

THE PERSIAN RIVAL TO JESUS, AND HIS AMERICAN DISCIPLES.

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ONE of the most interesting of Oriental cults is a comparatively modern religion, Baháism, its origin going back only to the middle of the nineteenth century. Although so recent, this religion has spread from its birthplace, Persia, to the furthest ends of the earth. Not alone in the Oriental countries, Persia, Turkey, Egypt, India and Japan, have the Baháis found proselytes. There are thriving Baháí centers in France, Germany and England, while in the United States and Canada the work of conversion has met with even more success. Here Christians by the thousand have deserted the banner of Jesus for that of Baha'u'llah, and the work of proselytism is still being pushed onward with unabated zeal in the hope of making America Baháí. In thirty American cities Baháí meetings are held each week, and Baháí pamphlets are being unobtrusively but effectively circulated. A monthly periodical, half in English and half in Persian, is published in Chicago, and a Baháí temple is soon to be erected on the shores of Lake Michigan. Each year there gather together, at a quiet summer resort, representative Baháís from the United States and Canada, bringing with them the friends who are on the road toward conversion, and retreats are held at which eloquent Baháí speakers urge the claims of the new religion. Not seldom the European and Asiatic talent of the sect is called upon, and the chargé d'affaires of the Persian legation at Washington, Ali Kuli Khan, is usually a prominent figure at these meetings which extend through the months of July and August.

The present writer was brought by chance into contact with a number of Baháí converts, and the interest thus aroused finally led to an investigation of the history of Baháism. Some of the material gathered together was very illuminating and furnished ground for an excellent view of certain aspects of sectarian re-

ligion. An account of these aspects in the history of Baháism together with the impressions gained by personal experience among the American Baháis is what is here presented the reader.

The Baháis trace their origin to the preaching of Mirza Ali Mohammed of Shiraz, who in 1844 inaugurated a religious movement known as Babism, though in point of fact Baháism is an offshoot rather than a legitimate outgrowth of the Babi cult. To the student of religions Babism and Baháism offer this great advantage that, owing to the recency of the times in which they arose and the interest taken in them by certain Europeans (notably Count de Gobineau, Prof. E. G. Browne of Cambridge and Baron Rosen), materials are at hand from which may be drawn an impartial and tolerably complete history of these movements.

Ali Mohammed, the founder of Babism, was the son of a merchant of Shiraz, and in his early manhood took up this same vocation at Bushire, where for some five years he combined piety and business as so many shopkeepers do. His religious practices are said however to have degenerated into austerities not very conducive to either mental or physical vigor, one especially detrimental habitude being the exposure of his uncovered head to the rays of the sun for hours at a time. Finally he left his shop and made a pilgrimage to Nejed and Kerbela whence he returned in 1843 to set up in business anew as a professional reformer. His first efforts were directed, not toward founding a new religion, but toward rescuing Mohammedanism from the corruption into which it had fallen. In Shiraz he delivered a series of sermons in the Mosque of the Smiths, the chief characteristic of these sermons being bitter denunciation of the established Mohammedan clergy. About this time the leadership of a dissident Mohammedan sect, the Sheykhis, became vacant, and Ali Mohammed seized the opportunity to offer his services. The account of how he gained his first footing as leader among the Sheykhis is not without interest. Some time after the death of the leader of that sect a prominent member, Mulla Huseyn, paid a visit to Ali Mohammed at Shiraz. In the course of their conversation Ali Mohammed asked whether it was not time for the Sheykhis to select a new spiritual ruler to replace the one who had passed away five months before, and requested his guest to give an account of the marks by which the sect expected to recognize the person appointed by God as their leader. Huseyn described the signs by which the divinely appointed Master might be recognized. Ali Mohammed listened attentively, and when Huseyn was through said modestly: "Do you observe these

signs in me?", to which Huseyn bluntly replied: "I see in you none of these signs whatsoever." The next day Ali Mohammed again opened the subject, and repeated the same question. Again Huseyn replied in the negative. The would-be leader did not for the moment pursue the matter further, but the next day and the next day and the next he again took up the subject, and by dint of his pertinacity and the impression made by his masterly commentary on "The Tradition of the Handmaiden" and his other exegetical treatises on points of theological doctrine, he finally gained Mulla Huseyn as his first convert.

A portion of the Sheykhis accepted this new leader and became Babis, Ali Mohammed declaring himself the Bab or Gateway to Knowledge of the Divine. Another section, however, refusing to accept the innovations of the Bab, took as leader Mohammed Karim Khan whose descendants still rule the Sheykhi sect. In the struggle for leadership the Bab exhibited all of that kindness characteristic of sectarian religion, and gave to his rival the courteous title of The Quintessence of Hell-Fire. It was not alone among the Sheykhis that the Bab found adherents; many converts were gained among the orthodox Mohammedans. One very prominent proselyte was a beautiful woman, Kurratu'l-Ayn, who left her husband in order to preach Babism to the people. When attempts were made to reconcile her with her husband she complacently replied to the peacemakers: "He, in that he rejects God's religion, is unclean, while I am pure; between us there is naught in common." When the disciples of the Bab took such an attitude it was not unnatural that animosity should arise between the Babis and the conservative Mohammedans who derided the pretensions of Ali Mohammed to speak with more than human authority. By the vilification of his opponents the Bab had made numerous enemies, and persecution soon began to rage. Many Babis were tortured and slain, the Bab himself being executed by the Persian government in 1850. It is the custom so to paint the character of martyrs as to conceal all traces of imperfection, but though we pity the Babis in their sufferings and condemn the barbarity of their enemies, history forbids us to regard the former as sheep and the latter as wolves. The first killing in the warfare between the two parties was made by the Babis, not by their persecutors, and was the cold-blooded murder of a Mohammedan Mulla.

The story of this murder, as told by the Babi historian Mirza Jani, is by no means an edifying one. Mulla Mohammed Taki was the uncle and also the father-in-law of Kurratu'l-Ayn and was an

orthodox Mohammedan who indulged in public tirades against the dissenting sects of Sheykhis and Babis, and disparaged the holy men whom the sectaries held sacred. Whether, in his denunciation of the Bab, Mohammed Taki equalled or surpassed the bitterness with which the Bab habitually attacked the orthodox Mohammedan mullas we have no means of ascertaining. But at all events the Babis became enraged, and one of their number stabbed Mohammed Taki while he was saying his prayers in the mosque; this, as the Babi historian unctuously tells us, being brought to pass "by the Lord" in order that Mohammed Taki "might no more speak insolently of the saints of religion." A spirit quite unlike that of the Babis was shown by the murdered Musulman on his death-bed, since (according to this same Babi historian) he declared with his dying breath that he forgave his murderer. The latter escaped and, as the historian puts it, "joined himself to the people of God," that is to the Babis of Mazandaran province, who apparently felt no compunction at sheltering a murderer. However, two other Babis suspected of having a hand in the crime were captured and killed, and these were the first Babi martyrs of whom history has any record.

Kurratu'l-Ayn was suspected of having instigated the murder of her uncle, and she too found it advisable to flee from her home and take refuge with "the people of God." It was not long before the Babis of Mazandaran were an armed body of outlaws in conflict with the Persian government. Scandal says that Kurratu'l-Ayn so exercised her physical charms as to gain many soldiers for the cause. Though she never took part in the actual battles, by the devotion she inspired in the camp she became to the Babis something of a Joan of Arc. Undue self-depreciation, be it noted, was not among her faults. Upon one occasion, when Mohammed Ali of Barfarush, a shining light among the outlaws, turned toward the customary "Kibla" to say his prayers, she modestly requested him to turn toward *her* as she was the Kibla.

The Babi bandits of Mazandaran, who were led by Mulla Huseyn, the Bab's first disciple, had in view a descent upon Teheran, and had even selected a place of burial for the ten thousand Mohammedans they expected to slaughter in the capital. This pious expectation was not however realized, and the outlaws were finally suppressed by the Persian government though not until they had performed many valorous exploits. Again and again they defeated the government troops in battle. One glorious feat was the sacking and burning of the Musulman village of Farra; none of the in-

habitants were spared by the Babis who butchered men, women and children indiscriminately. Still more memorable was the victory at Daskes, where the Babis glorified God by throwing their wounded enemies into the flames of the burning houses, adjuring these Mohammedans to burn as penalty for their impiety.

Another revolt broke out in the province of Zanjan, and it is in large measure to these two revolts—revolts so serious that they were not quelled until the government had brought into play all the resources at its command—that we must ascribe the execution of the Bab. His condemnation cannot be looked upon as wholly due to religious bigotry, but was in great part a political measure due to the apprehensions excited at the Persian Court by the insurrections of Mazandaran and Zanjan. To what extent these outbreaks had their origin in the maltreatment of the Babis by the Persian officials and the Mohammedan mullas and to what in the aggressiveness of the Babis themselves it is hard to say. We know however that, once begun, the warfare was carried on with the usual Oriental barbarity on both sides. The religious regeneration brought about by Babism did not avail to make the disciples of the Bab less inhuman than their unconverted opponents. We have already noted the inhumanities committed by the Mazandaran Babis in the name of religion. The Zanjan insurrectionists indulged in like cruelties; they would divert themselves by slowly burning a prisoner with red hot irons; stopping his agony only as he was just about to expire, when they would cut off his head and throw it into the camp of his friends. Inhumanities like these are not cause for wonder; they are precisely what one would expect of Persians in the middle of the nineteenth century. But they show us that we must not be too sanguine in estimating the force of the religious movement inaugurated by the Bab in the regeneration of the Oriental character. Modern admirers of this movement put on roseate spectacles, not only in viewing Bahatism, the cult that has grown out of Babism, but even in considering early Babism itself. To them the Babi martyrs appear as models of meekness. Thus M. H. Dreyfuss, in his *Essai sur le Behaïsme*, referring to the troubles that culminated in the death of the Bab, says that there was “everywhere unheard-of refinements of cruelty on one side and on the other courage and the resignation evinced by faith”—a statement with an implication that is, to say the least, not justified by the facts which we learn on turning to more serious and authoritative writers.

As to the teachings of the Bab himself, it cannot be said that

they erred on the side of inculcating too kindly a feeling toward those of other creeds. The present-day Bahais represent the Bab as "a fearless protester against despotism and fanaticism," "an instinctive and passionate believer in freedom," but in fact the conception of religious liberty was quite foreign to Babism. In the sacred writings known as the *Bayan* the Bab laid down that when his people came into power no unbelievers were to be allowed to dwell in the five principal provinces of Persia, while everywhere else the unbeliever was to be subjected to restrictions and kept in a position of inferiority. Anticipating religious wars in which his followers would be victorious, the Bab was careful to arrogate to himself a share of the loot. One-fifth of all the spoil taken from infidels, together with whatever is incomparable in value or beauty (beautiful women presumably included) belongs to the Bab. Another token of the Bab's cast of mind is found in his decree that the public authorities shall destroy all books on logic, jurisprudence and philosophy. Quite an elaborate scheme for the government of Babi communities was formulated by the Bab. Each community is to have its affairs regulated by a council of nineteen members which levies a yearly tax upon the inhabitants. And the Bab expressly lays down, as the chief method by which this council may enforce its decrees, the interdiction of marital relations between husband and wife for a longer or shorter period; the assumption, of course, being that one of the couple is not likely to be contumacious, but will remain faithful to the church. If a certain Christian sect is not belied by its enemies, this mode of enforcing discipline has been made use of in the Occident, and the devoutly religious nature of the women of the sect has made its results most gratifying. As then the men are to be kept in subjection through their wives, it is not surprising that early marriage is insisted upon. After the age of eleven marriage is compulsory, and widowers and widows must remarry, under penalty of a fine, ninety and ninety-five days respectively after the death of the spouse. The Mohammedans claim that the Babis held up as an ideal, communism, not merely of goods but even of women. And it does seem to be true that there were those among them who dreamt of a time when, under the rule of the expected Imam Mahdi (whose advent at some indefinite time in the future was looked for by the early Babis as well as by the Shi'ite Mohammedans), "men will go to the bazars, invoke blessings, and take as an equivalent whatever they please from the shops." The justification of such a procedure was the theory that all goods were the property, not of their apparent own-

ers, but of the Imam Mahdi, while likewise all women were "His handmaidens whom He giveth to whomsoever He pleaseth, and taketh from whomsoever He pleaseth." And it was thought that practice would follow theory with women as well as with goods, since, as one Babi hopefully urged, there was a tradition to the effect that the Imam Mahdi would change wives and husbands, precisely as the Bab (he said) had already done in taking Kur-ratu'l-Ayn away from her husband and giving her to another man.

A year before his execution the Bab appointed as his successor a young lad of nineteen, Mirza Yahya, who is known to history under the title assumed by him: Subh-i-Azal, i. e., Dawn of Eternity. There arose however, after the death of the Bab, a second claimant to leadership in the person of Asadu'llah of Tabriz, a man of some prominence in the sect, his coreligionists having distinguished him by the title of Dayyan (the Supreme Judge). Fortunately there were a number of Babis awake to the importance of preserving for this "great spiritual movement" the blessing of unity. These Babis pursued the false prophet, and succeeded in hunting him down near the Turkish frontier. Attaching heavy stones to the neck of Asadu'llah, they led him to a convenient river, the Shat-ul-Arab, and threw him in. He sank to rise no more, and thus the Babi brethren attained, at least for a time, peace and freedom from the horrors of schism.

An attempt made by certain Babis to assassinate the Shah, two years after the death of the Bab, led to new persecutions, and Azal and those of his adherents that could get away fled from Persia to Bagdad in Turkey whence the Turkish government removed them to Constantinople and later to Adrianople. For fourteen years Azal was the nominal leader of the Babis. But he was not suited for the leadership of a militant religious sect. Professor Browne, who knew him, describes him as "a peace-loving, gentle soul, wholly devoted to the memory of his beloved Master, caring little for authority, and incapable of self-assertion." Intent upon the spiritual needs of his flock, he left much of the administrative work that is incumbent upon the heads of a religious organization in the hands of his half-brother, Mirza Huseyn Ali, a man thirteen years his elder, to whose thoughtful care, as certain Babis tell us, was due the timely taking off of Asadu'llah. This Huseyn Ali was of a very different temperament from Azal; with astuteness and resolution he combined an ambition that soon made him a prominent figure in the sect, and put into his hands all the hidden wires of Babi intrigues. The post of administrator of temporal affairs for

his brother was not enough to permanently satisfy Huseyn Ali; he aspired to absolute domination, but for some years he patiently bided his time. At last, in 1866, he announced himself to be a new manifestation of the divinity. The other Babis, Azal included, were called upon to recognize Huseyn Ali as supreme, and to accept as divine the revelations he proceeded to promulgate.

Huseyn Ali, who now took the name of Baha'u'llah (Splendor of God), had well judged his power over the Babi organization. Spirituality rarely prevails, in this mundane sphere, over temporal ability. Active and astute emissaries were dispatched in all directions announcing the new order of things. The greater part of the Babis, having probably been gradually prepared for the change by Baha who had kept in his own hands the threads of communication with the Crypto-Babis of Persia and with the Babi communities in Egypt and other outlying countries, accepted Baha as their new prophet and became Bahais. The claim to prophetic power was doubtless an aid to Baha in his pretensions, the Babis, it would appear, having reached a point where they were thirsty for new revelations. Azal had modestly ranked himself as the mere guardian of the divine message sent to man through his beloved master the Bab. Baha, on the contrary, put the Bab in the background, and amended and abrogated his ordinances. The Bab was now held to be a mere forerunner like John the Baptist, the true Messiah being Baha himself. That the Bab regarded himself in this light, Professor Browne (the highest authority on the history of Babism and Bahaism, and one who errs, if at all, only by a too sympathetic treatment of Baha) characterizes as "devoid of historical foundation." The Bab's nomination of Yahya [Azal] as his successor was "explicit and notorious," and the Bahais, who take as prophetic the utterances of the Bab as well as those of the greater prophet Baha, are faced with the difficulty of explaining how the herald whom they say announced the coming of Baha'u'llah, was not aware that Huseyn Ali was this Messiah, but relegated the coming dispensation which was to supplant his own to some indefinite time in the future, and cast his eyes upon an Anti-Christ (as the Bahais deem Azal) in selecting the future shepherd for his flock.

Azal quite naturally refused to submit to his brother's authority, and there still adhered to him a body of believers, small in number but comprising some of the most eminent of the Bab's disciples. Argument proving unsuccessful, the Bahais resorted to the *ultima ratio religionis*, assassination. One by one the prominent Azalites were stabbed or poisoned, at Tabriz and Kerbela, at Bagdad and

Adrianople. Azal survived, but the Azalites accuse Baha of having attempted to poison him. In the language of their tale, Baha brought to his brother "a dish of plain food with one side of which he had mixed some poison, intending to poison his Holiness." Fortunately however Azal declined to eat. The Bahais tell the story somewhat differently; according to them it was Azal that put the poison in the dish, intending to poison Baha. However, leaving matters of dispute to one side, we know at least that a number of Azalites were killed by Bahais, and that Baha'u'llah, as his writings show, regarded the murder of these men by his own disciples not with abhorrence but as divine judgments upon his foes. This Baha, we may remind the reader, is he whom the Americans and Europeans that have accepted the Bahai religion accept as their Messiah in place of Jesus; Jesus, Moses and Mohammed being by them equally ranked as minor prophets.

The strife at Adrianople moved the Turkish government to insist upon a separation of the two factions. Baha and most of his followers were sent to Acre, while Famagusta in Cyprus was the place fixed upon as the residence of Azal and the Azalites. Four Bahai families were however sent with Azal to serve as unpaid spies for the government, and it was likewise designed to send four Azalites and their families to Acre. The Bahais promptly murdered one of the four Azalites and only three of the families started for Acre with the Bahais. Azal was not so bloodthirsty, and the four Bahai spies reached Famagusta safely and dwelt there unharmed.

The letter from the Turkish government commending the Bahais to the care of the governor of Acre described them as "thieves and murderers." They were apparently anxious to justify this description of themselves, for as soon as the authorities at Acre relaxed their vigilance and allowed the Bahais to range the streets of the city, a band of the disciples of Baha'u'llah went to the house where dwelt the Azalites that had come to Acre and slaughtered them in cold blood. This at least is the story as told to Professor Browne not by an Azalite but by a fervent Bahai who was in a position to know the truth. And the apologists for the Bahais find the best face they can put upon the matter is to contend that certain Bahais went to the house in which dwelt the Azalites, intending, not to kill them, but merely to threaten them with death if they did not cease their derogatory talk against Baha, and that the result of their mission was a fight in which three Azalites and one Bahai were killed. At all events, the men who killed the

Azalites were not in the least conscience-stricken but openly avowed their deed and glorified themselves for it. And the Turkish authorities, who as Mohammedans had no liking for either Azalites or Bahais, instead of executing the men, contented themselves with meting out more or less rigorous imprisonment to Baha and his followers. This imprisonment—which was probably due more to fear of what the Bahais might do to Mohammedans and Mohammedan rule in Turkey than to any care for the surviving Azalites—lasted some time, but in the latter portion of his stay at Acre the situation of Baha was much like that of the present pope in his “imprisonment” at Rome. The Bahais look upon the exile of their prophet at Acre as a “martyrdom.” An unprejudiced Occidental however may think it just as improper to apply this term here as to speak of the “martyrdom” of a commonplace criminal who, as penalty for instigating twenty murders, serves a term in jail and then is forced to remain the rest of his life under the eye of the police in some particular locality.

Baha remained in exile at Acre from 1866 until his death in 1892. Notwithstanding the impediments put by the Persian and Turkish authorities in the way of the Bahai propaganda, this went on with undiminished vigor. From Acre, Baha ruled the Bahai world which each year grew to more and more imposing proportions. In the East assassination is not regarded as unworthy of a prophet. The thought that Baha, the Blessed Perfection, as he was fondly called, must be, in some measure at least, responsible for the death of the murdered Azalites would not prove a stumbling-block to a prospective convert from Mohammedanism to Bahaim. Thousands of pilgrims flocked from every quarter to see Baha and obtain his blessing. Many Bahais indeed gave up their homes and settled near Acre devoting their lives to the services of their Master. Soon gardens arose where before all had been barren sand, and it was not long before Baha was living in a veritable villa on the outskirts of Acre surrounded by the orange groves of his adherents.

Baha put forth many revelations of his own. He showed himself to be an astute opportunist, setting aside the stringent ordinances of the Bab wherever this would make easier the path of the convert. Thus the interdiction upon tobacco was removed and the Bahais allowed to smoke, though this had been forbidden to the Babis. Upon one point however he, like other sectarian leaders, was firm; faith in the Bahai doctrines is of paramount importance. He that is without faith, says Baha'u'llah, is “of the people of

error, even though he produce all manner of good deeds." This admonition has not fallen upon deaf ears. Professor Browne, himself a sincere Christian but no bigot, on telling his Bahai friends that as between "a Jew and a Christian, the former merciful, charitable, humane, pious, but rejecting and denying Christ; the latter cruel, selfish, vindictive, but accepting and reverencing him," the Jew ought to be esteemed the better man, received as reply: "God forbid! The Christian is without doubt the better." God, the Bahais said, was merciful and forgiving, and might pardon sin, but unbelief could not be pardoned. The modern Bahais however are not quite so plain spoken in this matter as were the early Babis. Mirza Jani, the Babi historian, records, with apparently no inkling that it is at all unedifying, a conversation between himself and Seyyid Yahya of Darab, a Babi celebrity. Jani, on one occasion, not very long after Yahya's conversation, asked the latter what his father thought of the Bab. Yahya replied that his father was as yet undecided whether to accept the claims of the Bab and become a Babi or not; and added, confirming his words with an oath, "By the Truth of God's Holy Essence, should my father deny this most luminous Manifestation I would assuredly, notwithstanding his conspicuous virtues and eminent position, slay him with my own hand for the sake of the Beloved; and this although such a father as he and such a son as I are seldom met with under the Heavens of the Moon."

The religious doctrines held by the Bahais are not very distinctive. The first article of faith is naturally recognition of Baha'u'llah as the most recent manifestation of the Divinity. Previous manifestations are recognized, Moses, Jesus, Mohammed being equally ranked as obsolete prophets of the past whose messages have been superseded under the present dispensation by the teachings of the prophet of modern times, Baha'u'llah. It is even intimated, on occasions when a proselytizer wishes to influence the adherents of pagan religions, that Zoroaster, Buddha, etc. may have been divine manifestations in their day. This recognition of other cults as founded on truth but requiring the new revelation of Bahaism to bring them up to date is an important feature in Bahai propaganda and has had much to do with its success. In giving an exposition of their religion, modern Bahais lay the greatest stress upon its message of unity. The object of the Bahai movement, they say, is the unification of people of all religions on spiritual lines. But as they aim to soften religious prejudice through a universal recognition of the pretensions of Baha'u'llah, it is difficult to

see how in this respect Bahaim differs from other proselyting religions. All such cults strive for religious unity, and like the Bahais seek to bring it about by the absorption of the adherents of all remaining sects. It is true that a Bahai convert is allowed to take part in the ceremonies of his old religion, but since he is all the while bound to recognize the promulgations of Bahaim as paramount over what he formerly regarded as the essentials of faith, we cannot regard this fact as making the Bahai movement any less sectarian. It is really a very clever piece of tactics which not only makes the transition to the new faith much easier than it otherwise would be, but also gives the neophyte opportunities for bringing other souls over to Baha.

The doctrines held by the Bahais in the question of a future life are somewhat difficult to ascertain. As an excuse for keeping these matters veiled, one Bahai said to a Christian missionary: "We believe in a future state so unthinkably ecstatic that if its joys were now revealed to men they would commit suicide to hasten their entrance into it." Most investigators however have reached the conclusion that there are really no definite Bahai teachings on this subject. At all events the vivid pictures painted by Mohammed of the joys of the celestial paradise find no counterpart in the Bahai writings.

A deviation from Mohammedanism is likewise to be noticed in the Bahai attitude toward the female sex. Bahai women are not bound to wear veils, though in Persia they often find it advisable to submit to the prevailing custom. The education of women is also urged by the present leader of the sect. Polygamy is less prevalent with the Bahais than with their Mohammedan neighbors, and in the Bahai writings destined for European consumption strict monogamy is advocated, which is rather curious in view of the fact that the prophet Baha'u'llah was a bigamist twice over, having remarried when the mother of his favorite son Abbas died leaving the Blessed Perfection with only one wife. A husband may divorce his wife, even though she has committed no very grave offense, and he is compelled at the most to let her take with her out of the common funds of the household nineteen miscals of gold (about fifty dollars); a like facility for divorce at the instance of the wife does not seem to be provided for, notwithstanding the boast that Bahaim favors the equality of the sexes.

A systematic treatment of ethics is not a part of the Bahai teachings. There do however exist a rather haphazard collection of ordinances by which the believer is admonished to regulate his

life. Thus all men are exhorted to engage in some useful art or handicraft; gambling and the use of opium and alcoholic drinks are forbidden; and it is prescribed that the dead be wrapped in fine cloths of silk or cotton and placed in coffins of glass, the burial place being most suitably lined with cut stone. Prayer is recommended, and when engaged in it one's face is to be turned towards Acre. Celibacy is discouraged and monasticism is looked upon as sinful. The influence of Western ideas can be traced in the advocacy of peace between nations, disarmament and international arbitration, and the adoption of a universal language. When a country has been made Bahai, union of church and state is to take place. Each community is then to be ruled by a council of nine Bahais (called the Bait al-Adl) elected by the faithful, and this council is to levy yearly upon every citizen a tax of one nineteenth of his income. The numbers nine and nineteen are sacred in the Bahai scheme, and not seldom even an American or European member of the sect will gravely specify, as one of the important changes to be made when they come into power, the modification of the calendar so as to make the year have nineteen months of nineteen days each. It is enjoined to renew the furniture of each house at the end of a sacred cycle of nineteen years. The actual state of the household goods does not enter into the question at all, and a European missionary relates how a Bahai friend, in complying with this rule, discarded a magnificent Oriental carpet whose colors had softened with age, and replaced it with a glaring monstrosity of Manchester manufacture. The absurd regulations based on the sacredness of numbers are not the only puerilities among the enactments of Baha'u'llah, but on the whole such ordinances are far fewer than in Mohammedanism.

In Persia, where of late years there has been a regime of comparative toleration in religious matters and the Bahai sect has openly raised its head, most of the conversions to Bahaimism come from the ranks of the Mohammedans. Some of the Zoroastrians have also deserted the faith of their fathers and accepted that of Baha'u'llah, but it is said that such conversions are being checked by the spirit of European rationalism which now to a large extent pervades the Guebre communities. Opinions as to the character of the Persian Bahais are somewhat various. Leaving aside however the enemies as well as the avowed partisans of the sect, the consensus of opinion would rank them slightly above the Mohammedans in all save regard for truth, while the Zoroastrians are classed as more trustworthy than either Bahais or Mohammedans.

To care little for veracity is an Oriental failing, and it is not surprising that the members of a proscribed sect who dared not avow their convictions should have become adepts in dissimulation. Not alone in the private life of the Bahais does prevarication prevail; it is also in evidence in their historical and controversial writings. To obscure the evidence that Subh-i-Azal was the legitimate and recognized successor of the Bab and to relegate the Bab himself in the eyes of the world to the lowly position of a mere precursor who was to Baha'u'llah what John the Baptist was to Jesus history has been rewritten and falsified and documents have been suppressed. The economy of truth is too plainly evident not only with the Oriental Bahais but also to an extent that is truly astounding with their American and European advocates. In the works put forth by the apologists in the Occident and purporting to give a historical account of the movement there is frequently no mention at all made of Azal, and when the latter is by exception mentioned there is little more than a passing reference to his claims as utterly absurd. Nor is there any more candor in the treatment of the question of the murdered Azalites. Usually the matter is quite ignored, and at most an attempt will be made to explain away one or two of the misdeeds accredited by history to the Bahais while the rest of the long list of Bahai crimes will be vaguely referred to as "other accusations equally incredible." In the Orient the Azalites claim that the Bahais deliberately destroyed or fraudulently tampered with the Babi writings on a very large scale. One notable book which the Bahais could not hope to destroy entirely, the "Point of Kaf" of Jani (which included a history of Babism), they rewrote, eliding all matter that favored the Azalites, and put the expurgated work forth under the name of "The New History." Fortunately a copy of the original work had found its way to Europe before this was withdrawn from circulation in Persia, for later on, when Professor Browne looked for it there, though he made "many inquiries amongst the Babis in different parts of Persia for Mirza Jain's history" he found, he tells us, "no trace of its existence." He adds: "This fact is very instructive in connection with the history of other religions, for it is hard for us, accustomed to a world of printed books and carefully guarded public libraries, to realize that so important a work as this could be successfully suppressed; and equally hard to believe that the adherents of a religion evidently animated by the utmost self-devotion and the most fervent enthusiasm, and in ordinary every-day matters by obvious honesty of purpose, could connive at such an

act of suppression and falsification of evidence. The application of this fact, which, were it not established by the clearest evidence, I should have regarded as incredible, I leave to professional theologians, to whom it may not be devoid of a wider significance."

The present Bahai leader Abdul Baha (Abbas the son of Baha), in whom there blends great astuteness with a certain apparent naivety, due probably to the inability of the Asiatic to comprehend the moral and intellectual standards of the European, in an interview with Dr. Jessop some years ago expressed with great frankness his idea of the duty of a historian. Speaking of Professor Browne and his writings on the subject of Bahaism, Abdul Baha complained that "He heard us and then heard our enemies (the Azalites) and wrote down the views of all. How can he get at the truth? Now supposing that a man wanted to learn about the Jews, and you are, we will suppose, an anti-Semite. He asks you about the Jews and writes down your views. Then he asks a Rabbi and takes down his views and prints both. How can he get at the real truth?" Realization that a Bahai writer may take this point of view which puts suppression of inconvenient facts in the light of a virtue will enable us to comprehend many things that puzzle one accustomed to Occidental straightforwardness. Abdul Baha himself, to help on the cause of his religion, wrote the "Traveler's Narrative" in which not merely is Subh-i-Azal disparaged by the imputation of want of personal courage (and in truth Azal seems never to have committed a murder) but he is even represented as never having been appointed by the Bab as his successor, and as never having been recognized by the Babis as their spiritual ruler. The fact is, the naming of Azal for this position by the Bab was explicit and notorious; the Bab even authorized him to augment the sacred writings and to add to the Bayan eight sections of nineteen chapters each. And upon the death of the Bab Azal received the almost unanimous recognition and homage of the whole Babi community.

Baha'u'llah died in 1892 having previously named his son Abbas as his successor. Abbas took the name of Abdul Baha (Servant of Baha) and is recognized by his flock as the Bahai pope. Baha'u'llah however had other sons by another wife; and apparently there was not the kindest of feelings between the two families, as one of these other sons, Mohammed Ali, also laid claim to the office of spiritual ruler, and was supported by his two younger brothers. This new schism has not as yet found any large number of adherents, but it is of interest to note that in the United States

the apostle who introduced Bahaism to our country, Ibrahim Kheiralla, espoused the cause of Mohammed Ali. New apostles being sent to counteract his heresy, most of the believers in America were persuaded to remain in the orthodox fold, and during one period Mr. Kheiralla is said to have felt that his life was in peril. This seems ridiculous to the prosaic American, but we must remember that Ibrahim Kheiralla knew his own people, and had doubtless vividly before his mind the fate of Asadu'llah and the twenty murdered Azalites. In the Orient where, as Professor Browne puts it, "human life is held cheap and religious fervor runs high" killing at the command of a prophet is not regarded as murder. Professor Browne tells us of a discussion he had with a Babi Seyyid in the course of which the good Babi said with a look of extreme surprise, "Surely you cannot pretend to deny that a prophet, who is an incarnation of the Universal Intelligence, has as much right to remove any one whom he perceives to be an enemy to religion and a danger to the welfare of mankind as a surgeon has to amputate a gangrened limb?"

Abdul Baha, the present ruler of the sect, who with his followers was liberated from his exile at Acre in 1908 by the establishment of constitutional government in Turkey, was born in 1844, and is a mild-looking venerable old man of pleasing personality. Kind to friends as he is, he is said by Persians to be very bitter toward his enemies. He took an active part in the affairs of the sect at the time of the strife with the Azalites, and history makes it doubtful whether he can be completely absolved from responsibility for the bloodshed that occurred. But there is no reason to believe that, whatever part he took in the factional warfare, he ever once acted against the dictates of his conscience. Oriental morality is not like that of the civilized West, and an Oriental, after doing what we would all regard as the most detestable deeds, may look back upon them with the greatest complacency, and be aided by their recollection in acquiring the benevolent facial expression of a philanthropist.

Abdul Baha rules his flock with a firm hand, and is docilely obeyed by his people. Ranking himself below his father, he nevertheless insists upon his own place in the Bahai dispensation as the "Center of the Covenant" in which capacity he assumes the sole right to interpret the inspired words of the prophet Baha'u'llah. Private interpretation of the scriptures is strictly forbidden. It was this assumption of authority in doctrinal matters that caused the schism led by Mohammed Ali. The seceders cite as decisive the

words of the prophet Baha'u'llah who, they say, characterized as a "liar and calumniator" any one that, before the expiration of a thousand years, should arrogate to himself such authority as is claimed by Abdul Baha. The latter, besides infallibility, claims a certain gift of prophecy, but faith in this was rudely shaken by the failure of certain predictions to materialize a few years ago. In the spring of 1908 Abdul Baha put forth in his "Tablets" (pastoral admonitions to the faithful) the promise of peace and prosperity for the Shah, Mohammed Ali, and made the prediction that the latter would rule Persia for the remainder of his life. Peace and prosperity however took the strange form of civil war; and the enforced abdication of Mohammed Ali in the middle of the next year, combined with his obstinate refusal to die after giving up the Persian throne, was the source of much scandal to the faithful and exposed the pretensions of the Bahai pope to the scoffing of the unbelievers.

Some years ago, when in Persia it was a perilous thing to be even suspected of holding the Bahai faith, the most exaggerated claims regarding the growth of the sect passed muster. Quite commonly a European would be told that half the inhabitants of Persia were secretly in sympathy with the movement and only waited the dawn of religious liberty to openly avow themselves Bahais. But these predictions were by no means realized when the state of affairs in Persia began to approximate toward something like religious toleration. It is true that even now Bahais, when talking with foreigners who know nothing of modern Persia, will often claim for their sect several million adherents. But this number will be abated to two or three hundred thousand when a better informed European comes along. The Christian missionaries put the number still lower, and estimate there to be not more than one hundred thousand followers of Abdul Baha in Persia. Whatever be their number we cannot estimate lightly the power of a sect which is composed of a well-disciplined body of believers that history shows will stop at nothing to attain their ends. In politics they ostensibly stand aloof but there is no doubt that they are strongly pro-Russian and are opposed to the spirit of nationalism, much preferring to see their country in the status of a Russian province than to have Persia enfranchise herself from foreign sway. In the troubles that took place a few years ago, the conflict between the parliament and the imperialists, the Bahais kept in the background, but it was thought that they carried on intrigues in favor of the Shah. Their rivals, the Azalites, who

still exist as a minor sect, were on the contrary devoted heart and soul to the cause of constitutional liberty, and worked ardently for the parliamentary party.

The sketch of the Bahai movement that has just been given shows its history to be not altogether an edifying one. And yet, desiring to be perfectly fair, we have not given credit to certain tales, which, though by no means incredible, are not established beyond a reasonable doubt. Thus we have not recorded the Azalite story that Baha'u'llah sent Abu'l-Kasim, a Bakhtiyari robber, one of the adornments of the Bahai sect, from Acre to rob a merchant in Constantinople who had fallen away from Bahaism, and that the emissary, received in the merchant's house as a guest, broke open the safe of his host and abstracted £350. A portion of this money Abu'l-Kasim is said to have kept for himself, while the rest he used to purchase clothing and other goods for Baha'u'llah from whom he received a blessing in return. Nor have we set down the story of Rizvan Ali, the son of Azal, who claims that when he paid a visit to Acre a few years ago his cousin, Abdul Baha, attempted to poison him. Leaving quite out of account such doubtful matter, there nevertheless remains so much infamy to be accredited to the sect that it is astounding to learn that Bahaism has gained a foothold among civilized human beings, and that in two years Mr. Kheiralla converted two thousand Americans, there being seven hundred of these converts in Chicago alone. A few years ago the Bahais claimed thirty thousand American converts which apparently was the high water mark in their propaganda here. More recently there has been a falling off, but the loss in numbers is compensated by the devotion of those that remain faithful. As an illustration of the command that the head of the sect has over his flock, we may mention that, realizing the importance of controlling the marriages of his followers, Abdul Baha from time to time tries with his European and American disciples to arrange a match that will be of advantage to his projects. And not infrequently the parties concerned docilely obey the mandate. There is to-day, in the city of Washington, an English lady of refinement married to an American negro whom she accepted at the behest of Abdul Baha.

To a student of human nature the American and European Bahais are most interesting, and the present writer, in two summers passed in the midst of the Bahai colony at Eliot, Maine, had an unusually good opportunity to study these curious people. My first impression of the Bahais, I must say, was rather favorable. At that time all I knew of the history of Babism and Bahaism was

derived from one or two highly eulogistic accounts of the Bab written by his admirers. It is true that no one who came into personal contact with the Bahais would be likely to overestimate either their intelligence or their erudition. As an illustration of the latter I may mention that one of my earliest experiences was to have a Bahai, in the course of what purported to be an account of the history of Bahaism, give me the interesting information that Persia is ruled from Constantinople and is a part of Turkey! But on first acquaintance the Bahais did appear to me to be simple kindly folk and I began to like them. Much to my regret I was subsequently compelled to modify this opinion.

The summer colony at Eliot finds most of its recruits among the New England Bahais, but quite a number come from New York and from Washington for a longer or shorter visit. Naturally women predominate. Among the members of the sect are a few of fairly high social standing, and the majority would seem to be in comfortable circumstances. Most illuminating, in a study of the morals and methods of the Bahais, is the story of how they came to make Eliot their summer headquarters. Some twenty odd years ago, after the Congress of Religions in Chicago, there was founded in Eliot the "Greenacre Conferences." The purpose was to continue for further fruition the religious parliament idea; to have each summer people of the most diverse creeds mingle with each other and with people of no creed at all. Religion was by no means the only topic discussed; sociology, science and art also had their turn, and the general spirit of the place was that each should look upon a heretic from his religious or sociological or artistic creed, not as a person to be avoided or merely tolerated, but as one to learn from and sympathize with. The aspiration common to all was that of broadening one's horizon, not only in religion, but everywhere. Things went very smoothly at Greenacre, a beautiful estate on the banks of the Piscataqua River, for a number of years, and it is quite certain that many persons here received great help in their spiritual development. Visitors came from the furthest parts of the world; Swamis and Buddhist priests as well as representatives of our domestic religions contributed to the mutual enlightenment. Like other religions Bahaism was given a hearing, and at Greenacre it was put forth as the religion of humanity with the brotherhood of man for its keynote. It was with this conception of Bahaism that a number of the Greenacreites, who naturally were not conversant with the dark side of the movement in the Orient, formally declared themselves Bahais. Of these, some, upon becoming better

acquainted with the new sect, severed their connections with it, but quite a few others remained in the fold. At first Bahaism at Greenacre was not a source of dissention; what disagreements there were being due to other causes. But in 1912 the Bahai pope, Abdul Baha, took a trip to the United States and was invited to Greenacre. Exhibiting a pleasing and impressive personality and an urbanity remarkable even for a Persian he succeeded in heightening the devotion of the old converts and in gaining new ones.

Before leaving the United States Abdul Baha is said to have casually remarked to a group of the faithful that it would be a very fine thing if the Bahais could control this beautiful place at Eliot. Really to attribute this remark to Abdul Baha may be wholly unjustified, but the fact remains that the Bahais did control Greenacre the following year. To manage the Greenacre conferences, an association entitled the Greenacre Fellowship had been legally constituted, at whose head were five trustees elected by the members. Factional quarrels had broken out in the Fellowship some time before the visit of Abdul Baha. Cynics said this was largely due to about thirty thousand dollars worth of property that the Fellowship had acquired by donations and bequests, and that the reason certain persons who never avowed themselves Bahais acted in unison with that sect later on was their desire to have a hand in the control of this property. But such a statement may be entirely without foundation, and the persons in question (with whom we are not concerned here) may have acted from the purest of motives. At all events, early in the year 1913 the Bahais set quietly at work to get their people into the Greenacre Fellowship. Circular letters of appeal were sent around to the Bahai brethren asking all to become members, with the observation that fifty cents was a sufficient membership contribution to insure the right to vote, and bidding any one who could afford to give more to put in a separate member for each fifty cents, as those who could not attend the meeting at Eliot could vote by proxy. Thus if any Bahai could give ten dollars, he should (in the words of one communication) "let twenty membership blanks be signed by twenty different friends and thus we will secure the necessary vote to elect the Board of Nine." To have a board of nine trustees was an innovation at Greenacre where five had always hitherto sufficed, and it would seem that the idea was to change the board into a Bait-al-Adl—that committee of nine which Baha'u'llah prescribed for the governing of communities unfortunate enough to be under Bahai rule. In striving to get as many voters as possible into the Fellowship, one pious lady with that

insouciance and disregard of purely mundane considerations characteristic of the religious zealot, had printed and circulated a communication to which, as was shown later in certain proceedings in the courts, she affixed the names of other persons without first taking the trouble to obtain their sanction! By means of these tactics, the Bahais, with their allies mentioned above, attained a majority of the votes in the meeting of the Greenacre Fellowship in 1913. They enlarged the board of trustees from five to nine, and finding it advisable to give their allies four seats on the board, distributed the other five among themselves, their opponents being left without any representation at all. To prevent anybody else gaining control of the Fellowship in the way they had themselves adopted, they amended the by-laws so that no one in the future could enter the Fellowship except by consent of the board of nine. An amendment was also passed under which the board of trustees is no longer to be elected by the members of the Fellowship; in future the board of nine will be self-perpetuating, any vacancy being filled by the remaining trustees. Finally, to make assurance doubly sure, the rank and file of the Bahais docilely passed a resolution by which even they could be prevented from kicking over the traces, since it was ordained by this that no future alterations in the by-laws could be made until after the board of nine had consented to the change.

The meeting of 1913 at which these new by-laws were adopted is said to have been a stormy one. I attended the meeting of 1914 as a disinterested spectator, expecting in my innocence to see exhibited some of that love-your-enemy spirit about which religious people are so fond of talking. But I saw none of this; there was not even that magnanimity in which an ordinary man of the world sometimes indulges. There was however in evidence a good deal of petty spitefulness. The Bahais had an overwhelming majority, many of their opponents having given up the fight as hopeless after the passage of the new by-laws. A few anti-Bahais did still claim their rights as members of the Fellowship to be present and take part in the proceedings; but most of these were debarred, it being ruled that they had forfeited their membership by paying the requisite annual contribution a day too late. There were at that time two vacancies on the board of trustees, which was then composed of five Bahais and two of their allies, and the last I heard of the matter was the report that these two seats also had been given to the Bahais, who would then have seven seats on the board out of a total of nine.

Greenacre has now all the benefits of Bahai rule. In past years such celebrities as Guglielmo Marconi, John Fiske, Joseph Jefferson and Edward Everett Hale found their way to Greenacre, but under the new regime things have changed. The present idea in selecting speakers for the conferences seems to be to consider soundness in Bahai doctrine as of first importance, and purely worldly ability as of very little consequence. A few lecturers that were not Bahais were brought in last season, but the Bahais seemed more anxious to convert these lecturers to Bahaim than to profit by what they put forth. A prominent feature of the Bahai regime are the devotional exercises, held seven days a week, at which the good Bahais listen to readings from the works of Baha'u'llah and from the "Tablets" of Abdul Baha. In addition, once or twice each week Bahai conferences are held at which the right to ask questions upon doctrinal points is granted any one who seems of promise as a proselyte. I used to attend these exercises quite frequently, drinking in the deep wisdom of Baha'u'llah. For instance: "The time cometh when the Nightingale of Holiness will be prevented from unfolding the inner Significances, and all shall be bereft of the Merciful Melody and Divine Call." Or the admonitions of Abdul Baha: "Oh servant of God! Be thou a sign of guidance, a standard of the Supreme Concourse and a light shining in the meeting of the maid-servants." Maid-servants of God, I must explain, is the tasteful title given to the ladies of the Bahai flock, whose good quality, Abdul Baha tells us, is submissiveness. Some passages are more pertinent: "Withhold not from My servant in whatsoever he may ask of thee, for his face is My face, and thou must reverence Me." "Oh My Friend by Word, Reflect a little! Hast thou ever heard of the beloved and the stranger dwelling in the same heart? Therefore send away the stranger, so that the Beloved may enter His home."

Toward any one whom they have hopes of converting, the Bahais behave in a very friendly manner, but they quickly assume a different attitude when they learn you are not likely to enter the fold. Of kindness without ulterior motives there is in reality very little. I saw nothing at Eliot which would lead me to believe that the Bahai religion widens the sympathies; on the contrary it seems to narrow them, but of course this is true of all sectarianism be it in religion or elsewhere. Especially noticeable is the animosity the Bahais feel toward the original Greenacreites who fought against them for the control of the Fellowship; a feeling which may perhaps be due to the proverbial fact that men usually come to hate

deeply those whom they have injured. Eliot is still a pleasant place to spend a summer vacation; there yet come each year a number of cultured and interesting men and women who have kept fast to the ideals of the old Greenacre; but you must not be seen in the company of any of these ungodly people if you wish to keep in the good graces of the Bahais.

In proselyting the Bahais begin by exhibiting Bahaim in a very alluring aspect. No dogmatic theology is brought to the notice of the neophyte who is given to understand that the very keystone of the sect is the absence of sectarianism. As one of its exponents puts it: "The ultimate aim of Bahaim is the spiritual unification of mankind. Its mission is not to supply the world with a new ethic, for a lofty ethic is already furnished us in the world's religious literature, but to knit all the faiths of the world and all the peoples of the world into one." Another prominent Bahai tells us that "The mission and object of the Bahai Movement is the uniting of all nations, religions and races in the love of God and the brotherhood of man." That lip devotion to the doctrine of the brotherhood of man makes the Bahais better members of society there is no evidence, and an investigation soon finds equal stress laid upon other doctrines which are trivial and even silly. The anxiety of the Bahais to increase the board of trustees to the sacred number of nine is an instance of this. These ludicrous touches are not however the worst features of the Bahai creed. Though kept in the background, the intolerant dogmatism of the old theology is by no means absent. To be sure the Occidental Bahais will tell you (to take the words of one of their European exponents) that they wish to "unite all existing religions by freeing them from the obsolete trammels of dogmas and rites," but this doctrine is only for neophytes and outsiders. In the inner circle it is taught that the vital thing is, not to be of service to humanity, but to tag yourself as a Bahai; that to enjoy the benefits of the new dispensation—the new covenant between God and man—it is necessary to accept Baha'u'llah as the Messiah and Abdul Baha as the Center of the Covenant: as the infallible interpreter of the words of the Bahai Saviour. Great discretion is however used in circulating the Bahai writings which deal with this side of the Bahai doctrine. When I was at Eliot a young lady of the sect was so incautious as to show such a work to a newcomer who had a genuine sympathy with what Bahaim appeared to be on the surface, but none with the esoteric doctrine. The result was the alienation of the prospective proselyte, and the Bahai saints of the inner circle are said to have roundly scolded the

poor girl for her indiscretion. They informed the man who had read the book that she had no right to show it to him as he was not yet far enough advanced in Baháism to be able to profit by it—a way of looking at matters that does not impress one with the idea that the Bahais are particularly frank and sincere.

Not all Bahai proselytes cling permanently to the sect; many, when they get to know its true inwardness go elsewhere. And those men and women that remain as permanent converts seem to be of the type that like nothing better than to be bound by the shackles of an intolerant sectarianism. Persons to whom morality is supreme and dogma little or nothing are not at home among the Bahais. Needless to say, scholars and thinkers are also conspicuous by their absence. There is to be sure a certain amount of culture to be found with many of the Bahais, but it is the culture of names, not the culture of knowledge. They can talk fluently upon various subjects and handle deftly the vocabulary of science or art or religion, but are usually woefully deficient of any real understanding of what they talk about. Of the history of their own religion they are particularly ignorant. Their conversion has not been attained by a dispassionate consideration of Baháism, but by their reading some passages from Baha'u'llah or Abdul Baha which struck their fancy, or by listening to the rhetoric of an eloquent Bahai speaker. So limited is their mentality that they can scarcely conceive of a bad man writing a good book or delivering an eloquent address. And notwithstanding the evidence of history they persist in endowing Baha'u'llah with all the virtues because he has written something that appeals to their emotions. A really rational person when he reads anything that stirs him and helps make him a better and happier man will appreciate it, and can be grateful to the author without feeling it at all incumbent upon himself to reverence this author and accept as inspired everything the latter has written. Still less will he wish to tag himself with the name of an author he admires and join a sect that groups itself around that name. But the sectarian, whether in religion or in any other field, is quite different. He delights to tag himself, and fastening his attention upon the one work or set of works he most admires, deliberately makes himself purblind to all else that is wise or noble or beautiful. And Baháism is simply a sectarian religion; it is a reversion to modes of thought that the ideals of civilization have long ago outgrown.