

Some notes on fundamental principles: Western scholarship and the religion of the Báb

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In recent years scholarly papers have appeared in Western countries on the Bábí-Bahá'í religion the like of which only very rarely emerge in the East. Bahá'í writers in Iran have never been able produce works informed by critical analysis; not only because most of them were not used to this kind of methodology but also in view of the fact that enemies of their newly-born Faith were ever ready to attack them and latch onto any word or expression that might further their hostile aims. Iranian Bahá'í literature is thus a kind of apology, a defence of the Faith.

Scholars in western countries, on the other hand, have also, in certain cases failed to grasp important fundamentals. Some among them have failed to penetrate the religious milieu within which the Bábí-Bahá'í Cause emerged; they have neither gained an adequate notion of what religion is nor befittingly set, for example, the Bábí Faith within in 19th century Iranian religious environment. Bábí history and doctrine are spoken about in largely socio-political terms as if the Bábí Faith were a 'political movement'. This undoubtedly leads to wrong judgements.

In this paper the present writer will attempt to discuss certain fundamental principles which, it is hoped, will help Western scholars to gain a more adequate grasp of the religion of the Báb. A narrowly historical and non-theological approach to religion is severely limited. The divine plan and purpose behind historical events must be appreciated. The eminent Bahá'í scholar Mírzá Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpáygání has observed that scholars have made great mistakes in taking a narrowly historical approach to the revealed Books—outside of an understanding of them in the light of the Divine Purpose.¹ More recently H. M. Balyuzi has written as follows about the inadequacy of the western understanding of the Arabian Prophet: "This inadequacy among western authors may be traced to a fundamental lack of the appreciation of the full claims and the Mission of the Prophet. However greatly impressed by the achievements; character and even doctrines, their judgement of Muḥammad Himself and their evaluation of his Faith cannot be other than suspect when their fundamental conviction was that he was a deluded imposter."²

¹ Refer, Gulpáygání, "ad-Durar al-Bahá'íya" in *Mukhtárát min Mu'alifát Abu'l-Faḍl* (Brussels 1970/138 Badí'), p. 20.

² Balyuzi, *Muḥammad and the Course of Islám* (Oxford 1976), p. 1.

Those who attempt to study the history of a religion in purely historical terms and in disregard of the religious teachings of its Founder Messenger may discover contradictions. It should be borne in mind however, that the exigencies of the Divine Wisdom not only necessitate a progressive revelation of religious truth in terms of the succession of religions but also within the span of a single religion. Like a loving father God gradually and in a variety of ways guides his creatures.

It is unfortunate that western scholars of the early years of the Bábí-Bahá'í religion have, in some cases, failed to realise the progressive or gradual unfoldment of the religious message conveyed and have thereby misrepresented its historical evolution.

I. The claims of the Báb

The study of the claims of the Báb should be made in the context of God's plan for mankind through his Messengers as expressed in Bábí scripture.

In the Báb's writings it is explained that the Founders of all religions, though they appeared in different places and at different times, have all been manifestations of the same Divine Reality; "We discriminate against none of His apostles".¹ The "Days" or dispensations of these great Founder Prophets have though, in the light of varying human capacities and the levels of the greatness of the Message, never been the same; "We have exalted some above others".² In the revealed Books mention is made of a future "Day of Days" or "Day of God". The end of the cycle of prophethood is announced in the Qur'án in the light of the world being at the threshold of the "Day of God". The Prophet Muḥammad was the "Seal of the Prophets".³ His religious dispensation will be followed by the arrival of the "Day of God" which is the "Day" when humanity will behold their God walking among them on earth.

In many of his writings the Báb declared that the expected "Day of God" had arrived and that the promised One of all ages had appeared. His claims should be viewed in this light. Consider the following excerpts from his writings:

When God sent forth His Prophet Muḥammad, on that Day the termination of the prophetic cycle was foreordained in the knowledge of God. Yea, that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained. Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people of bygone time, eagerly expected. What then hath befallen

¹ Qur'án 2:284.

² Qur'án 2:252.

³ Qur'án 33:40.

*yeu that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence?*¹

*Fear ye God and breathe not a word concerning His most Great Remembrance other than what hath been ordained by God, inasmuch as We have established a separate covenant regarding Him with every Prophet and his followers. Indeed, We have not sent any Messenger without this binding covenant and We do not, of a truth, pass judgement upon anything except after the covenant of Him Who is the Supreme Gate hath been established.*²

These passages illustrate the real claims made by the Báb. Such claims were in fact made by him at the very outset of his mission. He did however, gradually and in the light of the capacities of his hearers, intimate his ultimate claims. As we shall see he early on referred to himself as “the Gate” (*báb*) giving the impression that he was an intermediary between the hidden Imám and the believers. He represented his words as being the words of the hidden Imám and drew on *Shí‘í* concepts surrounding the advent of the promised Qá‘im and his occultation.

In order to appreciate the gradual nature of the Báb’s intimation of his ultimate claims one has to take into account the contemporary Muslim attitudes surrounding:

A) The claim to Divinity

The idea of calling a prophet “God”—not problematic for Christians—was out of the question for Muslim theologians. In Islám a prophet is a man chosen by God to be his Messenger; throughout his life he remains a man. Those verses in the Qur’án that mention the “meeting” (*liqá’*) with God on the “Day of Resurrection”,³ were not taken literally. Commentators interpreted them in terms of “reward and punishment” and the “power of God” and the like in connection with the “Day of Resurrection”.⁴ Though some Muslim mystics believed that by virtue of their “dying to self” and “living in God” they could legitimately say “I am the Truth” they were condemned as heretics. Ḥusayn ibn-i-Manṣúr Halláj was brutally tortured and condemned to death for such a claim.⁵

B) The claim to Divine Revelation

Muslims were very sensitive to any claim to be capable of revealing verses (*nuzúl-i-áyát*); no one could claim that verses had been revealed to him subsequent to the mission of the Prophet of Islám. They believed

¹ The Báb cited in *Selections From the Writings of the Báb* (Haifa 1976, henceforth SWB), p. 161.

² idem, p. 46.

³ See for example, Qur’án 29:23.

⁴ Refer *Khulāṣat at-Tafásir*, pp. 174, 184, 253.

⁵ See ‘Aṭṭār, *Tadhkirat al-Awliyá’*, p. 583.

that *áyát* (“verses”) came only to the Prophet Muḥammad through the Angel Gabriel. The Prophet did not himself reveal verses but received them from God via Gabriel often having to wait months or even years before receiving them.

Apart from the Qur’án there is of course the question of the *ḥadīth qudsí* or “holy tradition”—also known as the “Lordly” and “Divine” tradition (*ḥadīth-i-rabbání/ḥadīth-i-illáhi*). It is commonly believed that these are records of revelations that came upon the Prophet Muḥammad through Gabriel while he was asleep—in his dreams—or in a visionary state. They are not to be compared to Qur’anic revelation or the *áyát*.

None of the *Shí’í* Imams ever claimed that his words were *áyát*, divinely revealed verses. Not even the eloquent and much-praised words of Imám ‘Alí contained in the *Nahj al Balágha* are considered to be the “Word of God”—they are greater than the utterances of men but inferior to the “Word of God”.

The Muslim notion of Divine Revelation is such that the *áyát* are considered to be the proof of the prophethood of Muḥammad. This is indicated in the Qur’án itself: “If men and jinn (the people of this world and the next) combined to write the like of this Qur’án, they surely would fail to compose like it, though they helped one another.”¹

C) The claim to abrogate Qur’anic law

Muslims are unanimously agreed that the laws of the Qur’án will never be changed or abrogated. All the laws of the Qur’án will ever endure until the end of the world. The expected Qá’im or Mahdí will rule according to the laws and precepts of the Qur’án. The advent of Jesus in the last days, intimated in the Qur’án,² is such that this will not lead to the alteration or abolition of Qur’anic law. The Messiah at his second-coming will live according to Islamic law.

The miserable fate that befell Mullá Šádiq-i-Khurásání when he in line with an injunction of the Báb, added a clause to the accepted *adhán* formula illustrates how sensitive Muslims were to the least deviation from legal norms. Although Mullá Šádiq was an outstanding mujtahid his act created such an uproar that according to Nabíl, “the whole city [*Shíráz*] had been aroused, and public order was, as a result,

¹ Qur’án 17:87.

² See Qur’án 97:3.

seriously threatened”.¹ His beard was burnt, his nose pierced, and through this incision a cord was passed by means of which he was paraded through the streets.

In the light of the foregoing it is not at all surprising that that Báb gradually intimated his ultimate claims and purposes. The present writer is amazed that western scholars have sometimes failed to realise this especially inasmuch as the same pattern may be seen in the lives of other great Prophets.

It is generally accepted today that Christianity was, from the beginning, intended to be a universal religion applicable to all mankind; and not a localised religion exclusively for the Jews. It should be noted however, that Jesus did not teach this at the outset of his mission. He said, “I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”² When he sent his disciples out to teach he instructed them saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter not.”³ Particularly striking is the case of the woman of Canaan who asked Jesus’ help for her daughter; “He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel It is not meet to take the children’s bread and cast it to the dogs.”⁴ With respect to the Jewish law Christ is recorded as having said: “It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void”;⁵ “Think not that I am come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.”⁶ These words may be contrasted with the developed Christian conviction that the Jewish law is no longer applicable to Christians.

The prophet Muḥammad’s gradual introduction of Islamic law is also worthy of detailed study. He educated his contemporaries according to their evolving capacity. Initially for example, he was lenient with respect to idolatry as the following verse indicates: “Say: Unbelievers, I do not worship what you worship nor do you serve what I worship. You have your own religion and I have mine.”⁷ At one point during his mission he was not strongly condemnatory of drinking; “They ask you about drinking and gambling. Say: there is great harm in both, although they have some benefit for men; but their harm is far greater than their benefit.”⁸ Then, seeing that some believers came to the congregational prayer completely drunk the following verse was revealed: “Believers,

¹ Refer Shoghi Effendi [tr.] *The Dawn-Breakers* (London 1953), p. 101.

² Matthew 15:24.

³ Matthew 9:5.

⁴ Matthew 15:24, 26.

⁵ Luke 16:17.

⁶ Matthew 5:17.

⁷ Qur’án 109:1.

⁸ Qur’án 2:218.

do not approach your prayers when you are drunk, but wait until you can grasp the meaning of your words.”¹ Subsequently the following verse was revealed, “Believers, Wine and games of chance, idols and divining arrows, are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them so that you may prosper.”²

It was in the light of the limited capacity of his contemporaries that the Báb gradually introduced his claims. In his *Dalá'il-i-Sab'a* he writes:

*Consider the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islám to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed, observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the exponent of the verse 'I, in very truth, am God', identified himself as the Gate [Báb] for the advent of the promised Qá'im, a descendant of Muḥammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'án, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being.*³

At this point it should be kept in mind that the gradual education the Báb gave his followers was not in a way, as some scholars have thought, that he initially presented Himself as a Shaykhí leader or pretended only to be the “Gate” of the Hidden Imám. The fact is that at the same time that He was trying to say things through which his contemporaries “might regard His Faith as similar to their own”, he claimed to reveal *áyát* after the manner of the Prophet Muḥammad. He, furthermore, claimed Divinity and that the promised “Day of God” had arrived. Consider the following verses from the early *Qayyúm al-Asmá'*:

On the revelation of *áyát*

*Verily We made the revelation of verses (áyát) to be the testimony of Our Message unto you. Can you produce a single letter to match these verses? Bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of those who can discern the one true God. I solemnly affirm before God, should all men and spirits combine to compose the like of one chapter of this Book, they would assuredly fail, even though they were to assist one another.*⁴

*We have, of a truth, sent down this divinely-inspired Book unto Our servant*⁵

¹ Qur'án 4:42.

² Qur'án 5:89.

³ SWB, p. 119.

⁴ SWB, p. 43.

⁵ SWB, p. 44.

Verily such as ridicule the wonderful, divine Verses revealed through His Remembrance, are but making themselves the objects of ridicule¹

On the claim to Divinity and the “Day of God”

The Lord hath, in truth, inspired Me: Verily, verily, I am God, He besides Whom there is none other God, and I am indeed the Ancient of Days²

O My servants! This is God’s appointed Day which the merciful Lord hath promised you in his Book³

Indeed We conversed with Moses by the leave of God from the midst of the Burning Bush in the Sinai and revealed an infinitesimal glimmer of Thy Light upon the Mystic Mount and its dwellers, whereupon the Mount shook to its foundations and was crushed to dust⁴

The abrogation of Islamic Law

This third aspect of the Báb’s claims, destined to shake the foundations of Islám, was only fully accomplished during the later years of the Báb’s ministry when the *Persian Bayán* was revealed.

There are however, in the Báb’s earlier writings, passages in which new precepts are introduced. On his return from pilgrimage for example, the Báb, anticipating later pronouncements, introduced seven new legalistic precepts in his newly composed *Khaṣá’il-i-Sab’a*.⁵ They, as far as Muslims were concerned were unacceptable innovations (*bid’át*) marking their author out as a heretic. The previously mentioned addition to the *adhán* formula, in fact, “I bear witness that He whose name is ‘Alí before Muḥammad [= the Báb] is the servant of the Báqiyyatu’lláh [= the Hidden Imám]”, was particularly unacceptable.⁶ Nabíl’s account of Mullá Šádiq’s voicing this new Bábí *adhán* formula set down in the *Khaṣá’il-i-Sab’a* bears eloquent testimony to extent to which Muslims regarded it as heretical.⁷

At the beginning of his prophetic mission the Báb expressed “triple claims” about which Muslims were extra sensitive; that is, 1) He claimed Divinity and spoke of the arrival of the Day of God; 2) He claimed the revelation of verses (*nuzúl-i-áyát*) and 3) He began to undermine the stronghold of Islamic Law—unimaginable to Muslims. At the same time He made less exalted claims that would satisfy those with limited capacity

¹ SWB, p. 60.

² SWB, p. 58.

³ SWB, p. 72.

⁴ SWB, p. 72.

⁵ See Muḥammad ‘Alí Faydí, *Haḍrat-i-Nuṣṭay-i-Ulá*, p. 153.

⁶ In the traditional *Shí’í* call to prayer the reality of the Divine Oneness (*tawḥíd*), Prophethood (*risálat*) and Guardianship (*wiláyat*) are affirmed. No orthodox Muslim ever considered adding anything new to the call to prayer let alone the name of one claiming special authority.

⁷ Refer *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 100f.

and hold back the clamour of the ‘*ulamá*’! He acted as a wise and loving spiritual physician; first administering small sugar-coated doses of medicine. Despite this there were divines who could not tolerate the least innovation or who reacted to the Báb’s great claims. Many denounced him including Hájí Muḥammad Karím Khán Kirmání who cried out in desperation, “Our God is not his God, our Prophet is not his Prophet, and our Imám is not his Imám.”¹

To sum up: from the very beginning of his mission the Báb conceived the supreme revelation promised in all previous religions. He spoke in accordance with the capacity of the people of his day though it would be incorrect to maintain that he merely wanted to claim leadership of the Shaykhí school—in rivalry with Karím Khán Kirmání and such other claimants to leadership after Siyyid’s Kázim Rashtí’s passing as Mullá Muḥammad-i Mámáqání.²

The concept of holy war in the Bábí Dispensation

The notion of war against unbelievers and the imposition of religion by the sword in the Bábí dispensation is one of the issues that has given rise to speculative statements.³

Before turning directly to this question and in the light of the previously mentioned importance of a comparative approach to the study of religion—the plan of God mirrored in all religions—reference may be made to the example of Jesus who, according to certain New Testament texts, was not exactly the gentle pacifist he is popularly imagined to be.

In his book *The Death of Christ*, Joel Carmichael has in recent times, discussed the possibly revolutionary intentions of Jesus Christ.⁴ He argues, on the basis of New Testament texts, that Jesus was a militant revolutionary referring in particular to his being called “King of the Jews”, his “cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple” (allegedly necessitating armed disciples) and his words recorded in Luke 12:49, Matthew 10:14 and Luke 22:36. The disciples of Jesus carried arms⁵—the same has been said of the disciples of the Báb (see below).

To what extent Carmichael is right is not easy to determine. The New Testament texts raise difficult questions similar to those raised in the Bábí sources. One can easily go astray in attempting to resolve such issues.

¹ Karím Khán-i-Kirmání, *Izháq al-Báṭil*.

² Contra D. MacEoin, *Shaykhí Reactions to the Báb in Studies in Bábí and Bahá’í History* (Vol. 1. Ed. Moojan Momen), p. 40.

³ See for example, D. MacEoin, “The Babi Concept of Holy War” in *Religion* 12:2 (1982), pp. 93–119.

⁴ J. Carmichael, *The Death of Christ* (Penguin Books 1969).

⁵ Refer, idem, p. 116. No convincing explanation as to what Christ meant by buying a sword (Luke 23:26) has been given. G. B. Caird in his *The Gospel of St. Luke* (Penguin Books 1979), p. 241, has gone so far as to suggest that this text provides “an example of Jesus’ fondness for violent metaphor.”

The apparently militant directives of Jesus and the Báb were made in accordance with the capacities and expectations of Jews and Muslims regarding their promised One. The interesting parallelism between the ministry of the Báb and that of Jesus has been referred to by Shoghi Effendi: "The passion of Jesus Christ and indeed the whole of his public ministry alone offers a parallel to the mission and death of the Báb which no student of comparative religion can fail to perceive or ignore."¹

To return to the question of Holy War in Babism. A comprehensive study of the writings of the Báb on this matter in comparison with a consideration of His actions and those of His disciples leads, at first sight, to a clear contradiction between them.

In his writings the Bab writes—theoretically—about *jihád* ("holy war") and often uses the same expressions as are found in the Qur'án. In practice however, he advises his disciples or counsels his followers to be mild, compassionate and forgiving towards those who oppose Him and his religion. His Christ-like gentleness led him to view others with compassion though the Muslim expectations as to the character of the expected Qá'im led him to speak theoretically about *jihád*.

The Báb's "Farewell Address of the Letters of the Living" illustrates how he called upon his followers to lead such saintly lives that others would be attracted to his Religion through their example.² His writings contain passages such as the following: "*It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past and shall continue to be in the future!*"³ "*Take heed to carefully consider the words of every soul, then hold fast to the proofs which attest the truth. If ye fail to discover truth in a person's words, make them not the object of contention.*"⁴ When the Báb decided upon the expulsion of Mullá Javád, a Covenant-breaker and fierce enemy of His, He wrote with suffering heart: "*At the time when I was writing the decree of his expulsion, it was as if one were calling within My heart, 'Sacrifice the most beloved of all things unto you, even as Ḥusayn (Imám Ḥusayn) made sacrifice in My path.*"⁵ Had he wished to act according to Islamic law he might have instead acted in accordance with the following Qur'anic verse, "But if after coming to terms with you, they break their oaths and revile your Faith, make war on the leaders of unbelief."⁶

¹ Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* (Wilmette Illinois 1979), p. 56.

² Refer *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 63f.

³ The Báb cited SWB, p. 77.

⁴ The Báb cited idem, p. 134.

⁵ The Báb cited Fáḡíl-i-Mázandaránī, *Kitáb-i-Ẓuhúr al-Ḥaqq*, Vol. III (n.p. n.d.; henceforth ZH [III]), p. 280.

⁶ Qur'án 9:11.

During the Báb's stay in Işfahán as a guest of Manúchihir Khán the He was addressed by his host as follows:

The Almighty Giver has endowed me with great riches Now that I have by the aid of God, been led to recognise this Revelation, it is my ardent desire to consecrate all my possessions to the furtherance of its interests It is my intention to proceed, by Your leave, to Tíhrán and do my best to win to this Cause, Muḥammad Sháh, whose confidence in me is firm and unshaken

His reply to this noble offer was;

May God requite you for your noble intentions. So lofty a purpose is even to me more precious than the act itself Not by the means which you fondly imagine will an Almighty Providence accomplish the triumph of His Faith Through the poor and lowly of this land, by the blood which these shall have shed in His path, will the Omnipotent Sovereign ensure the preservation and consolidate the foundation of His Cause.”¹

When the Báb was on his way to Ádharbayján some believers from Qazvín and Zanján collected the necessary forces to go to his rescue. This group overtook the guards at the hour of midnight and finding them fast asleep, approached the Báb and begged him to flee. “*The mountains of Ádharbayján too have their claims*”² was his confident reply, and he advised them to abandon their project and return to their homes.

It is recorded, on the other hand, that whilst being conducted to Máh-Kú the Báb sent messages to two men in positions of authority requesting that they accomplish his deliverance. One was Sulaymán Khán-i-Afshár whose son was married to a daughter of Siyyid Kázim and who was in Zanján at that time. His message was “*I am the Promised One. Arise and deliver me from the hands of the oppressors.*” The other was Prince Bahrám Mírzá the then governor of Ádharbayján. Both of these men ignored the Báb's appeal.

How can the student of the ministry of the Báb resolve such contradictions? While in the *Qayyúm al-Asmá'* the Sháh of Persia is exhorted to arise and propagate the Bábí cause with the sword the Báb is also known to have refused Manúchihir Khán's offer of assistance. The youthful Messenger of Shíráz requests deliverance from leading men on the way to Ádharbayján but when a group of his followers attempt this they are lovingly commanded to withdraw!

These difficulties can be resolved in the light of the Shí'í notion of the character of the promised Qá'im who was not expected to be a man of compassion and grace. He was to be a man of the sword who

¹ *The Dawn-Breakers*, pp. 152–3.

² *idem*, p. 166.

would declare war against all the inhabitants of the earth. The ensuing bloodbath would be such that its wave is to reach up to the stirrups of his horse. The Báb made statements in line with this image of the Qá'im but did not desire the concrete waging of holy war. He spoke of holy war but did not put it into practise.

He appealed to the powerful of his day in order to test their faith for, when assistance was offered, he refused it. His various directives regarding holy war were designed to indicate the fulfilment of time-honoured Islamic traditions: not destined to be literally fulfilled. His contemporaries were not completely ready for radical reinterpretations of the prophecies. The Báb educated and prepared his followers for the era to come. Though the new age had dawned with the Báb certain changes, such as the clear abrogation of holy war, had to await the manifestation of Bahá'u'lláh.¹

In his attitude to holy war the Báb gradually educated his followers, especially his close disciples. This is clear from the historical sources. In spite of the pronouncements regarding holy war in the *Qayyúm al-Asmá'* the sources do not lead us to believe that leading Bábís prepared for any insurrection. Those who took part in the episodes of Ṭabarsí, Zanján and Nayríz were protecting themselves and ready for martyrdom.² During the Zanján upheaval Ḥujjat clearly declared: "... During all this period of strife, what day hath there been, or what night, wherein I have commanded a religious war save only that I was constantly considering how we might ward off your assaults from our wives and children, for we have no choice but to defend."³ In a letter from Ḥujjat to one of the divines of Zanján, extant in his own handwriting, we read, "Tell the governor who has been deceived by your tricks, that it is enough of that. Let him stop sedition and disperse the army from around us and we are ready to continue our subjection. By God, the same king who is the object of your worship, will rise in anger against you if he is informed of your acts."⁴

Some students of Bábí history who have enjoyed the life-long security of the western world have argued that Bábí militancy is proven by the fact that certain groups of Bábís are said to have been armed, i.e. those Bábís who accompanied Ṭáhirá from Karbala to Iran. Such arguments are misdirected. In 19th century Iran there was no real police force to protect the peoples. Travellers had to be prepared to face the attacks of thieves and armed groups which were widespread. Macdonald Kinneir who visited Khurásán

¹ The Báb's gradual education of his followers is comparable to Jesus'. Early in his ministry Jesus, in accordance with Jewish expectations, represented himself as one come exclusively for the Jews. The universality of his message was fully realised after his crucifixion. (see Acts 11:1-8)

² This cannot be refuted. cf. MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War", p. 120.

³ "Personal Reminiscences of the Bábí Insurrection at Zanján in 1850" (tr. E. G. Browne in *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 29 [1897], pp. 810-11. Cited MacEoin, *idem*, p. 120.

⁴ Cited ZH (III), p. 182.

towards the beginning of the 19th century wrote: "The inhabitants, in constant fear of being attacked, never go unarmed. They even cultivate their gardens with their swords by their sides."¹

The present writer has vivid recollection of two experiences dating from the time when the Pahlavi dynasty had established a relatively peaceful situation in Iran. They may throw light on alleged 19th century Bábí militancy.

In the spring of 1942 I arrived in Nayríz in order to spend some time with the courageous Bahá'ís of that town, the descendants of the Dawn-breakers of the Bahá'í era. I noticed that in the town, though there was a governor and a small body of police, there was no real authority. In view of this the government had allowed wealthy citizens to engage their own armed men (*tufangchís*). One of them was the chairman of the local Bahá'í Assembly. Wherever he went an armed man accompanied him. His name was Mr Manşúrí. When the Bahá'í Assembly met he used to sit outside the door of the room in which his master attended to Bahá'í business.

On another occasion during the month of Muḥarram of the same year and at the same place, I noted that the Bahá'ís and the Muslims lived in two different parts of the town—separated by a dry river-bed. News came that the Muslims had decided that on the 10th of Muḥarram they would stage a procession through the Bahá'í sector. At the instigation of the Mullas they planned to attack, kill and plunder Bahá'ís and their properties. In view of this the Bahá'ís requested protection from the governor. He bluntly promised nothing and advised the Bahá'ís to be ready to defend themselves. The Bahá'ís decided that in order to put a stop to the savagery of the Muslim fanatics they would have to be seen to be powerful and ready to defend themselves. In consequence a number of armed men (*tufangchís*) were dispatched to the roofs of the houses of the main street through which the Muslim procession was to pass. This action had the desired result. The Muslim procession passed peacefully through the main street. There was no disturbance.

Of the three major Bábí upheavals, those at Ṭabarsí, Zanján and Nayríz, it is regarding that at Ṭabarsí that we have the most first-hand information.

Eye-witness testimony indicates that from the moment Mullá Ḥusayn raised the black-standard until the end of the Mázindarán upheaval there was no effort to collect arms. One source has it that when the Bábís arrived at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí they had only seven guns in their possession.²

¹ Cited Amanat, "The Early Years of the Babi Movement ..." (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis, University of Oxford 1981), p. 350.

² MS "History of Luṭf 'Alí Mírzá".

At this point I should like to contrast what one student of the Bábí religion has written about the arrival of Mullá Ḥusayn in Bárfurúsh and subsequently Ṭabarsí with the testimony of a source written down when the Mázandarán upheaval was hardly finished.

It has been recently written that,

In order to avoid further trouble, Hamza Mírzá ordered Bushrú'í to leave Mashhad and, on 19 Sha'bán 1264/21 July 1848, he set out with a large body of fellow Bábís, ostensibly heading for the Shí'í shrines in Iraq. Travelling towards Mázandarán, this party, swelled somewhat in numbers by new arrivals along the route, reached Bárfurúsh on 12 Shawwál/12 September and there clashed seriously with local inhabitants trying to prevent their entry to the town. Penetrating more deeply into the forest region of Mázandarán province they reached the shrine of Shaykh Abú 'Alí al-Faḍl Ṭabarsí on 22 Shawwál/24 September.¹

In this short account, of course, the writer has not had the space to go into details and explain how the clash began or record subsequent events; to explain why the Bábís penetrated deeply into forest region of Mázandarán and how they came to arrive at the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí. The impression is given that Mullá Ḥusayn wanted to enter Bárfurúsh by force; hence the journeying into the forest region of Mázandarán in order to find a suitable place to build a fort. The chronicle of Luṭf 'Alí Mírzá indicates a different perspective.

Luṭf 'Alí Mírzáy-i-Shírází was a prince of the Afsháriyya dynasty (a pre-Qájár ruling class) who, dressed in the garb of a Sufi, joined Mullá Ḥusayn's Bábí companions at Dih-i-Mullá. He was among the survivors of the Mázandarán upheaval-along with Mullá Šádiq-i-Muqaddas. He never completed his eye-witness account of the upheaval due to his martyrdom in 1852, though what was written down includes the following account:

[On entering the town]² that head of the wretched ones (*Sa'id al-'Ulamá*) had ordered that a large crowd of three or four thousand, with firearms, staves, and stones be ready and not let us enter the bazaar. Áqá Siyyid Zayn al-'Ábidín who was in front of the companions said: 'We are pilgrims and we have come a long way. The king has died and the roads are unsafe. This is the land of believers; we shall be your guests for a few days, until the king occupies his throne and the country is secure; then we shall go away'. 'You are not pilgrims,' they said, 'and we shall not let you enter.' At length His Holiness (Mullá Ḥusayn) ordered us to return and make our own way out. Those accursed ones started to treat us shamelessly and persecuted the friends. They took the companions property and harmed them. The companions asked permission from that *Quṭb al-Aqṭáb* (Mullá Ḥusayn) to defend themselves, but he did not allow them to. We reached the corner of the *Sabz-i-Maydán* ('Green Square'). Here they (the enemies) unloaded the horse of

¹ MacEoin, "The Babi Concept of Holy War", p. 113.

² Bárfurúsh.—Ed.

Áqá Maḥmúd of Iṣfahán and then a shot was heard. Áqá Siyyid Riḍá, an old man of seventy, fell down dead. Another shot was heard and Mullá ‘Alí of Miyáníh, who had not yet completed his youth, fell. Mullá Ḥusayn unsheathed his sword and turned back”

Luṭf ‘Alí Mírzá goes on to relate how the Bábís came to reach the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsí:

A rider came and announced that Khusraw Khán (Qáḍí-Kalá’í) wanted to talk to us. His Holiness (Mullá Ḥusayn) sent Áqá Siyyid Zayn al-‘Ábidín. That accursed one (Khusraw Khán) had said, ‘You have killed thirty-seven people of Bárfurúsh. How can you go on your way?’ Áqá Zayn al-‘Ábidín had answered [to the effect that] it had been their fault and they had first started things off by killing some [Bábí] companions. That accursed one (Khusraw Khán) had said that killing us [the Bábís] was lawful and that he would not allow us to depart That accursed one (Khusraw Khán) entered the presence of His Holiness (Mullá Ḥusayn) and it was agreed that he [Khusraw Khán] would escort the companions [Bábís] safely out of Mázandarán and that then Mullá Ḥusayn’s horse and sword and everything else of our [the Bábís] possessions that he might ask would be given to him. While the conversation was going on they started to take possession of our properties. One took the horse of a companion [Bábí] away and the other seized another companion’s sword from his hand The companions [Bábís] started off and enemies began to attack. One [enemy] came and took the sword from the hand of the companion [a Bábí] and if he followed him [that enemy] into the forest they [the enemies] would cut him to pieces Then his holiness (Mullá Ḥusayn) took an unsheathed sword and said to that accursed dog (Khusraw Khán), ‘If you want to kill me here is my neck; take this sword and kill me, but let the companions go free and do not trouble them.’ ... Anyhow, when night came the calamity increased, the groans and complaints of the friends [Bábís] augmented. The enemies laid hands on the companions [Bábís] possessions; half of the companions [Bábís] were stripped of their clothes and wounded; scattered in the forest Then he (Mullá Ḥusayn) asked if there was a place nearby where we [the Bábís] could stay. He [the guide] said that there was a shrine close by Three or four hours before sunrise we reached Shaykh Ṭabarsí All the companions [Bábís] gathered around him [Mullá Ḥusayn]. Then he [Mullá Ḥusayn] said: ‘We will all be martyred in this place. The enemies will soon attack us and shed our blood.’ The companions asked him if it was ordained by God, if so they were satisfied with it; but if it was not ordained he should ask God to change it. He answered saying: ‘God desires to reveal His Truth in this way, just as He did so in the time of the Prince of Martyrs [Imám Ḥusayn]’

This heart-rending account of Luṭf ‘Alí Mírzá does not lead us to believe that Bahá’í historians have suppressed the real facts of history or concealed the militant character of the Bábís. Mullá Ḥusayn is presented in an even more gentle way than in the *Tárikh-i-Nabíl* [‘The Dawn-Breakers’].

The early followers of the Báb

The lives of the early followers of the founders of the great world religions have ever inspired passion and enthusiasm in subsequent generations of believers. The early days of the emergence of a world faith marks a turning point in history and souls of extraordinary capacity stand ready to face the greatest of tests, often sacrificing all that they possess including their precious lives. Though little is known about the earliest adherents of most of the great world religions the study of Christianity and Islám illustrates that they were largely from the lowest level of society and bereft of culture and learning. For this, among other reasons, the great Messengers of God were not taken seriously by the learned of their day. In the time of Muḥammad those of high rank repeated what had been said at the time of Noah: "We regard you as a mortal like ourselves. Nor can we find any among your followers but men of hasty judgement, the lowest of our tribe."¹ It was similar at the time of Christ whose Cause was ignored by leading Rabbis and members of the Jewish hierarchy. Hence Jesus' praying, "I thank thee Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes ..."² and Paul's saying, "But God hath chosen the weak in the world to shame the strong."³

During the dispensation of the Báb the learned and wise, forgetting rank and position, responded to the heavenly voice of the Manifestation of God. Mention will here be made of a few learned Bábís in view of the fact that some writers have supposed that the learned deserted the Báb when they became aware of the real nature of his Cause. The submission of outstandingly learned men to the youthful Siyyid of Shíráz is a remarkable phenomenon that cannot adequately be accounted for outside of the recognition of His Divine Power.

- 1) Mullá Şádiq Muqaddas Khurásání was an outstanding Iranian Mujtahid who received his *ijázih* ('authorization') from Siyyid Kázim. In it the Shaykhí leader refers to him as "my trustworthy brother", "an accomplished scholar", one "superior among his peers, because of his outstanding insight and sharp intelligence, a possessor of both rational (*ma'gúl*) and traditional (*manqúl*) [learning]." At the time of the Báb's declaration Mullá Şádiq was resident in Işfahán. He enjoyed the highest degree of honour such that 4,000 Muslims followed him in the congregational Friday prayers.⁴ On believing in the Báb he suffered the calamity which befell him in Shíráz (see above). He took part in the Mázandarán upheaval (see above), was released following its suppression and lived a long life during which he was both faithful and ever ready to give his life for the Bábí Cause.
- 2) Mullá Muḥammad 'Alí Ḥujjat-i-Zanjání was another outstanding mujtahid who gave his life for the Bábí Cause. His father Mullá 'Abd ar-Raḥmán was

¹ Qur'án 11:132.

² Matthew 11:25.

³ I Corinthians 1:27.

⁴ Refer ZH, (III), p. 175 and Amanat, *The Early Years ...*, p. 275.

was one of the most distinguished mujtahids of Zanján. After completing his studies in Zanján Ḥujjat travelled to Iraq where he undertook advanced study. On his return to Iran he was already so famous that a great crowd gathered to meet him in Kirmánsháh. The inhabitants of Hamadán begged him not to proceed to Zanján but stay amongst them; this he did for some two years until the death of his father (in Zanján). At the request of the people of Zanján he took over the position of his father. His influence in Zanján was great. He acquired more power than the other Mullas who, unlike himself, made a business of their religion.¹

On hearing of the Bábí Cause he sent one of his disciples, Mullá Iskandar, to Shíráz to investigate it. His emissary had become a Bábí and when he presented Ḥujjat with some writings of the Báb he, after reading only one page, prostrated himself and exclaimed, "I bear witness that these words which I have read proceed from the same source as that of the Qur'án. Whoso hath recognised the truth of that sacred Book must needs testify to the Divine Origin of these words."

Ḥujjat was steadfast in the Bábí Cause until his last moment. He showed much heroism and courage in propagating it. His story has inspired many historians to write about him at great length. He died a martyr's death along with more than 1,000 of his companions.

- 3) Siyyid Yahyá Vahíd was another outstanding divine who believed in the Báb and gave his life for His Cause. His father was the famed author of many books. Vahíd also attained the highest level of religious knowledge being well-versed in *fiqh* and *usúl*. It is said that he had memorised 30,000 Islamic traditions (*aḥadīth*). He was highly regarded by Muḥammad Sháh by the time news was circulating about the claims of the Báb and was asked to travel to Shíráz to investigate the matter. At Shíráz he became a Bábí. A treatise is extant in his own handwriting in which he sets down many proofs of the truth of the Báb; acknowledging, for example, that the Báb was, though an unlettered Persian, capable of revealing 1,000 verses in Arabic in only six hours and answering the most abstruse questions. The Báb's power of revelation seemed miraculous to Siyyid Yahyá, a miracle which he could not refute. He found, whilst a guest of the Báb, that the Báb's manners, moods and behaviour were beyond normal human capacities. In his treatise about the Báb he applies to him the following Arabic poem: "If you attained his presence you would find the whole of humanity in one Man, Eternity in one Hour and the whole earth in one House."²

Siyyid Yahyá led the upheaval in Nayríz and gave his life in the path of his Beloved ten days before the Báb was martyred in Tabríz.

- 4) Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Bushrú'í was a highly knowledgeable, pious and well-regarded disciple of Siyyid Kázim Rāshidí. During the lifetime of his master he wrote books and commentaries on the Qur'án. He was so praised by Siyyid Kázim that the thought rose that his might be the Promised One—much spoken of by Siyyid Kázim.³ When the time came to send someone "to touch the lion's tail" Mullá Ḥusayn was chosen.⁴ It is well known that Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir-i-Shaftí greatly praised him,⁵ and how highly regarded he was by such great divines as Mullá 'Abd al-Khāliq-i-Yazdí, Mullá Muḥammad Taqí-i-Hiraví, Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Azghandí, Siyyid 'Alfí-i-Bushr and Shaykh Bashír-i-Najafí (all disciples of Siyyid Kázim).⁶ The story of his coming to faith in the Báb has been set down elsewhere along with details regarding his services and martyrdom in the Bábí Cause.
- 5) Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Azghandí was "the most eloquent, the wisest and the most eminent" among the 'ulamá' of Khurásán.⁷ He was the first to believe in that province and was converted by Mullá Ḥusayn. After becoming a Bábí he travelled to Shíráz in order to attain the presence of his Beloved. On the way he "compiled a voluminous compilation of traditions and prophecies about the Báb. He collected more than twelve thousand traditions in his

¹ See ZH, (III), p. 175.

² Cited idem, p. 470.

³ Refer, idem, p. 522.

⁴ See *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 15 ff.

⁵ Refer, R. Mehrabkhani, *The Lion Hearted Mulla Husayn* (p. 67—forthcoming, Kalimát Press).

⁶ See ZH, (III), p. 522.

⁷ Nabíl. See *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 87.

- book.”¹ Throughout his long life he remained steadfast in the Bábí Cause for which he had sacrificed wealth, reputation and all else besides.
- 6) Mullá Yúsf-i-Ardibílí a confidant of Siyyid Kázim, was one of the most eminent Shaykhí ‘ulamá’. His eloquence was such that he was [even] praised by Hájí Muḥammad Karim Khán-i-Kirmání. A native of Ādharbayján he, having accepted the Báb’s claims, taught his faith in that province to large numbers of people. He was widely travelled and eventually died a martyr during the Mázandarán upheaval.²
 - 7) Hájí Siyyid Javád-i-Karbalá’í was the grandson of the renowned Siyyid Mahdí, Baḥr al-‘Ulum. He was born, brought up and studied in Karbalá and was a leading disciple of both Shaykh Aḥmad and Siyyid Kázim. He also studied with some of the outstanding Iranian ‘ulamá’. After completing his studies he went to India and associated with all manner of peoples before returning to Iraq. After perusing some of the Báb’s writings he became a believer without hesitation and journeyed to Shíráz to meet his Beloved. He attained an advanced age and met and came to believe in Bahá’u’lláh. The eminent Bahá’í scholar Mírzá Abú al-Faḍl Gulpáygání considered himself a pupil of Siyyid Javád during the time that they both resided in Tehran—Siyyid Javád took up residence in Tehran the same year that Gulpáygání became a Bahá’í [1876—Ed.]; the latter visited Siyyid Javád each week for some years.
 - 8) Ṭáhira’s fame and renown are well-known outside of Iran. In view of her very considerable scholarly abilities her father always expressed regret at her being a woman and thus unable to occupy his place. After the death of Siyyid Kázim she held a class in his house where many came to benefit from her vast knowledge. Fascinated by her learning and eloquence a number of Shaykhis and subsequently Bábís accompanied her wherever she went. In his 14 volume commentary on the Qur’án the Muftí of Baghdad, Siyyid Muḥammad-i-Álúsí lauded Ṭahirá and credited her with accomplishments not seen in scholars of his time.³ She died a martyr’s death in Tehran.
 - 9) Siyyid Ibráhím-i-Khalíl was a leading ‘ulamá’ of the Shaykhí school and a close disciple of Siyyid Kázim. He was famous throughout his native province of Ādharbayján where many considered him greater than Mullá Muḥammad i-Mamáqání who claimed to succeed Siyyid Kázim. He lived many years after the Báb’s martyrdom and served the Faith with all his heart and soul.

The above are but a few of scores of Muslim divines who came to believe in the Báb and who remained firm in their faith. Without going into details others were:

- 10) Mullá Jalíl-i-Urúmí; 11) Mullá Aḥmad-i-Abdál; 12) Mullá Ḥusayn-i-Dakhíl; 13) Mírzá ‘Alí-i-Sayyáh; 14) Mullá Mahdí-i-Khú’í; 15) Mírzá Asadu’lláh Dayyán; 16) Mullá ‘Alí-i-Bastámí; 17) Mullá Muḥammad ‘Alí Quddús; 18) Mírzá Ḥasan-i-Zunúzí; 19) Mullá Báqir, Ḥarf-i-Hayy; 20) Mullá Muḥammad-i-Furúghí; 21) Mírzá Aḥmad-i-Mu’alim-i-Ḥiṣárí; 22) Mírzá Muḥammad Báqir-i-Qá’íní; 23) Shaykh ‘Alí-i-‘Azím; 24) Mullá Mihdí-i-Kandí; 25) Mírzá Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ḥakím-i-Illáhí; 26) Mírzá Qurbán ‘Alí-i-Istirábádí; 27) Mullá Iṣam’íl-i-Qummí; 28) Shaykh Muḥammad-i-Shibl; 29) Mullá ‘Abd al-Karím-i-Qazvíní; 30) Mullá Ja’far-i-Qazvíní; 31) Mullá Ibráhím-i-Maḥallátí; 32) Siyyid Aḥmad-i-Yazdí; 33) Mullá Báqir-i-Ardakání.

¹ Refer, idem, p. 132.

² See ZH, (III), p. 50.

³ See idem, p. 316.

Anyone who has lived in Iran will be aware of the level of authority which even low ranking Mullas exert. The influence exerted by the Báb on divines of the highest rank was remarkable in the light of the sufferings surrounding their espousal of His Cause. The following words are hardly accurate: "The history of Babism up to 18 is marked by a high measure of tension between the cautious intellectualizing of large numbers of Shaykhí Bábís who became more and more disillusioned and abandoned the Báb in greater and greater numbers as his doctrines and injunctions jarred increasingly with established Islamic theory, and the utterly dedicated bands of saints and zealots who argued, fought, and were often tortured or put to death for a cause they often understood little enough of."¹ There were, of course, those who abandoned the Bábí Cause when tests came. This happened in all religions: why should the Faith of the Báb be an exception?² Those who left the Báb were not however, the people of knowledge but the ordinary believers whose names have not been recorded. Only a few high-ranking divines abandoned the Báb along with two or three mullas of lower rank. In the former category are to be numbered Mullá 'Abd al-Kháliq Yazdí and Mullá Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Hiravi.

Mullá 'Abd al-Kháliq, an eminent Mullá, recognised the station of the Báb and, in a letter to his Beloved, expressed himself as follows: "I do not know with what tongue I should thank God for the honour of having been in your service My Lord, my God, I beg to be honoured by being taken into the service of my Lord and Master."³ The martyrdom of his son at Shaykh Ṭabarsí shook his faith. Abbas Amanat has written, "in [AH] 1265, the death of his young son Shaykh 'Alí, in the Ṭabarsí uprising, which happened at the same time as the Báb's claim to Qá'imíyyat, shattered the faith of the old mujtahid, and brought him to the point of denial."⁴

Mullá Muḥammad Taqíy-i-Hiraví, an outstanding mujtahid from Iṣfahán, became a staunch Bábí and translated some of the Báb's writings from Arabic into Persian. He was among the earliest converts of Mullá Ḥusayn whom he admired very much. When trouble and calamity befell the Bábís he was not able to remain steadfast. In spite of his failure he was known as a Bábí until the end of his life—he died in Karbalá. None of the Mullas of Karbalá were prepared to attend his funeral or attend to his burial; in the end a local mujtahid had him buried.

These were the only two high ranking mujtahids who left the Bábí Cause and whose names have come down to us. Mention might also be made though of two lower ranking Mullas who denied the Báb after believing in Him.

¹ Denis MacEoin, *Shaykhi Reactions*, p. 27.

² Tests are like a sieve that separate the weak from the strong. During the days of Christ many abandoned him. cf., for example, Matthew 16:19, 26:72.

³ ZR, (III), p. 172.

⁴ Amanat, *The Early Years*, p. 366.

Firstly, Mullá Jawád-i-Baraghání who left Babism along with a few of his associates. The problem with him was that he became a Bábí in order to satisfy his ambitions. It is recorded in Mázandarání's *Kitáb-i-Zuhúr al-Haqq* (Vol. III) that he on accepting the Báb, thought he would be in a position to right the wrongs done to the Shaykhis. Mullá Ja'far-i-Qazvíní, a native of the same town as Mullá Jawád, has left to posterity a manuscript in which he has described certain events surrounding the early days of the Bábí Faith. He has recorded that when Mullá Jawád first heard the news of the Báb's claims he stated, "Now the time has arrived for us to take revenge on Baraghání (an enemy of the Shaykhis)." Later however, he became jealous of Mullá Husayn and threw in his lot with Karím Khán-i-Kirmání.¹

Secondly there is the case of the lower ranking Mullá Siyyid 'Alí-i-Kirmání a onetime secretary of Siyyid Karím. According to Qatíl-i-Karbalá'í he forged a letter in favour of Karím Khán Kirmání's being the successor of Siyyid Kázim Rashtí.² When the forgery was discovered Siyyid 'Alí confessed to the forgery and stated that he had attempted to draw people's attention away from Mírzá Hasan-i-Gawhar—a claimant to leadership of the *Shaykhí* school after Siyyid Kázim's passing. He abandoned the Cause of the Báb at the time of the uproar of the divines of Karbalá. Much frightened he fled to Mecca.

Apart from these divines there were many souls who left the Cause of the Báb because they had no real idea of what the mission of the youthful Manifestation of God was. They apostatized when, according to the Báb's own testimony, he did not journey to Karbalá—as promised—after his pilgrimage;³ when the conference of Badashit took place; when the Báb defended the position of Táhira; when the believers of Marághih were informed by the Báb that he has abrogated Islamic Law, and on the occasion when those who had witnessed a miracle of the Báb in Urúmiyya were put to the test or experienced persecution. It was not the learned however, who left the Bábí Cause on these occasions but ordinary, immature people who could not stand up to the tests.

¹ Refer ZH, (III), p. 388.

² Qatíl-i-Karbalá'í, *Risála* in ZH, (III), p. 518.

³ When the Báb cancelled his journey to Karbalá, Mullá 'Abd al-Khálíq-i-Yazdí (see above) wrote a letter and asked the Báb about this. In his reply, a Tablet in the form of a prayer, the Báb explains:

... And Thou knowest that I commanded the 'ulamá' to enter the Holy Land [= Karbalá] for the Day of my return, so that Thy Hidden Covenant might be publicly revealed And Thou knowest the decree about which I heard in Umm al-Qurá [= Mecca] regarding the opposition of the 'Ulamá' and the denial of the remote among Thy servants who are the inhabitants of the Holy Land [Karbalá]. Wherefore did I change my decision and did not journey in that direction. This in order to avoid sedition ... to the end that not a single hair be unjustly taken from the head of anyone

Though part of the original text of this writing of the Báb is printed in 'Abd al Ḥamid Ishráq Khávarí's *Qámús-i-Kitáb-i-Íqán* (Vol. II [Tehran 128 Badí'], p. 1003f) it has escaped the attention of students of this subject. Denis MacEoin and Abbas Amanat have relied on the doubtful words of Qatíl-i-Karbalá'í [his *Risála* published as an appendix at the end of Mázandarání's *Kitáb-i-Zuhúr al-Haqq* [Vol III]—Ed] and Moojan Momen has written in his article, "The Trial of Mullá 'Alí Bastamí" (in *Iran* XX [1982], p. 113ff), "Neither in the Báb's writings nor in the Bábí and Bahá'í literature is there much to indicate the cause of this change of plan." (p. 140)