



SAMUEL K. NWEEYA, M.D.

**PERSIA**  
**THE LAND OF THE MAGI**  
OR  
**THE HOME OF THE WISE MAN**

**An Historical and Descriptive Account of Persia from the Earliest  
Ages to the Present Time; with a Detailed View of its People,  
their Manners, Customs, Matrimony and Home Life,  
Religion, Education and Literature, the King, his  
Court, and Forms of Punishment, Including  
Afghanistan and Beloochistan.**

**COMPLETED IN ONE VOLUME**

***DECORATED WITH MANY ILLUSTRATIONS AND A MAP***

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BY

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**URMIA CITY, PERSIA.**

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**DEDICATED TO**  
**MY FRIENDS IN AMERICA AND ALL WHO DEVOTE**  
**THEIR TALENTS AND TIME TO THE**  
**UPLIFTING OF THEIR FELLOW-MEN:**

To fail and fall is the fate of all men ;  
To rise and succeed is their common victory ;  
To claim exemption from the common lot of humanity, a  
    proof of pride and vanity ;  
To extend mercy and help, the evidence of a great soul :  
Therefore let such as read and errors detect  
Either ignore, conceal or correct,  
Rather than reveal to revile :  
For he is wise who is lenient  
And from his brother's failings averts his eyes ;  
Being loath to hurt and harm  
Meeting bane with balm.

**Wa's Salam.**

## INTRODUCTION.

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DEAR READERS: In presenting to you this volume on his native land, the author wishes to say that in undertaking to describe so extensive and celebrated a region as the Persian Empire, he is by no means insensible to the difficulty of the task on which he enters. The subject is wide and intricate, while the sources of information are frequently imperfect, or obscure; but it has been his study by adopting a distinct arrangement, and by consulting the best authorities, to present his readers with a correct and complete picture of that interesting portion of Western Asia.

Being a native and personally acquainted with many parts of the country, he has availed himself of the observations of the greater number of modern travelers, both to correct his own opinions and to supply additional facts, in describing: Persia—Its history. Political character of the Persian Empire. The King, his Court and his Palace. Civil and Criminal Law. Account of the provinces of Persia. The antiquities of Persia. Its people, home life, customs, and matrimony; the Mohammedan religion, its Bible and its priesthood; a discourse on the Arabs and their prophet; also Kurds, Babis and their Bible (Babism is a new religion uprisen from Mohammedanism); a full de-

scription of the Magi, or Parsee, religion and the Wise Men of the East. Literature of Persia. Mystical interpretations of Koran and metaphysical conception of God according to Sufis Philosophy; a description of the Nestorians and the medical mission in the East, including Afghanistan and Beloochistan.

Should it entertain you and your children, should it arouse in you a deeper interest in humanity and should it prompt an earnest prayer on our behalf to the ever-present God and Father, whom we all try to love and to serve, then its object is accomplished.

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## CHAPTER XIII.

### BABISM.

THE Mohammedan religion is to-day divided into about fifty different sects. This division greatly weakens it. The Bab sect was started by Mirza Mohammed Ali of Shiraz, a city in which reside the most intellectual and poetical scholars of Persia. He began to plan the new religion at the age of eighteen, but did not reveal it until he was twenty-five years old. The foundation of his faith was this: Mohammed, like Christ, taught that the latter days would be a millennium. They have a tradition that when all the prophets had died, or had been killed by their enemies, a son six years of age was, by the direction of Allah, hid in an unknown well. He was to remain there until the time for the millennium. It was believed that he would be the ruler of the Mohammedans in these last days.

He was to lead both his victorious armies and conquer all the world, and Islam would become the universal religion. Mirza Mohammed Ali based his doctrine on this theory, but changed it somewhat. At the age of twenty-five he made several pilgrimages to shrines, such as Karballa, Mecca, and Medina, and then returned to his native town of Shiraz. At first he began to teach his doctrine to his confidential friends and relatives until it was deepened in their hearts. And then he began to preach to the public that he was Mehdeialzaman.

At first but little attention was paid to the new sect

by the government or clergy, but towards the end of the summer of 1845, they began to be alarmed at its rapid spread, and took measures to stop its progress. The Bab, who had just returned from Mecca to Bushire, was brought to Shiraz and placed in confinement. His followers were prohibited from discussing his doctrines in public, and some of the more active were beaten, mutilated, and expelled from the town. In the early summer of 1846, however, a plague broke out in Shiraz, and, during the general consternation caused by this, the Bab effected his escape, and made his way to Ispaham, where he was well received by Minuchihr Khan, governor of that city, who afforded him protection and hospitality for nearly a year.

Early in 1847 Minuchihr Khan died, and his successor, anxious to curry favor with the government, sent the Bab, under the care of an escort of armed horsemen, to the capital. So serious were the apprehensions already entertained by the government of a popular demonstration in the prisoner's favor, that his guards had received instructions to avoid entering the towns by which they must needs pass. At Kashan, however, a respectable merchant named Mirza Jani, who subsequently suffered martyrdom for his faith, prevailed on them by means of a bribe to allow their prisoner to tarry with him two days. At the village of Khanlik, also near Teheran, a number of believers came out to meet the Bab. Amongst these was Mirza Huseyn, Ali of Nur in Mazandaran, who, at a later date, under the title of Beha'u'llah ("the Splendor of God"), was recognized by the great majority of the Babis as their spiritual chief, and who, till his death on May 16, 1892, resided at Acre, in

Syria, surrounded by a band of faithful followers, and visited yearly by numbers of pilgrims.

The late king, Mohammed Shah, and his chief minister, Haji Mirza Aghasi, dreading the effect likely to be produced in the capital by the presence of the Bab, determined to send him to the fortress of Maku on the northwest frontier of Persia, without allowing him to enter Teheran. Thither he was accordingly conveyed; but at Zanjan and Milan he received a popular ovation, and even at Maku it was found impossible to prevent him from receiving occasional letters and visits from his adherents. Nor did the plan of transferring him to the sterner custody of Yahya Khan, governor of the castle of Chihrik, near Urumiyye, meet with much better success in this respect.

Meantime, while the Bab was occupying the weary days of his imprisonment in compiling and arranging the books destined to serve as a guide to his followers after the fate which he had but too much cause to apprehend should have removed him from their midst, his emissaries were actively engaged in propagating his doctrines. Fiery enthusiasm on the part of these was met by fierce opposition from the orthodox party, headed by the clergy, and it needed only the confusion and disorder introduced into all departments of the empire by the death of Mohammed Shah (October 5, 1848) to bring the two factions into armed collision. The strife, once kindled, rapidly assumed the most alarming proportions, and the reign of the present king, Nasiru'd-Din Shah was inaugurated by formidable insurrections of the Babis at Yezd, Niriz, Zanjan, and in Mazandaran. Of the two latter risings I shall

have to say something when I come to speak of the places at which they occurred. For the present it is sufficient to state that, after the rising in Mazandaran had been suppressed with great difficulty and the sacrifice of many lives, a revolt, which threatened to defy the united efforts of the whole Persian army, broke out at Zanzan. Thereupon, by the advice of Mirza Taki Khan (at that time prime minister to the young king), an attempt was made to strike terror into the hearts of the insurgents, and to fill their minds with despair, by the public execution of the Bab, who, though innocent of any direct share in the plans or councils of the rebels, was regarded as the source from which they drew the enthusiasm which inspired them with a resolution so obstinate and a courage so invincible.

Accordingly, orders were despatched to Tabriz to bring the Bab thither from his prison-house, and, after the form of a trial, to put him to death. After enduring all manner of insults at the hands of the government authorities, the clergy, and the rabble of the city, through the streets of which he was dragged for many hours, he was finally brought to the place of execution, near the citadel, a little before sundown. An immense crowd, drawn thither, some by sympathy, others by a vindictive desire to witness the death of one whom they regarded as an arch-heretic, but actuated for the most part, probably, by mere curiosity, was here assembled. Many of those who composed it were at least half convinced of the divine mission of the Bab; others, who had come with feelings of animosity or indifference, were moved to compassion by the sight of the youthful victim, who continued to

manifest the same dignity and fortitude which had characterized him during the whole period of his imprisonment.

The Bab was not to suffer alone. The sentence which had been pronounced against him included also two of his disciples. One of these Aka Seyyid Husayn of Yezd, who had been his companion and amanuensis during the whole period of his captivity, either actuated by a monetary but uncontrollable fear of death, or, as the Babis assert with more probability, obedient to orders received from his master, bidding him escape at all hazards and convey to the faithful the sacred writings of which he was the depositary, declared himself willing to renounce the creed for which he had already sacrificed so much, and the master to whom he had hitherto so faithfully adhered. His recantation was accepted and his life spared, but his death was only deferred for two years. In September, 1852, he met the fate which he no longer affected to fear amongst the martyrs of Teheran.

The other disciple was a young merchant of Tabriz, named Aka Mohammed Ali. Although every effort was made to induce him to follow the example of his comrade, and though his wife and little children were brought before him, entreating him with tears to save his life, he stood firm in his faith, and only requested that at the moment of death he might still be allowed to fix his gaze on his master. Finding all efforts to alter his decision unavailing, the executioners proceeded to suspend him alongside of his master at the distance of a few feet from the ground by means of cords passed under the arms. As he hung thus he was heard to address the Bab in these words: "Master!

art thou satisfied with me?" Then the file of soldiers drawn up before the prisoners received the command to fire, and for a moment the smoke of the volley concealed the sufferers from view. When it rolled away, a cry of mingled exultation and terror arose from the spectators, for, while the bleeding corpse of the disciple hung suspended in the air pierced with bullets, the Bab had disappeared from sight! It seemed, indeed, that his life had been preserved by a miracle, for, of the storm of bullets which had been aimed at him, not one had touched him; nay, instead of death they had brought him deliverance by cutting the ropes which had bound him, so that he fell to the ground unhurt.

For a moment even the executioners were overwhelmed with amazement, which rapidly gave place to alarm as they reflected what effect this marvelous deliverance was likely to have on the inconstant and impressionable multitude. These apprehensions, however, were of short duration. One of the soldiers espied the Bab hiding in a guardroom which opened onto the stone platform over which he had been suspended. He was seized, dragged forth, and again suspended; a new firing-party was ordered to advance (for the men who had composed the first refused to act again); and before the spectators had recovered from their first astonishment, or the Bab had had time to effect a rescue, the body of the young prophet of Shiraz was riddled with bullets.

The two corpses were dragged through the streets and bazaars, and cast out beyond the city gates to be devoured by dogs and jackals. From this last indignity, however, they were saved by the devotion of

Suleyman Khan and a few other believers, who, whether by force, bribes, or the influence of powerful friends, succeeded in obtaining possession of them. They were wrapped in white silk, placed in one coffin, and sent to Teheran, where, by order of Mirza Yahya Subh-i-Ezel ("the Morning of Eternity," who, though but twenty years of age, had been chosen to succeed the Bab), they were deposited in a little shrine called Imam-zade-i-Masum, which stands by the Hamadan road not far from Ribat-Karim. Here they remained undisturbed for seventeen or eighteen years, till the schism originated by Beha deprived his half brother Ezel of the supremacy in the Babi church which he had hitherto enjoyed, when they were removed by the Behais, to whom alone is now known the resting-place of the glorious martyrs of Tabriz.

Beha, whose proper name is Mirza Huseyn Ali, of Nur, in Mazandarin, was one of those who believed in the Bab. He was arrested at Amul on his way to join the Babis, who, under the leadership of Mulla Huseyn of Bushraweyh, were entrenched at Sheykh Tabarsi. In 1852, he narrowly escaped death in the great persecution wherein the intrepid Suleyman Khan, the brilliant and beautiful Kurratu l-Ayn, and a host of others suffered martyrdom. It was proved, however, that he had but just arrived at Teheran, and could not have had any share in the plot against the Shah wherein the others were accused of being involved, so his life was spared, and after an imprisonment of about four months, he was allowed to leave Persia and take up his residence at Baghdad. Mirza Yahya, "Subh-i-Ezel" ("the Morning of Eternity"), Beha's half-brother (then only about twenty-two years

of age), was at that time recognized as the Bab's successor, having been designated as such by the Bab himself, shortly before he suffered martyrdom at Tabriz. His supremacy was recognized, at least nominally, by all the Babis during the eleven year's sojourn of their chiefs at Baghdad, but even then Beha took the most prominent part in the organization of affairs, the carrying on of correspondence, and the interviewing of visitors. In 1863, the Ottoman government, acceding to the urgent requests of the Persian authorities, removed all the Babis, including Beha and Mirza Yahya, "Subh-i-Ezel," from Baghdad to Constantinople and thence to Adrianople, where they arrived about the end of the year. Here at length Beha cast aside the veil, proclaimed himself as "He whom God shall manifest," whose coming the Bab had foretold, and called on all the Babis, including Mirza Yahya, "Subh-i-Ezel," to acknowledge his claim and submit to his authority. Many of the Babis did so at once, and their number increased as time went on, so that now the great majority of them are followers of Beha, though a few still adhere to Mirza Yahya, and these are called Ezelis. But at first the disproportion between the Bahais and the Ezelis was but slight, and the rivalry between them was great, resulting, indeed, in some bloodshed. So the Turkish government decided to separate them, and accordingly sent Beha and his followers to Acre in Syria, and Mirza Yahya and his family to Famagusta in Cyprus. Now the reason why Beha was sent to Acre, was, as his followers assert, that its climate is exceedingly unhealthy, and that it was hoped he might die there. But Beha continued to live and prosper, and even dreary Acre



smiled with fresh gardens and seemed to gain a purer air.

The Babis year consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, the same names serving alike for the months of the year and the days of the month. These names are as follows:—(1) Beha; (2) Jalal; (3) Jemal; (4) Azimat; (5) Nur; (6) Rahmat; (7) Kalimat; (8) Kamal; (9) Asma; (10) Izzat; (11) Mashyyat; (12) Ilm; (13) Kudrat; (14) Kawl; (15) Masa'il; (16) Sharaf; (17) Sultan; (18) Mulk; (19) Ula. According to this arrangement, the week is completely abolished, the third day of the eighth month, for example, is called Yawmu 'l-Jemal min shahri 'l-Kamal, "the day of beauty (Jemal) in the month of perfection (Kamal)." But, pending the re-tenation of the week, new names have been given to the days composing it as follows:

Sunday, Yawmu 'l-Jemal; Monday, Yawmu 'l-Kamal; Tuesday, Yawmu 'l-Fizal; Wednesday, Yawmu 'l-Idal; Thursday, Yawmu 'l-Istijlal; Friday, Yawmu 'l-Istiklal; Saturday, Yawmu 'l-Jalal.

The relations of the Bab are called "Afnan," and the sons of Beha "Aghsan," both of these words meaning "branches." Beha's eldest son, 'Abbas Efendi, is called Ghusn-i-Akbar ("the most Great Branch") and also Akayi Sirru 'llah ("the Master, God's Mystery") while another of his sons, named Mirza Mohammed 'Ali, is entitled Ghusn-i-A'zam ("the Most Mighty Branch").

#### HIS DOCTRINE.

He taught that every age must have its own prophet, inspired from God. He claimed that he was

inspired and that he had frequent communications from God telling him how to direct the people. He openly claimed to be Mehdeialzaman. And he taught that the priesthood and the religion were corrupt and that he was appointed to renew them. He did not oppose the Koran, but at the same time said that every age needs a new Bible. He claimed to have received a Bible from God. This book is called Bayon, meaning exposition. He taught the equality of both sexes and paid homage to woman. He showed that it was against the law of God to marry more than one woman or to keep concubines. Further, it is against the law of society and the happiness of women to marry more than one wife. The law of divorce, which is common among Mohammedans, was not practiced by the new sect. The place of women among them is the same as among Christians. The prophet taught that the spirit of charity ought to be as a flame of fire in the hearts of his followers. He said we cannot please God if we see our brother in need and do not help him; if we pray He will not hear us, if we worship Him He will turn His face away from us. Believing this, the spirit of charity is very strong among them, and they support the needy. The use of wine and all intoxicants is strictly forbidden. They are very kind to people of other faiths who are not Mohammedans; these they hate. Mehdeialzaman preached these doctrines and won many hearts. The converts were generally intelligent and well educated. His doctrine spread through the southern and northeastern parts of Persia. Among his followers were two prominent and attractive persons, Molla Hussein and Hajee Mohammed Ali. He called them his right and left hand supporters. An-

other convert of importance was a lady of rare attainments. In poetry she was accomplished, in beauty wonderfully rare, and she was highly educated. She traveled with two assistants from state to state and from city to city, preaching the new doctrine. She never met Bab, the founder, and knew of him only through letters. She said that God had endowed him with unusual gifts for this holy cause. By the power of her eloquence she made many converts, and was called by her followers Kurratool Alaein, which is a very high title.

Below is an outline of a discussion between a Christian and two Babis teachers, young Seyyid and Haji Mirza Hasan, the Babis teachers said that "The object for which man exists is that he should know God. Now this is impossible by means of his unassisted reason. It is therefore necessary that prophets should be sent to instruct him concerning spiritual truth, and to lay down ordinances for his guidance. From time to time, therefore, a prophet appears in the world with tokens of his divine mission sufficient to convince all who are not blinded by prejudice and wilful ignorance. When such a prophet appears, it is incumbent on all to submit themselves to him without question, even though he command what has formerly been forbidden, or prohibit what has formerly been ordained."

"Stay," I interposed; "surely one must be convinced that such prohibition or command is sanctioned by reason. If the doctrine or ordinance be true, it must be agreeable to the idea of absolute good which exists in our own minds."

"We must be convinced by evidence approved by reason that he who claims to be a prophet actually is

so," they replied; "but when once we are assured of this, we must obey him in everything, for he knows better than we do what is right and wrong. If it were not so, there would be no necessity for revelation at all. As for the fact that what is sanctioned in one 'manifestation' is forbidden in another, and vice versa, that presents no difficulty. A new prophet is not sent until the development of the human race renders this necessary. A revelation is not abrogated till it no longer suffices for the needs of mankind. There is no disagreement between the prophets: all teach the same truth, but in such measure as men can receive it. One spirit, indeed, speaks through all the prophets; consider it as the instructor (murabbi) of mankind. As mankind advance and progress, they need fuller instruction. The child cannot be taught in the same way as the youth, nor the youth as the full-grown man. So it is with the human race. The instruction given by Abraham was suitable and sufficient for the people of his day, but not for those to whom Moses was sent, while this in turn has ceased to meet the needs of those to whom Christ was sent. Yet we must not say that their religions were opposed to one another, but rather that each 'manifestation' is more complete and more perfect than the last."

"What you say is agreeable to reason" I assented; "but tell me, in what way is the prophet to be recognized when he comes? By miracles or otherwise?"

"By miracles (if by miracles you mean prodigies contrary to nature)—No!" they answered; "It is for such that the ignorant have always clamored. The prophet is sent to distinguish the good from the bad, the believer from the unbeliever. He is the touch-

stone whereby false and true metal are separated. But if he came with evident supernatural power, who could help believing? Who would dare oppose him? The most rebellious and unbelieving man, if he found himself face to face with one who could raise the dead, cleave the moon, or stay the course of the sun, would involuntarily submit. The persecution to which all the prophets have been exposed, the mockery to which they have been compelled to submit, the obloquy they have borne, all testify to the fact that their enemies neither feared them nor believed that God would support them; for no one, however foolish, however forward, would knowingly and voluntarily fight against the power of the Omnipotent. No, the signs whereby the prophet is known are these: Though untaught in the learning esteemed by men, he is wise in true wisdom; he speaks a word which is creative and constructive; his word so deeply affects the hearts of men that for it they are willing to forego wealth and comfort, fame and family, even life itself. What the prophet says comes to pass. Consider Mohammed, He was surrounded by enemies, he was scoffed at and opposed by the most powerful and wealthy of his people, he was derided as a madman, treated as an impostor. But his enemies have passed away, and his word remains. He said 'You shall fast in the month of Ramazan,' and behold, thousands and thousands obey that word to this day. He said, 'You shall make a pilgrimage to Mecca if you are able,' and every year brings thither countless pilgrims from all quarters of the globe. This is the special character of the prophetic word; it fulfils itself; it creates; it triumphs. Kings and rulers strove to extinguish the

word of Christ, but they could not; and now kings and rulers make it their pride that they are Christ's servants. Against all opposition, against all persecution, unsupported by human might, what the prophet says come to pass. This is the true miracle, the greatest possible miracle, and indeed the only miracle which is a proof to future ages and distant peoples. Those who are privileged to meet the prophet may indeed be convinced in other ways, but for those who have not seen him his word is the evidence on which conviction must rest. If Christ raised the dead, you were not a witness of it; if Mohammed cleft the moon asunder, I was not there to see. No one can really believe a religion merely because miracles are ascribed to its founder, for are they not ascribed to the founder of every religion by its votaries? But when a man arises amongst a people, untaught and unsupported, yet speaking a word which causes empires to change, hierarchies to fall, and thousands to die willingly in obedience to it, that is a proof absolute and positive that the word spoken is from God. This is the proof to which we point in support of our religion. What you have already learned concerning its origin will suffice to convince you that in no previous 'manifestation' was it clearer and more complete."

"I understand your argument," I replied, "and it seems to me a weighty one. But I wish to make two observations. Firstly, it appears to me that you must include amongst the number of the prophets many who are ordinarily excluded, as, for example, Zoroaster; for all the proofs which you have enumerated were, so far as we can learn, presented by him. Secondly, though I admit that your religion pos-

sesses these proofs in a remarkable degree (at least so far as regards the rapidity with which it spread in spite of all opposition), I cannot altogether agree that the triumph of Islam was an instance of the influence of the prophetic word only. The influence of the sword was certainly a factor in its wide diffusion. If the Arabs had not invaded Persia, slaying, plundering, and compelling, do you think that the religion of Mohammed would have displaced the religion of Zoroaster? To us the great proof of the truth of Christ's teaching is that it steadily advanced in spite of the sword, not by the sword: the great reproach on Islam, that its diffusion was in so large a measure due to the force of arms rather than the force of argument. I sympathize with your religion, and desire to know more of it, chiefly because the history of its origin, the cruel fate of its founder, the tortures joyfully endured with heroic fortitude by its votaries, all remind me of the triumph of Mohammed."

"As to your first observation," rejoined the Babi spokesman, "it is true, and we do recognize Zoroaster, and others whom the Mussulmans reject, as prophets. For though falsehood may appear to flourish for a while, it cannot do so for long. God will not permit an utterly false religion to be the sole guide of thousands. But with Zoroaster and other ancient prophets you and I have nothing to do. The question for you is whether another prophet has come since Christ: for us, whether another has come since Mohammed."

"Well," I interrupted, "what about the propagation of Islam by the sword? For you cannot deny that in many countries it was so propagated. What right

had Mohammed—what right has any prophet—to slay where he cannot convince? Can such a thing be acceptable to God, who is absolute good?”

“A prophet has the right to slay if he knows that it is necessary,” answered the young Seyyid, “for he knows what is hidden from us; and if he sees that the slaughter of a few will prevent many from going astray, he is justified in commanding such slaughter. The prophet is the spiritual physician, and as no one would blame a physician for sacrificing a limb to save the body, so no one can question the right of a prophet to destroy the bodies of a few, that the souls of many may live. As to what you say, that God is absolute good, it is undeniably true; yet God had not only attributes of grace but also attributes of wrath—He is Al-Muntakim (the avenger) as well as Al-Ghafur (the pardoner). And these attributes as well as those must be manifested in the prophet, who is the God-revealing mirror.”

“I do not agree with you there,” I answered. “I know very well that men have often attributed, and do attribute, such qualities as these to God, and it appears to me that in so doing they have been led into all manner of evil and cruelty, whereby they have brought shame on the name of their religion. I believe what one of your own poets has said:

‘Az Khayr-i-Mahz juz niku’i nayad,’

‘Naught but good comes from Absolute Good,’

and we cannot falsify the meaning of words in such wise as to say that qualities which we universally condemn in man are good in God. To say that revenge in man is bad, while revenge in God is good, is to confound reason, stultify speech, and juggle with para-



doxes. But, passing by this question altogether, you can hardly imagine that a prophet in whom the 'Attributes of Wrath' were manifested could attract to himself such as have believed in a prophet in whom were reflected the 'Attributes of Grace.' Admitting even that a prophet sent to a very rude, ignorant, or froward people may be justified in using coercion to prepare the way for a better state of things, and admitting that Mohammed was so justified by the circumstances under which he was placed, still you cannot expect those who have learned the gentle teaching of Christ to revert to the harsher doctrines of Mohammed, for though the latter was subsequent as regards time, his religion was certainly not a higher development of the religion of Christ. I do not say that Mohammed was not a prophet; I do not even assert that he could or should have dealt otherwise with his people; but, granting all this it is still impossible for anyone who has understood the teaching of Christ to prefer the teaching of Mohammed. You have said that the God-given message is addressed to the people of each epoch of time in such language as they can comprehend, in such measure as they can receive. Should we consider time only, and not place? May it not be that since the stages of development at which different peoples living at the same time have arrived are diverse, they may require different prophets and different religions? The child, as you have said, must be taught differently as he grows older, and the teacher accordingly employs different methods of instruction as his pupil waxes in years and understanding; though the knowledge he strives to impart remains always the same. But in the same school are

to be found at one time pupils of many different ages and capacities. What is suitable to one class is not suitable to another. May it not be the same in the spiritual world?"

At this point there was some dissension in the assembly; the young Seyyid shook his head, and relapsed into silence; Mirza Ali signified approval of what I had said. Haji Mirza Hasan strove to avoid the point at issue, and proceeded thus:

"I have already said that what is incumbent on every man is that he should believe in the 'manifestation' of his own age. It is not required of him that he should discuss and compare all previous 'manifestations.' You have been brought up a follower of Christ. We have believed in this 'manifestation' which has taken place in these days. Let us not waste time in disputing about intermediate 'manifestations.' We do not desire to make you believe in Mohammed, but in Beha. If you should be convinced of the truth of Beha's teaching you have passed over the stage of Islam altogether. The last 'manifestation' includes and sums up all preceding ones. You say that you could not accept Islam because its laws and ordinances are harsher, and, in your eyes, less perfect than those laid down by Christ. Very well, we do not ask you to accept Islam, we ask you to consider whether you should not accept Beha. To do so you need not go back from a gentle to a severe dispensation. Beha has come for the perfecting of the law of Christ, and his injunctions are in all respects similar; for instance we are commanded to prefer rather that we should be killed than that we should kill. It is the same throughout, and, indeed, could not be otherwise, for

Beha is Christ returned again, even as He promised, to perfect that which He had begun. Your own books tell you that Christ shall come 'like a thief in the night,' at a time when you are not expecting Him."

"True," I replied, "but those same books tell us also that His coming shall be 'as the lightning, that lighteneth out of the one part under heaven and shineth into the other part under heaven.'"

"There can be no contradiction between these two similies," answered the Babi; "and since the phrase 'like a thief in the night' evidently signifies that when Christ returns it will be in a place where you do not expect Him, and at a time when you do not expect Him—that is, suddenly and secretly—it is clear that the comparison in the other passage which you quoted is to the suddenness and swiftness of the lightning, not to its universal vividness. If, as the Christians for the most part expect, Christ should come riding upon the clouds surrounded by angels, how could He be said in any sense to come 'like a thief in the night?' Everyone would see him, and, seeing, would be compelled to believe. It has always been through such considerations as these that men have rejected the prophet whose advent they professed to be expecting, because He did not come in some unnatural and impossible manner which they had vainly imagined. Christ was indeed the promised Messiah, yet the Jews, who had waited, and prayed, and longed for the coming of the Messiah, rejected Him when He did come for just such reasons. Ask a Jew now why he does not believe in Christ, and he will tell you that the signs whereby the Messiah was to be known were not manifest at his coming. Yet, had he understood what

was intended by those signs, instead of being led away by vain traditions, he would know that the promised Messiah had come and gone and come again. So with the Christians. On a mountain close by Acre is a monastery peopled by Christian priests and monks, assembled there to await the arrival of Christ on that spot as foretold. And they continue to gaze upwards into heaven, whence they suppose that He will descend, while only a few miles off in Acre He has returned, and is dwelling amongst men as before. O, be not blinded by these very misapprehensions which you condemn so strongly in the Jews! The Jews would not believe in Christ because He was not accompanied by a host of angels; you blame the Jews for their obstinacy and forwardness, and you do rightly. But beware lest you condemn yourselves by alleging the very same reason as an excuse for rejecting this 'manifestation.' Christ came to the Jews accompanied by angels—angels none the less because they were in the guise of fishermen. Christ returns to you as Beha with angels, with clouds, with the sound of trumpets. His angels are His messengers; the clouds are the doubts which prevent you from recognizing Him; the sound of trumpets is the sound of the proclamation which you now hear, announcing that He has come once more from heaven, even as he came before, not as a human form descending visibly from the sky, but as the Spirit of God entering into a man, and abiding there."

"Well," I replied, "your arguments are strong, and certainly deserve consideration. But, even supposing that you are right in principle, it does not follow that they hold good in this particular case. If I grant

that the return of Christ may be in such wise as you indicate, nevertheless mere assertion will not prove that Beha is Christ. Indeed, we are told by Christ Himself that many will arise in His name, saying 'See here,' or 'See there,' and are warned not to follow them."

"Many have arisen falsely claiming to be Christ," he answered, "but the injunction laid on you to beware of these does not mean that you are to refuse to accept Christ when He does return. The very fact that there are pretenders is a proof that there is a reality. You demand proofs, and you are right to do so. What proofs would suffice for you?"

"The chief proofs which occur to me at this moment," I replied, "are as follows: You admit, so far as I understand, that in each 'manifestation' a promise has been given for a succeeding 'manifestation,' and that certain signs have always been laid down whereby that 'manifestation' may be recognized. It is therefore incumbent on you to show that the signs foretold by Christ as heralding His return have been accomplished in the coming of Beha. Furthermore, since each 'manifestation' must be fuller, completer, and more perfect than the last, you must prove that the doctrines taught by Beha are superior to the teaching of Christ—a thing which I confess seems to me almost impossible, for I cannot imagine a doctrine purer or more elevated than that of Christ. Lastly, quite apart from miracles in the ordinary sense, there is one sign which we regard as the especial characteristic of a prophet, to wit, that he should have knowledge of events which have not yet come to pass. No sign can be more appropriate or more convincing than this.

For a prophet claims to be inspired by God, and to speak of the mysteries of the Unseen. If he has knowledge of the Unseen he may well be expected to have knowledge of the Future. That we may know that what he tells us about other matters beyond our ken is true, we must be convinced that he has knowledge surpassing ours in some matter which we can verify. This is afforded most readily by the foretelling of events which have not yet happened, and which we cannot foresee. These three signs appear to me both sufficient and requisite to establish such a claim as that which you advance for Beha."

I allowed the discussion to stand at this point, and proceeded to make inquiries about the books which they prize most highly. In reply to these inquiries they informed me that Mirza Ali Mohammed the Bab had composed in all about an hundred separate treatises of different sizes; that the name Beyan was applied generally to all of them; and that the book which I described as having been translated into French by Gobineau must be that specially designated as the Kitabu 'l-Ahkam ("Book of Precepts"). Beha, they added, had composed about the same number of separate books and letters. I asked if all these works existed in Shiraz, to which they replied: "No, they are scattered about the country in the hands of believers—some at Yezd, some at Isfahan, some in other places. In Shiraz the total number of separate works is altogether about a dozen."

"If that be so," I remarked, "I supposed that some few works of greater value than the others are to be found in every community of believers; and I should be glad to know which these are, so that I may endeavor to obtain them."

“All that emanates from the Source (masdar) is equal in importance,” they answered, “but some books are more systematic, more easily understood, and therefore more widely read than others. Of these the chief are:—(1) The Kitab-i-Akdas (‘Most Holy Book’), which sums up all the commands and ordinances enjoined on us; (2) The Ikan (‘Assurance’), which sets forth the proof of our religion; (3) Dissertations on Science—astronomy, metaphysics, and the like—which we call Suwar-i’Ilmiyye; (4) Prayers (Munajat) and Exhortations (Khutab). Besides these there is a history of the early events of this ‘manifestation,’ written by one who desired to keep his name secret.”