'l-Baha was knighted by the British Empire.<sup>26</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha passed away on November 28, 1921. His funeral, according to Shoghi Effendi, was attended by no less than ten thousand people from every class, religion, and race in that country. Among those sending messages of condolence were Winston Churchill, British Secretary of State for the colonies, Viscount Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt, and General Sir Arthur Money, former Chief Administrator of Palestine. Behind the coffin walked members of his family, Sir Herbert Samuel, the British High Commissioner, Sir Ronald Storrs, the Governor of Jerusalem, Sir Stewart Symes, the Governor of Phoenicia, and various other government officials and notables representing various religious groups.<sup>27</sup>

### **Opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership**

Baha'u'llah definitely appointed 'Abdu'l-Baha as his successor, but Baha'u'llah also had indicated that no new manifestation would appear for 1,000 years. What, then, were 'Abdu'l-Baha's legitimate rights? To what extent could he exercise his rights as Baha'u'llah's appointed successor without appropriating to himself the prerogatives of an independent manifestation? This issue divided Baha'u'llah's family into two opposing factions, with 'Abdu'l-Baha at the head of one, and his half-brother, Muhammad 'Ali, at the head of the other. Almost all of Baha'u'llah's family ranged themselves against 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>28</sup> The issues over which they divided throw some light on the transformation in the religion effected by 'Abdu'l-Baha.

The first occasion for differences between Baha'u'llah's sons followed immediately upon Baha'u'llah's death. Nine days after Baha'u'llah's passing, 'Abdu'l-Baha chose nine persons to hear the reading of Baha'u'llah's will, one of whom was Mirza Jawad, who reports that 'Abdu'l-Baha had concealed a portion of the will with a blue leaf (of paper). Aqa Riza of Shiraz, at a sign from 'Abdu'l-Baha, read the will to the place covered by the blue leaf. 'Abdu'l-Baha explained: "Verily a portion of this book is concealed for a good reason, because the time doth not admit of its full disclosure." That afternoon, Majdu'd-Din Effendi read it again to the same place and read no further.<sup>29</sup>

Mirza Jawad, in cementing on this action, probably expresses the general feeling of those who began to question 'Abdu'l-Baha's rights:

Let it not be hidden from persons of discernment that the injunctions set forth in the above-mentioned book all refer to this community generally; how then could it be right for Abbas Efendi to disclose what he wished and conceal a portion thereof? For there is no doubt that if what was so concealed had not been suitable [for general publication] His holiness Baha'u'llah would not have written it in His august writings.<sup>30</sup>

The most serious charge against 'Abdul-Baha was that he "adopted the position of originality",<sup>31</sup> meaning that he claimed to be the "bearer of a new Revelation".<sup>32</sup> This charge seems to have been based not on any explicit claim by 'Abdul-Baha but on an interpretation of certain of his sayings, such as: "The Dispensation in its entirety hath reverted to this visible place [to 'Abdul-Baha] and it is not [permissible] for anyone to stir save after his permission."<sup>33</sup>

The position 'Abdul-Baha seems to have taken is that he, as the living interpreter of Baha'u'llah's words, held the exclusive right

of giving a final judgment of their meaning. The matter of interpretation, therefore, was not left to private judgment by Baha'u'llah's followers. The "unitarians" (as the followers of Muhammad 'Ali called themselves) represented a kind of Protestant "back to the Bible" movement, however, for they placed ultimate authority in Baha'u'llah's written words. In support of their position, they pointed to the verse in the *Aqdas*: "If you differ on a matter, bring it back to God while the sun shines from the horizon of this heaven. Whenever it sets [when Baha'u'llah dies], go back to that which was sent down from Him [his writings]."<sup>34</sup> The unitarians, therefore, attempted to arrange a meeting between themselves and 'Abdu'l-Baha to work out their differences by referring their questions to Baha'u'llah's writings, but 'Abdu'l-Baha refused to respond to this arrangement.

The problem was this: if 'Abdu'l-Baha, or any future head of the religion, could be called into question over whether or not his actions or teachings were in accord with Baha'u'llah's writings, then his authority would always be subject to the decision reached by representatives from the differing factions and he could never guarantee the unity of the faith by his own final decision; if, however, 'Abdu'l-Baha's actions, decisions, and teachings were subject to no restrictions, then he was free to make whatever modifications or additions to the religion he might desire to make. Baha'is generally have given unquestioned loyalty to each appointed successor, seemingly never allowing the possibility that one might exceed his proper authority as an appointed head.

The issues between the unitarians and 'Abdu'l-Baha's followers was further aggravated by the overzealous desire of some Baha'is to

identify 'Abdu'l-Baha with the returned Christ and to place him in the same category with the Bab and Baha'u'llah. Ruhyyiyh Khanum refers to "the unfounded but over-enthusiastic claims of some of the Baha'is that He too partook of the Prophetic powers shared by the Bab and Baha'u'llah."<sup>35</sup>

This identification was largely due to the teaching of Ibrahim George Khayru'llah, a Christian Arab who had been converted to the Baha'i religion during the lifetime of Baha'u'llah (in 1890). He arrived in New York in December, 1892, leaving there in July, 1893, for Michigan, and moved to Chicago in February, 1894, which became the center of his activities in teaching the new faith.<sup>36</sup> Within a two-year period, Khayru'llah won some 2,000 Americans to Baha'i, 700 in Chicago alone.<sup>37</sup> Many of the outstanding early Baha'is in the United States were won through the efforts of Khayru'llah. Khayru'llah, however, did not teach pure Baha'i but added teachings of his own. He taught that God did not manifest himself through the personality of Baha'u'llah, as with Jesus, but that Baha'u'llah was actually God himself. Abbas Effendi ('Abdu'l-Baha), Khayru'llah maintained, was the reincarnation of Jesus Christ.<sup>38</sup> This teaching was possibly construed from the Baha'i teaching that Baha'u'llah is "the Father", and 'Abdu'l-Baha, being the son of Baha'u'llah, would be thus the son of God, or a return of the station of Jesus Christ. Helping to complicate matters was the title given to 'Abdu'l-Baha by Baha'u'llah of *Aqa*, generally treated into English as "Master", a word used by Christians in reference to Christ. *Aqa*, however, is the Persian equivalent of "mister" or "sir".<sup>39</sup>

The equating of 'Abdu'l-Baha with Christ and the manifestations may be seen in these statements: Florian King said to 'Abdu'l-Baha: "To me

Thou art Baha'u'llah, Thou art Muhammad, Thou art Jesus, Thou art Moses, Thou art Buddha." When she asked if she light kiss his hand (an act forbidden by Baha'u'llah), 'Abdu'l-Baha replied: "No, my daughter, it is not permitted; the personality is not to be worshipped; the Light it is which is of importance, not the lamp through which it shines."<sup>40</sup>

Mirza Valiyu'llah Khan Varqa, son of the martyred poet, Varqa records how one night Baha'u'llah said to Varqa: "At stated periods souls are sent to earth by the Mighty God with what we call 'the Power of the Great Ether'. And they who possess this power can do anything; they have all Power." Then says Mirza Valiyu'llah Khan Varqa:

Jesus Christ had this Power.

The people thought of Him as a poor young man, Whom they had crucified; but He possessed the Power of the Great Ether, therefore He could not remain underground. This ethereal Power arose and quickened the world. And now look to the Master, for this Power is His.<sup>41</sup>

A. P. Dodge understood the biblical prophecies concerning "the Son of Man" to refer to 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>42</sup> Isabella D. Brittingham, on pilgrimage to 'Akka, spoke of 'Abdu'l-Baha:

I have seen the King in his beauty, the Master is here and we need not look for another. This is the return of the Lion of the tribe of Judah, of the Lamb that once was slain; ... the Glory of God and the Glory of the Lamb.<sup>43</sup>

Horace Holley, in his volume *Baha'i: The Spirit of the Age*, advanced the idea of a "Cosmic Trinity" of love, will, and knowledge being manifested, respectively in the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and 'Abdu'l-Baha. He sees these "three Manifestations of God"<sup>44</sup> existing on a cosmic or spiritual plane above the merely human, and by coming into the human plane they are able to lift man to higher levels.<sup>45</sup>

'Abdul-Baha, however, repeatedly denied that he was Christ. To Julia Grundy, an pilgrimage in 'Akka, 'Abdu'l-Baha said:

I am nothing but the Servant of God. Some in America are looking for a 'third Christ' or personage [in addition to the Bab and Baha'u'llah]. This is only imagination. Some call me Christ. This also is imagination. ... Do they realize that I make no claim for myself.<sup>46</sup>

Grundy again reports 'Abdu'l-Baha as saying: "I am only His [God's] Servant; nothing more."<sup>47</sup> Constance E. Maud reports:

Some people came to him asking if he were a re-incarnation of the Christ. He laughed at the question in his kindly wise way. "No, no, no," he answered emphatically, "I am not the Christ—I am not even a prophet—Baha Ullah was a prophet, but I his son am simply this—the 'servant of God'. You also," he added, "must be servants of God."<sup>48</sup>

But if 'Abdu'l-Baha denied being Christ, Baha'is believed, and still believe, that at least he lived the life of Christ. George Townshend says that is the story of 'Abdu'l-Baha the Christian may find

reassurance that the moral precepts of Christ are to be accepted exactly and in their entirety, that they can be lived out as fully under modern conditions as under any other, and that the highest spirituality is quite compatible with sound common sense and practical wisdom.<sup>49</sup>

David Hofman writes: "He lived the life of Christ among the people, never caring for himself but always for them."<sup>50</sup> Thornton Chase maintained:

He, 'Abdu'l-Baha, has never claimed or acknowledged that He is the Christ, and has not permitted others to claim it for Him, but He lives the life of Christ, He fills the Office of Christ, He teaches the doctrines of Christ. ... [He] is saying to us many things of which Jesus said: 'I have many things to say unto you, but ye can not bear these now. But, when He, the Spirit of Truth, shall come, He will guide you unto all Truth, will reveal all things unto you.'<sup>51</sup>

The unitarians, therefore, were wrong in saying that 'Abdu'l-Baha claimed to be Christ, but that some of his followers in the so-called "Christian West" did hail him as the return of Christ and that Western Baha'is still see him as having lived the life of Christ are indubitable



facts. In pure Baha'i teaching, Baha'u'llah, not 'Abdu'l-Baha, is the return of Christ. Yet, the veneration thus given to 'Abdu'l-Baha by Western converts to Baha'i helped lay the foundation for the transformation which may be associated with his ministry.

One event in the 'Abdu'l-Baha-Muhammad 'Ali controversy which produced a certain crisis in the early American Baha'i community and which throws some light on the issue of that controversy was the conversion of I. G. Khayru'llah to the Muhammad 'Ali faction. Khayru'llah was desirous of having the writings of Baha'u'llah that he might examine Baha'i teaching at first hand and might thereby compare and correct his own teachings. Khayru'llah had requested that 'Abdu'l-Baha send him such writings but had received none. One of the purposes of his journey to 'Akka in 1898 was to secure a volume of Baha'u'llah's writings.<sup>52</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha greeted Khayru'llah with such appellations as "O Baha's Peter, O second Columbus, Conqueror of America!" He highly praised Khayru'llah before the believers for his endeavors in teaching the faith in America. He bestowed upon him the honor of participating with himself in laying the foundation stone of the mausoleum of the Bab.

An estrangement, however, developed between Khayru'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. Khayru'llah, when he met with 'Abdu'l-Baha, would explain the teachings he presented to the Americans, even translating lengthy sections of his material and asking 'Abdu'l-Baha to correct his errors. 'Abdu'l-Baha, according to Mirza Jawad's account, declared Khayru'llah's teachings to be correct, and when differences occurred between Khayru'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings, 'Abdu'l-Baha affirmed that the matter had two

meanings, one spiritual and one material. Khayru'llah pressed matters, however, to the point where an open disagreement between the two became apparent on the question of whether God's essence is limited by his essence. Khayru'llah argued that it was, and 'Abdu'l-Baha declared him to be in error. Khayru'llah further tried unsuccessfully to obtain from 'Abdu'l-Baha the books printed in India by command of Baha'u'llah. Khayru'llah, however, obtained the books in Egypt on his return to the United States. Further, 'Abdu'l-Baha had tried to keep Khayru'llah from meeting with Muhammad 'Ali and the members of the family who opposed 'Abdu'l-Baha, when Khayru'llah returned to the States, he compared Baha'u'llah's teachings with those of 'Abdu'l-Baha and renounced 'Abdu'l-Baha in favor of Muhammad 'Ali. This conversion resulted in a split within the American Baha'i community, with some three hundred believers in Chicago and Kenosha following him in renouncing 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership as well as a small number in the various cities where Baha'is were located. The majority, however, remained faithful to 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>53</sup>

Copies of two letters from Muhammad 'Ali and Badi'u'llah, dated March 31, 1901, in the holdings of Union Theological Seminary, New York, give evidence of a correspondence between Muhammad 'Ali and his supporters who apparently had recently organized themselves. The copies do not indicate the location of the recipients. One letter is addressed to "the president of The House of Justice" who had "embraced the faith five years ago through the mercy of Almighty God and the efforts of your efficient director, Dr Kheiralla", thanking him for his "esteemed letter which expressed unto us your sincere love and earnest desire to spread the lights

of Truth." "Your Behaist Society", the writers indicate,

is undoubtedly the first one which was famed in the civilized United States, and it shall have priority over all other Societies which may be formed hereafter, for all preeminence belongs to the pioneers, even though others should excel them in organization.

Mention is made of certain "texts" which had already been sent and of others which would be sent which would explain "the Day of the Lord" and would "keep steadfast His Children in elevating His Sacred Word." One paragraph mentions the existing dissension among the Baha'is:

As regards the dissensions existing in these days we can only say that it results from lack of obedience to the Commands of God, and from going out from the shadow of His Sacred Word and from not understanding its true meaning. If all were to return to the true utterances of God as they are commanded to do, the dissension will no doubt cease, harmony will prevail and the lights of the Word will shine brightly far and wide.

This statement confirms the basic position of Muhammad 'Ali's followers that differences are to be settled by recourse to Baha'u'llah's writings. Mention is then made of the eagerness expressed to pursue these writings:

We do not doubt that you are eager to read the traces of the Sublime Pen as is disclosed in your letter, and we shall whenever opportunity permits send you many of them, but we are waiting until you are enabled to have an efficient translator (as you say) who would be able to translate both from the Persian and the Arabic into your native tongues.

The other of the two letters is written in reply to a letter from "the Society of Behaists" and is addressed to "ye members of the Committee formed in the Name of the Everlasting Father, and who are straining your efforts in spreading the light of His Word and are enlightened by the light of His Truth and Wisdom." "We are glad to know," the writers mention, "that you have formed a council in the name of Beha according to the commandments of our Lord, and that you have legally organized it."

The writers evidently regard the members of the committee as “the House of Justice”, for they quote the words: “Oh men of Justice, be ye good shepherds to the sheep of God in His Kingdom, guard them from the wolves which disguise themselves as much as ye would guard your own children: thus are ye advised by the faithful adviser.” One paragraph refers to Khayru'llah's efforts to obtain Baha'u'llah's writings from 'Abdu'l-Baha:

You say that you have sought for some texts from the sublime Pen and that your instructor, Dr Kheiralla, wrote to Abbas Effendi several times, asking for these, but was not answered and was only told to follow the commands of the Greatest branch and to do this without investigation. No doubt the sacred texts were descended to direct the people in the straight path and to refine their manners and if their promulgation should be stopped the intended results for which the texts descended will not take place. Therefore all must spread the odours of the texts so that the world should be directed and enlightened.

These words also confirm Mirza Jawad's account that Khayru'llah was unsuccessful in obtaining from 'Abdu'l-Baha the writings of Baha'u'llah. The next paragraph reveals Muhammad 'Ali's and Baha'u'llah's belief that one could not exercise “independent investigation of the truth” without having recourse to Baha'u'llah's writings:

No wise man will follow another without investigation for man was created to acquire knowledge and is given the eyes of understanding to see everything by them. If we cannot see the rose and witness its coloring how can we judge that it is a fine flower which diffuses a sweet odor. Thus we cannot come to a knowledge of the Father without consideration and without looking into the traces of the might and the wondrous wisdom. Such great truths should not be adopted by tradition. The function of the instructor is to guide and show the traces and dissolve the mysteries so that the understanding of the neophyte should be enlightened and he be able to understand the utterances of God.

All the confusions existing at present have resulted from following others without confirmation or investigation. Verily he who meditates on the traces of the Lord and weighs everything by the scale of understanding cannot follow vain superstitions, but will

rather rid himself of them and thus keep firm in serving the most merciful Father.<sup>54</sup>

Badi'u'llah, the younger full brother of Muhammad 'Ali, in the spring of 1903 renounced his allegiance to Muhammad 'Ali and gave his support to 'Abdu'l-Baha, publishing a tract in Persian to this effect.<sup>55</sup>

### **'Abdu'l-Baha's transformation**

All interpreters may not agree on the extent to which 'Abdu'l-Baha effected a transformation within the Baha'i religion. J. R. Richards holds that "the official teachings of the sect" underwent "a complete transformation" under 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership.<sup>56</sup> Richards refuses to identify Western Baha'i, shaped largely by the personality and teachings of 'Abdu'l-Baha and bearing a distinct Christian influence, as pure Baha'i. 'Abdu'l-Baha did not transform the faith into a new religion with a new name, as Baha'u'llah had done with the Babi religion, but the faith under 'Abdu'l-Baha took on a distinctly new appearance. The religion as transformed by 'Abdu'l-Baha may be regarded as Baha'i, but it represents a new stage in the evolving faith. The transformation effected by 'Abdu'l-Baha will be discussed under three headings.

#### ***The station of 'Abdu'l-Baha***

'Abdu'l-Baha gave to the religion another focal point to be added to that of Baha'u'llah. Today, in Baha'i homes, temples, and literature, one will encounter various photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha, so such so that one might gather that 'Abdu'l-Baha, not Baha'u'llah, is *the* prophet of the religion. The reasons for the extensive use of 'Abdu'l-Baha's photographs are because only a few photographs of Baha'u'llah were ever taken, the few which

were taken are held especially sacred, and photographs of 'Abdu'l-Baha abound, due especially to the publicity accorded to 'Abdu'l-Baha during his Western travels.

This physical focus on 'Abdu'l-Baha by Westerners is symbolic of a deeper, spiritual focus. Western Baha'is had not seen nor known Baha'u'llah personally, but 'Abdu'l-Baha was a living prophet walking in their midst. "In him you see an Old Testament patriarch personified," wrote E. S. Stevens.<sup>57</sup> His simple life and manners and certain of his teachings reminded many of the pilgrims who made their way to 'Akka of the life and teachings of Christ. The high devotion given to 'Abdu'l-Baha is reflected in Ruhyyih Khanum's words: "To those who never met the Prophet [Baha'u'llah] in the flesh, but who knew His son, it seemed impossible that Baha'u'llah could have been any greater than 'Abdu'l-Baha."<sup>58</sup>

Out of the tension between the high veneration given to 'Abdu'l-Baha by overzealous Baha'is, who saw him as the returned Christ and in a category with the manifestations, and the explicit Baha'i teaching that no new manifestation would appear for at least 1,000 years developed a synthesis in which 'Abdu'l-Baha, while not being officially regarded as a manifestation, is nonetheless one of "the three central figures of the faith" along with the Bab and Baha'u'llah. He occupies a station above the merely human but below the category of a manifestation. Although not now regarded by Baha'is as the returned Christ, Baha'is nonetheless revere him as having lived the Christ-life, which is in effect to declare his life sinless. He is the perfect and ideal Baha'i.

The official teaching regarding 'Abdu'-Baha's station was not formulated until Shoghi Effendi's ministry, yet the veneration accorded

to 'Abdu'l-Baha and the position he assumed in the faith which led to that formulation were properly aspects of the transformation effected within his ministry.

### ***His words regarded as Scripture***

As 'Abdu'l-Baha holds a unique station in the Baha'i religion, officially not a manifestation but practically holding that office, his words also hold a unique authority for Baha'is. They are not the words of a manifestation, yet they have for Baha'is the character of a revelation, and today Baha'is accept his authenticated writings, along with those of Baha'u'llah, as being Scripture. David Hofman writes: "His word has the same validity as Baha'u'llah's own."<sup>59</sup> Horace Holley maintains: "The interpretation is one with the message, as the sunlight is one with the sun."<sup>60</sup> George Townshend writes concerning 'Abdu'l-Baha:

What strikes many in reading His writings is that they possess a quality different from that which belongs to any human being. There is a cadence, a power in them which definitely comes from a higher world than that in which we live. It is natural, therefore, that His writings should be spoken of as a Revelation. Yet he was human, not a Manifestation, and His scripture, though valid, has not the rank of the Revelation of a full Prophet.<sup>61</sup>

Richards charges that 'Abdu'l-Baha thus "is free to explain away the plain meaning of his father's words."<sup>62</sup> Baha'is would not allow for such a dichotomy of meaning in the teachings, but 'Abdu'l-Baha's words are as important, or more important, than Baha'u'llah's in establishing teachings of the faith, for although Baha'u'llah's words theoretically have a higher status—being the words of a manifestation—Baha'is are obliged to follow 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation. Thus, when the meaning of Baha'u'llah's

and 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings seem to differ, the believer must subscribe to 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation rather than follow his own personal judgment in understanding Baha'u'llah's meaning. The authority of 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation is intended to prevent schism which might result from conflicting personal interpretations by Baha'is, but the result is that 'Abdu'l-Baha's words for all practical purposes carry more force than do Baha'u'llah's own, since the believer may not advance a personal interpretation of Baha'u'llah's words which might differ from 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretation.

'Abdu'l-Baha, therefore, is in a position to make certain modifications and additions to Baha'u'llah's teachings in authoritatively defining Baha'i doctrine. For example, although Baha'u'llah had forbidden the practice of congregational prayer except at funerals, 'Abdu'l-Baha allowed the chanting of prayers among the assembled believers until all had gathered for the Sunday meetings.<sup>63</sup> Baha'u'llah identified the manifestations as Noah, Hud,<sup>64</sup> Salih,<sup>65</sup> Abraham, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and the Bab.<sup>66</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha dropped from his lists Hud and Salih and added Zoroaster and Buddha<sup>67</sup> and at times seems also to have added Confucius.<sup>68</sup> Some confusion exists among Baha'is today concerning which religions were founded by manifestations of God. According to one list, the nine revealed religions are the Sabaeen religion, Hinduism, Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, the Babi religion, and Baha'i.<sup>69</sup> Hugh E. Chance, however, lists the nine recognized religions as Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i Faith.<sup>70</sup>



### ***Teachings adapted to the West***

'Abdu'l-Baha was increasingly in contact with persons in the West. Many of the pilgrims making their way to 'Akka were from the West and had a Christian background. Their questions often involved Christian or biblical subjects. The audiences to which 'Abdu'l-Baha spoke in Europe and America were composed of persons oriented by a Western scientific and Christian outlook. 'Abdu'l-Baha, accordingly, adapted his message to his Western hearers.

### **Exposition of Biblical subjects**

Baha'u'llah, in the Baha'i understanding, appointed 'Abdu'l-Baha as the interpreter of his teachings, but 'Abdu'l-Baha, by his contact with the West was also expected to be an authority on numerous subjects not covered in Baha'u'llah's teachings. Notable among such subjects were those involving Christian or biblical topics. Baha'is accept 'Abdu'l-Baha's pronouncements on these subjects as being as authoritative as his interpretations of Baha'u'llah's teachings.

'Abdu'l-Baha regards the story of Adam and Eve as a symbol. Adam signifies Adam's spirit and Eve his soul. The tree of good and evil represents the human world and the serpent signifies attachment to the human world. On the question of original sin, 'Abdu'l-Baha in one place speaks of the sin "*which has been transmitted from Adam to his posterity*"<sup>71</sup> but elsewhere he rejects this view:

*The mass of the Christians believe that as Adam ate of the forbidden tree, he sinned in that he disobeyed, and that the disastrous consequences of this disobedience have been transmitted as a heritage, and have remained among his descendants. Hence Adam became the cause of the death of humanity. This explanation is unreasonable and evidently*

*wrong; for it means that all men, even the Prophets and the Messengers of God, without committing any sin or fault, but simply because they are the posterity of Adam, have become without reason guilty sinners, and until the day of the sacrifice of Christ were held captive in hell in painful torment.*<sup>72</sup>

Christ's greatness, 'Abdu'l-Baha maintains, "is not due to the fact that he did not have a human father, but to his perfections, bounties, and divine glory."<sup>73</sup> He argues that if Christ is great because he was fatherless, "then Adam is greater than Christ, for he had neither father nor mother."<sup>74</sup>

The resurrection of Christ means that "the Reality of Christ, which signifies his teachings, his bounties, his perfections, and his spiritual power" become "manifest", his disciples became assured and steadfast, and so "his religion found life".<sup>75</sup> The Holy Spirit is "the Bounty of God and the luminous rays which emanate from the Manifestations." In some passages the Holy Spirit signifies a certain person.<sup>76</sup> The Trinity does not mean that there are divisions within the Godhead but that "the Sun of Reality, the Essence of Divinity" reflects itself in the mirrors of Christ and the Holy Spirit.<sup>77</sup> On the question of Satan or evil, 'Abdu'l-Baha explains that "the evil spirit, Satan or whatever is interpreted as evil, refers to the lower nature in man," for "God has never created an evil spirit; all such ideas and nomenclature are symbols expressing the mere human or earthly nature of man."<sup>78</sup>

That 'Abdu'l-Baha should contradict himself at times was perhaps inevitable, since he addressed himself to so many questions on different occasions. He seems to contradict himself on the question of Christ's attitude toward war. In explaining Christ's saying to "put up the sword into the sheath", 'Abdu'l-Baha says: "The meaning is that warfare is forbidden and

*abrogated; but consider the Christian wars which took place afterward.*"<sup>79</sup>

But in explaining other words of Christ, 'Abdu'l-Baha maintains:

*What Christ meant by forgiveness and pardon is not that, when nations attack you, burn your homes, plunder your goods, assault your wives, children and relatives, and violate your honour, you should be submissive and allow them to perform all their cruelties and oppressions. No, the words of Christ refer to the conduct of two individuals towards each other; if one person assaults another, the injured one should forgive him. But the communities must protect the rights of man.*<sup>80</sup>

Marzieh Gail quotes both of these statements in her small volume on 'Abdu'l-Baha, seemingly without noting any contradiction.<sup>81</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha also attempted to give a Christian meaning to certain Baha'i concepts and practices, as, for example, in the case of the Baha'i feasts: *"The feast (supper) [every nineteen days] is very acceptable and will finally produce good results. The beloved and the maid-servants of the Merciful must inaugurate the feast in such wise as to resurrect the feast of the ancients—namely, the 'lord's supper'."*<sup>82</sup>

Although the Baha'i religion already contained a certain approach to Christianity, 'Abdu'l-Baha, by his life and teachings, attempted further to lessen the distinction between the two religions. 'Abdu'l-Baha seems to have accepted the virgin birth of Christ as a "fact",<sup>83</sup> although he stresses that his greatness is not due to it. Christ had all power and was able to perform miracles, although 'Abdu'l-Baha often gives a demythologized interpretation to the miracles:

*Wherever in the Holy Books they speak of raising the dead, the meaning is that the dead were blessed by eternal life; where it is said that the blind received sight, the signification is that he obtained the true perception; where it is said that a deaf man received hearing, the meaning is that he acquired spiritual and heavenly hearing. This is ascertained from the text of the Gospel where Christ said: 'These are like those of whom Isaiah said, They have eyes and see not, they have ears and hear not; and I healed them.'*<sup>84</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha accepts Christ as divine, as the Son of God, and as the Word of God.<sup>85</sup> Christ's sacrificial death is accepted: "*He perished in body, so as to quicken others by the spirit.*"<sup>86</sup> The resurrection of Christ is affirmed, although 'Abdu'l-Baha gives an interpretation to it much in the manner of liberal Christian theology.<sup>87</sup> The second coming of Christ is also affirmed, but for 'Abdu'l-Baha and other Baha'is Christ returned in the later manifestations, especially in Baha'u'llah.

*At the first coming he came from heaven, though apparently from the womb; is the same way also, at his second coming, he will come from heaven, though apparently from the womb.*<sup>88</sup>

### **The Baha'i principles**

In various public speeches, 'Abdu'l-Baha delineated the Baha'i principles, attempting to set forth for his Western hearers the basic features of Baha'u'llah's teachings. Since 'Abdu'l-Baha was speaking often to general audiences, he emphasized the social and humanitarian tenets of the faith. Because of the wide publicity given to 'Abdu'l-Baha during his European and American travels, the image of the religion presented in the press was of a social and humanitarian movement. It is largely because of 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings that the religion is often seen as a social movement.

One may raise the question whether 'Abdu'l-Baha was actually drawing upon the teachings of Baha'u'llah for these principles or was reading Western ideas back into Baha'u'llah's teachings. Baha'is insist that Baha'u'llah taught these concepts at a time when they were not even accepted in the West, and they attribute their acceptance by enlightened persons in the modern world to energies radiating from Baha'u'llah's revelation. Wilson,

however, holds that "not one of these is new; not one owes its position in the world of thought or activity to the Bahai propaganda."<sup>89</sup>

What 'Abdu'l-Baha may be attempting to do is to adapt certain of Baha'u'llah's teachings to a Western audience or, in other words, to translate concepts which find a basis in Baha'u'llah's teachings into the terminology and thought forms of Western civilization. However one may choose to judge the matter, the Baha'i principles as enunciated, elaborated, and emphasized by 'Abdu'l-Baha gave to the religion a distinct social coloring. Since these principles are set forth today as the basic teaching of the religion, some comment on certain of the principles is required.

### **Independent investigation of the truth**

This principle means basically that each person should exercise his own power of reason in distinguishing truth from falsehood and not accept beliefs simply because they were handed down by one's ancestors. Nor should one blindly rely upon the opinions of others without making his own inquiry. "*God has not intended man to blindly imitate his fathers and ancestors. ... He must not be an imitator or blind follower of any soul. He must not rely implicitly upon the opinion of any man without investigation.*"<sup>90</sup> The principle means especially for Baha'is that one should investigate the Baha'i religion without being prejudiced by other religious beliefs.

Richards maintains that "independent investigation of truth never was a principle of Baha'u'llah's teaching":

Baha'u'llah claimed to be the infallible interpreter of all Scriptures, and the infallible teacher of mankind. None has the right to question his statements, but if he declares water to be wine, the believer must unhesitatingly accept his statement. In the same way, 'Abdu'l-Baha allows no room for independent investigation; whatever he says is true,

and must be accepted by all believers. The true teaching of Baha'ism does not allow independent investigation, but demands servile submission and unquestioning acceptance of the doctrine of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>91</sup>

Miller, however, points out that "independent investigation of truth was not a new idea, for the Shi'ite theologians had long ago maintained that in matters which concern the fundamentals of religion, personal investigation (*tahqiq*) is obligatory."<sup>92</sup> Historically, then, it was possible and likely that the principle would find its way into Baha'u'llah's teachings.

Baha'u'llah, in fact, opens his *Kitab-i-Iqan* with an appeal for man to detach himself from all earthly affections and considerations:

*Man can never hope to attain unto the knowledge of the All-Glorious, can never quaff from the stream of divine knowledge and wisdom, can never enter the abode of immortality, nor partake of the cup of divine nearness and favour, unless and until he ceases to regard the words and deeds of mortal men as a standard for the true understanding and recognition of God and His Prophets.*<sup>93</sup>

Baha'u'llah proceeds to show how man continuously has opposed God's prophets when they have appeared, and his point is that man, if he blindly follows these opponents of the prophets, who were often the religious leaders of the day, in their derision and persecution of God's messengers, then will never attain the true knowledge of God nor have fellowship with him. Baha'u'llah also in his *Hidden Words* writes:

*The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor.*<sup>94</sup>

To 'Abdu'l-Baha, however, must be given the credit of giving the principle the prominence which it now holds in the faith.

But the question may be asked as to how the principle can be reconciled with the Baha'i requirement that complete submission must

be given to the authority of Baha'u'llah and his appointed successors. Apparently, the principle as it relates to religious matters is more a principle for non-Baha'is than for Baha'is. One is to exercise independent investigation until he finds the truth in Baha'i, and then having found the truth, he is to give unreserved obedience to the Baha'i laws and Baha'i administrative authority. Should those in authority decree that Baha'is are not to read certain literature or associate with certain persons, they must without question follow such restrictions.

### **The oneness of mankind**

The oneness of mankind was definitely one of Baha'u'llah's teachings. Arthur Dahl calls this principle the "keynote of Baha'u'llah's teachings. Among Baha'u'llah's often quoted statements on this point are these: *"Ye are the fruits of one tree, and the leaves of one branch."*<sup>95</sup> *"The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens."*<sup>96</sup> The ideal of the oneness of mankind, however, does not exist in practice. Baha'u'llah saw the purpose of his mission as transforming the ideal into reality: *"We, verily, have come to unite and weld together all that dwell on earth."*<sup>97</sup>

The unity of mankind is, of course, not a new principle. Both the Old and New Testament uphold the ideal of man's basic unity as the creation of one God. The Apostle Paul declares that God has "made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth" (Acts 17:26). The Qur'an maintains that "mankind were one community" but "then they differed" (10:20), and so God sent prophets with the scripture among the people to "judge between mankind concerning that wherein they differed" (2:213), evidently for the purpose of settling those differences.

'Abdu'l-Baha, in elaborating on the principle, explains that mankind is divided into various "limited unities", which have the effect of dividing man. Man has united himself along the lines of race, language, nationality, political parties, and other such groups. Unity exists within these groups, but all of these are limited unities and can, therefore, only produce limited results. Only unlimited unity can produce unlimited result. Man must, therefore, break loose of these limited unities and learn to live as one family under one God.<sup>98</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha approved and encouraged interracial marriages, and Baha'is today take pride in the fact that their membership is composed of many men and women of many races and they believe their religion is the first to have broken down, not only in theory but in practice, the wall of separation between racial groups.

### **The essential harmony of science and religion**

Richards maintains that it was in France that "the claim was first made that in the Baha'i religion Science and Religion are reconciled." He holds that this view was introduced in France by Hippolyte Dreyfus, a Jewish convert to Baha'i, to extol Baha'i before the rationalistic French, who held that science and religion were contrary to one another. Thereafter, the claim became "one of the main planks in the Baha'i platform."<sup>99</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha, in stating this principle, however, may be drawing upon the Babi-Baha'i philosophy that all of mankind's arts and sciences are derived from the manifestation's influence upon his age.<sup>100</sup> To the Bab, this meant that the study of other volumes besides those containing the words of



the manifestation were unnecessary. To Baha'u'llah, the principle seems to have meant that the arts and sciences were therefore legitimate areas of study. Baha'u'llah abrogated the Bab's law concerning the destruction of books, and his eleventh "glad-tidings" is that to study sciences and arts of all descriptions is allowable; but such sciences as are profitable, which lead and conduce to the elevation of mankind."<sup>101</sup> Baha'u'llah stressed the importance of acquiring knowledge in the sciences:

Knowledge is like unto wings for the being, and is as a ladder for ascending. To acquire knowledge is incumbent on all, but of those sciences which may profit the people of the earth, and not such sciences as begin in mere words, and end in mere words. The possessors of sciences and arts have a great right among the people of the world.<sup>102</sup>

Possibly this was the aspect of Baha'u'llah's teachings which 'Abdu'l-Baha formulated into the principle of the "harmony of science and religion" for his Western audiences. The principle for 'Abdu'l-Baha means:

*Religion must stand the analysis of reason. It must agree with scientific fact and proof, so that science will sanction religion and religion fortify science. Both are indissolubly welded and joined in the reality. If statements and teachings of religion are found to be unreasonable and contrary to science, they are the outcome of superstition and imagination.*<sup>103</sup>

### **Equality of men and women**

Marzieh Gail has some basis for charging:

In Judaism, Christianity, Islam, sex equality does not exist. The Old Testament says (of the man to the woman): "He shall rule over thee" (Genesis 3:18). And the New Testament: "let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence" (I Timothy 2:11-12). "Wives, submit yourselves unto your husbands, as unto the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). Of men and women the Qur'an, which however gives women a higher place than did previous Faiths, says: "**Men are a degree above them**" (2:228).<sup>104</sup>

Baha'is believe that their faith gives equality to the sexes. 'Abdu'l-Baha affirms that the principle of "the equality of men and women" was among Baha'u'llah's teachings. That the Babi and Baha'i movements did accord a higher status to women than did Islam may readily be acknowledged, although Browne observes that "their efforts to improve the social position of woman have been much exaggerated."<sup>105</sup>

Both the Babi and Baha'i communities accepted the removal of the veil (covering the face) by their women members in their meetings, thereby acquiescing to the example of the Babi heroine, Qurratu'l-'Ayn (Tahirih). The Baha'i women in Persia, however, continued to wear the veil in public until the law permitted them to remove it.<sup>106</sup> Baha'u'llah made it incumbent upon fathers to educate both their sons and daughters, but whether Baha'u'llah taught the full equality of men and women is another matter. Baha'u'llah allowed a man to take two wives,<sup>107</sup> but seems not to have granted to women a similar right to have two husbands. Baha'u'llah, himself, had at least two wives, and according to some accounts as many as four.<sup>108</sup>

Baha'i quotations setting forth the equality of men and women are from 'Abdu'l-Baha's writings, not Baha'u'llah's.<sup>109</sup> But even 'Abdu'l-Baha did not allow women to be members of the "Houses of Justice", the administrative bodies in the faith. The "Spiritual Assemblies" were originally called "Houses of Justice" or "Houses of Spirituality".<sup>110</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha approved of organizing "Houses of Justice" of men and separating the women into "Assemblies of Teaching".<sup>111</sup> In time these bodies became known as "Spiritual Assemblies",<sup>112</sup> composed of both men and women, but even today

women are barred from being members of the Universal House of Justice, the highest administrative body in the Baha'i world.

### **Universal peace upheld by a world government**

Another principle which 'Abdu'l-Baha claims to find in Baha'u'llah's teachings is "universal peace upheld by a world government". Baha'is sometimes maintain that "it was Baha'u'llah who first admonished men to come together and consult for peace, to form an international body to regulate the affairs of the world, to limit and gradually do away with armaments."<sup>113</sup> Baha'u'llah was not the first to propose peace and disarmament, for, as Wilson points out, the American Peace Society was formed as early as 1815 "to promote permanent peace through arbitration and disarmament",<sup>114</sup> and for this purpose world congresses were convened at London (1843), Brussels (1848), Paris (1849), Frankfort (1850), and London (1851),<sup>115</sup> but Baha'u'llah did admonish "*the elected representatives of the people in every land*" to take "*counsel together*" and to let their "*concern be only for that which profiteth mankind, and bettereth the condition thereof.*"<sup>116</sup>

One of Baha'u'llah's requirements is that in every city a "*House of Justice*" be formed, composed of nine or more men, who will act as the "*stewards of the Merciful*" and "*agents of God for the whole earth*".<sup>117</sup> Among the duties of the House of Justice are legislating on topics not revealed in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas*,<sup>118</sup> selecting an international language,<sup>119</sup> and concerning themselves with matters that benefit mankind.<sup>120</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha maintains that the House of Justice is "*endowed with a political as well as a religious function, the consummate union and blending of church and state.*"<sup>121</sup> He further comments:

*A universal or international House of Justice shall also be organized. Its rulings shall be in accordance with the commands and teachings of Baha'u'llah, and that which the universal House of Justice ordains shall be obeyed by all mankind. This international house of Justice shall be appointed and organized from the Houses of Justice of the whole world, and all the world shall come under its administration.*<sup>122</sup>

The election of the Universal House of Justice is to be “after the manner of the customary elections in Western countries such as those of England,” ‘Abdu’l-Baha specifies.<sup>123</sup>

Some of the principles enumerated by ‘Abdu’l-Baha are definitely in the teachings of Baha’u’llah, such as the oneness of mankind. Other of the principles find some basis in Baha’u’llah’s teachings but have undergone some modification in their formulation for a Western and scientifically oriented audience. ‘Abdu’l-Baha adapted Baha’u’llah’s teaching that certain sciences are allowable and profitable for study and his requirement to gain knowledge from the sciences into the principle of the “harmony of science and religion.” The higher status given to women in the Baha’i religion becomes for ‘Abdu’l-Baha the full-fledged “equality of men and women”.

Allan Ward, in his study of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s speeches delivered in the United States, points out that his speeches were adapted to his audiences. In speaking to the Theosophists, he used “extended and complex reasoning patterns” but “where the audience represented a lower educational level, ... the reasoning was minimized in favor of simple analogy.”<sup>124</sup> A similar adaptation is at work in all of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s messages in the West. He emphasized aspects of the faith which would find a more ready hearing in the West, giving to some teachings a more scientific coloring, presenting the religion as a more advanced form of Christianity, and minimizing dogmatic aspects in favor of a social and humanitarian emphasis.

## 5. ‘Abdu’l-Baha and the prerogatives of “the servant”

- <sup>1</sup> E. E. Elder and William Miller, trans. and ed., *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*, by Mirza Husayn ‘Ali Baha’u’llah, “Oriental Translation Fund”, New Series Vol. XXXVIII (London: Published by the Royal Asiatic Society and sold by its Agents Luzac & Company, Ltd., 1961), p. 56 (hereinafter referred to as *Aqdas*).
- <sup>2</sup> *Baha’i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha’u’llah and ‘Abdu’l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha’i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 209–10 (hereinafter referred to as *Baha’i World Faith*). Miller points out that the titles for ‘Abdu’l-Baha (*Ghusn-i-A’zam*) and Muhammad ‘Ali (*Ghusn-i-Akbar*) are both superlatives so that an accurate translation would be, respectively, “the Most Mighty Branch” and “the Most Great Branch” (William McElwee Miller, *The Baha’i Faith: Its History and Teachings* [South Pasadena, Calif.; William Carey Library, 1974], pp. 173–74). Browne says that he wrongly transposed the two titles in his first article on the Babis in the J.R.A.S., July, 1889 (Edward G. Browne. *A Year amongst the Persians* [3d ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1950], p. 368, n. 3), but he seems rather to have been wrong in giving the titles in *A Year amongst the Persians*.fs

- 3 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 70.
- 4 J. R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932), p. 97.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 This evening, as noted earlier, would actually be May 22, 1844.
- 7 Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi* (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, 1904), p. 13.
- 8 Thornton Chase, *The Baha'i Revelation* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1919), p. 59. The Bab's declaration was two hours and eleven minutes after sunset.
- 9 J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 19.
- 10 *idem*, p. 64.
- 11 *The Centenary of a World Faith: The History of the Baha'i Faith and Its Development in the British Isles* (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 28.
- 12 J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* (3d rev. ed.; New York: Pyramid Books, 1970), p. 64.
- 13 Edward G. Browne, comp., *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), pp. 319–20.
- 14 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), pp. 279–80.
- 15 For an account of 'Abdu'l-Baha in London, see *Abdul-Baha in London. Addresses & Notes of Conversations* (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1921), Lady Blomfield (Sitarih Khanum), *The Chosen Highway* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1967), pp. 147–78, and H. M. Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha, The Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah* (London: George Ronald, 1971), pp. 140–58.
- 16 For these addresses, see *Paris Talks, Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911–1912* (10th ed.; London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1961). This work was first published in 1912 and was published in the United States under the title *The Wisdom of Abdul-Baha*. For an account of 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris, see also chapter III of Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, pp. 179–87, and chapter XI of Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 159–66.
- 17 'Abdu'l-Baha's addresses delivered in the United States have been collected and published in two volumes entitled *The Promulgation of Universal Peace, Discourses by Abdul Baha Abbas during His Visit to the United States in 1912*, Vol. I (Chicago: Executive Board of Bahai Temple Unity, 1921–1922), Vol. II (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1925). See also Allan Lucius Ward, *An Historical Study of the North American Speaking Tour of 'Abdu'l-Baha and a Rhetorical Analysis of His Address* (Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, 1960), and Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha*, chapters XII–XVIII, pp. 171–339.
- 18 Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 186, and *The Baha'i Centenary, 1844–1944*, comp. by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1944), p. 84.
- 19 James T. Bixby, "What Is Behaism?" *The North American Review* Vol. 196, No. DCLXXIX (June, 1912), 833.
- 20 "Personal Glimpses: A Prophet from the East", *The Literary Digest*, XLIV (May 4,

- 1912), 957.
- 21 “Will Baháism Unite All Religious Faiths?” *The American Review of Reviews*, XLV (June, 1912), 748–49.
- 22 Robert M. Labaree, “The Bahá'í Propaganda in America”, *The Missionary Review of the World*, XLII (Aug., 1919), p. 591.
- 23 Ruth White, *Bahai Leads out of the Labyrinth* (New York: Universal Pub. Co., 1444), p. 7. Ruth White later fell from grace in the eyes of Bahá'is under Shoghi Effendi's guardianship. See the next chapter.
- 24 For a brief account of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's travels, see Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 279–81.
- 25 Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 420–22.
- 26 idem, p. 443.
- 27 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 310–13.
- 28 idem, p. 247.
- 29 Browne, *Materials*, p. 75.
- 30 idem, p. 76.
- 31 idem, p. 77.
- 32 idem, p. 77, n. 1.
- 33 idem, p. 79.
- 34 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 39. Brackets mine. See also Brown, *Materials*, p. 82.
- 35 Ruhyyiyih Rabbani, *Prescription for Living* (London: George Ronald, 1960), p. 182.
- 36 Browne, *Materials*, pp. 94–95; Balyuzi, *Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 65.
- 37 R. P. Richardson, “The Persian Rival to Jesus, and His American Disciples”, *The Open Court*, XXII (Aug., 1915), 477.
- 38 Browne, *Materials*, pp. 117–18.
- 39 See Samuel Graham Wilson, *Baháism and Its Claims* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1915), 93–94, and Marzieh Gail, *Bahá'í Glossary* (Wilmette, Ill.: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 8.
- 40 Blomfield, *The Chosen Highway*, p. 211.
- 41 idem, p. 134.
- 42 Arthur Pillsbury Dodge, *Whence? Why? Whither? Man, Things, Other Things* (Westwood, Mass.: Ariel Press, 1907), pp. 87, 264.
- 43 Isabella D. Brittingham, comp., *The Revelation of Bahá'-Ulláh, in a Sequence of Four Lessons* (Chicago, Bahá'í Publishing Society, 1902), p. 24; cited by Wilson, *Baháism and Its Claims*, p. 94. See also other quotations in Wilson, pp. 94–95.
- 44 Horace Holley, *Bahai: The Spirit of the Age* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1921, p. 25.
- 45 idem, pp. 56–57, 61, 71.
- 46 Julia M. Grundy, *Ten Days in the Light of Acca* (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Society, 1907), pp. 36–37.
- 47 idem, p. 48.
- 48 Constance Elisabeth Maud, “Abdul Baha”, *The Fortnightly Review*, XCIII, New Series (April, 1912), 715.
- 49 George Townshend, *The Mission of Baha'u'llah and Other Literary Pieces* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1952), p. 47.
- 50 David Hofman, *The Renewal of Civilization*, Talisman Books (London: George

Ronald, 1946), p. 28.

51 Browne, *Materials*, p. 101.

52 idem, p. 102.

53 idem, pp. 101–10.

54 These letters were called to my attention by Miss Marjorie Giffis, Reference Librarian, Union Theological Seminary Library, in a letter dated February 5, 1970. They are uncatalogued letters, located with other material in the section numbered *OU23 pam*. The letters are in English, probably translations of originals written in Persian. The English copies indicate that the letters were signed by "Mohammed Ali" and "Badi Allah" from "Acre" on "March 31st 1901".

55 Browne, *Materials*, p. 197. For an English translation of this tract and also an epistle setting forth the reasons behind Badi'ullah's switch to 'Abdu'l-Baha, see Mirza Badi Ullah, *An Epistle to the Bahai World*, tr. Ameen Ullah Fareed (Chicago: Bahai Publishing Society, 1907). The "confession" occupies three pages at the beginning. This publication appears in facsimile in Ruth White, *The Bahai Religion and Its Enemy the Bahai Organization* (Rutland, Vermont: Tuttle Company, 1919), pp. 129–63.

56 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 99.

57 Ethel Stefana Stevens, "The Light in the Lantern", *Everybody's Magazine*, XXV (December, 1911), 779.

58 Rabbani, *Prescription for Living*, pp. 183–84.

59 Hofman, *The Renewal of Civilization*, p. 30.

60 Horace Holley, "A Statement of the Purpose and Principles of the Baha'i Faith", *Baha'i Year Book*, Vol. I (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1916), p. 14.

61 George Townshend, *Christ and Baha'u'llah* (London, George Ronald, 1957), p. 96.

62 J. R. Richards, *Baha'ism*, "Christian Knowledge Booklets", No. 5 (London: S.P.C.K., 1965), p. 19.

63 *Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas* (3 vols.; Chicago: Bahai Publishing Trust, 1909–1919), I, 15–16 (hereinafter referred to as *Tablets*).

64 Hud is an ancient Arabian prophet after whom the eleventh surah of the Qur'an is named. According to the Qur'an, he was sent to his people of the tribe of A'ad (7:65; 2:50; 26:124; 96:21).

65 Salih is another ancient Arabian prophet sent to the tribe of Thamud (7:75; 11:61; 26:142; 28:45).

66 Baha'u'llah. *The Kitab-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (2d ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1950), pp. 7–65.

67 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, I, 192.

68 idem, I, 216, II, 339–40; 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, collected and tr. by Laura Clifford Barney (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1964), p. 189.

69 *One Universal Faith* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.), p. 5.

70 Hugh E. Chance, "Baha'i Faith", *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1965, III, 462.

71 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 143.

72 idem, pp. 136–37.

73 idem, p. 103.

74 ibid.

75 idem, pp. 120–21.

- 76 idem, pp. 124–25.
- 77 idem, p. 130.
- 78 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 289.
- 79 idem, p. 82.
- 80 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 310.
- 81 Marzieh Gail, *The Sheltering Branch* (London: George Ronald, 1959), pp. 51, 57–58.
- 82 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets*, I, 149.
- 83 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 103. See above, p. 256.
- 84 idem, pp. 133–38, 240–42.
- 85 idem, pp. 133–38, 240–42.
- 86 idem, p. 137.
- 87 idem, pp. 117–21.
- 88 idem, p. 127.
- 89 Wilson, *Baháism and Its Claims*, p. 34.
- 90 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 285.
- 91 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 111.
- 92 Miller, *The Baha'i Faith*, p. 233.
- 93 Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan*, pp. 3–4.
- 94 *The Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1963), pp. 3–4.
- 95 *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, trans. by Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1963), p. 218 (hereinafter referred to as *Gleanings*); Baha'u'llah. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1962), p. 14.
- 96 *Gleanings*, p. 25.
- 97 Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 24.
- 98 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 257.
- 99 Richards, *Baha'ism*, pp. 16–17; see also Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 101.
- 100 See above, pp. 158–59.
- 101 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 195.
- 102 idem, p. 189.
- 103 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, I, 170–71.
- 104 Gail, *The Sheltering Branch*, p. 81. Perhaps worth noting, though, are Paul's words in Galatians 3:28 that “there is neither male nor female; for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.” Author's emphasis.
- 105 Edward G. Browne, “Babiism”, *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., III, 95.
- 106 Gail, *The Sheltering Branch*, p. 83.
- 107 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 40.
- 108 Baha'u'llah's first wife, whom he married in 1835, was named Nawwab. She was the mother of 'Abdu'l-Baha, Bahiyiyh Khanum, three eons who died in childhood, and of one eon who died at 'Akka. Baha'u'llah married his cousin Mahd-i-Ulya in 1849. She was the mother of Muhammad Ali and Badi'u'llah, leaders in the opposition against 'Abdu'l-Baha, of two children who died in childhood, and of another son and a daughter (Browne, *Materials*, pp. 320–21).



Wilson holds that Baha'u'llah had "three wives, or two wives and a concubine". The third wife (or concubine) was taken in the last year in Baghdad (1867–1868) (Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, pp. 159–61). The third wife was named Gohar. Mention is made also of a fourth wife whom Baha'u'llah married in his later years, named Jamaliyya, a niece of Khadim Allah, a loyal follower (Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 40, n. 3).

109 John Ferraby, *All Things Made New* (rev. American ed.; Wilmette, Ill.; Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), pp. 94–95; Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, 3d rev. ed., pp. 154–56.

110 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets*, I, 8.

111 idem, I, 27; see also p. 90.

112 See *Tablets*, I, p. 69, where 'Abdu'l-Baha addresses the Muskegon, Michigan, assembly as "O Spiritual Assembly".

113 Rabbani, *Prescription for Living*, p. 179; see also Charles Mason Remey, *The Bahai Movement: A Series of Nineteen Papers upon the Bahai Movement* (Washington, DC: Press of J. D. Milans & Sons, 1912), p. 75.

114 R. L. Bridgman, "World-Organization Secures World-Peace". *The Atlantic Monthly*, XCIV (September, 1904), 358. The Massachusetts Peace Society (1815–1828) was merged into the American Peace Society in 1928.

115 Wilson, *Bahaism and Its Claims*, pp. 75–76.

116 *Gleanings*, p. 254.

117 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 31.

118 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 184.

119 idem, p. 199.

120 Elder and Miller, *Aqdas*, p. 30.

121 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 247.

122 idem, p. 248.

123 *Baha'i World Faith*, p. 447.

124 Ward, *An Historical Study of the North American Speaking Tour of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 114.





**Part III**  
**Modern Baha'i: The Faith as an institutionalized religion**

## 6

### **Shoghi Effendi and the institutionalizing of the Faith**

The form of the Baha'i faith to emerge under the direction of Shoghi Effendi may appropriately be referred to as "modern Baha'i" in sharp distinction from the faith's previous forms. Shoghi Effendi gave to Baha'i a precision of historical understanding, doctrinal formulation, and institutional organization which had not yet been fully achieved in the religion and, thus, made obsolete much of the faith's previous literature, doctrine, and practice.

#### **Shoghi Effendi's appointment as Guardian**

'Abdu'l-Baha had no surviving sons. His son, Husayn, died in childhood. In his *Will and Testament*, 'Abdu'l-Baha appointed as his successor, Shoghi Effendi, his eldest grandchild and his first grandson, born of his eldest daughter, Diya'iyyih Khanum.<sup>1</sup> The will is divided into three parts, each written at different times.<sup>2</sup> In the earliest part, these words are written:

*O my loving friends! After the passing away of this wronged one, it is incumbent upon the Aghsan (Branches), the Afnan (Twigs) of the Sacred Lote-Tree, the Hands (pillars) of the Cause of God and the loved ones of the Abha Beauty to turn unto Shoghi Effendi—the youthful branch branched from the two hallowed and sacred Lote-Trees and the fruit grown from the union of the two off shoots of the Tree of Holiness,—as he is the sign of God, the chosen branch, the guardian*

*of the Cause of God, he unto whom all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the Hands of the Cause of God and His loved ones must turn. He is the expounder of the words of God and after him will succeed the first-born of his lineal descendants.*<sup>3</sup>

The authority which 'Abdu'l-Baha herewith bestowed upon his grandson is fully revealed in his statement concerning "the guardian" and the Universal House of Justice, which in the future was to be elected and established:

*Whatsoever they decide is of God. Whoso obeyeth his not, neither obeyeth thee, hath not obeyed God; whoso rebelleth against him and against then hath contended with God; whoso disputeth with him hath disputed with God; whoso denieth him hath denied God; whose disbelieveth in him hath disbelieved in God; whoso deviateth, separateth himself and turneth aside from him hath in truth deviated, separated himself and turned aside from God. May the wrath, the fierce indignation, the vengeance of God rest upon him! The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God. It is incumbent upon the members of the House of Justice, upon all the Aghsan, the Afnan, the hands of the Cause of God to show their obedience, submissiveness and subordination unto the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One, will make a breach in the Cause of God, will subvert His word and will become a manifestation of the Center of Sedition.*<sup>4</sup>

The necessity to give obedience to Shoghi Effendi is again stated in the concluding portion of the third part of the will, and these words are added:

*To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular convictions. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice.*<sup>5</sup>

These words appear to be a blatant denial of the Baha'i principle of "independent investigation of truth" and to reveal the basic inconsistency in affirming such a principle in a religion which demands absolute submission to the authority of each successive head of the faith. David Hofman, a Baha'i, insists that the first sentence

cannot be lifted from its context and applied to anything else. It applies only to the appointment of the Guardian and the authority vested in him. Indeed such a statement in any other setting would be a direct contradiction of the Baha'i principle of consultation, which requires everyone to set forth his views with moderation and

recognizes that “*out of the clash of differing opinions the spark of truth cometh forth*”.<sup>6</sup>

If one may not question the appointment of Shoghi Effendi, however, then seemingly it would follow that neither could he question any of Shoghi Effendi's acts or statements of doctrine while holding that office, since whoever disputes with him, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha's will, disputes with God. If one must turn to Shoghi Effendi and seek his guidance in all things pertaining to the faith, then one's own convictions would seem to be annulled, except as they should agree with the guardian's views. The passage is a difficult passage to interpret, and opinions have differed as to its meaning.

The authority which passed to Shoghi Effendi was undoubtedly a high authority. The language which 'Abdu'l-Baha used, that anyone denying, disbelieving, disputing against, and opposing Shoghi Effendi would be denying, disbelieving, disputing against, and opposing God, is similar to language which Baha'u'llah used in reference to the authority which was to pass from him to 'Abdu'l-Baha. The language used by 'Abdu'l-Baha may even be somewhat stronger than that used by Baha'u'llah, and it was probably asserted so strongly because of the opposition which 'Abdu'l-Baha had faced during his ministry. The words could be understood as placing Shoghi Effendi in a station as high as that of 'Abdu'l-Baha, but Shoghi Effendi, himself, declined a station equal to 'Abdu'l-Baha. Nonetheless, he held a high station and was, therefore, in a position to make whatever codifications in the faith he deemed necessary, and none could stay his hand nor question his actions.

### **Shoghi Effendi's transformation**

When his grandfather passed away in 1921, Shoghi Effendi was only twenty-four years of age, a student at Oxford University, but the young

Shoghi Effendi took a firm bold on the direction of the faith's affairs. The period of his administration (1921–1957) is one of the most remarkable periods in the faith's history in terms of institutional development, geographical expansion, literature production and distribution, and doctrinal solidification. Under Shoghi Effendi, the Baha'i faith became truly the Baha'i *World* Faith. Baha'u'llah gave the faith a definite world vision, but Shoghi Effendi, armed with that vision, led in the dramatic extension of the faith into all parts of the world. From the thirty-five countries opened to the faith at the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing in 1921, the faith under Shoghi Effendi's leadership penetrated into 254 countries and dependencies.

### ***The establishing of Baha'i doctrine***

One notable contribution of Shoghi Effendi's ministry was the solidifying of Baha'i doctrine. What took Christianity several centuries to do—to arrive at a definitive statement of cardinal doctrines—Shoghi Effendi, by the supreme authority which he exercised, singlehandedly accomplished for his faith during the thirty-six year span of his ministry by defining the stations of the three central figures of the faith and by formulating other basic Baha'i concepts.

### **The Station of the Bab**

Edward Browne understood that the Baha'is, in relegating the Bab to the position of forerunner to Baha'u'llah, were thereby denying the Bab's claim of being an independent manifestation.<sup>7</sup> Other non-Baha'is have followed Browne in this view. The confusion in understanding the Baha'i position regarding the Bab is also reflected in Wilson's statement



that to all intents and purposes the Bab is as much an obsolete prophet as Mani or Babak.”<sup>8</sup>

Shoghi Effendi, however, clearly states not only that the Bab is an independent manifestation but that his greatness lies primarily in his independent prophethood:

That the Bab, the inaugurator of the Babi Dispensation, is fully entitled to rank as one of the self-sufficient Manifestations of God, that He has been invested with sovereign power and authority, and exercises all the rights and prerogatives of independent Prophethood, is yet another fundamental verity which the Message of Baha’u’llah insistently proclaims and which its followers must uncompromisingly uphold. That he is not to be regarded merely as an inspired Precursor of the Baha’i Revelation, that in His person, as He Himself bears witness in the Persian Bayan, the object of all the Prophets gone before Him has been fulfilled, is a truth which I feel it my duty to demonstrate and emphasize. ... Indeed the greatness of the Bab consists primarily, not in His being the divinely-appointed Forerunner of so transcendent a Revelation, but rather in His having been invested with the powers inherent in the inaugurator of a separate religious Dispensation, and in Him wielding, to a degree unrivaled by the Messengers gone before Him, the scepter of independent Prophethood.<sup>9</sup>

The Bab, therefore, holds a twofold station, as an independent manifestation and as the forerunner of Baha’u’llah. Shoghi Effendi finds the independent prophethood of the Bab a further sign of the greatness of Baha’u’llah’s revelation:

Among the distinguishing features of His Faith ranks, as a further evidence of its uniqueness, the fundamental truth that in the person of its Forerunner, the Bab, every follower of Baha’u’llah recognizes not merely an inspired annunciator but a direct Manifestation of God. It is their firm belief that, no matter how short the duration of His Dispensation, and however brief the period of the operation of His laws, the Bab had been endowed with a potency such as no founder of any of the past religions was, in the providence of the Almighty, allowed to possess.<sup>10</sup>

Two questions raised for Baha’is by the Bab’s ministry are why, if he is an independent manifestation, his ministry was so short and why certain of his laws were of such a drastic nature. Concerning the former question, Shoghi Effendi answers: “As the Bab was not only a Manifestation

but a Herald of this Baha'i Faith, the interval between His Revelation and that of Baha'u'llah was of shorter duration."<sup>11</sup> But due to the essential relatedness of the Babi and Baha'i religions, Shoghi Effendi sees the Bab and Baha'u'llah as co-founders of the Baha'i faith. Thus, "His Dispensation in a sense will last as long as Baha'u'llah's lasts."<sup>12</sup> As to the Bab's severe laws, Shoghi Effendi writes:

These drastic measures enforced by the Bab and His followers were taken with the view of undermining the very foundation of Shi'ah orthodoxy, and thus paving the way for the coming of Baha'u'llah. To assert the independence of the new Dispensation, and to prepare also the ground for the approaching Revelation of Baha'u'llah the Bab had therefore to reveal very severe laws, even though most of them, were never enforced. But the mere fact that He revealed them was in itself a proof of the independent character of His Dispensation and was sufficient to create such widespread agitation, and excite such opposition on the part of the clergy that led them to cause His eventual martyrdom.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the Bab's numerous writings, Shoghi Effendi maintains:

Except for the Bayan, the Seven Proofs and Commentary on the Surih of Joseph, we cannot be sure of the authenticity of most of His other works as the text has been corrupted by the unfaithful.<sup>14</sup>

Although the Bab's writings have been superseded by Baha'u'llah's revelation,<sup>15</sup> modern Baha'is attribute to the Bab's works a certain validity. Baha'is, of course, revere all the previous revealed scriptures and acknowledge their validity for the times in which they were written, but the Bab's writings, although being superseded along with the other revealed scriptures of the past, stand in a closer relationship to Baha'u'llah's. They constitute somewhat of an "Old Testament" for Baha'is. They foretell in a special sense, Baha'is believe, the coming of Baha'u'llah and magnify the greatness of his revelation. The doctrinal outlook is much the same as well as the allegorical method of interpreting previous scriptures. The Bab's writings,

however, have not been translated into English except for isolated passages in Baha'i writings and a few prayers.

### **The Station of Baha'u'llah**

Baha'is, of course, regard Baha'u'llah as the supreme manifestation. His revelation signalizes the human race's "coming of age"; and, although other manifestations will follow Baha'u'llah, it marks "the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet."<sup>16</sup> Baha'is believe that it will eventually usher in mankind's golden age of peace and unity.

The supremacy of Baha'u'llah's revelation raises the questions of Baha'u'llah's relationship with God and with the other manifestations. Is Baha'u'llah, unlike the other manifestations, to be identified with the essence of God? Is his manifestation an incarnation of that essence? Shoghi Effendi explains:

The divinity attributed to so great a Being and the complete incarnation of the names and attributes of God in so exalted a Person should, under no circumstances, be misconceived or misinterpreted. The human temple that has been made the vehicle of so overpowering a Revelation must, if we be faithful to the tenets of our Faith, ever remain entirely distinguished from that "innermost Spirit of Spirits" and "eternal Essence of Essences"—that invisible yet rational God Who, however much we extol the divinity of His Manifestations on earth, can in no wise incarnate His infinite, His unknowable, His incorruptible and all-embracing Reality, in the concrete and limited frame of a mortal being. Indeed, the God Who could so incarnate His own reality would, in the light of the teachings of Baha'u'llah, cease immediately to be God. So crude and fantastic a theory of Divine incarnation is as removed from, and incompatible with, the essentials of Baha'i belief as are the no less inadmissible pantheistic and anthropomorphic conceptions of God—both of which the utterances of Baha'u'llah emphatically repudiate and the fallacy of which they expose.<sup>17</sup>

Again Shoghi Effendi maintains:

That Baha'u'llah should, notwithstanding the overwhelming intensity of His Revelation, be regarded as essentially one of these

Manifestations of God, never to be identified with that invisible Reality, the Essence of Divinity itself, is one of the major beliefs of our Faith—a belief which should never be obscured and the integrity of which no one of its followers should allow to be compromised.<sup>18</sup>

Baha'u'llah, then, according to these pronouncements, is not to be identified with the invisible essence of God nor to be understood as an incarnation of that essence. He is essentially one with the other manifestations of God, although the latest in the series. His greatness consists, in Baha'i thought, not in any innate qualities but simply in the greatness of time when his manifestation occurred—at the point of mankind's maturity and the outpouring of God's full revelation. This time, Baha'is hold, is foretold and anticipated by all the previous manifestations of God.

### **The Station of 'Abdu'l-Baha**

'Abdu'l-Baha occupies a unique station in the Baha'i faith, for Shoghi Effendi defines his station as less than a manifestation yet possessed of superhuman characteristics. Shoghi Effendi maintains that there is no authority whatever

for the opinion that inclines to uphold the so-called "mystic unity" of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, or to establish the identity of the later with His Father or with any preceding Manifestation.<sup>19</sup>

Shoghi Effendi repeatedly declares that "'Abdu'l-Baha is not a Manifestation of God."<sup>20</sup> Yet, Shoghi Effendi maintains that, notwithstanding 'Abdu'l-Baha's own denials of holding a station equal to the Bab or Baha'u'llah, his station is "immeasurably exalted ... above and beyond the implications of ... His own written statements."<sup>21</sup>

Although not a manifestation, 'Abdu'l-Baha is linked with the Bab and Baha'u'llah in a special way:

Though moving in a sphere of His own and holding a rank radically different from that of the Author and the Forerunner of the Baha'i

Revelation, He, by virtue of the station ordained for Him through the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, forms together with them what may be termed the Three Central Figures of a faith that stands unapproached in the world's spiritual history. He towers, in conjunction with them, above the destinies of this infant Faith of God from a level to which no individual or body ministering to its needs after Him, and for no less a period than a full thousand years, can ever hope to rise. To degrade His lofty rank by identifying His station with or by regarding it as roughly equivalent to, the position of those on whom the mantle of His authority has fallen would be an act of impiety as grave as the no less heretical belief that inclines to exalt Him to a state of absolute equality with either the central Figure or Forerunner of our Faith.<sup>22</sup>

As Baha'u'llah was a "mirror" of God's attributes, so is 'Abdu'l-Baha a mirror of Baha'u'llah's glory:

He is and should for all time be regarded, first and foremost, as the Center and Pivot of Baha'u'llah's peerless and all-enfolding Covenant, His most halted handiwork, the stainless Mirror of His light, the perfect Exemplar of His teachings, the unerring interpreter of His Word, the embodiment of every Baha'i ideal, the incarnation of every Baha'i virtue ....<sup>23</sup>

The expression, the "Mystery of God", by which Baha'u'llah designated 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi maintains, "does not by any means justify us to assign to him the station of Prophethood" but does indicate how

in the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha incompatible characteristics of a human nature and superhuman knowledge and perfection have been blended and are completely harmonized.<sup>24</sup>

As to 'Abdu'l-Baha's words, Shoghi Effendi holds that "His words are not equal in rank, though they possess an equal validity with the utterances of Baha'u'llah."<sup>25</sup> 'Abdu'l-Baha's words, however, appear in a variety of forms, in books he has written, recorded from his speeches, quoted in newspaper and magazine articles, written in diaries of individual Baha'is, reported in biographies and other books by Baha'i and non-Baha'i authors, collections of sayings published by Baha'i pilgrims, in letters to various persons, and sayings attributed to him by his former secretaries or close associates.

Shoghi Effendi urged the believers in the West to “quote and consider as authentic only such translations as are based upon the authenticated text of His recorded utterances in the original tongue.”<sup>26</sup> The *Bahá'í News* reported:

Shoghi Effendi has made it clear that all diaries and records of visits during the lifetime of the Master, if consisting of quotations taken down by the pilgrim and not corrected and approved by 'Abdu'l-Baha, are to be edited in such a way as to make it clear that these words of 'Abdu'l-Baha are not direct quotations but rather the understanding of the editor himself of what the Master said. This removes all such works from the list of what we might call the authoritative utterances.<sup>27</sup>

Shoghi Effendi later indicated:

Baha'u'llah has made it clear enough that only those things that have been revealed in the form of Tablets have a binding power over the friends. Hearsays may be matters of interest but can in no way claim authority. ... This being a basic principle of the Faith we should not confuse Tablets that were actually revealed and mere talks attributed to the Founders of the Cause. The first have absolute binding authority while the latter can in no way claim our obedience.<sup>28</sup>

Holding the highest rank of 'Abdu'l-Baha's words, therefore, are those writings specifically revealed by him: *The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (3 vols.), *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, and *Memorials of the Faithful*.

Collection of 'Abdu'l-Baha's talks and sayings which have been approved either by 'Abdu'l-Baha or by Shoghi Effendi are *Some Answered Questions*, *Paris Talks*, and *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (2 vols.), although concerning the latter Shoghi Effendi has suggested the eventual retranslation of this work from Mahmud's original Persian notes. Included with these writings may be listed *Foundations of World Unity* (compiled largely from the previously mentioned work).<sup>29</sup>

A large amount of Baha'i agrapha, therefore, consists of 'Abdu'l-Baha's sayings printed in unauthenticated works. Included in the list of

unauthentic or obsolete texts are Ahmad Sohrab's collection of sayings, entitled *I Heard Him Say*, a circulated mimeographed work attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha, entitled *Fourth Dimensional Consciousness, a Tablet to the Americas, The Mysterious Forces of Civilization* (retranslated from the original Persian by Shoghi Effendi and retitled *The Secret of Divine Civilization*), and Myron Phelps' *Abbas Effendi, His Life and Teachings*, regarded by Shoghi Effendi as not entirely correct historically.<sup>30</sup> Added to these are numerous unauthenticated sayings in newspapers and magazines.

### **The station of Shoghi Effendi**

Shoghi Effendi also defined the station which he, himself, held and which he believed would be held by the guardians who would succeed him.

For wide as is the gulf that separates 'Abdu'l-Baha from Him Who is the Source of an independent Revelation, it can never be regarded as commensurate with the greater distance that stands between Him Who is the Center of the Covenant ['Abdu'l-Baha] and His ministers who are to carry on His work, whatever be their name, their rank, their functions or their future achievements.<sup>31</sup>

Although 'Abdu'l-Baha referred to Shoghi Effendi as "the sign of God" and conferred upon him an authority in terms similar to those which Baha'u'llah had used in reference to 'Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi made no claim of being "the perfect exemplar" of Baha'u'llah's teachings:

No Guardian of the Faith, I feel it my solemn duty to place on record, can ever claim to be the perfect exemplar of the teachings of Baha'u'llah or the stainless mirror that reflects His light. Though overshadowed by the unfailing, the unerring protection of Baha'u'llah and of the Bab, and however much he may share with 'Abdu'l-Baha the right and obligation to interpret the Baha'i teachings, he remains essentially human and cannot, if he wishes to remain faithful to his trust, arrogate to himself, under any pretense whatsoever, the rights, the privileges and prerogatives which Baha'u'llah has chosen to confer upon His Son. In the light of this truth to pray to the Guardian of the Faith, to address him as lord and master, to designate him as his holiness, to seek his benediction, to celebrate his birthday, or to commemorate any event associated with his life would be tantamount to a departure from those established truths that are enshrined within our

beloved Faith. The fact that the Guardian has been specifically endowed with such power as he may need to reveal the purport and disclose the implications of the utterances of Baha'u'llah and of 'Abdu'l-Baha does not necessarily confer upon him a station co-equal with those Whose words he is called upon to interpret. He can exercise that right and discharge this obligation and yet remain infinitely inferior to both of them in rank and different in nature.<sup>32</sup>

### **The Baha'í Faith and other religions**

In defining the relationship between the Baha'í faith and other religions, Shoghi Effendi writes in the following sentence:

The Revelation identified with Baha'u'llah abrogates unconditionally all the Dispensations gone before it, upholds uncompromisingly the eternal verities they enshrine, recognizes firmly and absolutely the Divine origin of their Authors, preserves inviolate the sanctity of their authentic Scriptures, disclaims any intention of lowering the states of their Founders or of abating the spiritual ideals they inculcate, clarifies and correlates their functions, reaffirms their common, their unchangeable and fundamental purpose, reconciles their seemingly divergent claims and doctrines, readily and gratefully recognizes their respective contributions to the gradual unfoldment of one Divine Revelation, unhesitatingly acknowledges itself to be but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations, supplements their teachings with such laws and ordinances as conform to the imperative needs, and are dictated by the growing receptivity, of a fast evolving and constantly changing society, and proclaims its readiness and ability to fuse and incorporate the contending sects and factions into a universal Fellowship, functioning within the framework, and in accordance with the precepts, of a divinely conceived, a world-unifying, a world-redeeming Order.<sup>33</sup>

Shoghi Effendi's reference to the Baha'í religion as "but one link in the chain of continually progressive Revelations" is underscored unequivocally by the Baha'í teaching that its own faith is not final:

Great as is the power manifested by this Revelation and however vast the range of the Dispensation its Author has inaugurated, it emphatically repudiates the claim to be regarded as the final revelation of God's will and purpose for mankind. To hold such a conception of its character and functions would be tantamount to a betrayal of its cause and a denial of its truth. It must necessarily conflict with the fundamental principle which constitutes the bedrock of Baha'í belief, the principle that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is orderly, continuous and progressive and not spasmodic or final. Indeed, the categorical rejection by followers of the Faith of Baha'u'llah of the claim to finality which



any religious system inaugurated by the Prophets of the past may advance is as clear and emphatic as their own refusal to claim that same finality for the Revelation with which they stand identified.<sup>34</sup>

Baha'u'llah's revelation, although being a link in the chain of revelations, is nonetheless greatly distinguished from the other revelations:

It should be viewed not merely as yet another spiritual revival in the ever-changing fortunes of mankind, not only as a further stage in a chain of progressive Revelations, nor even as the culmination of one of a series of recurrent prophetic cycles, but rather as marking the last and highest stage in the stupendous evolution of man's collective life on this planet.<sup>35</sup>

The manifestations of God following Baha'u'llah will reside in the "shadow" of Baha'u'llah, and their revelations, by implication, will not be as resplendent as Baha'u'llah's revelation. The Baha'i faith, although disclaiming finality, does claim supremacy. Is it not the claims of the various religions to supremacy, rather than their claims to finality, which hinder their unification?

Worth noting also in discussing the faith's relationship to other religions is that as the Baha'i Faith began to develop in India, the question arose concerning the possible divine founding of Hinduism, Shoghi Effendi wrote to a Baha'i in India:

As regards your study of the Hindu religion. The origins of this and many other religions that abound in India are not quite known to us, and even the Orientalists and the students of religion are not in complete accord about the results of their investigations in that field. The Baha'i Writings also do not refer specifically to any of these forms of religion current in India. So, the Guardian feels it impossible to give you any definite and detailed information on that subject.<sup>36</sup>

Hinduism was, however, too important a religion to be overlooked. In time, Baha'is selected Krishna from among the Hindu avatars to be added to the list of Baha'i manifestations and founders of religions.

## The Baha'i Administrative Order

The fundamental feature of the Baha'i faith which marks the secret of its strength, according to Shoghi Effendi, is its administrative order.

This Administrative Order is fundamentally different from anything that any Prophet has previously established, inasmuch as Baha'u'llah has Himself revealed its principles, established its institutions, appointed the person to interpret His Word and conferred the necessary authority on the body designed to supplement and apply His legislative ordinances. Therein lies the secret of its strength, its fundamental distinction, and the guarantee against disintegration and schism. Nowhere in the sacred scriptures of any of the world's religious systems, not even in the writings of the Inaugurator of the Babi Dispensation, do we find any provisions establishing a covenant or providing for an administrative order that can compare in scope and authority with those that lie at the very basis of the Baha'i Dispensation.<sup>37</sup>

Shoghi Effendi contends that neither in Christianity nor Islam nor even in the Babi religion are there *written* and *explicit* directions establishing the precise nature of the institutions to be formed, investing in the successive heads of the faith an unassailable authority, and providing the safeguards to guarantee the religion from breaking into the contending sects and factions which history has demonstrated became the unavoidable fate. Only in the Baha'i faith, Shoghi Effendi holds, may one find those provisions which guard it from schism.

The "twin pillars that support this mighty Administrative Structure" are "the institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice."<sup>38</sup> These "two inseparable institutions," Shoghi Effendi maintains, "should be regarded as divine in origin, essential in their functions and complementary in their aims and purpose." The hereditary guardianship provides for the continuous office of one qualified to interpret the Baha'i

writings and thus prevent divisions which might result over differing interpretations; and the Universal House of Justice provides a legislative body with powers to enact laws on matters not dealt with in the Baha'i scriptures and with power to abrogate its own enactments to meet the changing needs. Both these institutions, therefore, have their own sphere of authority and "neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other."<sup>39</sup> The guardian is the permanent head of the Universal House of Justice and, while having power to interpret what is specifically revealed in Baha'i scripture, "cannot legislate except in his capacity as member of the Universal House of Justice."<sup>40</sup>

The Baha'i administrative order is "the sole framework" of the future Baha'i commonwealth.<sup>41</sup> Shoghi Effendi delineates the essential features of the future world commonwealth in an important passage a portion of which is as follows:

The unity of the human race, as envisaged by Baha'u'llah, implies the establishment of a world commonwealth in which all nations, races, creeds and classes are closely and permanently united, and in which the autonomy of its state members and the personal freedom and initiative of the individuals that compose them are definitely and completely safeguarded. This commonwealth must, as far as we can visualize it, consist of a world legislature, whose members will act as the trustees of the whole of mankind, ultimately control the entire resources of all the component nations, and will enact such laws as shall be required to regulate the life, satisfy the needs and adjust the relationships of all races and peoples. A world executive, backed by an international Force, will carry out the decisions arrived at, and apply the laws enacted by, this world legislature, and will safeguard the organic unity of the whole commonwealth. A world tribunal will adjudicate and deliver its compulsory and final verdict in all and any disputes that may arise between the various elements constituting this universal system. A mechanism of world inter-communication will be devised, embracing the whole planet, freed from national hindrances and restrictions, and functioning with marvellous swiftness and perfect regularity. A world metropolis will act as the nerve center of a world civilization, the focus towards which the

unifying forces of life will converge and from which its energizing influences will radiate. A world language will either be invented or chosen from among the existing languages and will be taught in the schools of all the federated nations as an auxiliary to their mother tongue. A world script, a world literature, a uniform and universal system of currency, of weights and measures, will simplify and facilitate intercourse and understanding among the nations and races of mankind. In such a world society, science and religion, the two most potent forces in human life, will be reconciled, will coöperate, and will harmoniously develop. The press will, under such a system, while giving full scope to the expression of the diversified views and convictions of mankind, cease to be mischievously manipulated by vested interests, whether private or public, and will be liberated from the influence of contenting governments and people. The economic resources of raw materials will be tapped and fully utilized, its markets will be coördinated and developed, and the distributions of its products will be equitably regulated.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Institutional development***

In addition to the establishing of Baha'i doctrine, Shoghi Effendi turned his attention to the institutional development of the faith. Unlike 'Abdu'l-Baha who travelled extensively after his release from imprisonment, taking part in numerous public appearances and speaking engagements, and who before his death was planning yet another world tour, Shoghi Effendi was content to reside in relative seclusion in Haifa, from whence he directed, through a constant flow of letters and cablegrams, the ever-growing affairs of the worldwide Baha'i community.

### **National and Local Assemblies**

Shoghi Effendi began urging the immediate formation of a "National Spiritual Assembly" in every country where conditions were favorable and where Baha'is had reached a considerable size.<sup>43</sup> Such assemblies were instituted in the United States in 1925 (superseding the Baha'i Temple Unity, organized during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry), in the British Isles, Germany, and India in 1923, in Egypt in 1924, in Iraq in 1931, and in Persia and Australia in 1934.<sup>44</sup> He urged that in every locality where the number of Baha'is exceeded

size a “Local Spiritual Assembly” be established. Shoghi Effendi called for the establishment of a Baha’i fund to be under the control of the assemblies and to be expended for the promotion of the cause in the respective locality or country.<sup>45</sup> He urged the assemblies, national and local, to elect committees to discharge particular responsibilities and welcomed their reports along with the reports from the national assemblies. Shoghi Effendi named over sixty national committees, originating mainly in the West, which were functioning by 1944.<sup>46</sup>

As soon as the rational assemblies were functioning properly, Shoghi Effendi set about to place them on a clear legal basis. Two significant milestones in the faith’s evolution were the drafting and adoption by the Baha’is in the United States in 1927 of the first Baha’i national Constitution and the drafting of by-laws by Baha’is in New York City in 1931.<sup>47</sup> This national constitution became the pattern for other national constitutions, and the New York by-laws became the pattern for other local assemblies.

In 1929, the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States was incorporated, followed by the incorporation of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Egypt and the Sudan in 1934, of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of Australia and New Zealand in 1938, and of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha’is of the British Isles in 1939. Local assemblies also were similarly incorporated, beginning with the Chicago assembly in 1932.<sup>48</sup>

To the various national assemblies, Shoghi Effendi sent messages encouraging the Baha’is in their work, projecting goals, defining their authority, clarifying issues, settling disputes and answering questions,

reporting on activities in various parts of the world, urging the translation of Baha'i writings into native tongues, keeping before Baha'is the ultimate purposes of the faith, reminding them of promises of divine assistance, and continuously directing them to greater accomplishments.

A series of campaigns was initiated in 1937 designed to spread the faith throughout the world. The "first seven year plan" for American Baha'is (1937-1944) had three objectives: (1) to complete the exterior ornamentation of the Baha'i temple in Wilmette, Illinois; (2) to establish a local spiritual assembly in every state in the United States; (3) and to create a Baha'i center in every Latin American republic. Although the "seven year plan" was carried out during the difficult years of the war, Baha'is successfully achieved their goals. After the American Baha'is began their "seven year plan", similar plans also were initiated by other national assemblies.

After a "two-year respite", a "second seven year plan" was initiated (1946-1953), having four objectives: (1) consolidation of the victories won on the American continents during the "first seven years" effort; (2) completion of the interior ornamentation of the Wilmette Baha'i temple; (3) formation of three new national assemblies in Canada and in Central and Southern America; (4) and "the initiation of systematic teaching activity in war-torn, spiritually famished European continent."<sup>49</sup> The emphasis fell on the fourth objective, and thus this "second seven year plan" became known as "the European Campaign", aiming at establishing spiritual assemblies in "Ten Goal Countries", Spain, Portugal, Holland, Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Italy, the Duchy of Luxembourg, and Switzerland. Finland later was added to the list.

Baha'i pioneers (missionaries) were dispatched from the United States into Europe in the first systematic effort to carry the faith to the European continent. In the middle of the European campaign, Baha'i pioneers from Latin America were sent to aid in the work.<sup>50</sup>

### **International stage of the Faith**

The Baha'i faith entered a new international stage in its evolution as the decade of the 1950s began. Shoghi Effendi, who had previously addressed individual national spiritual assemblies, began directing his messages to the Baha'i world community. Three important developments at this stage were the launching of a "Ten Year World Crusade", the establishing of the International Baha'i Council, and the appointment of "Hands of the Cause".

***The Ten Year World Crusade:*** The ten year crusade (1953–1963) aimed at planting the faith in all the chief remaining territories of the world not yet opened to the faith. At the beginning of the crusade, Shoghi Effendi wrote to the believers:

The avowed, the primary aim of the Spiritual Crusade is none other than the conquest of the citadels of men's hearts. The theater of its operations is the entire planet. Its duration a whole decade, its commencement synchronizes with the centenary of the birth of Baha'u'llah's Mission. Its culmination will coincide with the centenary of the declaration of that same Mission. The agencies assisting in its conduct are the nascent administrative institutions of a steadily evolving divinely appointed order. Its driving force is the energizing influence generated by the Revelation heralded by the Bab and proclaimed by Baha'u'llah. Its Marshal is none other than the Author of the Divine Plan. Its standard-bearers are the Hands of the Cause of God appointed in every continent of the globe. Its generals are the twelve national spiritual assemblies participating in the execution of its design. Its vanguard is the chief executors of 'Abdu'l-Baha's master plan, their allies and associates. Its legions are the rank and file of believers standing behind these same twelve national assemblies and sharing in the global task embracing the American, the European, the African, the Asiatic and Australian fronts. The charter directing its course is the immortal Tablets that have flowed from the pen of the Center of the Covenant Himself. The armor with which its onrushing hosts have

been invested is the glad tidings of God's own message in this day, the principles underlying the order proclaimed by His messenger, and the laws and ordinances governing His Dispensation. The battle cry animating its heroes and heroines in the cry of Ya-Baha'u'l-Abha, Ya 'Aliyyu'l-A'la.<sup>51</sup>

Fired with the vision of conquering the world for Baha'u'llah, Baha'is accepted the challenge and went forth as spiritual crusaders to establish the faith triumphantly around the globe. The faith penetrated into some 131 new countries and territories, and Baha'i literature was translated into 220 additional languages. The number of national assemblies increased in this period from the original twelve<sup>52</sup> entrusted with executing the Ten Year Plan to fifty-nine, through the formation of twelve new assemblies in the American continent, thirteen in the European continent, eight in the Asiatic continent, three in the African continent, and one in Australasia. Baha'i temples were built in Sydney, Australia, and in Kampala, Uganda (both dedicated in 1961) and the superstructure completed for the first European Baha'i temple, in Frankfurt, Germany (later dedicated in 1964).<sup>53</sup>

***The International Baha'i Council:*** In a cablegram, January 9, 1951. Shoghi Effendi announced the "weighty epoch-making decision of formation of first International Baha'i Council" which he called the "first embryonic International Institution" which in time would develop into the Universal House of Justice. He declared that history would acclaim the constitution of this International Council as "the greatest event shedding luster upon second epoch of Formative Age of Baha'i Dispensation potentially unsurpassed by any enterprise undertaken since inception of Administrative Order of Faith." Shoghi Effendi outlined its threefold function:



first, to forge link with authorities of newly emerged State [Israel]; second, to assist me to discharge responsibilities involved in erection of mighty superstructure of the Bab's Holy Shrine; third, to conduct negotiations related to matters of personal status with civil authorities.<sup>54</sup>

To these would be added other functions in the course of its evolution. Among the nine members of the Council were Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiyyih, Shoghi Effendi's wife, serving as liaison between him and the Council, and Mason Remey, serving as its President.<sup>55</sup>

***The Hands of the Cause:*** 'Abdu'l-Baha in his *Will and Testament* had indicated that the guardian must appoint Hands of the Cause of God to be under his command with obligations to "diffuse the Divine Fragrances", to edify men's souls and improve their character, and to be detached from earthly things.<sup>56</sup> Baha'u'llah had appointed during his lifetime four hands to serve him. 'Abdu'l-Baha did not appoint any additional hands, but he did refer to some outstanding Baha'i teachers after their deaths as hands, a practice continued by Shoghi Effendi until his first appointment of living hands on December 24, 1951, when he announced in a cablegram the elevation to that office of twelve Baha'is, equally allocated (three each) to the Holy Land (Israel) and to the Asiatic, American, and European continents.<sup>57</sup>

In February, 1952, Shoghi Effendi raised the number of appointed hands to nineteen and maintained this number until October, 1957, by appointing new hands to take the places of five who passed away during this period. In Shoghi Effendi's last message to the Baha'i world (October, 1957) before his death, he appointed eight additional hands, bringing the total number to twenty-seven. In this last message, Shoghi Effendi referred to the hands as

the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth, who have been invested by the unerring Pen of the Center of His Covenant with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation, of His Father's Faith.<sup>58</sup>

Shoghi Effendi also called upon the hands to appoint nine members from each of the five continents to serve on auxiliary boards to assist the hands as their adjuncts or deputies.<sup>59</sup>

### ***Independent character of the Faith***

Although the establishing of Baha' doctrine and the developing of the Baha'i institutional structure sharply distinguished the faith under Shoghi Effendi from its previous forms, the heart of Shoghi Effendi's transformation was the molding of Baha'i into an independent religion. This somewhat unexpected development was foreshadowed in Shoghi Effendi's refusal, unlike 'Abdu'l-Baha's practice, to go to the mosque. Ruhiyyih Khanum remarks:

With the reading of the Will and the establishment of the Guardianship, came quite naturally and organically a new phase in the development of the Faith. This was typified by one of the first acts of the Guardian: Shoghi Effendi never set foot in the Mosque, whereas 'Abdu'l-Baha had attended it until the last Friday of His life.<sup>60</sup>

The difference between 'Abdu'l-Baha's and Shoghi Effendi's relationship to the Muslim mosque dramatically symbolizes the different approaches of their ministries regarding other religions and helps focus on Shoghi Effendi's transformation of the faith from that which existed under 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership.

'Abdu'l-Baha lived the outward life of a Muslim. Amelia Collins, one of the hands of the faith, comments: "The Master Himself, though so widely loved and respected, was not known as the Head of an independent religion, but rather regarded as a Moslem notable and Holy Man."<sup>61</sup> Henry Harris

Jessup, who visited 'Abdu'l-Baha around 1902, left this report: "On Fridays he prays with the Moslems in the mosque, as he is still reputed a good Mohammadan of the Shiite sect."<sup>62</sup> Myron Phelps speaks of how 'Abdu'l-Baha kept the Muslim fast of Ramadan and all the other Muslim observances for the sake of peace and to avoid the imputation of social innovation."<sup>63</sup>

Consistent with his practice, 'Abdu'l-Baha did not ask any believer to leave the church or religion with which he was identified. Shoghi Effendi, however, who made no pretense of living the life of a Muslim, was destined to bring about a significant change in Baha'i outlook and practice. The transformation thus effected may be brought into better focus by taking a closer look at Baha'i philosophy during 'Abdu'l-Baha's ministry.

### **Baha'i as an inclusive religion**

The Baha'i faith which made its first significant impact in the Western world during the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha, especially during his Western travels, was regarded more as a new spiritual attitude of unity and cooperation than as a competing religion. Favorite phrases were that Baha'i was "the spirit of the age" or "religion renewed" and not a new religion. The faith was an *inclusive* rather than exclusive religious movement. One could be a Baha'i, it was held, and still retain membership in other religious bodies. This aspect of the faith was regarded as one of its unique features:

The Baha'i is the first religious movement that does not insist on the alienation of the convert from his own traditional religion. Instead, he approves of his becoming a better Muslim, Jew, or Christian.<sup>64</sup>

Similarly, Albert Vail wrote:

Apparently, it is not so much an organization as a spiritual attitude, not so much a new religion as religion renewed. Its followers

are found in all sorts of ecclesiastical organizations. To be a Bahai a man need not sever his previous religious affiliation; he may remain a Buddhist, or Hindoo Braman, a Parsee, a Mohammedan, or a Christian. He becomes one of the Bahai Movement when he catches the Bahai spirit.<sup>65</sup>

Jessyca Gaver relates that a university professor once asked 'Abdu'l-Baha: "If I became a Baha'i, can I keep the religion of my saintly Christian mother?" 'Abdu'l-Baha replied: "Of course you may keep it. If you become a Baha'i you will apply it."<sup>66</sup> Stanwood Cobb saw this aspect of the faith as a reason for its missionary success:

The great success of Baha'i missionary work has been due to the fact that no one is asked to abandon his own religion in order to become a Baha'i. The Baha'i propagandist, because he does not have to argue the inferiority of other religions, avoids arousing a spirit of combative ecclesiastical loyalty on the part of those to whom he preaches, of whatever religion they may be.<sup>67</sup>

Thus, Cobb says:

The Baha'i missionary can do what no other missionary can. He goes among various races and religions and wins adherents to his cause without attack, without invidious comparison, without offense to the sensibilities and loyalties of other religionists.<sup>68</sup>

Consistent with the practice of retaining membership in one's original ecclesiastical or religious institutions were 'Abdu'l-Baha's broad, humanitarian definitions of a Baha'i:

To be a Bahai means to love humanity and try to serve it; to work for the universal peace and the universal brotherhood of mankind.<sup>69</sup>

He is a true Baha'i who strives by day and by night to progress and advance along the path of human endeavor; whose cherished desire is to live and act so as to enrich and illumine the world.<sup>70</sup>

In reply to questions asked by a representative of *The Independent* through an interpreter, 'Abdu'l-Baha had listed nine Baha'i principles and added:

If a man does and believes these things then he is a Bahaist, no matter whether he calls himself Shintoist, Confucianist, Buddhist,

Hindoo, Jew, Mohometan, Zoroastrian, Parsee or Christian. No matter in what church or temple he worships.<sup>71</sup>

Esslemont points out that in one of 'Abu'l-Baha's London talks he said "that a man may be a Baha'i even if he has never heard the name of Baha'u'llah."<sup>72</sup>

The philosophy behind this earlier Baha'i understanding was that Baha'i was not a religion alongside other religions but stood in the relationship of fulfillment to promise. All the religions found their fulfillment and higher expression in Baha'i. Thus, one did not cease being a Christian, Buddhist, or whatever in becoming a Baha'i but only accepted the new form of that religion. Baha'i was, therefore, compatible with existing religious traditions. Moreover, Baha'is hoped that by working from within the various religious institutions—as a leaven—they could expand the horizon of the conflicting viewpoints and bring about their eventual unification in the Baha'i philosophy. Maude Holbach wrote:

A Babi was a Mohammedan reformer, a Bahai may be a reformer *in any Church to which he happens to belong*, for Abdul Baha asks none to leave their own religion *but to love it*—to look back through the mists of ages and discern the true spirit of its founder—to cast off dogma and seek reality!<sup>73</sup>

The Baha'i view that in becoming a Baha'i one did not cease being a Christian or advocate of his own religion was upheld in a very literal sense, for the believer could retain his membership of affiliation.

Baha'is did have a limited Baha'i organization under 'Abdu'l-Baha, but it was not considered in any sense as competitive with other religions organizations because of its *inclusive* character. E. A. Dime quotes 'Abdu'l-Baha's words:

The Bahai Revelation is not an organization. The Bahai Cause can never be organized. The Bahai Revelation is the spirit of this age.

*It is the essence of all the highest ideals of this century. The Bahai Cause is an inclusive movement: the teachings of all religions and societies are found here.*<sup>74</sup>

In commenting on these words, Dime says:

The Bahais explain that the impossibility of organizing the Bahai Cause does not mean that the people cannot organize and cooperate for the accomplishment of the work of the Cause.<sup>75</sup>

Horace Holley, in his *Bahai: The Spirit of the Age*, gives expression to the broad understanding of the Baha'i Faith. He maintains that the "slightest appreciation" of the Baha'i revelation "leads one to realize that the spirit of the age cannot be thus conveniently confined" to "the Bahai Movement".

The slight Bahai organization which exists is, in comparison with the Revelation itself, only as body in comparison to soul. Obviously, the cosmically conscious person of to-day cannot accept any arbitrary, limiting classification.<sup>76</sup>

Even during the early years of Shoghi Effendi's administration, Horace Holley wrote:

A Baha'i community differs from other voluntary gatherings in that its foundation is so deeply laid and broadly extended that it can include any soul. Whereas other associations are exclusive, in effect if not in intention, and from method if not from ideal, Baha'i association is inclusive, shutting the gates of fellowship to no sincere soul. In every gathering there is latent or developed some basis of selection. In religion this basis is a creed limited by the historical nature of its origin; in politics this is party or platform; in economics this is a mutual misfortune or mutual power; in the arts and sciences this basis consists of special training or activity or interest. In all these matters, the more inclusive the basis of selection, the stronger the movement—a condition diametrically opposed to that existing in the Baha'i Cause.<sup>77</sup>

Little did Baha'is realize that this broad, inclusive understanding of Baha'i would undergo a complete reversal.

### **Baha'i as an exclusive religion**

Shoghi Effendi, early in his administration, called for lists of members of all local assemblies to be sent to him through the national assembly. The question arose, therefore, of what the qualifications for

membership were 'Abdu'l-Baha's broad definitions of a Baha'i were no longer considered adequate as defining qualifications for Baha'i membership. Shoghi Effendi considered as fundamental the following qualifications:

Full recognition of the station of the Forerunner, the Author, and the True Exemplar of the Baha'i Cause, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Testament; unreserved acceptance of, and submission to, whatsoever has been revealed by their Pen; loyal and steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will; and close association with the spirit as well as the form of the present day Baha'i administration throughout the world ....<sup>78</sup>

These qualifications were included in Article II of the By-Laws of the National Spiritual Assembly as part of the qualifications for a voting member of the Baha'i community.

An event of far-reaching effect on the Baha'i faith was the decision by the Supreme Religious Court of Egypt that the Baha'is of that land were adherents of a heretical faith at variance with accepted beliefs of Islam and were, therefore, outside of its jurisdiction. In a communication to the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States, dated January 10, 1926, Shoghi Effendi wrote:

This decision, however locally embarrassing, in the present stage of our development, may be regarded as an initial step taken by our very opponents in the path of the eventual universal acceptance of the Baha'i Faith, as one of the independent recognized religious systems of the world.<sup>79</sup>

In a later communication of February 12, 1927, Shoghi Effendi pointed out that the text of the court's decision refers to the Baha'i faith as a "new religion" and "entirely independent" and that its adherents could no more be called Muslims than Muslims could be called Christian or Jew. He notes that the decision places the Baha'is of Egypt in "a most humiliating and embarrassing position," but he maintains that

they, however, cannot but rejoice in the knowledge that whereas in various Muhammadan countries and particularly in Persia the overwhelming majority of the leaders of Islam are utterly opposed to any form of declaration that would facilitate the universal recognition of the Cause, the authorized heads of their co-religionists in one of the most advanced communities in the Muhammadan world have, of their own initiative, published to the world a document that may justly be termed as the first chapter of liberty emancipating the Baha'i Faith from the fetters of orthodox Islam.<sup>80</sup>

The text indicates further that the Muslim Court cannot renew the marriages of the Baha'is who were required to divorce their Muslim wives until they recant their Baha'i faith.

In the meantime, another significant development occurred. The National Spiritual Assembly of the United States and Canada, of New York, NY, filed in the United States Patent Office on March 10, 1928, an application for registration of the name "BAHA'I" as a trademark. The name ["BAHÁ'Í"] was registered on August 7, 1928, as Trade-Mark 245,271. An application for registration of the [Arabic] symbol of the "Greatest Name" also was made on April 12, 1934, and was registered on August 28, 1934, as Trade-Mark 316,444. Registered in Canada also were the name "BAHA'I" on November 13, 1935, and the symbol of the "Greatest Name" on December 3, 1935.<sup>81</sup>

Reflecting the increasing exclusiveness of the Baha'i religion are Horace Holley's words, in his short discussion of the legal protection now granted to the name "Baha'i" and to the symbol of the "Greatest Name":

A revealed Faith is universal, and in each cycle is offered freely to the entire world. The Baha'i Faith, however, involves an administrative order and a degree of discipline raising it above the realm of the spiritual philosophies which can be adapted to suit the individual understanding. The believers, therefore, realize a responsibility in upholding the full and complete standard of faith, which remains incomplete until membership in the Baha'i order is attained.<sup>82</sup>

The concept of the Baha'i faith as a spiritual attitude was more and more being replaced by a concrete, institutional concept.



Then in a communication appearing in *Baha'i News*, August, 1933, regarding membership in the World Fellowship of Faiths and similar societies, Shoghi Effendi indicated that Baha'is "should refrain from any act or word that would imply a departure from the principles ... established by Baha'u'llah", and then stated:

Formal affiliation with and acceptance of membership in organizations whose program or policies are not wholly reconcilable with the Teachings is of course out of the question.<sup>83</sup>

The implication of these developments, however, was not immediately recognized. That the Baha'i faith increasingly was being regarded as independent of its parent faith of Islam did not necessarily suggest to Baha'is that their faith also should become independent of other religions. The copyrighting of the name "Baha'i" and the instruction to refrain from joining bodies not wholly reconcilable with Baha'i teachings did not necessarily mean that present religious memberships should be severed.

But in a communication printed in *Baha'i News*, July, 1935, were these words:

Concerning membership in non-Baha'i religious associations, the Guardian wishes to re-emphasize the general principle already laid down in his Communications to your Assembly and also to the individual believers that no Baha'i who wishes to be a whole-hearted and sincere upholder of the distinguishing principles of the Cause can accept full membership in any non-Baha'i ecclesiastical organization. ... For it is only too obvious that in most of its fundamental assumptions the Cause of Baha'u'llah is completely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies and institutions. ... During the days of the Master the Cause was still in a stage that made such an open and sharp dissociation between it and other religious organizations, particularly the Muslim Faith, not only inadvisable but practically impossible to establish. But since His passing events throughout the Baha'i world, and particularly in Egypt where the Muslim religious courts have formally testified to the independent character of the Faith, have developed to a point that has made such an assertion of the independence of the Cause not only highly desirable but absolutely essential.<sup>84</sup>

After this statement appeared in the *Baha'i News*, letters from various local spiritual assemblies and individual Baha'is were written to the national assembly, and in October, 1935, the national assembly sent out a general letter in reply to some of these communications in which it upheld the Guardian's instructions, pointing out that various statements in Shoghi Effendi's communications were leading in this direction and that it was as necessary and inevitable result of the steady development of the World Order of Baha'u'llah."<sup>85</sup>

In a later communication, dated June 15, 1935, and printed in the October issue of *Baha'i News*, the Guardian recalled

the separation that set in between the institutions of the Baha'i Faith and the Islamic ecclesiastical organizations that oppose it—a movement that has originated in Egypt and is now spreading steadily throughout the Middle East and will in time communicate itself to the West.<sup>86</sup>

He maintained:

This historic development, the beginnings of which could neither be recognized nor even anticipated in the years immediately preceding 'Abdu'l-Baha's passing, may be said to have signaled the Formative Period of our Faith and to have paved the way for the consolidation of its administrative order.<sup>87</sup>

Then reaffirming his position, Shoghi Effendi said;

Though our Cause unreservedly recognizes the Divine origin of all the religions that preceded it and upholds the spiritual truths which lie at their very core and are common to them all, its institutions, whether administrative, religious or humanitarian, must if their distinctive character is to be maintained and recognized, be increasingly divorced from the outworn creeds, the meaningless ceremonials and man made institutions with which those religions are at present identified.<sup>88</sup>

The new policy created problems of adjustment for some Baha'is. One case in particular involving "an aged believer, afflicted with illness, for whom severance of church relations might have been too great a shock"<sup>89</sup> was brought to Shoghi Effendi's attention. He replied:

In this case, as also in that of suffering believers, the Assemblies, whether local or national, should act tactfully, patiently and in a friendly and kindly spirit. Knowing how painful and dangerous it is for such believers to repudiate their former allegiances and friendships, they should try to gradually persuade them of the wisdom and necessity of such an action, and instead of thrusting upon them a new principle, to make them accept it inwardly, and out of pure conviction and desire. Too severe and immediate action in such cases is not only fruitless but actually harmful. It alienates people instead of winning them to the Cause.<sup>90</sup>

Thus, Shoghi Effendi's transformation of the faith was complete. He had transformed it from a spiritual leaven working within the various religions into a new independent faith operating outside of and alongside of the other "obsolete" religious institutions. Had the "spirit of the age" become confined to an exclusive religious order? 'Abdu'l-Baha had indicated that one might be a Baha'i who had never even heard of Baha'u'llah, but with the National Spiritual Assembly holding copyright on the name "Baha'i", steps were taken to restrict the use of the name by anyone outside of the Baha'i organization. Some, however, opposed the new developments.

### **Opposition to Shoghi Effendi's transformation**

The Baha'i religion, in the course of its history, has lost some important members who, after their defections, became strong critics of the faith. Some, however, continued to consider themselves loyal adherents of the Baha'i religion but drew a sharp distinction between the Baha'i religion and the Baha'i organization of which Shoghi Effendi was the head.

#### ***Ruth White***

One of these was Ruth White, an actress and newspaper writer whose varied religious background included being a Roman Catholic,

a Protestant, an agnostic, and nearly a Communist. She met 'Abdu'l-Baha in Boston in 1912 and became a Baha'i. After receiving the news of the appointment of a successor to 'Abdu'l-Baha, which came, Ruth White maintains, "as a thunderbolt out of a clear sky to everyone",<sup>91</sup> since 'Abdu'l-Baha, as she holds, had never indicated any intention of appointing a successor, she carried on a solitary effort to prove the inauthenticity of the alleged will.

She travelled to London where she obtained photographic copies of the will and turned them over to Dr C. Ainsworth Mitchell, handwriting expert for the British Museum and editor of *The Analyst*, to compare with photographs which she had also obtained of 'Abdu'l-Baha's inscriptions written in 1912 in the Guest Bible of City Temple, London, and in the Bible of the Unitarian Church, Montclair, New Jersey, and with authenticated signatures of 'Abdu'l-Baha on two letters and another signature on an older letter.

Mitchell's report, which is dated June 3, 1930, as it appears in Ruth White's book *Abdul Baha's Questioned Will and Testament*, indicates that he made a "minute examination" of the photographs and states near the beginning:

In the absence of an opportunity to examine the original document, any conclusions to be drawn from an examination of the photographic enlargements must necessarily be of a provisional character contingent upon the accuracy of the photographic records, Moreover, some of the facts which are taken into consideration in the scientific examination of an original document cannot be perfectly studied in a photographic reproduction, such as, for example, the ink, paper, penstrokes, and so on.

Assuming that the authenticated specimens of writings are of approximately the same period as that at which the disputed will is alleged to have been written and signed, the points which can be accurately compared in the photographic enlargements are the mode of formation

of the writing, the changes in pressure, the form of individual letters and the relationship in the size of parts of the letter to the whole.<sup>92</sup>

Mitchell indicates that the signature on the older letter may be considered as authentic since it agrees closely with the other signatures, but he maintains that “a comparison of the four signatures on the envelope of the alleged will with the four authenticated signatures reveals many striking differences in the mode of formation of the characters” and that in his opinion “these differences are not consistent with the signatures upon the envelope being in the writing of the writer of the authenticated signature.”

As to the body of the will, Mitchell reports that

A minute comparison of the authenticated writing with the writing on every page of the alleged will ... has failed to detect in any part of the will the characteristics of the writing of Abdul Baha, as shown in the authenticated specimens.

Mitchell also maintains that the writing in the will “does not agree with the hypothesis that it was all written by one person”, for he observes that page two, except the last two lines, agrees with the writing on page three. The last two lines of page two agree with pages four, five, six, seven and eight. Pages nine and ten show points of resemblance with the writing on the envelope.<sup>93</sup>

J. R. Richards holds that “it is somewhat doubtful how much value can be set on the report in question,” because Mitchell had said that “any conclusions” were of a “provisional character contingent upon the accuracy of the photographic records.” Richards believes, therefore, that “the evidence produced by Mrs White ... is not sufficiently strong to merit acceptance.”<sup>94</sup> Mitchell did indicate, however, “the points which can be accurately compared in the photographic enlargements,” and it was upon

these points that Mitchell arrived at his conclusion. Mitchell's report sharply contradicts the claims of Shoghi Effendi and the Baha'is who accept the will that it was "signed and sealed by 'Abdu'l-Baha; entirely written with His own hand."<sup>95</sup>

The Baha'i organization attempted to allay Mrs White's questions concerning the will by assuring her that a number of well-known Baha'is had examined the will and concluded that it was written by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by pointing out to her that the British government, mandatory power over Palestine under the League of Nations, officially recognized the will.

Ruth White held, however, that since the Baha'is who examined the will were not handwriting experts and were not disinterested witnesses, they were not legally qualified to judge its authenticity; and the British government's recognition of the will consisted simply in permitting Shoghi Effendi to be custodian of the tombs of Baha'u'llah and the Bab and that this would have been conceded to him, as 'Abdu'l-Baha's oldest male descendant, even without a will and, therefore, had no direct bearing on the vital issue of the will's authenticity.<sup>96</sup>

Ruth White's objection to the Baha'i organization was not based merely on the question of the will's authenticity, for she maintained that "whether the will is valid or invalid does not alter the fact that the Bahai organization is the worst enemy of the Bahai Religion and its only real one."<sup>97</sup> She maintained that "the policies of the Bahai organization are the inversion of the Bahai Religion."<sup>98</sup> She argued that under Shoghi Effendi and the Baha'i organization "the great universal Bahai Cause has been changed into a narrow bigoted sect and many of the tactics of the dark ages have been revived."<sup>99</sup>

She held that the Baha'i organization's insistence that "the individual conscience must be subordinated to the decisions of the elected Spiritual Assembly"<sup>100</sup> was in violation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings concerning the liberty of the human conscience. She opposed the copyrighting of the name Baha'i.

Her strong belief that the Baha'i organization was an enemy of the Baha'i religion as promulgated by 'Abdu'l-Baha led her to believe that Shoghi Effendi was in collusion with Muhammad 'Ali in forging the will to give Shoghi Effendi the succession from which they might profit financially.<sup>101</sup> Shoghi Effendi expressed his amusement at

the preposterous and fantastic idea that Muhammad 'Ali, the prime mover and the focal center of unyielding hostility to the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha, should have freely associated himself with the members of the family of 'Abdu'l-Baha in the forging of a will which in the words of the writer herself, is but a "recital of the plottings" in which for thirty years Muhammad-'Ali has been busily engaged.<sup>102</sup>

Shoghi Effendi elsewhere refers to Mrs White, though unnamed, as "a besotted woman" who flouted 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will but who was unable "to produce the slightest breach in the ranks of its valiant upholders."<sup>103</sup> Ruhyyih Rabbani refers to Mrs White's efforts as "the attacks of a thoroughly foolish American believer", noting that Shoghi Effendi had written to Tudor Pole that "the most powerful and determined opponents of the Faith in the East ... have vehemently attacked its provisions, but never questioned its authenticity", and she remarks that "all Mrs White ever achieved was to stir up a temporary and insignificant cloud of dust."<sup>104</sup>

Ruth White, admittedly, appears to have been alone in challenging the authenticity of 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament. Her religious pilgrimage did not end with Baha'i. Miller points out that Mrs White seems

to have transferred her devotion from 'Abdu'l-Baha to Meher Baba and wrote in 1957 about visiting him.<sup>105</sup> Meher Baba claimed to be the last of a series of avatars including Zoroaster, Krishna, Rama, Buddha, Jesus, and Muhammad.<sup>106</sup> Perhaps being disillusioned by the great changes which had overtaken the Baha'i faith, she found an affinity of outlook with Baha'i in Meher Baba. Ruth White was not able to adjust to the transformation in the Baha'i faith effected by Shoghi Effendi.

### ***The New History Society***

Ruth White indicated that she was never a member of the Baha'i organization. Two persons, whose story is significant in Baha'i history, were at first members of the Baha'i organization, accepting 'Abdu'l-Baha's will as authentic and regarding Shoghi Effendi as the appointed successor. They were opposed, however, to the organization's control of their activities in propagating the Baha'i teachings, and in time the society which they founded encountered a head-on collision with the organized Baha'is in a lawsuit in New York City. They were Julie Chanler and Mirza Ahmad Sohrab.

Julie Chanler was wife of Lewis Stuyvesant Chanler, New York's onetime lieutenant governor and a respected criminal lawyer, the marriage of whose daughter in a Baha'i ceremony was noted in *Time*, March 10, 1930. Ahmad Sohrab was a Persian scholar and poet, nephew of a powerful Baha'i leader in Isfahan. He served as secretary to 'Abdu'l-Baha for eight years (1910-1919) and accompanied him on his Western travels, serving also as his interpreter. In 1919, 'Abdu'l-Baha sent him to the United States bearing the "Tablets of the Divine Plan", which were read at the eleventh annual



International Baha'i Congress, April 26–30. After the Baha'i Congress, he travelled extensively throughout the United States and Canada, giving lectures on the faith and on 'Abdu'l-Baha's Divine Plan. When 'Abdu'l-Baha died in 1921, Ahmad Sohrab's allowance from 'Abdu'l-Baha stopped and he was forced to seek extra work. He gained some work in Hollywood movies, as extras or atmosphere, portraying pirates, beggars, and Oriental princes. He also continued his lecturing. He became secretary to the Persian minister to the United States and later founded the "Persian-American Educational Society" and the "Orient-Occident Unity".

While visiting New York in 1917, he met Julie Chanler, who insisted that he come to New York and teach on Baha'i. On April 5, 1929, Mr and Mrs Chanler and Ahmad Sohrab formed the New History Society with twenty-eight original members.<sup>107</sup> Over the years, the society carried on active programs. It sponsored well-attended lectures by personalities such as Albert Einstein, Rabindranath Tagore, Helen Keller, Margaret Sanger, Grand Duke Alexander of Russia, and Count Ilya Tolstoy. Annual prize competitions were held on subjects such as world peace, world religion, world reconstruction, and racial amity. The society published a number of books and pamphlets, including the 743-page *The Bible of Mankind*, edited by Ahmad Sohrab, containing selections from the scriptures of Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Taoism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'i faith. The society formed the Caravan of East and West, an international correspondence club, which in 1943 had 1,300 chapters in thirty-seven countries with a membership of 100,000 children, young people and adults.<sup>108</sup> The society commissioned Max Brand, Austrian composer, to coauthor with Ahmad Sohrab "The Gate", a dramatic history of the Baha'i movement, which premiered at

the New York Metropolitan Opera House on May 23, 1944, the centennial of the Bab's declaration of his mission.

After the formation of the New History Society and during the early years of its activity, Julie Chanler sent reports of its progress to Shoghi Effendi, her "Beloved Guardian".<sup>109</sup> Shoghi Effendi at first approved of the work, which was attracting large numbers to the faith. Shoghi Effendi's secretary wrote: He wishes me to assure you of his prayers and best wishes that you may succeed in your ardent labors."<sup>110</sup>

Soon, however, friction developed between the Baha'i organization in New York and the New History Society. The organized Baha'is resented the fact that the New History Society had been formed without consulting them and was operating without their supervision. Julie Chanler, in her letters to Shoghi Effendi, expressed the hope that the society could be kept independent and free to conduct its activities as it saw fit, feeling that control by the New York assembly would impede the activities and hinder the success of the effort. She even indicated that, although working independently, the society would urge those whom it attracted to Baha'i to join the Baha'i organization and would serve as a "recruiting station" for the organization.

But in the August, 1930, issue of *Baha'i News* appeared the first pronouncement against the New History Society in an article entitled "The Case of Ahmad Sohrab and the New History Society". The article pointed out that the society was formed without consulting either the National or Local Spiritual Assembly and that its activities were "maintained apart from the principles of consultation and Assembly supervision which today, under the

Will and Testament of Abdul Baha, form the basis of Baha'i unity and protection of the Cause", and therefore the National Spiritual Assembly informed the Baha'is that

the activities conducted by Ahmad Sohrab through The New History Society are to be considered as independent of the Cause; as outside the jurisdiction of the Local and National Assembly, and hence in no wise entitled to the cooperation of Baha'is.<sup>111</sup>

A cablegram printed in *Baha'i News*, September, 1930, read: "Approve action regarding History Society. Deeply appreciate loyalty (of) believers. Shoghi."<sup>112</sup>

The New History Society continued to expand its activities, operating without the approval of Shoghi Effendi or the Baha'i organization. On November 7, 1939, the society opened a "Baha'i Bookshop" on Lexington Avenue in New York, and a month later, a letter, dated December 5, 1939, from the law firm of Watson, Bristol, Johnson & Leavenworth, representing the National Spiritual Assembly and Trustees of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada and the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the city of New York, informed Julie Chanter and Ahmad Sohrab that they had infringed on the copyright on the name "Baha'i".

A later amended complaint dropped the reference to the trademark infringement but held that the defendants were conducting meetings and lectures without the authority of the plaintiffs, who, they alleged, were the authorized representatives of all Baha'is in the United States and Canada, and that the defendants were giving the erroneous impression that they were connected with the Baha'i organization and were qualified to solicit contributions.

On April 1, 1941, Supreme Court Justice Louis A. Valente handed down the following judgment:

1. In the Court's opinion, the complaint fails to state a good cause of action. The plaintiffs have no right to monopoly on the name of a religion.
2. The defendants, who purport to be members of the same religion, have an equal right to use the name of the religion in connection with their own meetings, lectures, classes and other activities.
3. No facts are alleged in the complaint to indicate that the defendants have been guilty of any act intended or calculated to deceive the public into believing that their meetings, lectures or book shop are identified with or affiliated with the meetings, lectures, etc., and book shop of the plaintiffs.
4.
  - a) Defendants have the absolute right to practice Bahaism,
  - b) to conduct meetings,
  - c) to collect funds,
  - d) to sell literature in connection therewith, and
  - e) to conduct a book shop under the title of "Bahai Book Shop".<sup>113</sup>

An appeal was made by the organized Baha'is, but the appellate court upheld the decision of Justice Valente. The *New York World-Telegram*, June 19, 1941, expressed the decision in journalistic language that "Baha'i Is Placed In Public Domain". Ahmad Sohrab saw the victory as meaning that "Baha-O-Llah has freed his Cause!"<sup>114</sup>

Shoghi Effendi no doubt was greatly disturbed by the ruling, and his words in reference to Ahmad Sohrab, as printed in *Baha'i News*, October, 1941, were that "the latest protagonist of a spurious cause cannot but in the end be subjected, as remorsefully as his infamous predecessors, to the fate which they invariably have suffered."<sup>115</sup>

The suit against Ahmad Sohrab and Julie Chanler provoked Sohrab's release of "innermost thoughts, pent up and stored away during the passage of years."<sup>116</sup> For twelve years, he says, he followed the advice to remain silent and "held my tongue and pen in leash, the while witnessing the daily crucifixion of the movement which I love and believe in."<sup>117</sup> During the

litigation, Sohrab began writing articles in the *New History*, monthly magazine of the society, which were later incorporated in his book *Broken Silence*. Sohrab maintains that “reactionary and dogmatic forces” which set in after ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s death

little by little, gained ground until at present this movement, which was the most universal and liberal of all movements, past or present, has been reduced to a sect, while its spirit is all but extinguished. The principles of Baha-O-Llah are forgotten and in their stead we see nothing but a mass of rules and regulations that duplicate, to say the least, the ecclesiastical paraphernalia of previous organized religions.<sup>118</sup>

Ahmad Sohrab was always opposed to the organization of religion,<sup>119</sup> but unlike Ruth White, Sohrab held that ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s will was authentic. Sohrab writes in *Broken Silence*:

Practically, from the departure of the Master from this life until today, it has been charged against me by the Bahai Organization and by members of the Community that I deny the Will of Abdul Baha and refuse to accept Shoghi Effendi as Guardian. Therefore, I take this opportunity to make a plain and unequivocal statement: Never in thought, word or writing have I questioned the authenticity of the Will, nor denied the validity of the appointment of Shoghi Effendi. Let us now hope that once and for all time, this fact has been made clear and manifest.<sup>120</sup>

Sohrab admits that he has “occasionally disagreed with the policies of Shoghi Effendi”, but maintains that

it is not because I, in the least, contest the genuineness of the Will of Abdul Baha or question the appointment of Shoghi Effendi to the Guardianship, but because, as a Bahai, I maintain my freedom of conscience and hold to the injunction of Baha-O-Llaha: Independent investigation of Truth.<sup>121</sup>

If Ahmad Sohrab accepts the will and the appointment of Shoghi Effendi to the guardianship, how could he question Shoghi Effendi’s policies, for, according to that will, whoever contends with him contends with God? Some light on this question is thrown by a later writing of Ahmad Sohrab,

*The Will and Testament of Abdul Baha: An Analysis.* In this work, Sohrab again affirms his belief that the will is genuine. He indicates that through the years he “became fully familiar with the turns, strokes and trims of the art of calligraphy” as used by ‘Abdu’l-Baha, that he had read volumes of his works and was “thoroughly conversant with his choice of words, his mode of expression and his manner of phraseology”, and that he had in his possession more than a hundred of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s tablets addressed to him, some being wholly written in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s handwriting, the majority only signed by him. Sohrab asserts “without any hesitation and with no mental reservations, that the Will and Testament was written, signed and sealed by ‘Abdu’l-Baha, every word being in his own handwriting.”<sup>122</sup>

Sohrab, like Ruth White, expresses the “bewilderment” which he felt when news came of the appointment of a successor to ‘Abdu’l-Baha, because, he says,

Abdul Baha had never in speech or writing given the slightest indication that there would be a successor to himself. On the contrary, a number of addresses delivered by him on various occasions had made the opposite impression. Consequently, it took several years before a section of the Baha’is could adjust themselves to the new situation.<sup>123</sup>

He points out that according to Baha’u’llah’s will the succession after ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s passing was to go to Muhammad ‘Ali, who was next in authority to ‘Abdu’l-Baha. Richards had earlier made this observation, noting that after Muhammad ‘Ali the control of the faith’s affairs was to go to the House of Justice, and concluded, therefore, that ‘Abdu’l-Baha, even though his will be considered authentic, did not possess the right to nominate Shoghi Effendi and his descendants as guardians of the faith.<sup>124</sup>

Ahmad Sohrab contends that ‘Abdu’l-Baha had reached the conclusion that Muhammad ‘Ali was not fit to become the new leader and so “made the

stupendous decision of setting aside his Father's commands as to the succession" and that "the action of Abdul Baha, wherein he brought into play his own conscience in the face of the written text of Baha-O-Llah, relieves the fabric of religion of the weighty dogma of infallibility." Sohrab goes on to say that 'Abdu'l-Baha, thus, "in an urgent crisis lived up to his own teaching ... that the station of the Prophet is twofold—divine and human." The prophet's words at the divine level are "imperishable truths", whereas "those spoken on the human plans, in regard to material conditions, may be subject to change according to the requirements of advancing times."<sup>125</sup> Sohrab, therefore, saw 'Abdu'l-Baha, because of the existing circumstances, placing his conscience (or will) above the explicit text of the prophet's words concerning the succession. He believes that 'Abdu'l-Baha advocated this freedom of conscience for all men.

Sohrab acknowledges that 'Abdu'l-Baha "enjoins his followers to implicitly obey Shoghi Effendi as the Guardian of the Cause, and, to all intents and purposes, to accept him is an infallible leader", but he maintains:

If one takes 'Abdu'l-Baha's injunctions literally (and the present-day Baha'is are super-literalists), agreeing that to obey Shoghi Effendi is to obey God and to oppose him is to oppose God, there is no escaping the conclusion that the Master asks of us the surrender of our wills, minds and reason to the Guardian—a surrender which is fraught with far-reaching consequences for it implies a betrayal of the very Bahai ideals which the Master himself spent his life sharing with the world.<sup>126</sup>

Ahmad Sohrab, therefore, would not surrender his freedom of conscience, which he believed was guaranteed to him in the Baha'i teachings, to the demanding will of Shoghi Effendi, who, he believed, had completely reversed the character of the Baha'i religion. He believed that he had helped win a victory for religious liberty in America, but to the organized Baha'is he was only one more fallen luminary before the advancing evolution of the Baha'i faith.

## ***Ruhi Afnan***

Another of the fallen luminaries in the Baha'i story, in the eyes of the organized Baha'is, is Ruhi Afnan, son of 'Abdu'l-Baha's second daughter, Tuba Khanum and her husband, Mirza Muhsen Afnan. Unlike Ruth White who could not accept 'Abdu'l-Baha's will as authentic, and unlike Julie Chanler and Ahmad Sohrab who could accept the will as authentic but who could not accept the control of the Baha'i organization, Ruhi Afnan accepted both the authenticity of the will and the organizational hold upon the Baha'i community. In fact, Ruhi Afnan was a leading figure in the Baha'i organization. He served for fourteen years as confidential secretary to Shoghi Effendi. During those years (1922-1936), he was active in various capacities. As Shoghi Effendi's personal representative, he delivered an address on the Baha'i faith in 1924 before the Conference of Some Living Religions within the British Empire. He visited the United States in 1927 and fervently championed the system of Baha'i administration before declared Baha'is and as an honored guest at the twentieth annual Baha'i convention in Chicago, participating in all its proceedings. He travelled from coast to coast delivering speeches in churches and colleges and before other gatherings and was guest speaker at Green Acre Baha'i summer school in Maine. In Geneva, Switzerland, in 1928, he was the accredited representative of the Baha'i religion at the Conference of International Peace though the Churches.<sup>127</sup>

In 1935, Ruhi Afnan made a second visit to the United States. *Baha'i News* recorded:

The National Spiritual Assembly is privileged to announce that Ruhi Effendi Afnan, great-grandson of Baha'u'llah, has come to America and with the Guardian's approval can remain until November in order to take part in the National Meeting at the Temple on October 26 and 27, and visit local Baha'i communities to assist in teaching on his way to and from Chicago.<sup>128</sup>



But in 1941, Ruhi Afnan was excommunicated and became one of a number of Baha'u'llah's family who were so excommunicated in the years 1941 and 1942.<sup>129</sup> Appalled by these excommunications, Ahmad Sohrab in 1943 wrote a study of Ruhi Afnan's contributions to the Baha'i organization and the reasons for his excommunication, prefacing that work with a "Protest against the Excommunication of Members of Baha'O'Llah's Family" signed by various leaders of religion and educators who were opposed to the practice of excommunication by any religious body.<sup>130</sup>

As indicated in cablegrams from Shoghi Effendi, the reasons for Ruhi Afnan's excommunication seem to have been three: (1) Ruhi's sister had married the "covenant-breaker Fayzi", a previously excommunicated person, with whom all communication, association, or aid was, therefore, to have been severed; (2) Ruhi Afnan's alleged failure to obtain Shoghi Effendi's approval of his second visit to the United States, a charge which contradicts the report in the *Baha'i News* (quoted above) that he had the Guardian's approval to be in the States until November; (3) Shoghi Effendi's disapproval of Ruhi Afnan's own marriage.<sup>131</sup>

Ahmad Sohrab closed his book on Ruhi Afnan with a quotation from 'Abdu'l-Baha which he believed had special advice to Ruhi Afnan now that he had been excommunicated by the Baha'i organization:

*Abandon silence and seclusion and solitary nooks and go forth into the arena of explanation. Convey the Message of thy Lord with clearest speech and most complete elucidation. This is better for thee than solitude.*<sup>132</sup>

Ruhi Afnan did continue to spread the Baha'i teachings, although he has no connection now with the Baha'i organization nor does he have their approval.

Ruhi Afnan's book, *The Great Prophets*, a study of Moses, Zoroaster and Jesus, although it would not be regarded ordinarily, or officially, as a Baha'í book, nevertheless manifests a basic underlying Baha'í philosophy. Ruhi Afnan advances in this work the view of a "perennial religion" which progressively manifests itself in such religions as Judaism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, and the Baha'í faith.<sup>133</sup>

In a later work, *Zoroaster's Influence on Greek Thought*, Ruhi Afnan attempts to bring out the complementary nature of the Zoroastrian culture, with its definitely religious base, and the Greek culture, with its more secularly oriented outlook.<sup>134</sup>

A more recent work, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the Bab*, is the first of a series of volumes intending to set forth the teachings of Baha'u'llah and the Bab on a number of subjects.<sup>135</sup>

The three stories treated in this chapter each have their distinctive character, Ruth White refused to join the Baha'í organizations; Julie Chanler and Ahmad Sohrab, without denying the validity of the Baha'í organization, attempted to work independently of it; Ruhi Afnan, at first a strong supporter of the Baha'í administration, was cast forth from the organization. Each had to make his own particular adjustment in the face of Shoghi Effendi's transformation of the faith.

## 6. Shoghi Effendi and the institutionalizing of the Faith

- 1 Ruhiyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Baha'í Publishing Trust, 1969), p. 4.
- 2 David Hofman, *A Commentary on the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (3d ed., rev.; Oxford: George Ronald, 1955), p. 11 (hereinafter referred to as *Commentary*).
- 3 *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'í Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 11.
- 4 *ibid.*
- 5 *idem*, p. 26.
- 6 Hofman, *Commentary*, pp. 27–28.
- 7 See above, p. 209.
- 8 Samuel Graham Wilson, *Baháism and Its Claims* (New York: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1915), p. 15.
- 9 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'í Publishing Trust, 1955), p. 123.
- 10 *idem*, p. 61.
- 11 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day* (New Delhi, India: Baha'í Publishing Trust, n.d.), 94.
- 12 *ibid.*
- 13 *idem*, pp. 78–79.
- 14 *idem*, p. 95. For a list of the Bab's better known works, see *The Baha'í World: An International Record*, Vol. XIII (Haifa, Israel, Universal House of Justice, 1970), p. 1062.

- 15 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 62.
- 16 idem, p. 163.
- 17 idem, pp. 112–13.
- 18 idem, p. 114.
- 19 idem, p. 137.
- 20 idem, pp. 132–37.
- 21 idem, p. 133.
- 22 idem, pp. 132–33.
- 23 idem, p. 134.
- 24 idem
- 25 idem, p. 139.
- 26 idem, p. 5.
- 27 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i News*, April, 1927, cited by Eunice Braun, *Know Your Baha'i Literature* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1959). p. 10.
- 28 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i News*, May, 1939, cited by Braun, *Know Your Baha'i Literature*, p. 10.
- 29 See Braun, *Know Your Baha'i Literature*, p. 8.
- 30 Braun, *Know Your Baha'i Literature*, pp. 11–12.
- 31 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 132.
- 32 idem, p. 151.
- 33 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 100.
- 34 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 115.
- 35 idem, p. 163.
- 36 Shoghi Effendi, *Dawn of a New Day*, p. 198.
- 37 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 145.
- 38 idem, p. 147.
- 39 idem, p. 150.
- 40 ibid.
- 41 idem, p. 152.
- 42 idem, pp. 203–4.
- 43 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 39.
- 44 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 333.
- 45 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration*, pp. 37, 41.
- 46 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 334.
- 47 idem, p.335; Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 302–3.
- 48 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 336.
- 49 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to America* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1947), p. 86.
- 50 Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, pp. 403–5.
- 51 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World: 1950–1957* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), pp. 152–53.
- 52 These twelve national assemblies were those of the Baha'is in the United States; the British Isles; Germany and Austria; Egypt and the Sudan; 'Iraq; India, Pakistan and Burma; Persia; Australia and New Zealand; Canada; Central

America; South America; and Italy and Switzerland.

53 See above, p. 27.

54 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World*, p. 7.

55 *The Baha'i World*, Vol. XIII, p. 395. For the importance which Mason Remey attached to his being the president of the embryonic council, see the following chapter.

56 *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, pp. 12–13.

57 *The Baha'i World*, Vol. XIII, p. 336; Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World*, pp. 20, 55, 57, 91, 124.

58 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World*, p. 127.

59 idem, pp. 44, 59, 128.

60 Ruhyyih Khanum., *Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1948), p. 7.

61 Amelia Collins, *A Tribute to Shoghi Effendi* (Wilmette, Baha'i Publishing Trust, n.d.), p. 5.

62 Henry Harris Jessup, "Babism and the Babites", *The Missionary Review of the World*, XXV, New Series (October, 1902), 773.

63 Myron H. Phelps, *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi* (New York & London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, Knickerbocker Press, 1904), p. 101.

64 *The Baha'i World: A Biennial International Record*, Vol. III (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1930), p. 419.

65 Albert Vail, "Baháism—A Study of a Contemporary Movement", *Harvard Theological Review*, VII (July, 1914), 339.

66 Jessyca Russell Gaver, *The Baha'i Faith* (New York: Award Books, 1967), p. 17.

67 Stanwood Cobb, *Security for a Failing World* (Washington, DC: Avalon Press, 1934), p. 92.

68 idem, p. 93.

69 Quoted by Ethel Stefano Stevens, "The Light in the lantern", *Everybody's Magazine*, XXV (December, 1911), 785. Also quoted with slight modification by J. E. Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era* (3d rev. ed.; New York: Pyramid Books, 1970), p. 63.

70 From *Baha'i Prayers*, cited by Cobb, *Security for a Failing World*, p. 197.

71 Abdul Baha Abbas, "America and World Peace", *The Independent*, LXXIII (September 12, 1912), 606–7.

72 Esslemont, *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*, p. 83.

73 Maude E. Holbach, "The Bahai Movement: With Some Recollections of Meetings with Abdul Baha", *The Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXVII (February, 1915), 453. The problem of Baha'is seeking membership in Christian churches J. R. Richards saw as great enough to suggest that "all seekers after Baptism should be asked to declare publicly before the whole Church that they consider Baha'u'llah a false prophet. Some such formula as the following would probably meet the case, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God; that He really died on the Cross for our salvation; that He really and truly rose from the dead, leaving behind Him an empty tomb; that He was really and truly seen by the disciples as the Gospels bear witness. I believe that He alone is the Saviour of the World. I deny the doctrine of *rij'at*, by which I am to believe that

- Jesus was Moses returned, and Mohammad, the Bab and Baha'u'llah were "returns" of Jesus, and I declare it to be false teaching. Accepting Jesus as my Lord and Saviour I declare Mohammad, the Bab, and Baha'u'llah to have been false prophets and false guides, leading men away from the truth." (J. R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is* [London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932; New York: Macmillan Company, 1932], pp. 236–37).
- 74 Eric Adolphus Dime, "Is the Millennium upon Us?" *The Forum*, LVIII (August, 1917), p. 175.
- 75 *ibid.*
- 76 Horace Holley, *Bahai: The Spirit of the Age* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner and Co., Ltd., 1921), pp. 27–28.
- 77 *The Baha'i Year Book*, Vol. I (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1926), p. 47.
- 78 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration*, p. 90.
- 79 *idem*, p. 101.
- 80 *idem*, pp. 121–22.
- 81 Photographs of these trademark certificates appear in *The Baha'i World: A Biennial International Record*, Vol. VI (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1937), pp. 347–57.
- 82 *The Baha'i World*, Vol. VI, p. 72.
- 83 Cited in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. VI, p. 200.
- 84 *idem*, pp. 200–201.
- 85 *idem*, p. 199.
- 86 *Messages to America*, p. 4; publication has been replaced by *This Decisive Hour*, p. 9.
- 87 *ibid.*
- 88 *idem*, p. 5; *This Decisive Hour*, p. 9; *The Baha'i World*, VI, 201.
- 89 *The Baha'i World*, VI, 201n.
- 90 *idem*, pp. 201–2.
- 91 Ruth White, *Abdul Baha's Questioned Will and Testament* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: By the author, 1946), p. 27 (hereinafter referred to as *Questioned Will*).
- 92 *idem*, pp. 63–64.
- 93 *idem*, pp. 67–68.
- 94 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, pp. 199–200.
- 95 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 328.
- 96 White, *Questioned Will*, pp. 43–45.
- 97 Ruth White, *The Bahai Religion and Its Enemy, the Bahai Organization* (Rutland, Vermont.: Tuttle Co., 1929), pp. 210–11 (hereinafter referred to as *Bahai Organization*).
- 98 *idem*, p. 2.
- 99 White, *Questioned Will*, p. 26.
- 100 *The Baha'i Year Book*, I, 55.
- 101 Cited in White, *Questioned Will*, p. 74.
- 102 Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 126.
- 103 *idem*, p. 90.
- 104 Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 119.

- 105 William McElwee Miller, *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1974), p. 262.
- 106 See Meher Baba, *Listen Humanity* (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1967), and Jacob Needleman, *The New Religions* (rev. ed.; New York: Pocket Books, 1972), p. 74.
- 107 Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *Broken Silence: The Story of Today's Struggle for Religious Freedom* (New York: Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, 1942), p. 51.
- 108 Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, "The Bahai Cause", Chapter XIX of *Living Schools of Religion*, ed. by Virgilius Ferm (Paterson, N.J.: Littlefield, Adams & Co., 1965), p. 314.
- 109 Sohrab, *Broken Silence*, p. 86.
- 110 idem, p. 88.
- 111 idem, p. 104.
- 112 Cited in Sohrab, *Broken Silence*, p. 107.
- 113 idem, p. 186; also cited in White, *Questioned Will*, p. 93.
- 114 Sohrab, *Broken Silence*, p. 168.
- 115 Cited in *Broken Silence*, p. 253.
- 116 Sohrab, *Broken Silence*, p. 28.
- 117 idem, p. 27.
- 118 idem, p. 51.
- 119 See Ouisse Vaupel, "Changing a World", *The Open Court*, XLV (July, 1931), 421. This article (pp. 418–24) gives a brief account of the work of the New History Society.
- 120 Sohrab, *Broken Silence*, p. 49.
- 121 idem, p. 52.
- 122 Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *The Will and Testament of Abdul Baba: An Analysis* (New York: Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, 1944), p. 11 (hereinafter referred to as *Will: Analysis*).
- 123 idem, p. 61.
- 124 Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is*, p. 200.
- 125 Sohrab, *Will: Analysis*, p. 25.
- 126 idem, pp. 52–53.
- 127 Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *Abdul Baha's Grandson: Story of Twentieth Century Excommunication* (New York: Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, 1943), p. 67.
- 128 *Baha'i News*, October, 1935, p. 3, cited by Sohrab, *Abdul Baha's Grandson*, p. 151.
- 129 For a list of the excommunicated members, see Sohrab, *Abdul Baha's Grandson*, p. 24.
- 130 See Sohrab, *Abdul Baha's Grandson*, pp. 11–18.
- 131 idem, pp. 22–27, 166–69.
- 132 idem, p. 172, citing *Tablets of Abdul Baha Abbas*, Vol. III (Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Society, 1919), p. 520.
- 133 Ruhi M. Afnan, *The Great Prophets: Moses-Zoroaster-Jesus* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1960). See especially pages 11 and 146.
- 134 Ruhi Muhsen Afnan, *Zoroaster's Influence on Greek Thought* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1965).

- <sup>135</sup> Ruhi M. Afnan, *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the Bab* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1970).









## **The Universal House of Justice and the question of the Guardianship**

The unexpected death of Shoghi Effendi of a heart attack on the morning of November 4, 1957, in London, England, where he had gone with his wife to order furniture for the interior of the International Archives Building, thrust the Baha'i religion into a most critical situation, for adding to the grief connected with Shoghi Effendi's passing was the anxiety in the later realization that Shoghi Effendi apparently had left no will appointing a successor.<sup>1</sup>

When Ruhyyih Khanum, Shoghi Effendi's widow, returned to Haifa on November 15, 1957, she and four other hands of the cause sealed with wax and tape Shoghi Effendi's safe and desk drawers, and on November 19, nine hands chosen by Ruhyyih Khanum made a thorough search through the papers in the safe and desk and later signed a document testifying that no will had been found.

The Baha'is were left in a grief-stricken and bewildered condition. They had no new leader to whom they might turn. The faith had achieved such marvelous successes under Shoghi Effendi's able direction: the foundations of the administrative order were firmly laid; the Baha'i ship was ready to sail into even more glorious conquests, but now there was no captain at the helm.

Shoghi Effendi had noted in his book *God Passes By* that Baha'u'llah “lays upon every person the duty of writing a testament.”<sup>2</sup> Had Shoghi Effendi, himself, the head of the Baha'i faith, failed to comply with this duty? How could Shoghi Effendi, who was so careful with every minute detail in the administration of the faith and who, as Baha'is maintained, was divinely guided, especially in matters of supreme importance, have failed to leave a will, naming a successor? If he did not plan to name a successor in his last will, why did he not announce this to the Baha'i world or at least leave some instructions on how the faith might conduct its affairs being bereft of infallible guidance? Had Shoghi Effendi left a will which was lost, stolen, or worse, deliberately destroyed? Shoghi Effendi's failure to write a will—or the failure to find his will—naturally produced within the faith a crisis of the highest magnitude.

The hands of the cause, who certified that Shoghi Effendi had left no will and testament and likewise certified that he had left no heir, in their historic proclamation to the Baha'is of East and West on November 25, 1957, mentioned that all the *Aghsan*, male descendants of Baha'u'llah, who might have been appointed, seeing that the guardian, himself, had no children, were either dead or declared by Shoghi Effendi to be violators of the covenant, and indicated:

The first effect of the realization that no successor to Shoghi Effendi could have been appointed by him was to plunge the Baha'is of the Cause into the very abyss of despair. What must happen to the world community of his devoted followers if the Leader, the Inspirer, the Planner of all Baha'i activities in all countries and islands of the seas could no longer fulfill his unique mission?<sup>3</sup>

The hands also suspected that “our implacable opponents may, and probably

will, unleash attacks, assuming in their ignorance that the Faith of Baha'u'llah is weakened and defenceless.”<sup>4</sup>

In this grave crisis, the hands were conscious of two important facts, (1) that Shoghi Effendi had passed away in the midst of their Ten Year World Crusade and that they still had the guardian's explicit directions as to the faith's objectives until the termination of the world crusade in 1963, (2) and that infallible guidance would devolve again upon the faith once the Universal House of Justice came into existence, which according to the Baha'i teachings, was to be under the protection of Baha'u'llah.

## **The Faith under the leadership of the Guardians**

Until the Universal House of Justice could be formed, the hands of the cause assumed the direction of the faith. Five conclaves were held by the hands between Shoghi Effendi's passing and the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, and one additional conclave was held at the time of its election. At the conclusion of each conclave, the heads sent forth a message to the Baha'i world.

### ***First Conclave of the Hands—November, 1957***

Twenty-six of the twenty-seven hands of the cause gathered at Bahji in November, 1957. Corinne True, at the age of ninety-six, was unable to be present. 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament had indicated that the hands were to elect nine of their number to “*be occupied in the important services in the work of the Guardian of the Cause of God.*”<sup>5</sup> The hands, therefore, elected nine from their number, who were designated for legal purposes as “Custodians of the Faith”, whom they charged

to exercise—subject to such directions and decisions as may be given from time to time by us as the Chief Stewards of the Baha'í World Faith—all such functions, rights and powers in succession to the Guardian of the Baha'í Faith, His Eminence the late Shoghi Effendi, as are necessary to serve the interests of the Baha'í World Faith, and this until such time as the Universal House of Justice, upon being duly established and elected in conformity with the Sacred Writings of Baha'u'llah and the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, may otherwise determine.<sup>6</sup>

One of the nine nominated hands for this office and one of the twenty-six hands signing the resolution in which the above words occur was Mason Remey, president of the Baha'í International Council.

These twenty-six hands, then, issued their proclamation to the Baha'is of East and West, noting the crisis into which the faith had been plunged, encouraging them to continue the work of the Ten Year World Crusade, announcing their appointment of the nine custodian hands, and indicating that meanwhile:

The entire body of the Hands assembled by the nine Hands of the World Center will decide when and how the International Baha'í Council is to evolve through the successive stages outlined by the Guardian, culminating in the call to election of the Universal House of Justice by the membership of all National Spiritual Assemblies.

When that divinely ordained body comes into existence, all the conditions of the Faith can be examined anew and the measures necessary for its future operation determined in consultation with the Hands of the Cause.<sup>7</sup>

This proclamation was signed also by all twenty-six hands of the cause.

### ***Second Conclave of the Hands—November, 1958***

Twenty-five of the twenty-seven hands met again in the mansion of Baha'u'llah at Bahji. In their message to the Baha'is, the hands again encouraged the Baha'is to attain the goals set for them in the world crusade and expressed their confidence that the Baha'is

fully aware of the gravity of the crisis facing them, and unified as never before by the sacrifice of the life of our beloved Guardian, will arise as one soul in many bodies in a mighty forward surge to complete as an immortal monument to his memory the triumph of the holy Crusade.<sup>8</sup>

The hands then indicated their plan that upon the foundation of that victory there will be raised up the crowning glory of all the Universal House of Justice, and once again a precious source of divine infallibility will return to the earth with the establishment of that Supreme Body on the occasion of the Most Great Jubilee in 1963—the World Congress called by our beloved Guardian himself, a glorious and befitting fulfillment of his life of complete sacrifice.<sup>9</sup>

### ***Third Conclave of the Hands—October-November, 1959***

In their message from the third conclave, the hands announced that they had formulated a “plan of action which will enable the Baha’i world to establish the Universal House of Justice in 1963.” The plan called for the election in Ridvan, 1961, of twenty-one national spiritual assemblies in Latin America, for the election of eleven national assemblies in Europe and on in Ceylon by Ridvan 1962. The hands also announced that in Ridvan, 1963, members of all national and regional spiritual assemblies, duly constituted in Ridvan, 1960, would elect nine members to the International Baha’i Council, who would serve a two-year term ending in 1963 with the election of the Universal House of Justice. The hands recalled their previous announcement that when this body comes into existence it can examine anew, in consultation with the hands, all the conditions in the faith and noted that this would include “the question of the Guardianship”.<sup>10</sup>

### ***Fourth Conclave of the Hands—October-November, 1960***

The hands announced that hands of the cause had reached a point in their development where they could no longer operate on a regional basis alone and “must render their services on a global scale”. The hands indicated also that the International Baha’i Council which would be elected the following year would be given certain additional administrative duties to those announced last year.<sup>11</sup>

The message from the fourth conclave noted also that the worldwide Baha’i community had risen to “new heights of accomplishment”, although “faced by yet another severe test during the past year.”<sup>12</sup> The “severe test” was the claim advanced in March, 1960, by Mason Remey of being the second guardian of the faith in succession to Shoghi Effendi. Remey succeeded in gaining a certain following and subsequently was expelled from the faith by the hands. Remey’s story will be treated later in the chapter. Among the powers given to the nine custodian hands in 1957 by the entire body of the hands was authority “to expel from the Faith violators of the Covenant.”<sup>13</sup>

### ***Fifth Conclave of the Hands—October-November, 1961***

The hands announced that on the first, second, and third days of Ridvan, 1963, the members of all national and regional spiritual assemblies elected in Ridvan, 1962, would constitute the electoral body to vote for the members of the Universal House of Justice and that all male voting Baha’is would be eligible for election to this supreme body. They also announced that the world congress would not be held in Baghdad, as first proposed, but in London, England, where Shoghi Effendi is buried.<sup>14</sup>



### ***Sixth Conclave of the Hands—April-May, 1963***

In the central hall of the home of ‘Abdu’l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi in Haifa, the hands assembled for their sixth annual conclave. Also present were over 300 members of fifty-six national and regional assemblies of the Baha’i world. On this historic occasion, the members of these assemblies elected the first Universal House of Justice, comprising nine men, which is today the highest administrative body of the Baha’i world and considered by Baha’is as being infallible in its decisions.

The hands announced in a cable to all national assemblies on April 22, 1963, the election of the Universal House of Justice.

At the conclave, the hands also established a body of five hands to remain in Haifa to assist the Universal House of Justice in whatever way the House deemed advisable, and the five hands were given power to act on behalf of the hands in transferring to the House any general powers, properties, or funds held by the custodian hands. Changes were made also in the assignment of hands to various continents, and a cable issued indicating that the hands desired now to devote their efforts to the protection and propagation of the faith according to their functions as described in the Baha’i scriptures.<sup>15</sup>

As can be seen in the actions of the hands between the death of Shoghi Effendi and the election of the Universal House of Justice, the hands assumed powers and activities formerly held and conducted by the guardian alone. They directed through cablegrams the affairs of the faith after the manner of the guardian; they elected nine of their number to exercise, subject to their directions, “all such functions, rights,

and powers in succession to the guardian ... as are necessary to serve the interests of the faith"; they also enlarged the sphere of their activities to a global scale and later reassigned their appointments; and even assumed the right to expel from the faith those whom they deemed violators of the covenant, a right that Shoghi Effendi "never permitted anyone else to exercise"<sup>16</sup> besides himself, for, as it was stated during his lifetime, "no one has the right to excommunicate anybody except the Guardian of the Faith, himself."<sup>17</sup>

The hands, thus, as "the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth",<sup>18</sup> a designation given to them by Shoghi Effendi in his last message to the Baha'i world before his death, assumed temporarily the control of the faith until the election of the Universal House of Justice, at which time they resumed their duties as outlined in the Baha'i scriptures.

## **The transformation by the Universal House of Justice**

One of the important questions facing the Universal House of Justice after it came into power in April, 1963, was the question of the guardianship, which the hands had indicated could be re-examined by the infallible House of Justice once it came into power. Could this body appoint a guardian or enact laws to make possible the appointment of another guardian? In an historic cablegram, October 6, 1963, the Universal House of Justice, announced:

After prayerful and careful study of the Holy Texts bearing upon the question of the appointment of the successor to Shoghi Effendi as Guardian of the Cause of God, and after prolonged consultation which included consideration of the views of the Hands

of the Cause of God residing in the Holy Land, the Universal House of Justice finds that there is no way to appoint or legislate to make it possible to appoint a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi.<sup>19</sup>

The Universal House of Justice turned its energies to the prosecution of the Nine Year Plan (1964–73), which occupied much of its concern, but the question of the guardianship was not a settled issue for some Baha'is. In a message to one of the national assemblies, March 9, 1965, the Universal House of Justice addressed certain questions concerning the guardianship and its own authority as the supreme administrative body. The House indicated that the international administration of the faith by the hands of the cause prior to its election was "in accordance with" Shoghi Effendi's designation of them as the "Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth" and insisted that "there is nothing in the Texts to indicate that the election of the Universal House of Justice could be called only by the Guardian."<sup>20</sup>

In a later message, May 27, 1966, the House of Justice, in responding to a letter by an individual believer, indicated, contrary to the suggestion by the believer that "certain information concerning the succession to Shoghi Effendi" was being withheld for the good of the cause, that "nothing whatsoever is being withheld from the friends for whatever reason",<sup>21</sup> pointing out that no one could have been appointed in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Baha's will. The House also maintained:

The fact that Shoghi Effendi did not leave a will cannot be adduced as evidence of his failure to obey Baha'u'llah—rather should we acknowledge that in his very silence there is a wisdom and a sign of his infallible guidance. We should ponder deeply the writings that we have, and seek to understand the multitudinous significances that they contain.<sup>22</sup>

The gravity of the crisis which struck the Baha'i faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi in the realization that the guardian had not left a will and testament appointing a successor, or that at least a will had not been found, and the significance of the transformation in the faith by the announcement of the Universal house of Justice that no guardian could be appointed can be appreciated only by realizing how essential the guardianship was conceived to be in Baha'i documents and writings.

The Baha'i claim that it is a religion which could not be torn apart by schism rested primarily in the idea of the covenant, which provided that the leadership of the faith would be passed on from generation to generation by a succession of appointed leaders whose authoritative voice, especially in the interpretation of the holy texts, so often a cause of differences within religions, would settle all questions and quell all dissent.

'Abdu'l-Baha, in his will and testament, considered the "Charter" of the new world order, stressed: *"It is incumbent upon the Guardian of the Cause of God to appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor, that differences may not arise after his passing."*<sup>23</sup> Shoghi Effendi described the state of the faith without the institution of the guardianship:

Divorced from the institution of the Guardianship the World Order of Baha'u'llah would be mutilated and permanently deprived of that hereditary principle which, as 'Abdu'l-Baha has written, has been invariably upheld by the Law of God. ... Without such an institution the integrity of the Faith would be imperiled, and the stability of the entire fabric would be gravely endangered. Its prestige

would suffer, the means required to enable it to take a long, an uninterrupted view over a series of generations would be completely lacking, and the necessary guidance to define the sphere of the legislative action of its elected representatives would be totally withdrawn.<sup>24</sup>

No less essential to the faith is the Universal House of Justice. The guardianship and the Universal House of Justice are termed “the twin institutions of the Administrative Order of Baha’u’llah”, and Shoghi Effendi maintains, “should be regarded as divine in origin, essential in their functions and complementary in their aim and purpose.” He refers to them as “two inseparable institutions” and “each operates within a clearly defined sphere of jurisdiction.”<sup>25</sup> The guardian holds the right of interpreting the revealed word, whereas the Universal House of Justice has powers of legislating on matters not expressly revealed in the sacred texts.<sup>26</sup> Shoghi Effendi elsewhere discussed the importance of the guardianship to the Universal House of Justice:

It enhances the prestige of that exalted assembly, stabilizes its supreme position, safeguards its unity, assures the continuity of its labors, without presuming in the slightest to infringe upon the inviolability of its clearly-defined sphere of jurisdiction.<sup>27</sup>

George Townshend expressed his view of the importance of the guardianship:

Interpretation of the Word, which has always been the fertile source of schism in the past, is thus taken once and for all time, into His own hands by Baha’u’llah, and none other but His appointed Guardian, whom He guides, can fulfil this function. This is the secret of the unbreakable unity of the Baha’i Faith and its entire and blessed lack of sects.<sup>28</sup>

Townshend saw the institution of the guardianship as a fulfillment of scripture and as the means whereby God would direct his people:

When it is written that “the government shall be upon his shoulder” the reference can be to the Guardian only and the continuing “forever”

of his sovereignty can only be referred to the lineage of succeeding Guardians. For this is the means—the Covenant—which the Lord of Hosts has designed to discharge His supreme mission, and the way in which God Himself shall rule His people.<sup>29</sup>

Marzieh Gail saw the guardianship as providing a focus for human love which would be incapable of being directed to a group of men:

The secret of Baha'i strength is the tie between the individual and the Guardian. We obey our elected representatives, our Local and National Spiritual Assemblies, because our interest is centered in him. We could not gear our emotions to our chosen representatives, we could not suffer and sacrifice and die for them; because they are many, he is one; they change, he endures; they are our creation, he is Baha'u'llah. If—as is inconceivable—human love and loyalty were capable of focusing on a group of men—then American Baha'is would center in their representatives, and Persian Baha'is in theirs, and there would be no higher devotion to hold the Baha'i world together. The memory of Baha'u'llah would be with us, yes, but not the day-to-day expression of His will. We would go the way of other religions, into hatred and schism and war. Because of the Guardianship, then, I believe in the Baha'i plan for establishing a world federation.<sup>30</sup>

The essentiality of the guardianship as a continuing institution in the Baha'i faith could be expressed in no more forceful words than those of Ruhyyih Khanum:

The institution of the Guardianship—tied into the fabric of the Faith by 'Abdu'l-Baha through His Will in a knot no amount of perseverance and ingenuity can undo—has, as it was destined to do, effectively prevented any division or schism in the Baha'i ranks.<sup>31</sup>

The principle of successorship, endowed with the right of Divine interpretation, is the very hub of the Cause into which its Doctrines and Laws fit like the spokes of a wheel—tear out the hub and you have to throw away the whole thing. This is why our enemies, for a hundred years, failed to establish anything outside the Faith which could thrive or prosper.<sup>32</sup>

The above quotations from various Baha'i writings reveal the absolute essentiality of the hereditary guardianship in the thought of Baha'is before Shoghi Effendi's death. They saw the continuing guardianship, with its rights of infallible interpretation of Baha'i scripture,

as the prime reason for Baha'i unity and the safeguard guaranteeing that the faith would not be plagued with schism. But what "no amount of perseverance and ingenuity" could do in untying the hereditary guardianship from the faith was done through the historical circumstances that the guardian had excommunicated in Baha'u'llah's family all possible candidates to the succession and seemingly had left no will thus appointing a successor. The "principle of successorship, endowed with the right of Divine interpretation", described by Ruhiiyyih Khanum as "the very hub of the Cause", was thus wrenched from the Baha'i wheel; but rather than "throw away the whole thing", which at a previous period in the faith was seen as the inevitable and logical recourse, the Baha'i leaders, Ruhiiyyih Khanum herself being one of the principal figures, decided on a not so drastic course of picking up the pieces and managing as best they could until the election of the infallible Universal House of Justice. That supreme body ruled in effect that the living guardianship had ended with the death of Shoghi Effendi. Some Baha'is, however, disagreed.

### **Mason Remey's opposition to the transformation**

The leading voice, and for a time the sole voice, in opposing the abandonment of the living guardianship was Charles Mason Remey, a hand of the cause and president of the International Baha'i Council. Mason Remey at the time of Shoghi Effendi's death in 1957 was eighty-three years old, having been born in Burlington, Iowa, on May 15, 1874. He was one of the earliest American converts to the faith, having accepted the Baha'i message upon hearing it in 1899-1900 from May Ellis Bolles,

later Mrs Sutherland Maxwell, the mother of Ruhyyih Khanum.<sup>33</sup> He made four visits to 'Abdu'l-Baha between 1901 and 1908, before 'Abdu'l-Baha gained his freedom. At the time of the first visit, Shoghi Effendi was only four years old. Another visit was made two years after his release and again when 'Abdu'l-Baha was in London, England.<sup>34</sup> At the beginning of the war years in 1914, Mason Remey and George Latimer made a tour through various countries, visiting Baha'i centers, on their way to visit 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>35</sup> Mason Remey was also the recipient of a number of tablets from 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>36</sup>

Remey travelled widely in Europe and South America, spreading the Baha'i teachings.<sup>37</sup> He wrote extensively about the faith.<sup>38</sup> He was the architect for various Baha'i buildings, including the Baha'i temples in Kampala, Uganda, and in Sydney, Australia. In 1951, Shoghi Effendi appointed him as president of the International Baha'i Council and also as a hand of the cause. He was one of the hands who sealed Shoghi Effendi's safe and desk drawers after the guardian's death and who later examined his papers and certified that no will had been found.

Remey indicates that at the time of the first conclave of the hands in November, 1957, he thought that he "might become the Guardian of the Faith in some way or another", but he "did not know how."<sup>39</sup> All was rather vague in his mind during those confusing days immediately following Shoghi Effendi's passing, and so he succumbed to the majority opinion and signed his name along with the other hands to the "Proclamation" issued on November 23, 1957, indicating that "no successor to Shoghi Effendi could have been appointed by him."<sup>40</sup>



At the second conclave of the hands in November, 1958, Remy says that he had “the vague thought” of himself “as a possible Guardian of the Faith” and he felt that someone other than he should “Make the stand that the hope for the continuation of the Guardianship should not be abandoned.” No one else made such a stand. Remy remained silent until the last session of the conclave, when he “took the floor, and told the members of the conclave that they were violating the Will and Testament of the Master ‘Abdu’l-Baha in their attitude of not wanting a continuation of the Guardianship.” Remy was ruled out of order for bringing up a subject on which the hands had already acted.<sup>41</sup>

One of the decisions at the third conclave of the hands in 1959 was to elect in 1961 new officers to the International Baha’i Council to hold a two-year term until the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963. Remy refused to sign the message of the hands from the third conclave and went into “voluntary exile” in Washington, DC, where he began to collect his thoughts and compose his “appeals” to the hands of the cause. Three appeals were issued: “An Appeal to the Hands of the Faith in the Holy Land”, “Another Appeal to the Hands of the Baha’i Faith”, and “A Last Appeal to Hands of the Faith”.<sup>42</sup>

In his first appeal, written in reference to the projected visit of Ruhyyih Khanum, Leroy Ioas, and other of the hands to the annual convention of the Baha’is in the United States, Remy seeks to prepare them for that visit, indicating that the American Baha’is “still hope for a Guardian”, and pledging his efforts to try to build up the trust of the American Baha’is in the hands, although he disagrees with them on their stand concerning the guardianship. He believes that the American believers

will follow the hands “until the awakening of the Hands and their abandonment of the program for 1963.” He mentions that “something is going to happen as a surprise to the Baha’i world from another direction altogether”, perhaps hinting at his announcement of himself as the second guardian, if at this time he has reached this conviction, and maintains that the hands for the most part will have to take an awful thrashing.” He tells the hand: “I know that you are up the wrong track and that in the end your majority will be obliged to acknowledge your mistake.”<sup>43</sup>

Remey’s second appeal consists of a series of letters in which he maintains that the hands should be awaiting the appearance of the second guardian.

The “Last Appeal” is the most important of Remey’s three appeals, for in this work he takes a more forceful stand against the position of the hands, and although he does not declare himself the second guardian, the work reveals that he has come to regard himself as holding this station.<sup>44</sup> The major points in this work may be summarized as follows.

Remey contends that the hands have no authority to proclaim that the living guardianship has ended, that likewise they have no authority to call for the election of an International Baha’i Council or for the election of the Universal House of Justice,<sup>45</sup> and that in the Baha’i teachings “the Hands of the Faith are given no authority to control anything.<sup>46</sup> Nor have the hands any power, Remey maintains, to put anyone out of an office who was placed there by the guardian of the faith.<sup>47</sup> Remey evidently is thinking here of the call by the hands for an election of the International Baha’i Council, whose members were appointed by Shoghi Effendi. “The only prerogative bestowed upon the Hands of the Faith in the Will

and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha," Remey says, "is that they propagate and that they protect the Faith."<sup>48</sup> Remey maintains that the hands, thus, are in "violation of the Will and Testament" of 'Abdu'l-Baha."<sup>49</sup>

Remey feels that the position of the hands has created a situation in the faith similar to the days of 'Abdu'l-Baha "when we only knew about the Covenant and knew nothing about the Administration under a Guardian." According to Remey, "the elimination of the Guardianship eliminates the message" which Baha'is have to give to the world, for the guardianship is "the heart of the Administration" established by 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament,<sup>50</sup> a position similar to that previously held by Ruhyyih Khanum when she describes the guardianship as the "hub" in the wheel without which the rest would have to be thrown away.

The fallacy of the program of the hands, Remey maintains, is that without the guardianship the institution of the hands also will not exist within a generation or two because only the guardian can appoint hands of the cause, thus eliminating the first two of the essentials of a kingdom (the king, his nobility, and his people), and "the Cause ere long will be but an indiscriminate mass of people trying to rule and regulate themselves!"<sup>51</sup>

Remey holds that only the guardianship can give infallibility to the Universal House of Justice:

The Universal House of Justice can only function in its infallibility when it has these two supports—the International Assembly alone without the Guardianship cannot be the Universal House of Justice.<sup>52</sup>

Such a House of Justice with no guardian as its president would be merely "a human democratic institution proclaiming the voice of the people."<sup>53</sup>

Remy compares the position of the hands with that of Ahmad Sohrab, who accepted Baha'u'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's teachings but who "refused to accept the Guardianship of the Faith as provided for in the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha."<sup>54</sup>

Remy points out that the proposal to abandon the guardianship was advanced first by one of the ten Persian hands and that "all of the other Persian Hands quickly arose in support of this move, with the result that this move had the immediate support of the majority of the Hands." Remy believes that the Persian hands had "consulted amongst themselves" between the first two meetings of the first conclave of the hands and that "they had come to an agreement between themselves that the Guardianship be abandoned."<sup>55</sup> Remy believes that the Baha'is in the Orient "have never been as keen about the Administration as have been the Baha'is of America."<sup>56</sup> Remy maintains that the course being pursued by the hands would result eventually in a split in the faith, especially between the Orient and the Occident.<sup>57</sup> He expresses a strong confidence that the American Baha'is would resist the hands if they knew that the hands had closed the matter of the guardianship:

If the American Baha'is as a whole should realize that the very existence of the Faith is now at stake, it would indeed create an agitation in the Cause because America is the Cradle of the Administration of the Faith and the strength of the Administration is firmly rooted in the consciousness that envelopes them very strongly and to which they will cling.<sup>58</sup>

Again, he states, "In my opinion the American Baha'is are just not going to take this violation of the Will and Testament that you are trying to put over on the Baha'i world!"<sup>59</sup>

To stop what Remy considers the violation of 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and the destruction of the faith, he asserts his authority as the

president of the International Baha'i Council, appointed by Shoghi Effendi, to call for a halt to the program of the hands concerning the election of a new International Council and the election of the Universal House of Justice. Remy's position could not be disputed, for Shoghi Effendi had appointed him to the presidency of the council and had announced his appointment to the Baha'i world. Remy maintained, therefore, that he could call a halt to any steps being taken about the council of which he, as its appointed president, did not approve. The calling of a halt to steps taken concerning the council would necessarily stop the steps being taken regarding the House of Justice, which was to evolve from the International Council.

Remy was actually, therefore, setting up a power block in the administrative machinery. His position as president of the council was undisputed, whereas the hands had no clear authority in Baha'i texts to exercise any administrative authority over the faith but were agents of the guardian to carry out his biddings. Their functions were propagation and protection of the faith. Remy maintains that they were not protecting the faith but violating the faith. The authority assumed by the hands after Shoghi Effendi's death was based on the words of his last message that the hands were "the Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth",<sup>60</sup> but even in this last message no administrative powers are passed to them. They are described as "invested ... with the dual function of guarding over the security, and of insuring the propagation",<sup>61</sup> of the faith.

If it is true, as Remy asserts, that the guardian had not given his "instructions to organize anything or to do anything at all"<sup>62</sup> about

the council is his position as president and that “the Council has always been a quiescent body, the duties of which have never been assigned or designated”,<sup>63</sup> then one may question what authority Remey had for declaring that Shoghi Effendi had placed “the reins of power in my hands over the body of Hands and thus over the believers of all the world by my appointment as President of the Baha’i International Council” and that he was “now in command of the Baha’i Faith.”<sup>64</sup> In other words, if Shoghi Effendi never activated the council during his lifetime, then Mason Remey seemingly could exercise no authority as president of a quiescent body. Remey’s authority as asserted in his *Last Appeal* is on the basis of his being president of the International Baha’i Council, not on his being the second Guardian. Remey, therefore, had no active power as the president of the International Council.

Remey’s position, however, as expressed in the following statement has some validity:

My position ... while it did not allow me to go ahead with the activities of the Council in the days of Shoghi Effendi, now gives me the authority not to do anything with or about the Council until so commanded by the Second Guardian of the Faith.<sup>65</sup>

Remey, as president of the council, could keep it from functioning, since no higher administrative power in the faith existed which could compel him to activate the council as a functioning body. The individual members of the council had carried out Shoghi Effendi’s directions, but the council never assembled to function as a body.

But regardless of Remey’s authority as the council president, his point is valid that no one person or body of persons had authority

after Shoghi Effendi's death to initiate steps to elect a new council whose original members were appointed by Shoghi Effendi himself. The authority which the hands assumed after the guardian's passing was conceded to them by the national assemblies but was not granted to them by the Baha'i writings. The Universal House of Justice later commented on the action of the hands:

Following the passing of Shoghi Effendi the international administration of the Faith was carried on by the Hands of the Cause of God with the complete agreement and loyalty of the national spiritual assemblies and the body of the believers. This was in accordance with the Guardian's designation of the Hands as the "Chief Stewards of Baha'u'llah's embryonic World Commonwealth."<sup>66</sup>

This is a carefully worded statement, for it presents the facts that the hands did begin administering the international affairs of the faith, and that the national assemblies agreed to this arrangement, states the basis upon which the hands so acted, and by implication approves of the conduct without stating definitely that the action was in accord with their rightful authority. The statement by the House of Justice that the hands realized that "they had no certainty of Divine guidance such as is incontrovertibly assured to the Guardian and to the Universal House of Justice"<sup>67</sup> allows the possibility that they could have overstepped their legitimate authority.

Had Remy persisted in his stand within the faith as the president of the International Baha'i Council to oppose the authority of the hands to do anything concerning the council, he might have created legal problems in the functioning of the faith's processes, whether or not the

majority in the end would have bypassed him, but Remy soon after announced himself as the second guardian, a position not as explicitly designated as his presidency of the International Council, and was promptly expelled from the faith, thus solving any difficulties facing the hands in their projected endeavors. The expulsion of Remy from the faith by the hands, of course, also raises the question of what clear authority the hands had for this action, but the basis upon which Remy claimed the guardianship was more easily attacked than his appointment as council president, considering the lack of an explicit appointment as well as the fact that Remy did not assert his claim for three years after Shoghi Effendi's death.

In his *Last Appeal* to the hands, Remy did not openly claim the guardianship, but various hints are given that he considers himself the new guardian. He indicates that the hands should know without being told who the second guardian is and says that he has known "for the past eleven or twelve years who the Second Guardian was to be."<sup>68</sup> He promises that if the hands will follow his urging and at the next conclave will restore hope in the guardianship that the second guardian will emerge "from his occultation" to take command of the faith.<sup>69</sup> The guardian, he says, is "with us but waiting to be wanted"<sup>70</sup> and "is delaying his coming forth from his occultation in the hope that the Hands of the Cause will want to welcome him when he comes to them."<sup>71</sup> By the stand he is taking in his message to the hands he is, he holds, "assuming a command tantamount to that of a Guardian of the Faith to be obeyed by all."<sup>72</sup> He affirms "I am the protector of the Faith";<sup>73</sup> "I guard the faith."<sup>74</sup>



By Ridvan 117, Remey said: “all was clear to me.”<sup>75</sup> He first announced himself as the second guardian to the hands of the faith and then before the Ridvan convention in Wilmette, Illinois. Remey hoped and even expected that the Baha’is in America, “the Cradle of the Administration”, would accept his as guardian. He had previously warned the hands that the American believers would not sanction their stand against the guardianship. He wrote a letter, dated March, 1960 (the day not indicated), to Charlie Wolcott, secretary of the National Spiritual Assembly in the United States, enclosing a copy of his *Proclamation* to be read before the national convention and outlining the procedure by which he was to be conducted formally to Wilmette to meet with the Baha’i leaders if the convention should accept his guardianship.

The printed *Proclamation* contains five pages with these words on the cover: “Proclamation to the Baha’is of the World through the Annual Convention of the Baha’is of the United States of America Assembled at Wilmette, Illinois, Ridvan 117 Baha’i Era, from Mason Remey, the Second Guardian of the Baha’i Faith.” Remey introduces himself in the *Proclamation*, giving a brief account of his background and focusing on his position as the president of the International Baha’i Council, and declares that he is, therefore, “the President of the Embryonic Universal House of Justice”, and that “when this August body become the Universal House of Justice”, if during his lifetime, he “will then be the President of the First Universal House of Justice of the Baha’i Dispensation” (‘Abdu’l-Baha’s will and testament indicates that the presidency of the Universal House of Justice is a position to be filled by the guardian.) He charges the hands with flagrantly violating the will of ‘Abdu’l-Baha by their “program for 1963”.<sup>76</sup>

Remey says that he is “fully confident” of the American believers’ “support and cooperation in all Baha’i matters for you understand the Administration of the Faith” and indicates that he expects the Baha’is at the convention “to accept me without question as their Commander-in-Chief in all Baha’i matters and to follow me so long as I live for I am the Guardian of the Faith—the Infallible Guardian of the Baha’i Faith.” He maintains: “The line of the Guardianship of the Baha’i Faith in unbroken for I have been the Guardian of the Faith since the death of the Beloved Guardian Shoghi Effendi,” signing the document as “Mason R., Guardian of the Baha’i Faith.”<sup>77</sup>

Remey’s hopes of being accepted officially as the second guardian by the Baha’is in convention, however, were not realized, and he mentioned in a later writing that almost the entire Baha’i world, it would seem, endorsed the violation of the Hands of the Faith in their repudiation” of Shoghi Effendi’s appointment of him, as he maintains, as the second guardian.<sup>78</sup> Although with only a small following, Remey believed that his cause was right and that it would eventually triumph over the violation of the hands and those who followed them.

After his *Proclamation*, Remey issued three encyclical letters to the Baha’i world, setting forth his position. Remey’s claim to the guardianship rests primarily upon Shoghi Effendi’s appointment of him as president of the International Baha’i Council, which Shoghi Effendi said would evolve into the Universal House of Justice. He points out that this appointment was made during Shoghi Effendi’s lifetime and was thus in accord with the requirement in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s will that Shoghi Effendi appoint him successor during his lifetime. He admits that his “appointment was veiled at

the time” but that nonetheless it was “very clear and concise and not to be misunderstood.”<sup>79</sup> He finds that in his attempt to stop the hands from violating the will and testament by endorsing the termination of the living guardianship he was even then guarding the Baha’i faith, although not yet fully aware of his station.

Remy maintains that he is not advancing his own claim to the guardianship nor attempting to usurp that office but merely announcing to the Baha’i world an appointment which Shoghi Effendi himself had made. “The Guardians of the Faith do not appoint themselves, for they are appointed—each Guardian by his predecessor.”<sup>80</sup> To the charge that he is attempting to cause schism in the faith, Remy answers:

The Hands of the Cause accuse me of attempting to create a split in the Cause—as if this were a bad thing for the Baha’i Faith! I am indeed making a split in the Faith, for I am separating the diseased from the healthy living spiritual organisms of the body of the Baha’is. Such was the manner in which The Blessed Master saved the Faith in his day and the Beloved Guardian saved the Faith in his day.<sup>81</sup>

He declares all the hands who signed the message from the third conclave, November, 1959, to be “cut off from the Baha’i Faith”<sup>82</sup> and “expels from the Faith all who stand with and give support to these former Hands of the Faith.”<sup>83</sup> He declares that all those who “proclaim themselves to be ‘Baha’is Sans Guardianship’, should not be considered as Baha’is, for the only true and legitimate Baha’is are those now serving under the Second Guardian of the Faith.”<sup>84</sup>

## **Baha’is under the Universal House of Justice**

The majority of Baha’is refused to accept the claims of Mason Remy, considering themselves the true Baha’is and Mason Remy and his followers as covenant-breakers and, thus, outside the faith and not entitled to identify themselves as Baha’is.

### **Arguments against Remey's claim**

Two major arguments are raised against Remey's claim of being Shoghi Effendi's successor in the guardianship.

#### **Not a descendant of Baha'u'llah**

'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament specifies that the appointed successor "*must be the essence of purity, [and] must show in himself the fear of God, knowledge, wisdom and learning*", and provides that if "*the first-born of the guardian of the Cause of God*" does not meet these qualifications, then the guardian must "*choose another branch to succeed him.*"<sup>85</sup> The word "branch" could mean another of the guardian's sons or could mean one of the *Aghsan* ("Branches"), male descendants of Baha'u'llah. The House of Justice points out, however, that Shoghi Effendi

had no children and all the surviving Aghsan had broken the Covenant. Thus, as the Hands of the Cause stated in 1957, it is clear that there was no one he could have appointed in accordance with the provisions of the Will. To have made an appointment outside the clear and specific provisions of the Master's Will and Testament would obviously have been an impossible and unthinkable course of action for the Guardian, the divinely appointed upholder and defender of the Covenant.<sup>86</sup>

How the institution of the guardianship, the essentiality of which is so clearly upheld in the Baha'i writings, could suddenly come to naught seems to have been explained by the Persian hands at the first conclave of the hands by the concept of *bada*, God's changing his mind.<sup>87</sup> This concept, no doubt quite familiar to the Persian Baha'is but not so well known to Western Baha'is, asserts that "God can change his mind, especially in the designation of a prophet or Imam." It was one of the heresies charged against the Babis. The classic use of the term, Edward G. Browne points out, was the sixth Imam's traditional saying in reference

to his sons, "God never changed His mind about anything as He did about Isma'il."<sup>88</sup> Ja'far-i-Sadiq, the sixth Imam, desired for Isma'il to succeed him but he subsequently appointed instead his other son Musa as seventh Imam, through whom the "Twelver" sect continues the line of Imams to Muhammad, the twelfth Imam. The "Seveners" regard Isma'il as the seventh and last Imam.

Mason Remey employs the *bada* concept in holding not that God changed his mind and ended the guardianship but that God changed his mind about the guardianship's being passed on within Baha'u'llah's family:

God the Almighty stepped in and changed the entire possibility of the Beloved Guardian's carrying out this order of inheritance that was written in the Will and Testament. ... Then it was that the Beloved Guardian in his infallibility designated that I, Mason Remey, succeed him in the Guardianship of the Faith.<sup>89</sup>

Remey's followers also saw a certain significance in 'Abdu'l-Baha's reference to the occasion of Christ's brothers seeking him, when Christ "answered that His brothers were those who believed in God. ..." In this context, 'Abdu'l-Baha speaks of "the Divine Gardener who "cuts off the dry or weak branch from the good tree and grafts to it, a branch from another tree."<sup>90</sup> Remey's followers see in these passages a spiritual inheritance in the "hereditary Guardianship" which allowed Shoghi Effendi to choose to succeed him "another branch" outside of the natural branches.

### **The consent of the Hands to the Guardian's choice**

Another argument against Remey's claim is that the hands never acknowledged any appointed successor. 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament stipulated:

*The Hands of the Cause of God must elect from their own number nine persons that shall at all times be occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian of the Cause of God. The election of these nine must be carried either unanimously or by majority from the company of the hands of the Cause of God and these, whether unanimously or by a majority vote, must give their assent to the choice of the one whom the guardian of the Cause of God hath chosen as his successor.*<sup>91</sup>

These words seem to allow the possibility that the hands could vote against the guardian's choice of his successor, an interpretation held by Ahmad Sohrab, who points out in reference to the hands that "considering that the members of this body cannot be dismissed or expelled, a mighty deadlock might ensue."<sup>92</sup> That is, the guardian and the hands would be at odds, and the guardian could do nothing to see that his choice of a successor should become the next guardian.

Does this stipulation in the will provide an argument against Remy's claim? Even if Shoghi Effendi should have appointed him as successor, as he holds, the hands never acknowledged him as the new guardian. The House of Justice pointed out that 'Abdu'l-Baha's will

provided a clear means for the confirmation of the Guardian's appointment of his successor. ... The nine Hands to be elected by the body of the Hands were to give their assent by secret ballot to the Guardian's choice. In 1957 the entire body of the Hands, after fully investigating the matter, announced that Shoghi Effendi had appointed no successor and left no will. This is documented and established.<sup>93</sup>

Remy's claim to the guardianship would seem, therefore, to be annulled by the lack of any confirmation of his appointment by the hands, that is, if one should interpret the passage in the will as meaning that the hands could block the guardian's choice of a successor. Shoghi Effendi did not so interpret the passage:

The statement in the Will of 'Abdu'l-Baha does not imply that the Hands of the Cause of God have been given the authority to

overrule the Guardian. 'Abdu'l-Baha could not have provided for a conflict of authority in the Faith. This is obvious, in view of His own words, which you will find on p. 13 (p. 11 of 1944 US Edition) of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, "The mighty stronghold shall remain impregnable and safe through obedience to him who is the guardian of the Cause of God, to turn unto him and be lowly before him. He that opposeth him hath opposed the True One", etc.<sup>94</sup>

In Shoghi Effendi's understanding, then, the hands have not the power to overrule the guardian or to set up a "deadlock", as Sohrab mentions, and, therefore, the argument that the hands did not consent to Remey's appointment would not be valid for those who hold that Shoghi Effendi appointed Mason Remey to the guardianship.

Moreover, the hands were to "elect from their own number nine persons" to be "occupied in the important services in the work of the guardian", and although the hands had power in themselves to elect this body, they were to be elected evidently during the guardian's lifetime to assist him in his work, and since this body was non-existent when Shoghi Effendi passed away, they were not in a position to carry out the will's provision to assent to the guardian's choice.

### ***The Institution of the Guardianship***

Some word of clarification is necessary in defining the position of the Baha'is who refused to accept Remey's guardianship in regard to the institution of the guardianship. They do not see themselves as having abandoned the institution of the guardianship. The hands sent forth their messages to the Baha'i world by signing themselves as "In the Service of the Beloved Guardian of the Faith", i.e. Shoghi Effendi. Mason Remey would not sign the message from the third conclave partly

because he believed the hands should be signing themselves after Shoghi Effendi's death as "In the Service of the Second Guardian of the Baha'i Faith".<sup>95</sup>

A careful reading of the announcement from the Universal House of Justice concerning the guardianship reveals that it did not state any abandonment of the guardianship nor declare that the guardianship had ended. It merely pointed out that it could find "no way to appoint or legislate to make it possible to appoint a second Guardian to succeed Shoghi Effendi."<sup>96</sup> The institution of the guardianship, therefore, simply came to a standstill. Baha'is still look to the writings of Shoghi Effendi, and his guardianship, in a sense, still continues through his written words. Quite pointedly, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

The Guardianship does not lose its significance nor position in the Order of Baha'u'llah merely because there is no living Guardian. We must guard against two extremes: one is to argue that because there is no Guardian all that was written about the Guardianship and its position in the Baha'i world Order is a dead letter and was unimportant; the other is to be so overwhelmed by the significance of the Guardianship as to underestimate the strength of the Covenant, or to be tempted to compromise with the clear Texts in order to find somehow, in some way, a "Guardian."<sup>97</sup>

### ***The Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice***

One of Remey's contentions was that the Baha'is overstepped their authority in calling for the election of the Universal House of Justice because only the guardian could call for its election. But the Universal House of Justice maintained that "there is nothing in the Texts to indicate that the election of the Universal House of Justice could be called only by the Guardian" and pointed out that 'Abdu'l-Baha had "envisaged the calling of its election in His own lifetime."



At one point when 'Abdu'l-Baha's life was threatened, it noted, 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote to Haji Mirza Taqi Afnan "commanding him to arrange for the election of the Universal House of Justice should the threats against the Master materialize."<sup>98</sup>

Remy also insisted that only the guardian could give infallibility to the Universal House of Justice and that without him the House would be merely a democratic body. The House of Justice, however, stated:

The infallibility of the Universal House of Justice, operating within its ordained sphere, has not been made dependent upon the presence in its membership of the Guardian of the Cause.<sup>99</sup>

It admits, however, that one of the guardian's functions was "to define the sphere of the legislative action" of the Universal House of Justice.

The question therefore arises: In the absence of the Guardian, is the Universal House of Justice in danger of straying outside its proper sphere and thus falling into error? Here we must remember three things: First, Shoghi Effendi, during the thirty-six years of his Guardianship, has already made innumerable such definitions, supplementing those made by 'Abdu'l-Baha and by Baha'u'llah Himself. As already announced to the friends, a careful study of the Writings and interpretation on any subject on which the House of Justice proposes to legislate always precedes its act of legislation. Second, the Universal House of Justice, itself assured of Divine guidance, is well aware of the absence of the Guardian and will approach all matters of legislation only when certain of its sphere of jurisdiction, a sphere which the Guardian has confidently described as "clearly defined." Third, we must not forget the Guardian's written statement about these two institutions: "Neither can, nor will ever, infringe upon the sacred and prescribed domain of the other."<sup>100</sup>

Another question which arises is, since Shoghi Effendi stressed the inseparability of the institutions of the guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, whether they may function independently. On this question, the Universal House of Justice wrote:

Whereas he obviously envisaged their functioning together, it cannot logically be deduced from this that one is unable to function

in the absence of the other. During the whole thirty-six years of his Guardianship Shoghi Effendi functioned without the Universal House of Justice. Now the Universal House of Justice must function without the Guardian, but the principle of inseparability remains.<sup>101</sup>

One of the ironies of Baha'i teachings is that these "two inseparable institutions" actually were never united. A distance of some six years intervened between Shoghi Effendi's guardianship and the beginning of the Universal House of Justice.

### ***The Continental Boards of Counselors***

The Baha'i texts do not indicate how long the term of office may be of the members of the Universal House of Justice. But in October, 1963, the House announced that the next election for the Universal House of Justice would be held in the spring of 1968. Accordingly, at that time the newly elected Universal House of Justice took office. One of its first actions was to deal with the problem of being unable to appoint new hands of the cause. 'Abdu'l-Baha's will indicated: "*The Hands of the Cause of God must be nominated and appointed by the guardian of the Cause of God.*"<sup>102</sup> Without a living Guardian to appoint new hands, this body eventually will expire. The Universal House of Justice previously ruled in November, 1964, that "there is no way to appoint, or legislate to make it possible to appoint, Hands of the Cause of God."<sup>103</sup>

In June, 1968, the newly elected Universal House of Justice established eleven continental boards of counselors in Northwestern Africa, Central and East Africa, Southern Africa, North America, Central America, South America, Western Asia, Southeast Asia, Northeast Asia, Australasia, Europe.<sup>104</sup>

In the cablegram, June 21, 1968, announcing the decision to establish these boards, the Universal House of Justice indicated that “this significant step”, following consultation with the hands, “insures (the) extension (in the) future (of the) appointed functions (of) their institution.”<sup>105</sup> The board members were appointed on June 24. Their duties are the propagation and protection of the faith. They also are to assume the direction of the auxiliary boards to the hands, thus freeing the hands of this responsibility and allowing them to increase their intercontinental services. Unlike the hands, who are appointed for life, the members of the continental boards serve a term of office.

### **Developments in the Orthodox Baha’i Faith**

Mason Remey, being rejected by the majority of Baha’is and expelled from the faith by the hands of the cause, began to organize the Baha’is who accepted him as the second guardian. They called themselves the Baha’is under the Guardianship, then the Baha’is under the Hereditary Guardianship, and finally the Orthodox Baha’is to distinguish themselves as the true Baha’is from the “Sans Guardian Baha’is”.

### ***Doctrine of the great global catastrophe***

One teaching given particular emphasis in Mason Remey’s writings concerns a “great global catastrophe”. Remey combined certain Biblical, Qur’anic, and Baha’i prophecies relating to a coming day of tribulation and judgment with current geological theories, particularly as popularized by Charles H. Hapgood,<sup>106</sup> to arrive at a concept of a coming catastrophe brought on by a shifting of the earth’s crust which will produce cataclysmic changes in the earth’s atmosphere and surface, killing two-thirds of the earth’s population.

Concerning Daniel's prophecy (chapter 12), Remy asserts:

Some of the Friends had come to the conclusion that the prophecy of the one thousand three hundred and five and thirty days indicated the date 1917 A.D. and they wished to know just what might be expected to happen in the world at that time.<sup>107</sup>

According to Remy, he asked 'Abdu'l-Baha what would happen in the world at that time and received the reply that "after the year 1917 there is coming a very great catastrophe in the world!" Remy then asked: "Would this be soon after 1917, or in the distant future?" 'Abdu'l-Baha, he says, answered: "Not soon after nor distant."<sup>108</sup> Remy says that years later Shoghi Effendi told the world that 1963 would be the year of fulfillment" of "the abomination of desolation".<sup>109</sup>

Because of this coming catastrophe, Remy on July 16, 1961, directed his followers to prepare the future center of their national Baha'i administrative headquarters in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and of their international European center in the capital city of Berne in the Swiss Oberland,<sup>110</sup> areas which he believed would survive the catastrophe.

In 1961, Remy also removed all of his personal records from Chicago to Santa Fe, where at an altitude of 7,000 feet above sea level, he deposited them in fireproof storage.<sup>111</sup> Believing that time was running out before the great catastrophe, Remy wrote on June 19, 1962, to the National Spiritual Assembly in Wilmette urging them to "lose no time in preserving the archives of the Faith that are now in the crypt of the Temple" by removing them to a place of safety high above sea level. He indicates in this letter that he had previously written to Ruhyyih Khanum ordering her to remove the remains of Shoghi Effendi from the

Great Northern Cemetery in New Southgate to Mt. Carmel in Haifa. The location of Shoghi Effendi's present tomb, Remey maintained, would be inundated along with all of London except for a high portion of Hampstead Heights. According to Remey, Chicago and Wilmette are also doomed for destruction in the catastrophe.<sup>112</sup>

Remey later set the date of the great catastrophe forward to May, 1995.

### **Incorporation under the second guardian**

From Florence, Italy, November 30, 1962, Remey outlined the preliminary steps toward the election of national spiritual assemblies of the Baha'is under his guardianship. He appointed three local assemblies to serve as "mother assemblies" for three nations. Each mother assembly would be in charge of organizing elections leading to the formation of national assemblies. The appointed mother assemblies were the Local Spiritual Assembly in Santa Fe for the United States, the local assembly in Rawalpindi for Pakistan, and the local assembly of Lucknow for India. From the reports from the three mother assemblies on the number of local assemblies, groups, and isolated believers, Remey decided on the number of delegates to be elected for the national conventions.<sup>113</sup>

Two national bodies of Baha'is under the Guardianship, in the United States and in Pakistan, were formed in 1963. According to the *Glad Tidings*, a bulletin of the Baha'is under the second guardian, almost all the Baha'is in Pakistan accepted Mason Remey as second guardian.<sup>114</sup>

The United States national assembly was elected in April, 1963, by seventy-five delegates, assembled in Santa Fe, New Mexico, representing local Baha'i groups throughout the country. According to A. S. Petzoldt, Quincy, Illinois, who was elected the first chairman of the newly formed national assembly, Baha'is under the Guardianship were located in Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Mexico, Costa Rica, the Canal Zone, France, England, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, Africa, and in the Mauritius and Reunion islands.<sup>115</sup>

The attorney for the Baha'is under the Guardianship informed the American assembly on March 16, 1964, that the "Declaration of Trust and By-Laws of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America under the Hereditary Guardianship" had been legally incorporated in New Mexico and its incorporation subsequently filed with the US Department of State. The attorney further explained that the incorporation

embraces all of the believers of the Baha'i Faith in the United States as members of the new corporation, whether or not they have declared allegiance to the principle of Guardianship. The new legal incorporation also embraced all of the properties held by all of the believers of the Baha'i Faith, whether or not some of the properties currently may be operated or under the control of certain Baha'i believers who have not declared their allegiance to the Guardianship principle.<sup>116</sup>

### **The Wilmette property lawsuit**

With their new legal incorporation embracing all Baha'i properties, the Baha'is under the Guardianship proceeded to institute a legal suit in the Federal District Court in Chicago against the National Spiritual Assembly in Wilmette on August 5, 1964, for "breach of trust",

attempting to gain legal ownership of the Wilmette Baha'i temple property held by the "Sans Guardian Baha'is".<sup>117</sup>

The Santa Fe Baha'is maintained that the Baha'is refusing to acknowledge the continuation of the guardianship were violating the Declaration and Trust under which they were incorporated, which declares the purposes of the trust to be to administer Baha'i affairs according to principles

created and established by Baha'u'llah, defined and explained by 'Abdu'l-Baha and amplified and applied by Shoghi Effendi and his duly constituted successor and successors under the provisions of the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>118</sup>

Unknown to the Santa Fe Baha'is was that the National Spiritual Assembly in Wilmette, after the election of the Universal House of Justice in 1963, had amended and copyrighted its Declaration of Trust in 1964, deleting references to the "successor and successors" after Shoghi Effendi (in Article II) and deleting reference to the "Guardian of the Cause" in Article IV and in Article IX of the By-Laws, making their affairs subject only to the Universal House of Justice.<sup>119</sup>

The Wilmette Baha'is also filed on December 23, 1964, a counter-claim against the Baha'is under the Guardianship for trademark infringement, mailing on January 27, 1965, a notice to the Commissioner of Patents, Washington, DC, reporting the trademark infringement as entered in the counterclaim.

After a year and a half of legal battle, the Wilmette Baha'is succeeded in getting an injunction against the Baha'is under the Guardianship on June 28, 1966. The injunction entered by Judge Richard Austin in

the Federal District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, reads:

IT IS ORDERED, ADJUDGED AND DECREED that the counter-defendant, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America Under the Hereditary Guardianship, Inc., its officers, agents, servants, employees, attorneys, and all persons in active concert or participation with them, including affiliated Local Spiritual Assemblies, groups, and individuals, or any of them, be and they are hereby enjoined from using in their activities the designations "National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America under the Hereditary Guardianship, Inc.," "Baha'i News Bureau," "Rebels Round Robin," "Baha'i," trademark representations of the Baha'i House of Worship, the Arabic design "The Greatest Name," and any other designation which by colorable imitation or otherwise is likely to be mistaken for or confused with the counterclaimant's name or marks as indicated above or is likely to create the erroneous impression that counter-defendant's religious activities, publications or doctrines originate with counterclaimant, and from otherwise competing unfairly with counterclaimant or infringing counterclaimant's rights.<sup>120</sup>

The Baha'is under the Guardianship had sixty days in which to file a motion for a new trial and appeal to a higher court. On August 8, 1966, they filed the motion for a new trial and a motion to amend the judgment. While the National Spiritual Assembly under the Guardianship and their lawyer, Donald S. Frey, made preparations for the new trial, an unexpected directive from Mason Remey ordered the National Spiritual Assembly under the Guardianship to withdraw from the proceedings "regardless of the consequences".<sup>121</sup>

Remey's position was that the court case detracted from their teaching efforts, that they were dealing with a spiritual problem which could not be solved in a law court, and that the Baha'is were not to engage in such "aggressive" actions.<sup>122</sup>

Since the "Conclusions of Law" submitted by the Wilmette Baha'is states that the Wilmette National Spiritual Assembly did not presume to



infringe on the right to religious liberty or to organize and worship according to the dictates of conscience, the Baha'is under the Hereditary Guardianship interpreted the ruling against them that they could continue their teaching and advertising activity, give talks on the Baha'i religion, and privately call themselves Baha'is but could not use the name "Baha'i" in their advertisements.<sup>123</sup>

The Wilmette Baha'is had lost their case in New York State against the New History Society in attempting to restrict the use of the name "Baha'i" to their own organization. This time they won.

As a result of the injunction, Mason Remey, in 1966, ordered the National Spiritual Assembly in Santa Fe to be dissolved. The Baha'is under Mason Remey continued as best they could under the injunction to spread the Baha'i teachings while refraining from advertising themselves as Baha'is.<sup>124</sup>

### **Mason Remey's messages**

Mason Remey, before and after the Chicago lawsuit, issued various messages to those accepting his guardianship. These were often printed in the *Glad Tidings* until the Chicago injunction. After the National Spiritual Assembly in Santa Fe was dissolved, Remey sent his messages to his followers in the United States through Charley O. Murphy, who reproduced the letters or portions of letters or announcements which were specified as for the believers at large. These messages dealt with points of doctrine and announcement's related to the affairs of the faith under the direction of Mason Remey.

One of Remey's earlier messages pertained to a non-Baha'í, English translation of Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas*. A surprising feature of the Baha'í faith is that, although Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas* is the most important of Baha'u'llah's writings, the book to which all Baha'ís must turn for the laws governing the present age, it has never yet been translated into English and published by Baha'ís. A non-Baha'í translation by E. E. Elder with an introduction by William McElwee Miller, however, was published in 1961. Remey encouraged his followers to avail themselves of this work. Pointing out that it is not an "authorized" Baha'í publication and that its laws cannot yet be enforced on a community level, Remey held nonetheless that it would be profitable for individual use.<sup>125</sup> The Wilmette Baha'ís find this translation unacceptable.

Remey announced in 1964 his belief that the break in the line of descent in the guardians "can be remedied" and brought "back again into the line of descent from Baha'u'llah ... as soon as there may arise amongst those of this chosen descent one who will qualify."<sup>126</sup>

In a statement issued August 9, 1964, Remey defined the infallibility of the guardianship. He held that the guardianship is endowed with infallibility but that "this does not seem that every act, word and deed of the Guardian remains inflexibly binding on the believers of the future generations." Remey maintained that only the words of Baha'u'llah cannot be changed until a future manifestation.

The interpretation of the Holy Word, however, may differ from time to time depending upon the interpretation of the Living Guardian alone for he alone has been authorized as the interpreter). If this were not so, then any believer might wish to hold to what a former Guardian established and conflict would arise. Therefore, no believer has a right to contest what the living Guardian of the Faith gives to the Baha'í World as his interpretation.<sup>127</sup>

These words perhaps formed the basis for Mason Remey's departure from the teachings of Shoghi Effendi. Remey began to criticize Shoghi Effendi's administration. In a message, January, 1967, Remey declared that "Shoghi Effendi was all wrong in teaching that the future world government would be installed on Mt. Carmel," asserted that "Shoghi Effendi was a sick and disorganized soul," and spoke of the "violations of the Faith that were made unwittingly by Shoghi Effendi."<sup>128</sup>

In a letter, January 28, 1958, Remey maintained that the Babi and Baha'i religions are two separate and distinct religions" that have "very different and opposing objects," contended that "Shoghi Effendi forced the Babi Faith upon the entire world of the Baha'i Community," and held that "this was all wrong and is the cause of the contusion of the Baha'i people of today, and they don't understand this!" Remey declared: "Shoghi Effendi built his Administration about the Babi Faith. He ought to have built it about the Baha'i Faith but he did not."<sup>129</sup>

In 1968, Remey appointed the first five of an intended twenty-four elders who would together with the guardian "administer the Faith of Baha'u'llah", finding support for the twenty-four elders in Revelation 4:10-11 and 11:16-17, and in a passage in 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Some Answered Questions*. Donald Harvey, to be mentioned subsequently, was appointed as the first elder and the "member at large" of the body. To the remark that Shoghi Effendi knew of no twenty-four elders, Remey replied that "Shoghi Effendi knew nothing" of the twenty-four elders of the Baha'i Dispensation because "his administration was confined to the Babi Faith

that had been dead for more than a century.”<sup>130</sup> Remy later dissolved the body of twenty-four elders.

On May 19, 1969, Remy announced that English would be “the official language of the Baha’i Faith” and urged communities in each country of the world to begin teaching English to illiterates, allowing them to become world citizens at once.”<sup>131</sup> On July 16, 1971, Remy indicated that Colorado Springs would be the best location for the Baha’i temple.<sup>132</sup> Mason Remy in his 100th year, passed away in Florence, Italy, on February 4, 1974.

## **The emergence of a third guardian**

An unusual development among those who looked to Mason Remy as second guardian was the emergence in November, 1969, some four years and three months before Remy’s death, of a claimant to the third guardianship, who won the support of most of Remy’s followers. The circumstances of this development were as follows:

In December, 1961, some nineteen months after Mason Remy’s *Proclamation* was issued, Joel Marangella, according to his written testimony, received from Remy a letter “in whose outer envelope was enclosed a smaller sealed envelope” on which were written these words:

Joel: Please take care of this sealed envelope among your papers in the Bernese Oberland. As I see things now it may have to do with the coming world catastrophe in or after 1963. You will know when to break the seal.  
Mason, Washington, D.C., U.S.A., 5 December 1961.<sup>133</sup>

Joel Marangella, as instructed, deposited the letter unopened in a safety deposit box in a bank near his permanent residence in Switzerland.

Then, on September 21, 1964, Mason Remey appointed Joel Marangella as president of the newly created second International Baha'i Council (announced in *Glad Tidings*, October, 1964), an act of high importance for Remey's followers, for Remey's claim to the second guardianship rested on his appointment by Shoghi Effendi as president of the first International Baha'i Council.

Soon after this appointment, Marangella journeyed to Switzerland, where he felt that the time had come to open the letter which he had placed in the safety deposit box three years earlier. The handwritten letter read:

Washington, D.C., U.S.A.  
5 December 1961

Dear Joel,

This is to tell you to tell the Baha'i World that I appoint you to be the third Guardian of the Baha'i Faith according to the Will and Testament of the Master, Abdu'l-Baha.

Mason, Guardian  
of the Baha'i Faith<sup>134</sup>

Marangella indicates that he was struck by the fact that the letter was addressed to him instead of to the believers and that it commissioned him to "tell" the Baha'i world that he was the third guardian. The question arose in his mind of when to make his announcement, and he says that he concluded that it would only be appropriate after the second guardian's passing, although he says "an examination of the Will and Testament of Abdu'l-Baha does not disclose that this is a precondition."<sup>135</sup>

Marangella indicates further that when he visited Mason Remey in Florence, Italy, in the summer, 1965, Remey instructed him to

announce the activation of the Baha'í Council of which Marangella was president. Marangella's announcement appears in *Glad Tidings*, October, 1965, under the heading of "Council Assumes Task".

Then in a letter from Remy to Marangella, February 18, 1966, (published in *Glad Tidings*, May, 1966), he wrote: "I am turning the affairs of the Faith over to you as the President of the second Baha'í International Council to handle this for me—you having the other members of the Council to assist you," and further indicated in the letter, "from now on I will leave you free to conduct the affairs of the Faith, I making suggestions when necessary."<sup>136</sup> In a letter a portion of which is printed in *Glad Tidings*, October, 1966, Remy wrote:

Joel Marangella will soon have a message for all Baha'is that I trust will put everyones [sic] mind at rest about who will be the 3rd Guardian of the Faith. I have devised a plan that will assure the people that there will be a 3rd Guardian but that no one will know who he is to be until the catastrophe has passed and with it the confusion of the days of tribulation.

This will be about 29 years from now according to my reckoning.<sup>137</sup>

But, unexpectedly, Mason Remy in a handwritten letter, May 23, 1967, made another appointment to the guardianship:

In the most Holy Name of El Baha,

I the Second Guardian of the Baha'í Faith hereby appoint Donald Harvey at my death to be my Successor the Third guardian of the Faith.

(Signed) Mason Remy

May 23rd 1967

Florence, Italy

P.S. May the Spirit of El Abha ever protect this line of Spiritual descent from Abdul Baha the Center of the Covenant of El Baha.

(Signed) C.M.R.<sup>138</sup>

Since Mason Ramey had not annulled his previous appointment, Marangella wrote a letter to Ramey enclosing a photostatic copy of his appointment of Marangella in 1961 and seeking an explanation. Ramey's reply, Marangella says, "offered no explanation and served to confirm my worst fears that something was seriously wrong if Mason Ramey had forgotten, as was obviously the case, this all-important appointment." Marangella, at this point, in "great commotion" of "heart and soul", reasoned:

After meditating on the situation for some time in an effort to find a rational explanation, it dawned on my consciousness that the reason for this, as well as the lamentable state of affairs in the Faith and the conflicting statements which were coming from Mason Ramey lay in the fact that the mantle of Guardianship no longer reposed on the shoulders of Mason Ramey nor had it done so since the autumn of 1964 when I had opened the letter addressed to me by Mason Ramey telling me to tell the Baha'i World that I was the third Guardian of the Baha'i Faith. As earlier explained, I had considered at the time that this was an announcement that I would only make after the passing of Mason Ramey. But as I have already pointed out Mason Ramey had on two occasions provided me with the opportunity, however unbeknownst to himself and unrecognized by me to take over the reins of the Faith (i.e., when the Council was activated in October 1965 and in February 1966). In some respects, my own failure to perceive my accession to the Guardianship parallels the experience of Mason Ramey as it will be recalled that some three years elapsed (from 1957 to 1960) before he perceived that he had been the Guardian of the Faith since the passing of Shoghi Effendi.<sup>139</sup>

On November 12, 1969, Joel Marangella issued his proclamatory letter, containing the above quoted words, claiming the station of third guardian. Marangella, thus, holds that he had been third guardian since autumn, 1964, and apparently for Marangella and his followers, Mason Ramey's pronouncements after that date have no validity, thereby eliminating for them Ramey's attacks on Shoghi Effendi's administration during the closing nine years of Ramey's long life.

Marangella later wrote to his fellows urging them “to not be critical of Mason Remey in any way”, referring to “the problems of a person who has reached his extremely advanced age”, and indicating that

they are common to all very old people and happily he was not afflicted until far past the usual age. At the time that he made his appointment of me as his successor (i.e. the second year after the issuance of his Proclamation) he was given the wisdom to realize that a time would come when he was no longer able to function in the office of the Guardianship and hence couched his letter of appointment in the terms that he did.

The Second Guardian of the Faith was unquestionably endowed with the necessary qualities to stand up like a rock against the greatest violation that the faith has ever known. Thus the continuity of the Guardianship was preserved and for this the present generation of faithful Baha'is as well as succeeding generations down through the centuries of the Baha'í Dispensation owe him an incalculable and eternal debt of gratitude.<sup>140</sup>

Not all the Baha'is under Remey accepted the claim of Marangella. Mason Remey, himself, kept issuing his announcements and letters of instruction to those who continued to accept him as guardian.

### **Arguments against Marangella's claim**

At least three arguments are advanced against Marangella's claim to the third guardianship. Shortly after Marangella issued his proclamation letter of November 12, 1969, a paper was circulated insisting that there could not be two living guardians at the same time. Marangella agreed. He was the guardian; Remey was no longer guardian. Remey's manner of appointing him, Marangella reasoned, was a form of abdication of the office of guardian whenever Marangella should announce himself as guardian.<sup>141</sup> Marangella had said previously in his proclamatory letter that

the Institution of the Guardianship of the Faith is independent of and apart from the individual who occupies this Office at a



particular time. Down through the ages to come, different persons will sit upon the spiritual Throne of the Guardianship—a Throne upon which is focused [sic] the light of the Holy Spirit. Only when the one who is the “chosen branch” of the Tree of the Covenant is seated thereon does he become irradiated with that eternal Light and is he enabled to discharge the sacred Trust with which he has been invested.<sup>142</sup>

A second argument is that ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s will and testament indicates that the guardian holds this office for life. The will and testament, in referring to the Universal House of Justice, says that “*the guardian of the Cause of God is its sacred head and the distinguished member for life of that body.*”<sup>143</sup> The reasoning would be that to be the “sacred head” of the Universal House of Justice for life would necessitate being guardian for life, because only the guardian can be president of the Universal House of Justice. Remey also had written in his *Proclamation* that he expected the Baha’is in convention in Wilmette in 1960 “to follow me *so long as I live* for I am the Guardian of the Faith.”<sup>144</sup> Mason Remey, also, in a letter to the city editor of the *Des Moines Register*, Des Moines, Iowa, January 10, 1963, identified himself as “the Guardian for life of the Baha’i (Orthodox) World Faith.” These statements were made by Remey during the time of his recognized guardianship. How, then, does Marangella meet these objections?

One of the explanations why Shoghi Effendi never urged Mason Remey to activate the International Baha’i Council was that, had the Council been activated then Remey, as president of the embryonic Universal House of Justice, would have become guardian at that time. Marangella maintains, however, that “unlike Shoghi Effendi”, Mason Remey

instructed me to activate the Council thus making me the active head of that body and simultaneously passing on the mantle of guardianship and placing it upon my shoulders.<sup>145</sup>

In this case, then, the guardianship, according to Marangella, passed to him prior to Remy's death.

A third objection, granting the legitimacy of Marangella's appointment, is that the later appointment of a third guardian by Remy annuls Marangella's previous appointment, since legally the last written will of a person is the one in force. Marangella's position is that Remy's later appointment of a third guardian was after the mantle of guardianship already had passed to him and the subsequent appointment, therefore, invalid along with Remy's other enactments after ceasing to be guardian.

### **Development of the Orthodox Baha'i Faith under Marangella**

On March 1, 1970, Joel Marangella announced the establishment with four initial members of the National Bureau of the Orthodox-Baha'i Faith in America, "pending the reestablishment of the orthodox Baha'i Administrative System under the hereditary Guardianship on the North American Continent." The functions of the Bureau are to serve as a point of contact between the guardian and Baha'is in the United States and Canada who recognize the third guardianship; serve as provisional custodian of a national Baha'i fund; officially represent the Orthodox Baha'i faith in national contacts with non-Baha'is; maintain a membership roll of Orthodox Baha'is; and initiate a Baha'i library.<sup>146</sup>

Plans originally were to establish an office in New York City, where the Supreme Court had ruled in 1941 that the Wilmette Baha'is

“have no right to monopoly on the name of a religion”,<sup>147</sup> but in July, 1972, the Bureau was transferred to New Mexico and later incorporated under the laws of the state.

Prior to its incorporation, the Bureau was deactivated temporarily when some of its members, along with some others, chose to follow Rex King, who claimed to be a “Regent for the Cause of Baha’u’llah”. King was one of the members of the first elected National Spiritual Assembly under the Hereditary Guardianship in 1963. After Joel Marangella claimed the third guardianship, King accepted him and was appointed by Marangella as president of the National Teaching Institute of the Orthodox Baha’i Faith in the United States. King, however, issued on January 15, 1973, a sixteen-page proclamation asserting his “Regency of the Cause”. His claim was based on a mystical experience and Marangella’s conferring upon him of the presidency of the National Teaching Institute. In a subsequent paper, King denied that Marangella was or ever had been guardian of the Baha’i faith, although he held that Marangella had made appointments and given titles to him through the Holy Spirit.

Marangella announced on August 12, 1973, the establishing of the European Bureau of the Orthodox Baha’i Faith with functions paralleling the US Bureau except that to the European Bureau was given an additional duty of preparing, editing, and publishing a Baha’i magazine. The “Winter 1973/74” issue of *Herald of the Covenant* was the first issue of this magazine. The European Bureau has since been inactivated, but plans are to continue publication of the magazine.

Marangella augmented the role of the US National Bureau on January 15, 1974, to include assisting Baha'is in planning, organizing, and conducting meetings, seminars, discussion panels, firesides, and other meetings; providing publications and teaching materials for local teaching activities and conducting regional and national publicity campaigns for promoting the Orthodox Baha'í Faith and preparing and utilizing varied publicity media and materials.

Unlike the National Spiritual Assembly, the National Bureau is an appointed, not elected, body and has no administrative or legislative powers. It is temporary and provisional until the Baha'í administrative order under the guardianship can be reestablished in the United States.<sup>148</sup>

In the new *Herald of the Covenant*, Joel Marangella outlines in nine points the beliefs of the Orthodox Baha'is. They concern belief in (1) the Bab, (2) Baha'u'llah, (3) Baha'u'llah's appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha as his successor, (4) 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament as "supplementary to the Most Holy Book revealed by Baha'u'llah (the Kitab-i-Aqdas)" and constituting "a part of the explicit Holy Text, inviolate and never to be abrogated or altered in any way during the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", (5) the will and testament's establishing of the guardianship and the Universal House of Justice, both under the protection and guidance of Baha'u'llah, (6) the sole authority of the guardian to appoint his successor, either his "first born son" or "another individual", preserving "an unbroken chain of guardians each appointed by his predecessor in office throughout the duration of the Dispensation of Baha'u'llah", (7) Shoghi

Effendi's appointment of Charles Mason Remey, (8) Mason Remey's appointment of Joel B. Marangella, (9) and a closing statement affirming that "avowed Baha'is who espouse views and doctrines at variance with the above statement are not orthodox Baha'is and have placed themselves outside the true Faith."<sup>149</sup>

## 7. The Universal House of Justice and the question of the Guardianship

- 1 For accounts of Shoghi Effendi's passing, see Ruhiiyyih Rabbani, *The Priceless Pearl* (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1969), pp. 446–51, and *The Baha'i World: An International Record*, Vol. XIII (Haifa, Israel: Universal House of Justice, 1970), pp. 207–25. The latter is a reprinting of Amatu'l-Baha Ruhiiyyih Khanum, in collaboration with John Ferraby, *The Passing of Shoghi Effendi* (London: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1958).
- 2 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 214.
- 3 *The Baha'i World*, XIII, 342.
- 4 idem, p. 343.
- 5 *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 12 (hereinafter referred to as *Will and Testament*).
- 6 *The Baha'i World*, XIII, 346.
- 7 idem, p. 343.
- 8 idem, pp. 350–51.
- 9 idem, p. 351.
- 10 idem, pp. 352–53. The twelve-day Baha'i Feast of Ridvan, commemorating Baha'u'llah's declaration, begins on April 21. The Baha'i national convention is held annually at this time.
- 11 idem, pp. 254–55.
- 12 idem, p. 353.
- 13 idem, p. 346.
- 14 idem, p. 361.
- 15 idem, pp. 362–63.
- 16 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to Canada* (Toronto, Ontario, Canada, National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, 1965), p. 63.
- 17 idem, p. 661 see also p. 65.
- 18 As Shoghi Effendi had designated them in his last message to the Baha'i world before his death (Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World: 1950–1957* [Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1958], p. 127).
- 19 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1996), p. 14.
- 20 idem, p. 53.
- 21 idem, p. 83.
- 22 idem, p. 84.
- 23 *Will and Testament*, p. 12.
- 24 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1955), p. 148.
- 25 ibid.

26 idem, p. 150.

27 idem, p. 8.

28 George Townshend, *Christ and Baha'u'llah* (London: George Ronald, 1963), p. 100.

29 idem, pp. 100–101.

30 Marzieh Gail, “Will and Testament”, *World Order*, VI (April, 1940), 21–22.

31 Ruhyyiyh Khanum, *Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1948), p. 19.

32 idem, p. 23.

33 See Mason Remey's “Forward” in May Maxwell, *An Early Pilgrimage* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1953) and Mason Remey's *Proclamation to the Baha'is of the World through the Annual Convention of the Baha'is of the United States of America Assembled at Wilmette, Illinois, Ridvan 117, Baha'i Era* (Washington, DC: n.p., 1960), p. A (hereinafter referred to as *Proclamation*).

34 Charles Mason Remey, *The Bahai Movement: A Series of Nineteen Papers upon the Bahai Movement* (Washington, DC: Press of J. D. Milans & Sons, 1912), pp. 103–10.

35 Charles Mason Remey, “Through Warring Countries to the Mountain of God: An Account of Some of the Experiences of Two American Bahais in France, England, Germany, and Other Countries, on Their Way to Visit Abdul Baha in the Holy Land, in the Year 1914” (Honolulu, Hawaii: unpublished typewritten manuscript deposited in selected libraries, 1915). Available through University Microfilms, a Xerox Company, Ana Arbor, Michigan.

36 “English Translation of Tablets Revealed by the Center of the Covenant, Abdul-Baha to C.M.R.” (Newport, R.I.: n.p., 1924).

37 Charles Mason Remey, “Journal Diary of a Baha'i Teacher in Latin America, 1946–1947”, Vols. I-III (Washington, DC: n.p., 1949); Charles Mason Remey, “Journal Diary of Baha'i Travels in Europe, 1947” (Washington, DC: n.p., 1949); Charles Mason Remey, “Journal-diary of European Baha'i Travels, April-November, 1949”, Vols. I-III (Washington, DC: n.p., 1949); Charles Mason Remey, “A Teacher of the Baha'i Faith in South America, 1945–1946”, Vols. I-III (Washington, DC: n.p., 1949); Charles Mason Remey, *Observations of a Bahai Traveller, 1908* (Washington, DC: Carnahan Press, 1909).

38 Charles Mason Remey, *The Bahai Revelation and Reconstruction* (Chicago, Ill.: Distributed by Bahai Publishing Society, 1919); Charles Mason Remey, *The Peace of the world* (Chicago, Ill.: Distributed by Bahai Publishing Society, 1919); Charles Mason Remey, *The New Day* (Chicago, Ill.: Distributed by Bahai Publishing Society, 1919); Charles Mason Remey, *Constructive Principles of the Bahai Movement* (Chicago, Ill.: Bahai Publishing Society, 1917); Charles Mason Remey, *A Series of Twelve Articles Introductory to the Study of the Baha'i Teachings* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1925); Charles Mason Remey, *The Universal Consciousness of the Bahai Religion* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1925).

39 Charles Mason Remey, *A Statement by the Second Guardian of the Baha'i World Faith* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Baha'is of Santa Fe under the Hereditary Guardianship, n.d.), p. 1 (hereinafter referred to as *Statement*).

40 *The Baha'i World*, XIII, p. 342.

41 Remey, *Statement*, p. 3.

42 “An Appeal to the Hands of the Faith in the Holy Lands: Made Strictly in Private to These Friends Residing in the Holy Land by Mason Remey, President of the Baha'i International Council and Hand of the Baha'i Faith in the Year 117 of the Baha'i Era” (unpublished typewritten letter, 1960); “Another Appeal to the Hands of the Baha'i

Faith: A Private and Secret Document to Be Read Only by the Hands of the Faith" (unpublished typewritten letter, 1960); *A Last Appeal to the Hands of the Faith: A Private and Secret Document to Be Read Only by the Hands of the Faith* (Washington, D.C.: n.p., 1960). The *Last Appeal* in its unpublished form, with the two other appeals, may be found in New York Public Library with other of Remey's letters and documents under the heading "Baha'i Religious Faith". This material also is available in microfilm at Baylor University, Waco, Texas. Quotations from the *Last Appeal* in this chapter are from the published booklet.

43 Charles Mason Remey, "An Appeal to the Hands of the Faith in the Holy Land", (unpublished typewritten letter, 1960), mentioned in previous footnote.

44 The "Statement" included in the back of the printed edition of the *Last Appeal* was written, as it clearly indicates, after Remey's *Proclamation* had been issued, which was subsequent to the writing of the "Last Appeal".

45 Remey, *Last Appeal*, pp. 13, 23, 27.

46 idem, p. 39.

47 idem, p. 26.

48 idem, p. 27.

49 idem, p. 8.

50 idem, pp. 33–34, 36.

51 idem, p. 37.

52 idem, p. 44.

53 idem, p. 45.

54 idem, p. 36. Ahmad Sohrab accepted the authenticity of 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament and the will's appointment of Shoghi Effendi as guardian but he opposed what he considered Shoghi Effendi's dictatorial control over the faith, which he felt was a misuse of the authority of the guardian in the will.

55 idem, p. 10.

56 idem, p. 18.

57 idem, pp. 18, 20.

58 idem, p. 20.

59 idem, 35.

60 idem, pp. 11, 14, 15, 17, 21, etc.

61 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World: 1950–1957* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1971), p. 127.

62 Remey, *Last Appeal*, p. 25.

63 idem, p. 42.

64 idem, p. 32.

65 idem, p. 42.

66 Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Baha'i World: 1950–1957*, p. 51.

67 ibid.

68 Remey, *Last Appeal*, p. 32.

69 idem, p. 30.

70 idem, p. 33.

71 idem, p. 38.

72 idem, p. 41.

73 idem, p. 47.

74 idem, p. 48.

- 75 Remey, *Statement*, p. 5. An "Announcement to the Hands of the Faith from Mason Remey the Second Guardian of the Faith of his Appointment of Guardianship by the First Guardian of the Faith" bears the date December, 1959. His announcement of his guardianship was sent to the Hands evidently *between* his *Last Appeal* and his *Proclamation*, issued at Ridvan, 117 (1960). A "Notification of the Appointment of Mason Remey, Guardian of the Baha'i Faith by the late Guardian of the Faith, His Eminence Shoghi Effendi Rabbani Sent to the Government of Israel through the President of Israel and the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Jerusalem, Israel" is dated May 15, 1960. These items may be found in "Baha'i Religious Faith", mentioned above in footnote 42.
- 76 Remey, *Proclamation*, pp. C-D. Remey does not mean the program for 1963 as initiated by Shoghi Effendi but the program of the hands for electing the Universal House of Justice.
- 77 idem, p. E.
- 78 Mason Remey, *II Encyclical Letter to the Baha'i World* (Washington, D.C., n.p., n.d.), p. 1.
- 79 ibid.
- 80 idem, p. 2.
- 81 idem, p. 4.
- 82 ibid.
- 83 Mason Remey, *III Encyclical Letter to the Baha'i World* (Washington, DC, n.p., n.d.), p. 4.
- 84 idem, p. 9.
- 85 *Will and Testament*, p. 12.
- 86 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 83.
- 87 Remey, *Last Appeal*, p. 10.
- 88 Edward G. Browne, comp., *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion* (Cambridge: University Press, 1961), p. 334.
- 89 Letter from Mason Remey to Dr Jur. Udo Schaefer, June 1, 1960. This letter may be found in "Baha'i Religious Faith" (see above, footnote 42).
- 90 *Baha'i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1956), pp. 437-38, referred to in Charles H. Gaines, "The Guardianship and Administration", mimeographed manuscript, 1960, p. 24.
- 91 *Will and Testament*, p. 12.
- 92 Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *The Will and Testament of Abdul Baha: An Analysis* (New York: Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, 1944), p. 64.
- 93 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 84.
- 94 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i News*, February, 1955, p. 1, cited by Gaines, "The Guardianship and Administration", p. 8.
- 95 Remey, *Last Appeal*, p. 38.
- 96 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963-1986*, p. 14.
- 97 idem, p. 87.



- 98 idem, p. 53.
- 99 idem, p. 84.
- 100 idem, p. 85.
- 101 idem, p. 87.
- 102 *Will and Testament*, p. 12.
- 103 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, p. 14.
- 104 idem, p. 130.
- 105 idem, p. 130. Words in parentheses are in the text.
- 106 Hapgood is author of *Earth's Shifting Crust* (Pantheon Press), bringing together views of scientists over the previous seventy-five years. A review appears in *Saturday Review* (June 7, 1958), cited in Charles Mason Remey, *The Great Global Catastrophe* (Santa Fe, N.M.: Baha'is of Santa Fe under the Hereditary Guardianship, n.d.), p. 5.
- 107 Remey, *The Great Global Catastrophe*, p. 1. Baha'is arrived at this date, according to E. A. Dime, because the Muslim year AH 1335 corresponds to CE 1917. According to Dime, the Baha'is believed that the millennium would occur before the end of 1917 ("Is the Millennium Upon Us?" *The Forum*, LVIII August, 1917, pp. 179–80).
- 108 Remey, *The Great Global Catastrophe*, pp. 1–2.
- 109 Circulated letter from Mason Remey, July 16, 1961, p. 1.
- 110 *ibid.*
- 111 Remey, *The Great Global Catastrophe*, p. 1n.
- 112 Letter from Mason Remey to the National Spiritual Assembly, Wilmette, June 19, 1962.
- 113 "Preliminary Steps toward the Election of the New N.S.A.'s", announcement from Mason Remey, November 30, 1962.
- 114 *Glad Tidings*, V (June, 1964), 4.
- 115 "Petzoldt Chairman of New Group of Baha'is", *Herald-Whig* (Quincy, Illinois), May 5, 1963, p. 11.
- 116 *Glad Tidings*, V (May, 1964), 3. The registration of the incorporation shows the date of May 7, 1964 (*Glad Tidings*, V [August, 1964], 1).
- 117 "Legal Suit Instituted", *Glad Tidings*, V (November, 1964), 3.
- 118 *The Baha'i World*, XIII, 548.
- 119 "From the National Spiritual Assembly", *Glad Tidings*, V (February, 1965), 3.
- 120 The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America under the Hereditary Guardianship, Inc. v. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America, Inc., 64 C 1878 (U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, 1964–1966).
- 121 "NSA Accepts Injunction Terms", *Glad Tidings*, VII (October, 1966), 2.
- 122 *ibid.*
- 123 idem, p. 3.
- 124 Martin T. Fisher, Washington, DC, inquired into the trademark copyright in connection with the New History Society case and noted in his report, December 8, 1939, that the trademark was registered under the 1905 Act as a "non-descriptive" mark, whereas it is a descriptive word, referring to a religion, and that the copyright pertains only to magazines and printed matter (Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, *Broken Silence: the Story of*

- Today's Struggle for Religious Freedom* [New York: Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, 1942], pp. 209–10.)
- 125 “From the Guardian”, *Glad Tidings*, IV (December, 1963), 1. The translation of the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* also may be found in an appendix in William McElwee Miller’s *The Baha’i Faith: Its History and Teachings* (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1974).
- 126 *Glad Tidings*, V (August, 1964), 2.
- 127 “Statement by the Guardian on the Infallibility of the Guardianship of the Baha’i Faith”, issued from Mason Remey, August 9, 1964.
- 128 Letter from Mason Remey to “Friends”, January, 1967.
- 129 Letter from Mason Remey to the Believers, January 28, 1968.
- 130 idem and Letter from Mason Remey to Esther Sego, November 13, 1967. The passage in ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s *Some Answered Questions*, 2nd edn, is on p. 76.
- 131 Letter from Mason Remey to “Friends”, May 19, 1969.
- 132 Letter from Mason Remey to Charley O. Murphy, July 16, 1971.
- 133 Joel Marangella’s proclamatory letter “to the faithful supporters of the Covenant of Baha’u’llah throughout the world”, November 12, 1969, with attached photocopies of letter and envelope from Mason Remey to Joel Marangella, December 5, 1961.
- 134 *ibid.*
- 135 Joel Marangella’s proclamatory letter, November 12, 1969, p. 3.
- 136 idem, p. 4.
- 137 “Guidance from the Guardian”, *Glad Tidings*, VII (October, 1966), p. 1. This would place the date of the great catastrophe and Remey’s expectation of when the third guardian would announce himself in about 1995, which seems to contradict his statement that Marangella “will soon have a message for all Baha’is.” Both here and on the envelope appointing Marangella as third Guardian, Remey conceived of a possible relationship between Marangella’s announcement and the great catastrophe, although the expected time of the catastrophe is different.
- 138 Marangella refers in his proclamatory letter (p. 5) to an announcement in August, 1967, of the appointment of a third guardian. Presumably, this is a later announcement of the same appointment. Donald Harvey, as previously indicated, was the first elder of Remey’s projected twenty-four elders.
- 139 Marangella’s proclamatory letter, November 12, 1969, p. 5. Marangella, born September 22, 1918 [d. September 1, 2013], spent much of his youth in the summers at Green Acre Baha’i Summer School, Eliot, Maine, and declared his intention at age fifteen of being a Baha’i and was enrolled as an adult believer on reaching twenty-one. In 1950, he journeyed to Europe in response to Shoghi Effendi’s call for Baha’i pioneers to spread the faith in Europe. He remained in France for eighteen years, except for four months in the United States in 1954, and was serving as chairman of the first Baha’i National Spiritual Assembly in France and was also a member of the Auxiliary Board of the Baha’is of the Cause in Europe for Teaching when Mason Remey proclaimed himself as second guardian. The majority of the National Spiritual Assembly, including Marangella, accepted Remey as guardian. The National Spiritual Assembly in France, incidentally, was the only NSA with a majority of its members accepting Remey (the above biographical information was provided by Joel Marangella, upon request, in a letter to the author, June 28, 1970).
- 140 Letter from Joel B. Marangella to his followers, January 8, 1970.
- 141 *ibid.*
- 142 Marangella, *Proclamatory letter*, p. 6.
- 143 *Will and Testament*, p. 14. Bold mine.

- <sup>144</sup> Remey, *Proclamation*, p. E. Italics mine.
- <sup>145</sup> "A Statement to the Believers", issued by Joel Marangella in the summer, 1973.
- <sup>146</sup> Announcement from Joel Marangella "to the Faithful Champions of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah and Supporters of the Third Guardian of the Baha'i Faith in America", March 1, 1970.
- <sup>147</sup> See above, p. 315.
- <sup>148</sup> Much of the information on the National Bureau was provided to the author by the National Bureau of the Orthodox Baha'i Faith of the United States and Canada through its secretary, Franklin D. Schlatter.
- <sup>149</sup> Joel Bray Marangella, "Statement of Beliefs of the Orthodox Baha'is under the Living Guardianship", *Herald of the Covenant*, I (Winter 1973/74), 19-20.









## Conclusion

That the Baha'i World Faith has undergone an extensive evolution in its short history from 1844 to the present is freely acknowledged by Baha'is. The extent of this evolution in its various stages is subject to some difference of interpretation, but this study has attempted to show that the religion has endured and progressed through a series of critical transformations.

### Summary of the transformations

The most far-reaching transformation was that effected by Baha'u'llah, the prophet after whom the religion is named. Baha'u'llah's transformation gave the religion a new name, a new central prophet, and a new book of laws. That the Baha'i religion, although distinguished in name from the Babi religion, was a transformation of the latter faith is seen in these considerations: (1) that Baha'is date the beginning of their faith not from Baha'u'llah's declaration of his mission but from the Bab's declaration on May 22, 1844; (2) that Baha'is regard the Bab and Baha'u'llah as "Twin Manifestations" in the new era and as "co-founders" of the faith; (3) and that Baha'is see the Bab not only as an independent manifestation but as the herald of Baha'u'llah.

Baha'u'llah's ministry was of the character of a reformation within the Babi movement, carrying over into the new form of the faith



much of the basic Babi doctrine and abrogating only the more obnoxious features of the faith not calculated to render it a universal hearing. To this base, Baha'u'llah added his own particular touches which turned the Persian Muslim sect of the Babi faith into a world religion.

'Abdu'l-Baha, eldest son and appointed successor of Baha'u'llah, carried the religion to further stages of development and won for himself a place beside the Bab and Baha'u'llah as one of the "three central figures of the faith" with his own writings being placed beside those of Baha'u'llah as the sacred scriptures of the religion. 'Abdu'l-Baha gave the Baha'i teachings an analytic form couched in the terminology of Western ideas and slanted to their more social and humanitarian aspects which rendered them more readily acceptable to a modern, progressive, and scientific audience.

The able administrative direction of Shoghi Effendi, grandson and appointed successor of 'Abdu'l-Baha, transformed the religion from a loosely knit, inclusive, spiritual philosophy infiltrating the existing religions to an exclusive, tightly run organization existing outside of and alongside the religions bodies of the day.

A final transformation was affected after the death of Shoghi Effendi when the faith's leaders announced in effect the end of the system of leadership in the religion vested in a single appointed head of the faith and elected as their supreme authority the nine-member Universal House of Justice. The religion henceforth will be controlled and directed not by one authoritarian figure appointed by his

predecessors but by a body of elected officials whose term of office will be temporary.

### **Critical nature of the transformations**

Each transformation was critical for the faith, for against each effort to innovate were segments of the faith's adherents who objected to the new developments and who saw themselves as loyal to the previous leader or system of the religion.

Baha'u'llah's opposition came from those who saw themselves as loyal to the Bab and to Subh-i-Azal, the Bab's nominee for leadership in the movement after his death. They saw the Bab as a great manifestation whose dispensation would extend for 1,511 or 2,001 years into the distant future. They anticipated the time when the Babi faith would become the state religion of Persia. The value they placed upon the Bab and his revelation is fully revealed in the *Kitab-i-Iqan* by Baha'u'llah, written before his own declaration. The Bab's rank excelled that of all prophets, and no revelation was considered more glorious than his revelation.<sup>1</sup> They consider the Bab the revealer of twenty-five of the twenty-seven letters of the alphabet. All the last prophets combined had revealed only two letters.<sup>2</sup> They were unable to believe that the Bab's revelation was destined to be surpassed within their own generation. The accusations hurled and the murders committed as a result of the Babi-Baha'i altercation testify to the critical condition in the faith occasioned by Baha'u'llah's transformation.

'Abdu'l-Baha's opposition was from those who saw themselves as faithful followers of Baha'u'llah, who had said that no new manifestation would come before the expiration of a full 1,000 years. They did not contest 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointment as Baha'u'llah's successor but believed that 'Abdu'l-Baha was assuming to himself the prerogatives which belonged only to a manifestation of God and that he, therefore, was overstepping the bounds of his rightful authority.

The conflict between 'Abdu'l-Baha's opponents and his followers was basically conflict between two commands of Baha'u'llah, both in Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas*:

*If you differ on a matter, bring it back to God while the sun shines from the horizon of this heaven. Whenever it sets, go back to that which was sent down from Him.*<sup>3</sup>

*When the Sea of Union (with Me) is dried up and the Book of Beginning is finished in the End, then turn to the one whom God desires, the one who is a Branch from the ancient Root.*<sup>4</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha's opponents stressed the former command to turn after Baha'u'llah's death to Baha'u'llah's revealed words to settle differences which might arise among the believers, holding that even Baha'u'llah's appointed successor was bound to those words. 'Abdu'l-Baha's followers stressed the latter command to turn after Baha'u'llah's passing to "the one whom God desires," identified in Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Ahd* as 'Abdu'l-Baha, regarding 'Abdu'l-Baha as the interpreter of Baha'u'llah's words and the final arbiter in any and all disputes among the faithful.

The former, therefore, placed stress on the importance of Baha'u'llah's words over those of 'Abdu'l-Baha, whereas the latter adhered to 'Abdu'l-Baha's words over their individual interpretations of Baha'u'llah's words.

The seriousness of this crisis is seen in the fact that, as Shoghi Effendi points out, Muhammad-'Ali "succeeded in ranging on his side almost the entire family of Baha'u'llah, as well as a considerable number of those who had formed his immediate entourage."<sup>5</sup> The crisis was augmented also by the fact that it occurred when the faith was gaining a foothold on the American continent and threatened to wreak the foundations of the American Baha'i community in its earliest stages of growth, a community which later formed the base of the faith's development and extension in other parts of the world. Ibrahim George Khayru'llah, responsible for attracting and organizing the faith's earliest adherents in America, revolted against 'Abdu'l-Baha and sided with Muhammad-'Ali and succeeded in creating a division in the early American Baha'i community. The crisis had its effects outside the community also. Edward G. Browne, who had begun his study of the faith, wrote:

"This last schism, I confess, and the bitterness to which it gave rise, created a very painful impression on my mind, for, as I have repeatedly enquired of my Baha'i friends, where is the compelling and constraining power which they regard as the essential and incontrovertible sign of the Divine Word, when, in face of such texts as 'Associate with [the followers of all] religions with spirituality and fragrance' and 'ye are all the fruit of one Tree and the leaves of one Branch', they can show such bitter animosity towards those of their own household."<sup>6</sup>

Likewise, the faith's opponents of Shoghi Effendi regarded themselves as loyal followers of the faith as taught by 'Abdu'l-Baha and opposed the guardian on the basis that he was reducing the faith with its liberal and universal spirit, capable of uniting itself to the various religious and philosophical movements and organizations of the age, to a narrow, sectarian faith operating hopelessly outside the existing

structures and subjecting itself to the deteriorating influences to which all organized religions had inevitably succumbed.

As Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters had not challenged the legitimacy of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the appointed successor of Baha'u'llah, so Ahmad Sohrab and the New History Society did not challenge the authenticity of 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament and the appointment of Shoghi Effendi as 'Abdu'l-Baha's successor. The charge was that Shoghi Effendi, as the appointed successor, was introducing into the faith innovations contrary to the faith's character. These Baha'is were heirs of 'Abdu'l-Baha's transformation, holding vividly in their memories the teaching of 'Abdu'l-Baha with its emphasis on independent investigation of the truth, its approach to the progressive spirit of the day, its broad definitions of what constituted a Baha'i, and its view that the faith by its very nature could never be organized.

The crisis in the faith at this point was brought to a head in the lawsuit in New York City, when the two Baha'i groups—the New History Society and the National Spiritual Assembly together with the New York local assembly of Baha'is—fought the issue as to whether the organized Baha'is could restrict the use of the name "Baha'i" to their own organization.

In some ways, the crisis which struck the faith after the passing of Shoghi Effendi was the most devastating of the crises the religion has had to face, for the young religion was attempting to establish an unassailable administrative structure when, for the Baha'i majority group, one of its major pillars was destroyed. In referring to the Baha'i administrative system, Shoghi Effendi said that "the pillars

that sustain its authority and buttress its structure are the twin institutions of the Guardianship and of the Universal House of Justice.”<sup>7</sup> But because Shoghi Effendi made no explicit appointment of a guardian during his lifetime, because he excommunicated all possible choices in Baha'u'llah's family for a successor and named no one to this position in a last will and testament, the line of succeeding guardians to direct the faith, as established by 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament, came to a sudden and abrupt conclusion upon the death of the very first guardian.

'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament, called by Shoghi Effendi “the Charter of the New World Order”,<sup>8</sup> which was to remain in force along with Baha'u'llah's *Kitab-i-Aqdas* for the duration of the Baha'i Dispensation, has of necessity already been modified in some of its provisions. The requirements that the guardian “*appoint in his own life-time him that shall become his successor*” and that he be the “*sacred head*” and “*distinguished member for life*” of the Universal House of Justice<sup>9</sup> necessarily must be overlooked if there are no more guardians. The stipulation concerning the “fixed money offering (Huquq)” which is “*to be offered through the guardian of the Cause at God*”<sup>10</sup> must now also be modified. On this matter, the Universal House of Justice acted on May 27, 1966, saying that the Universal Home of Justice “must, in the absence of the Guardian, receive and disburse the Huququ'llah.”<sup>11</sup> With the House of Justice ruling that it could not appoint or legislate to make possible the appointment of another guardian, it had no choice but to make some modification of this provision in 'Abdu'l-Baha's will, but it did so in the face of Shoghi Effendi's definition of Baha'i membership qualification as being “steadfast adherence to every clause of our Beloved's sacred Will.”<sup>12</sup>

The Baha'is who followed Mason Remey as second guardian saw themselves as being faithful to the established system in the faith which existed before Shoghi Effendi's passing. So again the division in the faith is between those who accepted and those who rejected the new transformation.

In former crises in the faith, the opposition was directed against appointed and acknowledged successors. Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters did not question 'Abdu'l-Baha's station as appointed successor but questioned the prerogatives which he, as the designated successor, assumed to himself. Ahmad Sohrab and those connected with the New History Society did not challenge Shoghi Effendi's appointment as guardian but challenged his strict organizational control of the faith. Ruth White, who did oppose Shoghi Effendi's appointment as guardian, marks an exception.

Regardless of how much opposition was raised, the appointed successor in these former cases was clearly designated and acknowledged for the most part even by those who opposed them. In this last crisis, however, the succession is not so clearly established. Two forms of the faith emerged, each in a sense claiming the rightful succession from Shoghi Effendi. The hands who assumed the direction of the faith's affairs after Shoghi Effendi's passing elected nine from their number to serve as "custodian" hands to exercise "rights and powers in succession to the Guardian" until the Universal House of Justice could be elected. When the Universal House of Justice came into power, it declared that "the

Covenant of Baha'u'llah is unbroken.”<sup>13</sup> Mason Remey, leader of the minority form of the faith, claimed to be the second guardian of the faith in succession to Shoghi Effendi by virtue of his appointment by Shoghi Effendi as president of the International Baha'i Council, the embryonic Universal House of Justice, whose president is the guardian. By claiming to be the second guardian from the time of Shoghi Effendi's death, Remey also maintained that the covenant was unbroken.

One reason for the greatness of this latest crisis in the faith is the fact that the succession is not as certainly established. Each of the two forms of the faith emerging after Shoghi Effendi's passing claims to be the true form; each sees itself as remaining faithful to the covenant and regards the other form as having violated the covenant; each has expelled from the faith those of the other position; each regards itself as protecting the future integrity of the faith.

Each form accuses the other of assuming unentitled rights and powers. The majority form accuses Mason Remey of having advanced his claim of guardianship in the absence of an appointment to that position by Shoghi Effendi and regards his claim to the hereditary guardianship as clearly unacceptable by his not being of the family of Baha'u'llah. Remey's followers, in turn, see the hands as assuming unrightful powers when they took over the direction of the faith's affairs by virtue of their designation as “chief Stewards” of the faith, when they elected nine from their number to exercise “rights and powers in succession to the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith”, and when they called for the election



of a new International Baha'i Council, whose members had been appointed by Shoghi Effendi himself.

In considering the crises in the faith connected with the faith's transformations, two further observations may be made. Edward G. Browne, at an earlier period in the faith's history, remarked that it is curious to observe ... how in the Babi church the 'stationary' or conservative party seems ever doomed to defeat."<sup>14</sup> His observation was based on two crises in the faith—the Baha'i-Azali controversy and the 'Abdu'l-Baha-'Muhammad-'Ali dispute. Subh-i-Azal and his followers, who represented the old school Babis, lost to Baha'u'llah and his new form of the faith, and likewise Muhammad-'Ali and his supporters, who saw themselves as faithful to Baha'u'llah's original form of the faith, lost to 'Abdu'l-Baha, who, they believed, was departing from Baha'u'llah's teachings and making innovations in the faith.

The latter two periods in the faith's history provide further confirmation of Brown's observation. The majority of Baha'is followed Shoghi Effendi and his institutionalizing of the faith against those who wanted to cling to the earlier universal form of the religion. Again, the majority of Baha'is at the present time are following the Universal House of Justice against those who are holding fast to the institution of the guardianship. In each case, those accepting the various transformations were in the majority and those opposing in the minority.

Another observation based on a study of the transformations is that the opponents of the transformations were raising serious

objections to the transformations. They were looked upon often by the majority party in each crisis as attempting to subvert the faith because of their own personal ambitions and visions of power. Baha'i literature draws a sharp distinction between those who followed the successive leaders and those who questioned their actions and policies in a manner reminiscent of old-time dramas where the all good heroes (dressed in white) are clearly distinguished from the all bad villains (dressed in black). Life generally is not so easily divided into such convenient and clearly distinguished categories. The Baha'i heads of the faith, however, stand in a position closely approximating the station which Christians give to Christ, and the opponents of these leaders, therefore, take on the character of "antichrists".

A study of the Baha'i transformations reveals that these opponents of each new leader were motivated not simply from selfish interests but from serious concern about safeguarding the faith which they thought to be threatened by the new policies in the faith. The irony of this is that Baha'is who, by their beliefs and attitudes, would be considered faithful and honorable Baha'is at one point in the faith's history become the castaways and despised profligates at a later stage in the evolving faith, if they are unable to make the transition to the new stage in the religion. This is why the religion manifests various examples of loyal Baha'is at the center of the movement who at a later stage become either inactive, disillusioned apostates or active leaders in the opposition against the new developments.

## **Seeds of the transformations**

Another observation to be made is that, however much opposition was raised, the seeds of each transformation were planted in the preceding stage of the religion. Baha'u'llah's transformation, for example, grew out of the necessity for lessening restrictions and making modifications in the original Babi faith to secure for it a more universal hearing. The Bab's emphasis given to his doctrine concerning "Him whom God shall manifest" and his repeated admonitions to his followers to accept this coming one when he appeared opened the way for Baha'u'llah's later manifestation.

Baha'u'llah's appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha as his successor, if not meant to grant 'Abdu'l-Baha the full power which he later assumed, nevertheless made the assumption of that power possible. The Baha'i teaching that Baha'u'llah was "the Father" and 'Abdu'l-Baha's designation as "the Master" led the early American converts with their Western Christian background to see 'Abdu'l-Baha in a position comparable to that of Christ, resulting in the revered position accorded to him in the faith and in his words being accepted as scripture. Shoghi Effendi later, in order to bring the veneration accorded to 'Abdu'l-Baha into conformity with Baha'i teachings, had to compromise or synthesize the perspectives so that 'Abdu'l-Baha was seen not as a manifestation (thus in accord with Baha'i teaching) but as one of "the three central figures of the faith" (in accord with the veneration bestowed on 'Abdu'l-Baha) and his words were not regarded as equal in rank with Baha'u'llah's (thus in accord with Baha'i teaching) but equal in validity (in accord with the popular viewpoint which regarded them as scripture).

The institutional form of the faith which Shoghi Effendi developed during his administration, moreover, already was under way to some extent in the days of 'Abdu'l-Baha. 'Abdu'l-Baha approved of organizing "Houses of Justice" for men and "Assemblies of Teaching" for women;<sup>15</sup> he sent Mirza Asadu'llah to the United States in 1901 to organize the House of Justice (House of Spirituality) in September, 1901.<sup>16</sup> The election of certain persons to the "Spiritual Meeting" 'Abdu'l-Baha describes as a "source of joy". 'Abdu'l-Baha indicates that the Spiritual Meeting of Consultation of New York and the Spiritual Meeting of Consultation of Chicago must "unitedly approve" of writings for publication, and then if 'Abdu'l-Baha approves, the writing may be printed and published.<sup>17</sup> The translation of Baha'u'llah's tablets, 'Abdu'l-Baha says, is to be done by a committee of two Persian translators and two competent English writers. The material is to be sent then to 'Abdu'l-Baha for his consent for its publication and circulation.<sup>18</sup>

These actions were the first steps in the organization of the Baha'i faith, which Shoghi Effendi carried to completion. The argument, therefore, that 'Abdu'l-Baha was opposed to organizing the faith is not entirely valid. This organization, however, in 'Abdu'l-Baha's time was not inconsistent with the inclusive character of the religion, for apparently no restrictions on membership were observed and one who considered himself a Baha'i could also hold membership in other religious bodies. Where Shoghi Effendi departed from previous policy was in requiring the Baha'i to sever his membership with other religious organizations. This

action was one small step for the guardian of the faith but a giant leap for the religion as a whole, for the faith thereby ceased being the inclusive religion which 'Abdu'l-Baha conceived it to be and became a highly exclusive religion whose character is revealed dramatically in the copyrighting of the name "Baha'i" and in the lawsuits aimed at restricting use of the name.

The seed of the latest transformation was planted in Shoghi Effendi's excommunication of all possible choices for a guardian among Baha'u'llah's descendants and in his not naming explicitly a successor during his lifetime or leaving a will naming one.

## **Tensions created by the transformations**

The various transformations in the faith have created certain tensions within the religion. A tension is created by the philosophy of a preceding stage of the religion being carried over into its later stages to exist alongside the new philosophy or state of the faith.

The first tension created in the religion by a transformation as that caused by Baha'u'llah's transformation of the Babi movement into the Baha'i faith. The philosophy of the Babi dispensation was that the Bab was an independent manifestation in line with Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad and was the founder of his own religion centering in his person. After Baha'u'llah's transformation, however, the religion's new center became Baha'u'llah, thus raising in the faith the problem of the relationship between the Babi and Baha'i religions and between the corresponding manifestations of the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

The Bab, in Baha'i thought, became a forerunner of Baha'u'llah, and this development helped to explain in part the Bab's relationship to Baha'u'llah; but the tension remains, for the faith also regards the Bab as an independent manifestation. If he is an independent manifestation, then would not his religion be one in the series of religions and technically distinct from the Baha'i religion? Some early Baha'is took this view. Mirza Abu'l-Fadl maintained, for example, that the Babi religion "is not the same religion or creed as Baháism",<sup>19</sup> and held, therefore, that the Baha'i religion should not be persecuted for the actions of the Babis. If this contention is true, then the Baha'i religion should not count as its own the numerous celebrated martyrs of the Babi faith, an argument sometimes advanced by non-Baha'i critics.

Edward G. Browne had noted that 'Abdu'l-Baha's *Traveller's Narrative* had "passed over very lightly" the "deeds and sufferings of the early apostles of Babiism" as well as "many of the most remarkable events of the older dispensation" and had treated "very fully" certain martyrdoms belonging to the new dispensation.<sup>20</sup> Mason Remey, during the early years of the faith in America, wrote that "Babism fulfilled its purpose, and when this was accomplished in the appearance of Baha Ullah, it, as such, ceased to exist."<sup>21</sup> Remey, in his later years, maintained that the Babi and Baha'i religions were distinct faiths.

Shoghi Effendi perhaps sensed a danger that the Baha'is were minimizing the importance of the Bab and his dispensation, holding that "the greatness of the Bab consists primarily, not in His being the divinely-appointed forerunner ... but rather in His having been ...

the inaugurator of a separate religious Dispensation.”<sup>22</sup> Shoghi Effendi explained that

the chief motive actuating me to undertake the task of editing and translating Nabil’s immortal Narrative has been to enable every follower of the Faith in the West to better understand and more readily grasp the tremendous implications of His exalted station and to more ardently admire and love Him.<sup>23</sup>

Yet, although Baha’is now acknowledge the independent prophethood of the Bab, they date the beginning of the Baha’i religion with the Bab’s declaration of his Mission, not with Baha’u’llah’s. Although Baha’is date the beginning of their faith with the Bab’s declaration, the Bab’s religion may at times be considered as distinct and inferior to the Baha’i faith, as in the following quotation from Shoghi Effendi:

Can the Author of the Babi Dispensation however much He may have succeeded through the provisions of the Persian Bayan in averting a schism as permanent and catastrophic as those that afflicted Christianity and Islam—can He be said to have produced instruments for the safeguarding of **His Faith** as definite and efficacious as those which must for all time preserve the unity of the organized followers of **the Faith of Baha’u’llah**?<sup>24</sup>

A certain tension also was produced during ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s ministry, for Baha’u’llah had indicated that no new manifestation would appear for 1,000 years, yet the veneration which Baha’is accorded to ‘Abdu’l-Baha placed him essentially in this category, although theoretically ‘Abdu’l-Baha is not a manifestation. He is regarded, however, as having lived the Christ life, as being the perfect Baha’i and the perfect reflection of Baha’u’llah’s glory, and his words, as those of Baha’u’llah, are sacred and infallible.

Another tension is created by equating the validity of ‘Abdu’l-Baha’s words with those of Baha’u’llah, for whose words carry the more

authority in determining points of doctrine or policy? Both have the same authority since they are equal in validity, but Baha'u'llah's words in Baha'i thought hold a higher rank for being words of a manifestation of God. Yet, 'Abdu'l-Baha's words are more determinative in establishing faith and practice, since the believer must approach Baha'u'llah's teachings through 'Abdu'l-Baha's interpretations. A certain tension also exists between original teachings and adapted teachings, for 'Abdu'l-Baha often credits Baha'u'llah with teachings which owe their form of expression to 'Abdu'l-Baha and which bear the influence of a later time.

Shoghi Effendi's transformation also created a tension in the faith, for in spite of that transformation some of the philosophy of the previous period continued to be expressed. In 'Abdu'l-Baha's time, the faith was described as undogmatic because of its open, inclusive, universal character with its emphasis on humanitarian and social principles which people of many different creeds and outlooks could easily accept. The faith was not viewed as a church or denomination, since its adherents were found in various religious groups, and since no one was asked to sever his religious membership affiliation, the faith was not seen as proselytizing.

This character of the faith, however, was changed by Shoghi Effendi's transformation. The faith took on a dogmatic character with the many definitions of Baha'i doctrine which Shoghi Effendi propounded. The faith definitely became a religious organization with its own officers, boards, committees, offerings, and missionary program.



As an illustration of this tension, Jessyca Russell Gaver writes:

The seeker learns that the Baha'i Faith is not a church. It does not have a formal creed to be recited, or sacraments, or a clergy. It is not a denomination of Christianity or Islam or Judaism. It is a religious community, composed of laws, principles and institutions for community life.<sup>25</sup>

Gaver's statement reflects the philosophy concerning the faith in 'Abdu'l-Baha's day, but it was written some ten years after Shoghi Effendi's passing. The statement, true of the faith's character prior to Shoghi Effendi's administration, would hardly be appropriate in describing the faith since Shoghi Effendi's time.

If by a church is meant a "religious body or society",<sup>26</sup> then the Baha'i organization constitutes a church. Shoghi Effendi's statement of Baha'i membership qualifications, to which every Baha'i must subscribe to be a member of the community, constitutes a kind of "creed". Although Baha'is do not have a formal clergy, the hands of the cause, the auxiliary board members, the officers of the spiritual assemblies, the Baha'i pioneers (missionaries), and now the members of the continental boards of councilors and of the Universal House of Justice function much as the clergy of the faith.

One could get involved in various semantic problems in discussing whether the Baha'is are a church and have clergy, creeds, and sacraments. The Jehovah's Witnesses make no distinction between clergy and laity, calling all their members ministers. Baha'is also seek to involve all their members in the work of the faith but designate no one as clergy. The original form of Christianity made no sharp distinction

between clergy and laity, and one of the main principles of the Protestant Reformation was “the priesthood of all believers”, which places all believers on an equal footing in their relationship and service to God.

Baha'i statements about the non-creedal, non-churchly, and undogmatic character of the faith may be explained as a carry-over into the modern period of the philosophy prevalent during the time of 'Abdu'l-Baha. This philosophy received such an emphasis in the popular press during the early development of the American Baha'i community in 'Abdu'l-Baha's time that it persists into the present period in spite of the faith's evident institutional form today.

The latest transformation in the faith also creates certain tensions. One tension is between the faith's basic writings underscoring the essentiality and complementary functions of the various features of the administrative system and the obvious inability of the faith to operate fully according to these provisions and definitions. Another tension may be created by the faith's attempt to carry on the philosophy of its previous periods that the faith, by its unique administrative order, is protected from schism when the primary institution in the faith to safeguard the religion's unity, namely the guardianship with its rights of infallible interpretation of Baha'i scripture, is no longer operative as a continuous institution in the faith. A further danger is that the Universal House of Justice may assume to itself some of the prerogatives of the guardianship.

## The transformations and the question of schism

A study of the Baha'i transformations reveals that connected with each transformation was a conflict within the religion between those who accepted and those who rejected the transformation. Non-Baha'i writers readily speak of schism within the faith,<sup>27</sup> yet Baha'is insist that their religion is protected from schism. Conflicts may occur, they admit, but not schism. Shoghi Effendi wrote: "Though fiercely assailed, ever since its inception, it has, by virtue of its character, unique in the annals of the world's religious history, succeeded in maintaining the unity of the diversified and far-flung body of its supporters."<sup>28</sup> David Hofman maintains: "There are no Baha'i sects. There never can be."<sup>29</sup>

The question of whether or not schism has occurred in the Baha'i faith is rather technical and depends in part on how schism is defined. If schism in a religion means the dividing into two or more factions of those who identify themselves with the said religion, then obvious schism has occurred in the Baha'i religion, for various factions each claiming to belong to the Baha'i religion have existed in the course of the faith's history. In saying that schism has not occurred in the Baha'i religion, Baha'is, then, evidently do not mean that only one group of those professing to be Baha'is has ever existed. If this is their meaning, then history proves them wrong.

Sometimes Baha'is seem to mean that no schism has occurred in the sense that no *lasting* schism has occurred or that the schismatic group

is so small numerically as to be hardly significant. The objection to this attitude would be that regardless of how small, ineffective, or temporary a schismatic group may be, it nonetheless marks schism within the faith. The Baha'i scholar, Abu'l-Fadl, recognized this when he called attention to the "Nakezeen" (Covenant-breakers)<sup>i</sup> in 'Abdu'l-Baha's time, "whose number does not exceed thirty",<sup>30</sup> yet lamented that

the one community of Baha-Ullah which was as the breeze of Paradise and the fragrance of the morn of Providence, free from the foul odors of animosity and discord, became divided through the evil intrigues of these few. ...<sup>31</sup>

What the Baha'is seem primarily to mean, however, in saying that the Baha'i faith is immune to schism is that schism cannot occur in the religion because a Baha'i is faithful to the covenant and one who violates that covenant cease to be a true Baha'i and after excommunication ceases in any sense to be a Baha'i. In Baha'i thought, if one accepts Baha'u'llah without reservation, then he must also accept the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Baha, who was appointed by Baha'u'llah as his successor. Then, if 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership is accepted, he also must accept Shoghi Effendi, appointed in 'Abdu'l-Baha's will and testament as 'Abdu'l-Baha's successor and as the guardian of the cause. In this way of thinking, those who opposed the constituted authority in the faith automatically excluded themselves from the faith, and they, therefore, are regarded not as schismatics within the faith but as violators of the covenant and therefore outside the fold of the religion. The two organizations today, both calling themselves Baha'i, do not constitute schism in their way of thinking because each one has declared the other to be outside the faith.

---

<sup>i</sup> Náqidín.

In this line of reasoning, various other religious bodies could claim that no schism has occurred within their religion. The Roman Catholic Church claims that it is the one true Christian church. If this claim is true, then the unity of the Christian church would be preserved, for bodies calling themselves Christian churches outside the Roman system would be outside the true church. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Mormonism) claims that it is the true Christian church restored in the latter days. Some Baptist bodies claim to be the church founded by Jesus Christ and trace their history outside of the Roman Catholic Church from the time of Christ to the present.

Shi'ah Islam considers itself the true form of Islam, acknowledging 'Ali as the Prophet Muhammad's choice of a successor. The Baha'i faith follows Shi'ah Islam in this belief. Shoghi Effendi labels the institution of the caliphate as illegitimate and an institution which from its inception trampled upon the sacred right of Muhammad's lawful successors and "unchained the forces of so distressful a schism" within the religion of Islam.<sup>32</sup> Shoghi Effendi believes, therefore, that Shi'ah Islam represents the lawful form of Islam, based on the authority of Muhammad to appoint his successor and his successor's right to appoint his successor, and so on through the line of the Imams.

Why should the opposition against Muhammad's appointment of 'Ali as his successor constitute schism within Islam but the opposition against the appointed successors in the Baha'i faith not constitute schism within Baha'i? In each case, lawful appointments were made, the former by the spoken word and the latter by the written documents.

The answer to this question in Baha'i thought lies in the matter of proof of appointment. The followers of Muhammad were not equipped with written proof of 'Ali's appointment and, therefore, could not forestall schism among the faithful. Shoghi Effendi asks:

Could Peter, the admitted chief of the Apostles, or the Imam 'Ali, the cousin and legitimate successor of the Prophet, produce in support of the primacy with which both had been invested **written and explicit affirmations** from Christ and Muhammad that could have silenced those who either among their contemporaries or in a later age have repudiated their authority and, by their action, precipitated the schisms that persist until the present day?<sup>33</sup>

Shoghi Effendi affirms concerning the Baha'i religion:

Alone of all the Revelations gone before it this Faith has, through the explicit directions, the repeated warnings, the authenticated safeguards incorporated and elaborated in its teachings, succeeded in raising a structure which the bewildered followers of bankrupt and broken creeds might well approach and critically examine, and seek, ere it is too late, the invulnerable security of its world-embracing shelter.<sup>34</sup>

None of the other religions has possessed the written documents which might have silenced those who opposed the lawful appointments, and the Baha'i faith has such written documents of appointment. The Baha'i faith is protected from schism by the written documents in its possession. The Baha'i faith, therefore, has proof of the succession of its appointed heads of the faith, and those who have opposed the appointed heads have done so in the face of written proof against them. This is why the Baha'i faith can maintain, regardless of the apposition which may be raised against the appointed leaders, that its unity is safeguarded and preserved.

How effective have the written documents been, though, in silencing opposition? Baha'u'llah's written appointment of 'Abdu'l-Baha did not silence Muhammad 'Ali and his supporters. 'Abdu'l-Baha's written

appointment of Shoghi Effendi did not silence Shoghi Effendi's opponents. Ruth White, with photographs of the will and testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha, proceeded to try to prove the inauthenticity of the will and managed to raise questions about the will which the Baha'is have not bothered to explain.

The reason the written documents have not been successful in preventing opposition to the appointed successors is that the opposition was not against their appointment, whether in word or in writing, but against the extent of their authority as the appointed successors. The appointed successors have been opposed on the grounds of their exceeding their authority and transforming the religion into modified and perverted forms, contrary to the previously established character of the religion.

Is the value of the written documents in proving to the adherents of a religion that, in spite of the opposition, it is the true form of the faith, or is their value in silencing that opposition? It the Baha'i concedes, as Shoghi Effendi did, that the Shi'ah form of Islam is the true form of Islam, wherein would lie the value of the written proof of its true form? Those of the Shi'ah form of Islam are already convinced of its true form, with or without written documents. The value of the written appointments would have to be, therefore, in silencing "those who either among their contemporaries or in a later age" might repudiate the appointments of the successive heads of the faith. But the written documents in the possession of the Baha'i faith, although serving to confirm the belief of Baha'is in the truth of their religion or of their form of the religion, have not actually been too effective

in silencing opposition. If the written documents are not effective in silencing opposition and thereby preventing schism in the faith, then their purpose in being written is unfulfilled and their value is questionable.

But even if the written documents were effective in preventing schism, their effectiveness could last only so long as each successor continued by the written document to appoint his successor. Shoghi Effendi was the last successive leader in the religion appointed by a written appointment. Mason Remey possessed no written document of his appointment to the guardianship which might have silenced those who opposed him. The Universal House of Justice, being an elected and not appointed body, holds no written document of appointment. This is why the present crisis in the faith is probably the greatest the religion has faced. The succession of leadership by written documents of appointment, which formerly was seen as the distinguishing feature of the faith guaranteeing that the Baha'i religion would not break into contending sects like the religions which held no such written documents, now has ended.

The Baha'i claim that it is a religion which cannot be divided by schism, considered by Baha'is a major reason for the greatness of the Baha'i religion, may be in the end its great weakness. Other religions have survived their division into numerous sects, but will the Baha'i faith be able to survive the divisions within it which may occur over the years? Sects within the Baha'i faith would annul the major claim of Baha'i that it is immune to schism and has the power to unite all mankind within its fold.



## A final transformation?

Undaunted by the crises of the past and inspired in their hopes for the future, Baha'is have continued to move forward to ever new triumphs in the belief that their religion eventually will embrace all the world. The words of Shoghi Effendi's prophecy still ring out for Baha'is:

Feeble though our Faith may now appear in the eyes of men. ... this priceless gem of Divine Revelation, now still in its embryonic state, shall evolve within the shell of His law, and shall forge ahead undivided and unimpaired, till it embraces the whole of mankind.<sup>35</sup>

When once the faith "embraces the whole of mankind", Baha'is believe that one final transformation is destined for the faith and for the world which it then will embrace—a transformation which will result in world brotherhood and peace on earth, when will be fulfilled the purpose of all the prophets of God "*of transforming the world of man into the kingdom of God.*"<sup>36</sup> Are the transformations which the religion has undergone in the past mere preludes to this final transformation? Are the Baha'i transformations but "progressive stages in a single evolutionary process, vast, steady and irresistible",<sup>37</sup> pressing toward the God-ordained goal of "*the Most Great Peace*"? Is the Baha'i World Faith, indeed, the true and ultimate religion in which all religions may find their common unity? Worth pondering are the words of Thornton Chase:

The truth of any religion can be proved and confirmed only by the heart, by testing its tenets in the life. The Bahai Revelation is unshaken in the arena of intellect, but powers of reasoning cannot make final decision concerning spiritual truth. One may read or hear it for a lifetime, may listen to opinions or express them

endlessly, but no judgement is just, no opinion reliable except that of the personal living and decision of the heart. It is not a matter of philosophical reasoning, but a question of facts, and facts are demonstrable only by experience.<sup>38</sup>

What Thornton Chase is saying is that the truth of the Baha'i faith must confirm itself in man's experience, in his heart more than in his mind. It follows also that the Baha'i faith will make its impact on the world not on the basis of the logic of its doctrines and the reiteration of its principles but as it puts its faith into practice, its logic into love, and its dreams into deeds.

The truth of the Baha'i faith will be revealed when or if it shall succeed in its continued evolution to transform "the world of man into the kingdom of God". Only time can reveal what the future holds in store for the Baha'i faith or what the Baha'i faith holds in store for the future.

## Conclusion

- 1 See above, p. 195.
- 2 Baha'u'llah, *The Kitab-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*, tr. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1960), p. 143.
- 3 Earl E. Elder and William McE. Miller, trans. and ed., *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*, Oriental Translation Fund, New Series, Vol. XXXVIII (London: Published by the Royal Asiatic Society and Sold by its Agents Luzac and Co., Ltd., 1961), p. 39.
- 4 idem, p. 56.
- 5 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1957), p. 247.
- 6 Edward G. Browne, ed., *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Years A.D. 1850 and 1852* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, Imprimerie Orientale, 1910; London: Luzac & Co., 1910), p. xlix (hereinafter referred to as *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*).
- 7 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah* (rev. ed.; Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1955), p. 157.
- 8 idem, p. 144.
- 9 *Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944), pp. 12, 14.
- 10 idem, p. 15.
- 11 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, p. 90.
- 12 Shoghi Effendi, *Baha'i Administration* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1968), p. 90.
- 13 Universal House of Justice, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*, p. 15.
- 14 Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xlvi.
- 15 *Tablets of Abdul-Baba Abbas* (3 vols.; Chicago: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1909–1919), I, p. 27.
- 16 idem, I, p. 8.
- 17 idem, I, p. 124.
- 18 idem, I, p. 152.
- 19 Mirza Abul Fazl, *Hajaj'ul Behayyeh (The Bahai Proofs)*, tr. Mirza Kuli Khan (New York: J. W. Pratt Co., 1903), p. 78 (hereinafter referred to as *Bahai Proofs*).
- 20 Edward G. Browne, ed. and tr., *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab* (Cambridge: University Press, 1891), p. xlv.
- 21 Charles Mason Remey, *The Bahai Movement: A Series of Nineteen Papers upon the Bahai Movement* (Washington, DC: Press J. D. Milans & Sons, 1912), p. 20.
- 22 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 123.
- 23 ibid.
- 24 idem, p. 146. Bold mine.
- 25 Jessyca Russell Gaver, *The Baha'i Faith* (New York: Award Books, 1968; London: Tandem Books, 1968), p. 24.

- 26 Funk & Wagnalls, *Standard Dictionary of the English Language: International Edition*, 1965, p. 238.
- 27 See for example, Browne, *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. xlix, and J. R. Richards, *The Religion of the Baha'is* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1932; New York: Macmillan Company, 1932), pp. 90–91.
- 28 Shoghi Effendi, *The Faith of Baha'u'llah* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1959), p. 13.
- 29 David Hofman, *The Renewal of Civilization*, Talisman Books (London: George Ronald, 1960), p. 110.
- 30 Abul Fazl, *Bahai Proofs*, p. 118.
- 31 idem, p. 116.
- 32 Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*, p. 178.
- 33 idem, p. 145. Bold mine.
- 34 idem, p. 144.
- 35 idem, p. 23.
- 36 Words of 'Abdu'l-Baha in *The Baha'i World*, Vol. II (New York: Baha'i Publishing Committee, 1928), p. 50; quoted by Mabel Hyde Paine, comp., *Divine Art of Living: Selections from the Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha* (Wilmette, Ill.: Baha'i Publishing Trust, 1944), p. 107.
- 37 Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. xv.
- 38 Thornton Chase, *The Baha'i Revelation* (New York: Baha'i Publishing Co Committee, 1919), p. v.





## Bibliography

### Books

- 'Abdu'l-Baha. *Foundations of World Unity*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1955.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Memorials of the Faithful*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in Paris in 1911-1912*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, London. 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks delivered by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Visit to the United States in 1912*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1982.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Tr. Marzieh Gail. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Some Answered Questions*. 2nd edn. Baha'i World Centre, Haifa. 1964.
- Abul-Fazl, Mirza. *Hujaj'ul Behayyeh (the Bahai Proofs)*. Tr. Ali Kuli Khan. J. W. Pratt Co., New York. 1902.
- Afnan, Ruhi Muhsen. *The Great Prophets: Moses-Zoroaster-Jesus*. Philosophical Library, New York. 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Revelation of Baha'u'llah and the Bab*. Philosophical Library, New York. 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Zoroaster's Influence on Greek Thought*. Philosophical Library, New York. 1965.
- 'Ali Muhammad dit le Bab, *Le Beyan Arabe: Le Livre Sacre du Babysme de Seyyed Ali Mohammed dit le Bab*. Traduit de l'arabe par A.-L.-M. Nicolas. Ernest Leroux, Paris. 1905.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Le Beyan Persan*. Traduit du Persan par A.-L.-M. Nicolas, 4 vols. Librairie Paul Geuthner, Paris. 1911-14.
- The Baha'i Faith 1844-1963: Information Statistical and Comparative*. Comp. Hands of the Cause Residing in the Holy Land. Printed in Israel. n.p., n.d.
- Baha'i World, The: A Biennial International Record*. Vol. III. Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York. 1930.

- Baha'i World, The: A Biennial International Record*. Vol. IV. Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York. 1933.
- \_\_\_\_\_. Vol. VI. Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York. 1937.
- Baha'i World, The: An International Record*. Vol. XIII. Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel. 1970.
- Baha'i World Faith: Selected Writings of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1956.
- Baha'i Year Book*. Vol. I. Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York. 1926.
- Baha'u'llah. The Book of Assurance (The Book of Ighan)*. Tr. Ali Kuli Khan. 2d ed. Baha'i Publishing Society, Chicago, Ill. 1907.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Kitab-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Prayers and Meditations*. Compiled and tr. Shoghi Effendi. 1st. British ed. Baha'i Publishing Trust, London. 1957.
- Balyuzi, H. M. *'Abdu'l-Baha: The Centre of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah*. George Ronald, London. 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Edward Granville Browne and the Baha'i Faith*. George Ronald, London. 1970.
- Blomfield, Lady (Sitarih Khanum). *The Chosen Highway*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1967.
- Browne, Edward G., ed. *Kitab-i Nuqtatu'l-Kaf, Being the Earliest History of the Babis, Compiled by Hajji Mirza Jani of Kashan between the Years A.D. 1850 and 1852*. E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series, Vol. XV. E. J. Brill, Imprimerie Orientale, Leiden. 1910; Luzac & Co., London. 1910.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Literary History of Persia*. Vol. IV: *Modern Times (1500-1924)*. University Press, Cambridge. 1953.
- \_\_\_\_\_. comp. *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*. University Press, Cambridge. 1901.
- \_\_\_\_\_. tr. and ed. *The Tarikh-i-Jadid; or, New History of Mirza 'Ali Muhammad the Bab*. University Press, Cambridge. 1893.



- Browne, Edward G. *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*. University Press, Cambridge. 1891.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Year Amongst the Persians: Impressions as to the Life, Character, & Thought of the People of Persia Received during Twelve Months Residence in That Country in the Years 1887-1888*. 3d ed. Adam and Charles Black, London. 1950.
- Chase, Thornton. *The Baha'i Revelation*. Baha'i Publishing Committee, New York. 1919.
- Cobb, Stanwood. *Security for a Failing World*. Avalon Press, Washington, DC. 1934.
- Dodge, Arthur Pillsbury. *Whence? Why? Whither? Man, Things, Other Things*. Ariel Press, Westwood, Mass. 1907.
- Elder, Earl E. and Miller, William McE., tr. and ed. *Al-Kitab Al-Aqdas or The Most Holy Book*. "Oriental Translation Fund", New Series Vol. XXXVIII. Published by Royal Asiatic Society and sold by its Agents Luzac & Co., London. 1961.
- Esslemont, J. E. *Baha'u'llah and the New Era*. 3d rev. ed. Pyramid Books, New York. 1970.
- Ferraby, John. *All Things Made New: A Comprehensive Outline of the Baha'i Faith*. Rev. American ed. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1960.
- Ford, Mary Hanford. *The Oriental Rose, or the Teachings of Abdul Baha Which Trace the Chart of 'The Shining Pathway'*. Broadway Publishing Co., New York. 1910.
- Gail, Marzieh. *Baha'i Glossary*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Sheltering Branch*. George Ronald, London. 1959.
- Gaver, Jessyca Russell. *The Baha'i Faith*. : Award Books, New York, 1958; Tandem Books, London, 1958.
- Gobineau, Joseph Arthur. *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*. 2d ed. Didier et Cie, Paris. 1866.
- Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1963.

- Grundy, Julia Margaret. *Ten Days in the Light of Acca*. Bahai Publishing Society, Chicago. 1907.
- Hofman, David. *The Renewal of Civilization*. Talisman Books. George Ronald, London. 1960.
- Holley, Horace. *Baha'i: The Spirit of the Age*. Kegan Paul, Trench, Trübner, London. 1921.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bahaism: The Modern Social Religion*. Mitchell Kennerly, New York. 1913.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Religion for Mankind*. 1st American ed. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1966.
- Huart, Clément M. *La Religion de Bab, Réformateur Persan du XIX<sup>e</sup> Siècle*. Bibliothèque Orientale Elzévirienne, Vol. LXIV. Ernest Leroux, Paris. 1889.
- Miller, William McElwee. *The Baha'i Faith: Its History and Teachings*. William Carey Library, South Pasadena, Calif. 1974.
- Nabil-i-A'zam (Muhammad-i-Zarandi). *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Baha'i Revelation*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Baha'i Publishing Trust, London. 1953.
- National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the British Isles. *The Centenary of a World Faith: The history of the Baha'i Faith in the British Isles*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, London. 1944.
- Phelps, Myron H. *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi*. Introduction by Edward G. Browne. G. P. Putnam's Sons, the Knickerbocker Press, New York. 1904.
- Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Koran*. A Mentor Religious Classic. New American Library, New York and Toronto; New English Library, London. n.d.
- Proclamation of Baha'u'llah to the Kings and Leaders of the World*. Baha'i World Centre, Haifa. 1967.'
- Rabbani, Ruhiiyyih. *The Priceless Pearl*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, London. 1969.

- Remey, Charles Mason. *The Bahai Movement: A Series of Nineteen Papers upon the Bahai Movement*. J. D. Milans & Sons, Washington, DC. 1912.
- Richards, John R. *The Religion of the Baha'is*. Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, London, 1932; Macmillan Company, New York, 1932.
- Sears, William. *The Prisoner and the Kings*. General Publishing, Toronto, Canada. 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Wine of Astonishment*. Talisman Books, London. George Ronald. 1963.
- Shoghi Effendi. *The Advent of Divine Justice*. 1st rev. ed. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Baha'i Administration*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1968.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Citadel of Faith: Messages to America 1947-1957*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Dawn of a New Day*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, New Delhi, India. 1970.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *God Passes By*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1957.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *This Decisive Hour*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 2002.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Messages to Canada*. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Canada, Toronto. 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Messages to the Baha'i World 1950-1957*. Rev. ed. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Promised Day Is Come*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1961.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The World Order of Baha'u'llah*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1965.
- Skrine, Francis Henry. *Bahatism: The Religion of Brotherhood and Its Place in the Evolution of Creeds*. Longmans, Green, London. 1912.
- Sohrab, Ahmad, Mirza. *Abdul Baha's Grandson: Story of a Twentieth Century Excommunication*. Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, New York. 1943.

- Sohrab, Ahmad, Mirza. *Broken Silence: The Story of Today's Struggle for Religious Freedom*. Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, New York. 1942.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Will and Testament of Abdul Baha: An Analysis*. Published by Universal Publishing Co. for the New History Foundation, New York. 1944.
- Tablets of Abdul Baha Abbas*. 3 vols. Bahai Publishing Trust, Chicago. 1909–1919.
- Townshend, George. *Christ and Baha'u'llah*. George Ronald, London. 1963.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mission of Baha'u'llah and Other Literary Pieces*. George Ronald, Oxford. 1952.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Promise of All Ages*. Talisman Books. George Ronald, London. 1961.
- Universal House of Justice. *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1996.
- White, Ruth. *'Abdu'l Baha's Questioned Will and Testament*. Self published, Beverly Hills, Calif. 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Bahai Leads out of the Labyrinth*. Universal Publishing Co., New York. 1944.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Bahai Religion and Its Enemy, the Bahai Organization*. Tuttle Co., Rutland, Vt. 1929.
- Wilson, Samuel Graham. *Bahaism and Its Claims*. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York. 1915.

## Articles

- 'Abdu'l-Baha. "America and World Peace". *The Independent*, LXXIII (September 12, 1912), 606–8.
- "Babism in Persia". *The Missionary Review of the World*, XI, New Series (January, 1898), 55.
- Bach, Marcus. "Baha'i: A Second Look". *The Christian Century*, LXXIV (April 10, 1957), 449–51.
- Bixby, James T. "What Is Bahaism?" *North American Review*, CXXV (June, 1912), 833–46.

- Bois, Jules. "The New Religions of America: Babism and Bahaism". *The Forum*, LXXIV (July, 1925), 1-10.
- Browne, Richard G. "Bab, Babis". *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1955, II, 299-308.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Babiism". *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., III, 94-95.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Babis of Persia, I. Sketch of Their History, and Personal Experiences amongst Them; II. Their Literature and Doctrines". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXI (July and October, 1889), 485-526, 881-1009.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Catalogue and Description of 27 Babi Manuscripts". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXIV (1892), 433-99. 637-710.
- \_\_\_\_\_. tr. "Personal Reminiscences of the Babi Insurrection at Zanjan in 1852, Written in Persian by Aqa 'Abdu'l-Ahad-i-Zanjani, and Translated into English by Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.B.A.S.". *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XXIV (1897), 761-827.
- Chance, Hugh E. "Baha'i Faith". *Collier's Encyclopedia*, 1968, III, 461-62.
- Dime, Eric Adolphus. "Is the Millennium Upon Us?" *The Forum*, LVIII (August, 1917), 168-80.
- "From the Guardian". *Glad Tidings*, IV (December, 1963), 1.
- "From the National Spiritual Assembly", *Glad Tidings*, IV (February, 1965), 3-4.
- Gail, Marzieh. "Will and Testament". *World Order*, VI (April, 1940), 15-22.
- Holbach, Maude M. "The Bahai Movement: With Some Recollections of Meetings with Abdul Baha". *Nineteenth Century and After*, LXXVII (February, 1915), 452-66.
- Jessup, Henry Harris. "The Babites". *The Outlook*, LXVIII (June 22, 1901), 451-56.
- Labaree, Robert M. "The Bahai Propaganda in America". *The Missionary Review of the World*, XLII (August, 1919), 591-96.

- "Legal Suit Instituted". *Glad Tidings*, V (November, 1964), 3.
- Masson, Jean. "The 'Bahai Revelation: Its Western Advance". *The American Review of Reviews*, XXXIX (February, 1909), 214-16.
- Maud, Constance E. "Abdul Baha". *The Fortnightly Review*, XCI, New Series (April 1, 1912), 707-15.
- Miller, William McElwee. "The Bahai Cause Today". *The Moslem World*, XXX (October, 1940), 379-404.
- "NSA Accepts Injunction Terms". *Glad Tidings*, VII (October, 1966), 2-3.
- "Personal Glimpses: A Prophet from the East". *The Literary Digest*, XLIV (May 4, 1912), 955-57.
- Richards, J. R. "Baha'ism in Persia Today". *The Moslem World*, XXI (October, 1931), 344-51.
- Richardson, R. P. "The Persian Rival to Jesus, and His American Disciples". *The Open Court*, XXIX (August, 1915), 460-83.
- Rojas, Billy. "The Millerites: Millennialist Precursors of the Baha'i Faith". *World Order*, IV (Fall, 1969), 15-25.
- Shedd, William A. "Bahaism and Its Claims". *The Missionary Review of the World*, XXIV, New Series (October, 1911), 725-34.
- Stevens, Ethel Stefana. "Abbas Effendi: His Personality, Work and Followers". *The Fortnightly Review*, LXXXIX, New Series (June 1, 1911).
- \_\_\_\_\_. "The Light in the Lantern". *Everybody's Magazine*, XXV (December, 1911), 775-86.
- Stewart, George Craig. "The New Persian Temple in Illinois". *The Missionary Review of the World*, XLIV (October, 1921), 792-96.
- Vail, Albert. "Bahaism—a Study of a Contemporary Movement". *Harvard Theological Review*, VII (July, 1914), 339-57.
- Vaupel, Ouse. "Changing a World". *The Open Court*, XLV (July, 1931), 418-24.
- "Will Bahaism Unite All Religious Faiths?" *The American Review of Reviews*, XLV (June, 1912), 748-50.
- Wilson, Samuel Graham. "The Bayan of the Bab". *The Princeton Theological Review*, XIII (October, 1959), 633-54.

## Booklets and pamphlets

- Braun, Eunice. *Know Your Baha'i Literature*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1959.
- Collins, Amelia. *A Tribute to Shoghi Effendi*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. n.d.
- Dahl, Arthur. *Baha'i World Faith for Modern Man*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1960.
- Entzminger, Albert. *Manifestation—Not Incarnation: the Reality of Christ*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1968.
- Hidden Words of Baha'u'llah*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1963.
- Hofman, David. *A Commentary on the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha*. George Ronald, London. 1955.
- Jackson, D. Thelma, comp. *Your Role in the Nine Year Plan*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1969.
- Maxwell, May. *An Early Pilgrimage*. George Ronald, Oxford. 1953.
- One Universal Faith*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. n.d.
- Power to Renew the World*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1965.
- Ruhiyyih Khanum. *Twenty-Five Years of the Guardianship*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1948.
- Remey, Charles Mason. *The Great Global Catastrophe*. Baha'is of Santa Fe under the Hereditary Guardianship, Santa Fe, N.M. 1958.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Last Appeal to the Hands of the Faith*. n.p., Washington, DC. 1960.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *A Statement by the Second Guardian of the Baha'i World Faith*. Baha'is of Santa Fe under the Hereditary Guardianship, Santa Fe, N.M. n.d.
- Richards, J. R. *Baha'ism*. "Christian Knowledge Booklets". S.P.C.K., London. 1965.
- Shoghi Effendi. *The Faith of Baha'u'llah*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1959.
- Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha*. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill. 1944.

## Chapters in books

- Bach, Marcus. "The Baha'i Faith". Chapter 7 of *They Have Found a Faith*. Bobbs-Merrill Co., Indianapolis. 1946.
- \_\_\_\_\_. "Unity of All Nations". Chapter 4 of *Strangers at the Door*. Abingdon Press, Nashville. 1971.
- Browne, Edward G. "Babiism" in *The Religious Systems of the World*. Swan Sonnenschein and Co., London. 1905.
- Mason, Charles W. "Bahaism". Chapter 11 of *The Confusion of Tongues*. Doubleday, Doran, and Co., Garden City, New York. 1929.
- Ross, E. Denison. "Babism" in *Great Religions of the World*. Harper and Brothers, New York. 1912.
- Sohrab, Ahmad, Mirza. "The Bahai Cause" in *Religion in the Twentieth Century*. Ed. Virgilius Ferm. Philosophical Library, New York. 1948.
- Spear, Robert E. "The Religion of the Bab". Chapter 3 of *Missions and Modern History*. Fleming H. Revell Co., New York. 1904.

## Dissertations

- Berger, Peter L. "From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Baha'i Movement". Ph.D. dissertation, New School for Social Research, New York. 1954.
- Ward, Allan Lucius. "An Historical Study of the North American Speaking Tour of 'Abdu'l-Baha and a Rhetorical Analysis of His Addresses". Ph.D. dissertation, Ohio University, Athens, Ohio. 1960.

## Letters and circulated announcements

- Marangella, Joel. Proclamatory letter "to the faithful supporters of the Covenant of Baha'u'llah throughout the world", November 12, 1969, with attached photocopies of letter and envelope from Mason Remey to Joel Marangella, December 5, 1961.
- Remey, Mason. "Baha'i Religious Faith". A collection of letters and documents written by Mason Remey, available at New York Public Library and in microfilm at Baylor University, Waco, Texas.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *II Encyclical Letter to the Baha'i World*. n.p., Washington, DC. n.d.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *III Encyclical Letter to the Baha'i World*. n.p., Washington, DC. n.d.



Remey, Mason. "Preliminary Steps toward the Election of the New NSA's" announcement from Mason Remey, November 30, 1962.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Proclamation to the Baha'is of the World through the Annual Convention of the Baha'is of the United States of America Assembled at Wilmette, Illinois, Ridvan 117 Baha'i Era*. n.p., Washington, DC. 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Statement by the Guardian on the Infallibility of the Guardianship of the Baha'i Faith", issued from Mason Remey, August 9, 1964.

### **Court case**

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America under the Hereditary Guardianship, Inc. v. The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States of America, Inc., 64 C 1878. U.S. District Court, Northern District of Illinois, Eastern Division, 1964-1966.

### **Cassette tape**

Kazemzadeh, Firuz. "A Commentary on 'Epistle to the Son of the Wolf'". Cassette tape. Baha'i Publishing Trust, Wilmette, Ill.

### **Bibliography**

## **Appendices**

**I**  
**Letter from Muhammad 'Ali and Badi'u'llah  
to the President of the House of Justice**

In the Name of the Most Merciful Father,

To the president of The House of Justice, formed in the Name of the Great and Ancient Lord (exalted be His name). We have with great pleasure and thanks received your esteemed letter which expressed unto us your sincere love and earnest desire to spread the lights of Truth. We pray God to help, strengthen, and enable you always to send forth the gentle breezes of knowledge of truth, and to imbue other people with the pure water of wisdom and Divine Knowledge.

We have been much delighted also in reading the letter of the Society of Behaists, for we have inhaled from it the good odour of their sincerity to us and of their steadfastness and firmness in the true religion of our Heavenly Father and their efforts in the promulgation of His Ever-lasting laws. Enclosed we send as an answer which please present to those who are faithful to the word of God, submissive to His commands and fervent in His Service.

We are glad to know of your having embraced the faith five years ago through the mercy of Almighty God and the efforts of your efficient director, Dr Kheiralla. This is a great blessing which can only be

appreciated by those whose hearts are enlightened by the rays of the Sun of Knowledge and who have drunk from the Spring of God's Word the pure water of Wisdom and Truth.

He is only meritorious who seeks to quicken the souls of others by the spirit of Life deposited in the words of the Everlasting Father, and he is good and holy who is revived by the sweet smelling breeze which moves by the Word of the Everlasting Father from the garden of His great utterances.

We bear record of your beloved instructor (Dr Kheiralla) at having excelled all others in this matter, for he is the only instructor who has introduced this true knowledge in your country and spread there the lights of the Word of God. We bear record that you are among the first to spread the Name of God amongst the other people and to acknowledge His wonders. Your Behaist Society is undoubtedly the first one which was formed in the civilized [the word "world" is crossed out] United States, and it shall have priority among all other Societies which may be formed hereafter, for all preeminence belongs to the pioneers, even though others should excel them in organization.

You say you have perused many books of other religions and found many truths in them; no doubt but that the original point in all religions is one, being the Knowledge of God and the pursuing His Path; the enlightening by the lights being the knowledge of God and the adornment by the vesture of perfection and thorough improvement.

People, however, have varied in their opinions regarding the way leading towards that point and in the expressions which they use as the poet says—"Our expressions are various while Thy Beauty is one, but they all testify to that beauty."

Those truths, as you have said, are surrounded by fictions, superstitions, contradictions and inconsistencies and this is why the souls are troubled, the teachings are varied and the people deceive each other, and thus the weak are swerved from the right path.

But the true religion of our Great God is built upon a firm foundation and contains the Brilliant Light of the Glorious Kingdom which radiates to quicken the world. In the Sacred Book our Lord describes it thus:—"Think ye not that we have brought down to you the laws; we have, rather, opened the soul of the sealed wine by the fingers of Might and Strength", and also:—"Those who are faithful can see that the commandments of God are waters of life to those who embrace them, and as a lamp of wisdom and advancement to those who are on the earth and in the heavens." They only contain the great means of promoting the good of nations; refining their actions and elevating their moralities.

Its laws are perfect truths by which the souls are attracted and to which the spirits are made submissive—They are the Spirit which quickens the world and confirms the words of our Lord Jesus Christ in the Gospel: "I came not to judge the world." No one can entertain a doubt of this fact unless he is lacking in knowledge of the Sacred Scriptures, for when a wise man studies deeply into these commandments and marvelous utterances, he will doubtless bear witness to its sublime preeminence and suitability to this present age in all respects.

You have read the texts we have already sent to you, and we shall (D.V.) later on send you others which will explain The Day of the Lord and keep steadfast His Children in elevating His Sacred Word.

As regards the dissensions existing in these days we can only say that it results from lack of obedience to the Commands of God, and from going out from the shadow of His Sacred Word and from not understanding its true meaning. If all were to return to the true utterances of God as they are commanded to do, the dissension will no doubt cease, harmony will prevail and the lights of the Word will shine brightly far and wide.

We do not doubt that you are eager to read the traces of the Sublime Pen as is disclosed in your letter, and we shall whenever opportunity permits send you many of them, but we are waiting until you are enabled to have an efficient translator (as you say) who would be able to translate both from the Persian and the Arabic into your native language, for most of these sacred traces are in these two tongues. Your eagerness to read our letters makes us thankful to you, as it shows your confidence in us. We are also eager to read yours, and are animated by the expressions they contain. If you were to know how glad and delighted our circle is when reading them you'd certainly not cease sending them.

We rise before the door of the Greatness and Majesty asking and praying to the Almighty that He will under all circumstances strengthen and help you by the hosts of His Kingdom and by the strength of His Might and to attract your thoughts and your pure hearts to Him. He is near and quick in answering.

There can be no doubt that the Heavenly Father loves His children and helps them when He sees them putting forth their efforts to spread this great Light. He will dilate their hearts with joy and strengthen and help them in spreading His Divine Word.

Peace, Joy and Glory to you and to those who obey the Word of God and harken to His Doctrines which are spread among them.

Acre March 31st 1901

(Signed) Mohamed Ali  
Badi Allah

---

[The following prayer is added to the letter.]

(A prayer Tablet for spiritual guidance and help to gain the [*Inner (?)*] *Sight*. With it use the *Name* twelve times.)

“Hold my right arm, O God, and dwell continually with me. Guide me to the fountains of knowledge and encircle me with Thy Glory. Set Thy Angel on my right side, and let mine eyes see Thy Splendor. Let mine ears harken to Thy Melodious tones and comfort me with Thy Presence, for Thou art the strength of my heart and the trust of ay soul, and I desire no one besides Thee.”

---

[The following note is also written on the letter.]

Meetings of *your* society are held at 11 a.m. on Sundays at Hall 4-12, Masonic Temple. Be faithful in seeking knowledge of the Utterances of Beha U'llah, and help in supporting and furthering the Cause of God. F. O. Pease—Pres.<sup>i</sup>

---

<sup>i</sup> Dr Frederick O. Pease, the President of the House of Justice of the Society of Behaists.

## II

### **Letter from Muhammad 'Ali Bad'u'llah to the Society of Behaists**

By the Name of the Lord the most Glorious and Mighty.

Oh you members of the Committee formed in the Name of the Ever-lasting Father, and who are straining your efforts in spreading the light of His Word and who are enlightened by the light of His Truth and Wisdom; we greet you by the Name of our Lord who has manifested Himself for the promotion of the world and has submitted Himself to all sufferings and adversities for the salvation of mankind. We pray that His care and providence should be always with you so that in all circumstances you may be regarded by the eyes of His providence, which will keep you faithful to His word, and be helped by the hosts of His high Kingdom so that you should direct people to Him. We are in receipt of your esteemed letter which showed your faithfulness and submissiveness to the commandments of the Everlasting Father who has no other purpose in giving the True religion and strong proofs, and in enduring adversities and afflictions than the quenching the fires of hatred existing amongst mankind; as He has expressed this fact in the greatest utterances of His Sacred Tablets.

Know well that your letters have given great consolation to our sorrowful hearts, for when we read them we have been greatly animated and a



thrill of delight entered our frames for they were penned by the pen of true sincerity and enlightened by the light of the Comprehensive Word.

Our supplications to God are that He should continue His gifts upon you and inspire you with what may dispel doubts and enlighten the hearts, so that through your efforts people might draw near to their creator and do His will. We are glad to know that you have formed a council in the name of Beha according to the commandments of our Lord, and that you have legally organized it. We wish you all success and ask the merciful Lord to strengthen you in this undertaking and to make the name of this organization to be a light for directing the people to Him. No doubt that every committee which is formed by the name of the Great Lord for no other purpose than serving and exalting His Word, that committee will be strengthened by the hosts of His great wonders and kept firm by the strength of His sublime Kingdom, for God has commanded His beloved to abide in His service and has promised to strengthen and confirm them. The light must be spread out and the good odour must be diffused and no one can prevent them. You must not mind being few or armless. Persevere in promulgating *the Word* and put your trust in God the Most Glorious.

It was descended from the Sacred Kingdom in the Sacred Books,—“Oh son of Justice, be ye good shepherds to the sheep of God in His Kingdom’ guard them from the wolves which disguise themselves as much as ye would guard your own children: thus are ye advised by the faithful adviser.” We pray God to make the expression of this Word true of you, by making you as horizons of the light of justice among mankind and as guards of the weak so that all should submit to His Will.

You say that you have sought for some texts from the sublime Pen and that your instructor, Dr Kheiralla, wrote to Abbas Effendi several times, asking for these, but was not answered and was only told to follow the commands of the Greatest branch and to do this without investigation. No doubt the sacred texts were descended to direct the people in the straight path and to refine their manners and if their promulgation should be stopped the intended results for which the texts descended will not take place. Therefore all must spread the odours of the texts so that the world should be directed and enlightened. The wise man ought, when seeing a thirsty man, to give him the pure water of life, and when seeing a hungry man to feed him with the victuals of Knowledge and Truth, for man cannot be promoted except by being given to drink from the spring of wisdom, thus enlightening them by the light of the Word and refining their actions.

No wise man will follow another without investigation for man was created to knowledge and is given the eyes of understanding to use everything by them. If we cannot see the rose and witness its coloring how can we judge that it is a fine flower which diffuses a sweet odour. Thus we cannot come to a knowledge of the Father without consideration and without looking into the traces of the might and the wondrous wisdom. Such great truths should not be adopted by traditions. The function of the instructor is to guide and show the traces and dissolve the mysteries so that the understanding of the neophyte should be enlightened and he be able to understand the utterances of God.

All the confusions existing at present have resulted from following others without confirmation or investigation. Verily he who meditates

on the traces of the Lord and weighs everything by the scale of understanding cannot follow vain superstitions, but will rather rid himself of them and thus keep firm in serving the most merciful Father. Those who follow (or act) without consideration are by no means enlightened by the light of knowledge through which the learned are discriminated from the ignorant and the perfect from the imperfect. This cannot but be admitted by the mind with which the Almighty God has endowed man so that he should discriminate between the things.

No doubt that every building which is laid upon firm foundation will continue, while that which is not upon firm foundation will fall. Thus, following others by the help of mind and thought is praisable and enduring whilst to submit to others by tradition is not durable for it is done without consideration and he who embraces its dogma without investigation cannot hold fast to it nor keep in one way, but follows every voice he hears. He cannot benefit himself or others.

You say that the rays of the Eternal Sun have dispelled your darkness, and that peace has spread amongst you after violent storms. By these expressions you have given us great consolation. Our Lord has told us of this in His Sacred Books: "The Servant is come to quicken the worlds and to unite all the inhabitants of the earth. What God wisheth shall conquer by the Will of God, and thou shalt see the earth as the garden of al-Abha: thus has the Sublime pen inscribed on the Sacred Tablet." In all circumstances we praise God that He has given us insight and submissiveness to His utterances and that our feet did not slip under the violent storms and awful distresses and we hope to keep steadfast till the end of our days,

and to bear patiently all adversities for the sake of God, for submissiveness to His command and for the promulgation of His Word.

You have expressed your sympathy toward us for the adversities and trials surrounding us and we do not-cease praising God for this feeling we find in you and we pray for the continuance of this true bond which is resulted from the submissiveness to His Word, and to make everyone of us a help to the other, so that through our union the lights of wisdom and knowledge should be spread among mankind and the pure water of truth be given to the neophytes.

Oh ye children of the Kingdom we pray and supplicate to God that He shall strengthen, help and succor you in spreading His high and Holy Word with faithfulness and fervency and that nothing should thwart your efforts and to make your names as spirits of life to the creatures, and to direct through your efforts and sincere attentions the pure hearts to the everlasting gifts. We shall await your kind letters explaining all that takes place in your country and in your committee and we shall, by the help of God, not fail to write you always. Those who live under the shade of the comprehensive word present you their respects and they cannot express how rejoiced they were in reading your letters. They pray to the Great God for the continuance of this grace and wish you all success in spreading His Word.

Be sure we always yearn towards you and pray for you so that through you the darkness of superstitions shall be dispelled and the rays of the true light should prevail in your country.

The Spirit, the Glory, the Salaam and the peace be upon you and upon those who initiate you in promulgating the truth and promoting the Holy Word.

Acre. Syria. March 31st 1901  
(Signed) Mohammed Ali and Badi Allah