

The paper read was—

PERSIA AND THE REGENERATION OF ISLAM.

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A Society which seeks, among other worthy objects, "to increase the trade of the realm by extending the sphere of British commerce," may be presumed to have practical concern with the possibilities of economic progress in backward countries. But it is on a higher ground—though that is not a low ground—that I venture to submit to this learned Society certain of the results of my long travels in the East. This Society is an outcome, and its multifarious work is an expression, of an order of civilisation hitherto attained only by advanced Western nations; and it is my present purpose to show that some Eastern nations have lately, under circumstances of romantic interest, become possessed of a powerful impulse to ascend to the same superior plane.

Not every acorn grows into an oak. This is true of other things besides botany. It is true of religious movements. Therefore the world has generally been heedless of small beginnings. Sometimes the world has had cause to regret its inattention. Europe, at the present time, is not showing itself regardful of the rise of the new religious movement, called "Bahaism," in Persia. Asia is by no means unmindful of the phenomenon. Is Europe wise in its indifference?

Let us reflect, for a moment, upon the beginning of Islam. When the Prophet took to preaching in the wilds of Arabia, to semi-barbarous tribes of idolatrous nomads, Constantinople was the capital of Christendom. Muhammad himself had to flee for his life from his own kith and kin at Mecca. Yet in less than a hundred years the Saracenic Empire extended from Lisbon in Portugal to Karachi in India; and to-day the Christian cathedral of St. Sophia is a Muhammadan mosque.

Europe's unconcern regarding Bahaism in Persia, and beyond, has not even the excuse that the beginning is small. Already the number of Bahais in the world is stated to exceed two million, though the founder of the Faith was still preaching when Mr. Gladstone was preparing to hurl his last thunderbolts at the House of Lords. Not less than one-fifth of the population of Persia is estimated to have embraced Bahaism. Nor are adherents recruited solely from the Shiah sect of Islam. Sunni Muhammadans in large numbers have

been and are being converted. In European Turkey, and more notably in Asiatic Turkey, votaries and propagandists of the new movements are increasing yearly. I conversed with some of these in Baghdad, and found them zealous and sanguine. In Egypt, it appears, Bahais are becoming numerous. Morocco, Algeria, Tunis and Tripoli, I am told, are not being left unvisited. The northern provinces of India provide a large potential harvest-field, where there are already many sowers, and I have met Bahais in Bombay, Karachi, Quetta, Peshawar, Rawalpindi, Lahore, Delhi and Lucknow—all proselytes from Islam. Outside the Moslem world Bahai missionaries, quietly purposeful and steadfast, are carrying the teachings of the "Kitab-ul-Aqdas" (the Most Holy Book) into many unsuspected regions. Converts have been won among the Sikhs of Amritsar and the Brahmans of Benares, in which cities I have met a few of them in friendly converse; among the Buddhists of Ceylon, Burma and Siam; and among the Taoists of China and the Shintoists of Japan. Japan, indeed, is said to be proving particularly responsive to the call. Many Persian Jews in Tehran have become Bahais, and I have been privileged to attend some of their secret or semi-secret assemblies. These Jewish Bahais tell me that in Hamadan, in Persia, one of the oldest Jewish settlements in the world, where the reputed tombs of Esther and Mordecai are shown, at least a third of the Jewish community has openly or secretly gone over to the new movement. No Christian missionary to the Jews in any part of the world can boast a triumph equal to this. The Parsees of Bombay, who have preserved their religious and racial integrity for centuries by dint of an impenetrable aloofness, are now, for the first time in their history, beginning to show signs of doubting themselves since Bahai influences reached them, and many Parsees have actually become Bahais, while others (I have been told by one of their number) are held back only by social restraints. A more intellectual form of Bahai proselytism has expanded into Europe, and has been fruitful in Russia, Germany, France, and England. I found a large community of Bahais flourishing in Baku. The number of Bahais in London is appreciable: smaller circles exist in Manchester, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow. The United States of America promise to become a great Western stronghold of Bahaism, and many Americans have been at the pains of mastering the Persian language

with the sole object of studying the Bahai scriptures and commentaries in the original. I have had the privilege of many long and earnest talks with one of these American converts—a gentleman of culture and scholarship—in his charming Persian home in Tehran, who, though enjoying large private means, is devoting laborious and even drudging years to the cause, with that calm, settled enthusiasm which Bahai teachers commonly show. An American lady has composed a Bahai hymn in good literary Persian, which was shown to me by a Persian Bahai when I was in Isfahan. Canada also is beginning to give friendly ear to the new teaching, especially the cities of Montreal, Quebec, and Toronto. Before going further, perhaps I ought to state that I am not a Bahai.

SIGNIFICANCE OF BAHAIISM.

What then is Bahaiism? There are still people in Europe who confuse Bahaiism with Babism. That is not an unnatural mistake. The Bab was the first and the lesser of two teachers, and his followers called themselves Babis, until the second and greater teacher, Baha (or Baha Ullah) appeared, who superseded the Bab, as the Bab himself had foretold. The relation between the two teachers is compared by Bahais with that between John the Baptist and Jesus—the former prepared the way for the latter. To call the Bahais “Babis” is, therefore, like calling Christians “Baptists.” Babis, properly so-called—that is, followers of the Bab, who have not become followers of Baha Ullah—number no more perhaps than a few hundred. Practically they are an extinct sect.

Bahaiism, then, is not Babism. What is it? I shall not refer inquirers to Bahai literature, which is now copious and—thanks to the splendid industry of that eminent Orientalist, Professor E. G. Browne—accessible. As an Asiatic traveller I have learnt that a wide difference may divide the theory of a religion from its practice. For my own part, I have not been content to examine Bahaiism in the recondite pages of the “Kitab-ul-Aqdas,” but have investigated it in the minds of men who profess and preach its tenets, especially in its native home. Learned European writers on the subject have not always appeared to show an adequate appreciation of this distinction between dead doctrines and living impulses. Thus, even the most careful of the shorter summaries of Bahai teaching, which appears in the French encyclopædia of Larousse, seems

to overlook the true mission of Persia's new prophet. According to this undoubtedly well-informed authority:—

Baha Ullah has known how to transform Babism into a universal religion, which is presented as the fulfilment and completion of all the ancient faiths. The Jews await the Messiah, the Christians the return of Christ, the Muslims the Mahdi, the Buddhists the Fifth Buddha, the Zoroastrians Shah Bahram, the Hindoos the re-incarnation of Krishna, and the Atheists—a better social organisation. Baha Ullah represents all these, and thus destroys the rivalries and the enmities of the different religions; reconciles them in their primitive purity, and frees them from the corruption of dogmas and rites. For Bahaiism has no clergy, no religious ceremonial, no public prayers; its only dogma is belief in God and in His Manifestations (Zoroaster, Moses, Jesus, &c., Baha Ullah). Ritual holds no place in the religion, which must be expressed in all the actions of life and accomplished in neighbourly love. Monogamy is universally recommended. A universal language, and the creation of tribunals between nations, are to suppress wars.

Bahaiism is thus made out to be a sort of spiritual Volapuk or Esperanto—a world religion. This is the truth. Every Bahai would endorse it. The Bahai scriptures would confirm it. But I venture to hold that it is not the whole truth. I would even suggest that it obscures what, for practical purposes, is a greater truth. The fact is that Bahaiism, in its essential character, as I understand it, is not a religion, but a religious movement. If it were a religion its chance of diffusion would probably be small. Like Theosophy, it might captivate here and there a few intellectual or romantic souls, become a fashion in salons of philosophical unrest, and sink softly into oblivion. Thirteen hundred years have elapsed since the youngest of the world's great religions was born, and humanity seems to have crystallised into two main classes: one, too warmly attached to the old creeds to be turned away from them; the other, too coldly indifferent to be stirred by any new creed. Bahaiism appears as the complement of religion. It is, in very brief, the Protestantism of Islam. It comes to inaugurate the Reformation in Asia. Its spirit is anti-papal, anti-episcopal, anti-clerical. The Bab was the John Huss of Persia; Baha Ullah was the Martin Luther. Therein, to my mind, lies the force, the promise, I may say the historical momentousness, of Bahaiism.

Small minds run lightly to extravagances of eulogy and of denunciation. Let it appear that a noble and venerable institution has out-

lived its uses, and there are men who will overwhelm it with vituperation. Of this sort, as a rule, is the anti-clerical fury. There may naturally come a time in the development of a great religion when its priests, who are its teachers, cease to be a help and even become a drag. It is confessedly so with teachers in other domains of knowledge. The graduate who goes forth from his university to do intellectual prodigies in the world might, if compelled to remain for life under collegiate tutelage, degenerate into a pedant. But to say that a religion on arriving at spiritual maturity may be justified, in certain circumstances, in freeing itself from ecclesiastical bonds is not to sanction vilification of all sacerdotal institutions. Probably no religion has been, or could be, reared through the perils of unpopular infancy, and the difficulties of juvenescence, except by priests. It is only when priestly power outstays its office, or oversteps it, or corrupts it, that it incurs just blame. History, unfortunately, provides many examples of clerical abuse: but history also glows with the renown of priestly works which have contributed to the uplifting of mankind.

Islam, like other religions, owes its growth and its greatness in large measure to its priests. Unhappily, it also owes to them its decay and its downfall. This is no irresponsible pronouncement; it is the verdict of those who have, perhaps, the best right to be the judges—representative Muhammadans. I have moved about the Moslem world for fourteen years, and everywhere in my travels—in India, in Persia, and in Arabia—earnest Muhammadans (not Bahais) have urged upon me the same strong conviction. This is far from implying that the whole of Islam has become conscious of its degradation and of the cause. Enlightenment is, as yet, limited almost entirely to the inconsiderable literate classes, and the uninstructed millions still preserve much of the old superstitious veneration for Mujtahids, Mullahs, Syeds, Dervishes, Pirs, Imamzadehs, and other adorable people. But the new anti-clerical idea is surely spreading, and it seems to be the special mission of Bahatism to propagate it to the ends of the Moslem universe. Some of the most learned Persian Bahais to whom I have submitted this view of Bahatism at Tehran conferences have acknowledged its justness, and have objected only to the implication that the energies of the new teaching are limited to the regeneration of Islam. This limitation is not of my making. I am the last to presume to set a bound of my own imagining

to the potentialities of any human movement. It is a limitation of present-day fact. You have only to consider that the Muhammadan converts to Bahatism number more than two million, and the non-Muhammadan converts only a few thousand, to perceive the strength of the statement. The Bahai dream of a world-wide propaganda is doubtless a proper, and may even be a reasonable, object of aspiration and endeavour. My concern here is with what is actually being accomplished.

HISTORICAL COMPARISONS BETWEEN EUROPE AND ASIA.

If the Reformation in Christendom be brought into view for comparison—so far as comparison can go—with this new Reformation in Islam, some remarkable parallels will appear. In earliest days, several centuries before the Reformation dawned in Europe, Christianity divided itself into two great Churches, the Greek and the Roman, which never again commingled, and to this day dwell apart, the one ruled by its Patriarchs, the other by its Popes. Islam similarly, in its young years, split up into two great Churches, the Sunni and the Shiah, which never afterwards recombined, and still remain mutually antagonistic, the one under its Caliphs, the other under its Imams or their successors. In both cases priestly zealotry widened the gulf and kept it open. One of the cherished aims of Bahatism is to bring Sunnis and Shiahs together again in a reformed faith of love.

Priestly pretensions to temporal power, in Christendom as in Islam, brought Church and State into frequent conflict, and generally it was the people, distracted between their civil duties and their religious fears, who suffered most. Bahatism seeks to reconcile the spiritual and temporal authorities in Islam by showing that each is a necessary adjunct of the other: the Church performs the religious functions of the State; the State discharges the civil obligations of the Church.

Abuse of priestly power, in Christendom as in Islam, provoked from time to time sporadic outbreaks of what may be called premature Protestantism, and in both religions these revolts were extirpated by fire and slaughter. The massacre by Pope Innocent III. of the heretical Albigenses in Languedoc, whose offending was that they anticipated Luther by three centuries, could be matched by more than one agonising tale from the history of early Islam.

When we get down to later times, the

parallelism grows closer. From the twelfth century a change appeared in the universal acceptance by the Christian nations of the orthodox faith of Rome. In that age there broke upon the Church a flood of heresy which no persecution was able thoroughly to stem till it finally overspread half the surface of Europe. Men openly began to think for themselves in religious matters, to reject particular teachings of the Papacy, and to protest against the despotism of the clergy. The Waldenses in Lombardy, Germany, Flanders, Spain, France, and England, set up the Bible as their sole rule of faith, and renounced entirely the arbitrary usages and traditions of ecclesiasticism. Like the Albigenses, they suffered, but the fire of rebellion was now too big to be extinguished, though for a time it could no more than smoulder. John Huss in Bohemia, following the teachings of Wycliffe in England, set himself to restore the purity and simplicity of scriptural Christianity, and was excommunicated by the Pope. When, under a safe conduct, he went to the Council of Constance to defend his opinions before the clergy of all the nations, he was seized, ordered to recant, and, refusing, burnt to death. Similarly, in the twelfth century of the Muhammadan era a change appeared in the universal acceptance by the Moslem nations of the Orthodoxy of Mecca and of Kerbela. Similarly, there broke upon the Mussulman Church a flood of heresy which no persecution was able thoroughly to stem. Similarly, the Bab, defying the fanaticism of the Shiah hierarchy, shook by his fiery eloquence the supports of what may be called the Papacy of Islam, in seeking to restore the simplicity of Quranic Muhammadanism; and in like manner was excommunicated. Thereafter, beguiled by perfidious pledges of safety, he delivered himself into the hands of his enemies, believing that he would be permitted to justify his opinions in open controversy, and, as no threat could move him during his imprisonment to retract, he was executed.

John Huss and the Bab, each in his turn, were but the voices crying in the wilderness. It was not until the sixteenth century that the wave of popular feeling against absolutism in the Roman Church broke all bounds. Erasmus started a school of Free-thought. Free-thought has to-day become widely prevalent among the intellectual classes in Persia, and was, indeed, one of the first phenomena to kindle the prophetic fire of Baha Ullah. The Christian populaces in Europe were influenced by the

diffusion of satirical epigrams and allegories, directed against the heads of the Church and against the monks. Last summer, when I was in Isfahan, the bazaar was excited by the secret circulation of a lampoon representing Agha Nejefi (one of the most powerful Mujtahids in the Shiah clergy and the supreme religious head in Central Persia) standing crestfallen before the Throne of Judgement, while Allah poured scorn and wrath upon him. Anti-clerical pamphleteering of this sort is now common in many Persian cities, though it is still timid and furtive. Christian protests in 1508 were particularly loud against the use of the Latin tongue in the services of the Church. The religious reformers in Persia are now beginning to make a corresponding grievance of the use of Arabic in the mosques.

But it was Martin Luther who gave coherence, energy and permanence to the scattered forces of Christian Protestantism. And—so far as the movement yet extends—it is Baha Ullah who has wrought the same wonder for Muhammadan Protestantism. Martin Luther began the campaign by asserting the rights of human reason. The same was the first plank in Baha Ullah's spiritual platform. Indeed Bahaism deliberately uses the weapon against itself by insisting that its own teaching shall be subjected by every individual to his private judgment. Luther's first collision with the Pope arose out of the sale of "indulgences." The theory of indulgences in the Roman Catholic system, it will be remembered, was that many saints and pious men had done more good works and borne more suffering than was required for the remission of their sins: the surplus constituted a treasure for the Church, which the Pope was authorised to distribute in exchange for pious gifts. In the minds of the ignorant an indulgence became equal to a licence for sin. One of the most pernicious religious abuses in Persia arises from the pretensions of some of the priests to sell to the people places in Heaven; indeed there are priests who go the incredible length of issuing tickets or passes for Paradise in the manner of the booking-office of a theatre. I know of one case, in the city of Qum, where such a ticket was declared transferable. Baha Ullah attacked this scandal fiercely, and thereby threw down the gauntlet. Luther next proceeded to assail the authority of the Pope and the doctrines of the Roman Catholic Church in a succession of printed pamphlets and sermons, which all Europe showed itself eager to read.

Baha Ullah wrote the "Kitab-ul-Aqdas," the "Kitab-ul-Iqan," and the "Kitab-ul-Ahd," besides numerous letters or "tablets," all of which are now being steadily disseminated through Asia. When Pope Leo X. resorted to excommunication, Luther retorted by burning the Papal decree in public. Baha Ullah, in similar circumstances, not less scornfully derided his excommunicators. Gradually in Europe nobles and princes, as well as some priests, began to support the Lutheran cause, until its suppression by violence ceased to be even thinkable. The followers of Baha Ullah already include members of the ruling family in Persia—Viziers, Parliamentary Deputies, Governors of Provinces, and several priests or Mullahs; and although persecution in Persia has not ceased, it is now obliged for the most part to resort to quieter and subtler methods. One of my most influential Bahai friends was, before his conversion, an eminent Mujtahid or Muhammadan prelate. Pope Adrian VI., in alarm, called to his aid the rulers of Austria, France and Germany, and a last fierce campaign against heresy was thus set going. The son and apostle of Baha Ullah, Abbas Effendi, has told how the Ulema (religious doctors) constrained the Persian Government to take active measures against the Reformer and to order the pillage and massacre of his followers. Luther translated the Bible into German, and thereby dealt ecclesiastical authority one of its heaviest blows. Baha Ullah has directed that the Bible, the Quran, and his own scriptures are to be translated into every language in the world. Luther, himself a monk, assailed the principle of monasticism by marrying a nun. Baha Ullah adjures the priests of all religions to renounce celibacy and to preach by their example, mingling in the life of the people. This personal parallelism might be carried further, but its significance must now be sufficiently apparent. History to-day is opening a new page in Asia.

But the Reformation in Europe, as all know, was not a mere revolt against Rome. The essence of the movement is the vindication of the principle, independent of time, place, or circumstance, that man is, in his very nature, destined to be free. From the religious freedom won by the anti-clerical upheaval of the sixteenth century came, in a large measure, the political rights now enjoyed by the greatest and most enlightened peoples in the world. Indeed, the outstanding civic fact of the last three centuries is the firm establishment almost throughout the Western world of constitutional

forms of government, with parliamentary control over law, justice, and finance. Can anyone suppose it to be a mere coincidence that in Persia and Turkey the beginnings of religious reformation, as represented by Bahaism, have been followed by the first steps in political reformation, and that the wafting of Bahai ideas to Egypt, India, Arabia, Morocco, and Algeria is being accompanied by new forms of Oriental unrest? Or can anyone believe that the influence of this regenerative spirit will carry no further than that? Let us cast but one more glance at the Reformation in Europe and reflect upon its larger consequences. The religious and political changes that it inaugurated were not its end: they were but the means to a more splendid reformation. "Rich indeed," says one of the soberest of our historians, "has been the harvest of that great period. The spirit of inquiry, once set free, has changed and blessed the whole world. To this we owe in modern literature some of the noblest creations of the human intellect. To this are due the discoveries of science, which have made life longer, easier, brighter. Hence have come in every land the triumphs of truth and genius over prejudice and power. This it is which has created the greatest of modern republics, and has filled the colonial world with flourishing, self-governing peoples; has revealed the secrets of Central Africa and the isles of the great Pacific; has diminished distance by steam, and destroyed it by electricity; has struck off the fetters of the slave, and, last and best, has made the nations know each other, and in that knowledge has prepared, and is preparing, for the reign of universal peace." A Reformation on European soil and a Reformation on Asiatic soil will not necessarily produce identical harvests. But before anyone attempts to make light of the potentialities of an awakened Islam, let him recall the splendid proofs of power which early Muhammadanism gave to the world ere priestly abuse corrupted and debased it. "The Arab Conquerors," we read, "at first unlettered foes of art and science, soon began to make a progress in culture as rapid as had been that of their arms. They acquired, and were zealous in promoting elsewhere, the civilisation of the Greek and Oriental world which they had subdued in Egypt, Asia Minor, and Persia. Great cities were built, commerce and manufactures flourished, and schools arose in all parts of the Saracenic Empire. The result of the efforts made was that the Saracens played a great and honourable part in the intellectual

history of the Middle Ages. Their quickness and their poetic sensibility were conspicuous in science and in literature in the darker times of Europe, and their services were especially valuable in connection with medical science and philosophy." So writes a calm and dispassionate Cambridge historian. When regenerated Islam recovers its lost inheritance in the domain of civilisation and culture, who shall set bounds to its further achievements?

ORIGIN OF BAHAIISM.

It may be useful here to set forth briefly some account of the origin and rise of Bahaiism and of the general nature of its teachings, as viewed from the Bahai standpoint. I am indebted to Mr. Sidney Sprague, a distinguished American Bahai, whom I had the good fortune to meet in Persia, for the following summary of leading events:—

In the year 1844, there appeared in Persia a youth, Mirza Ali Muhammad by name, who called himself the Bab, that is the "Door" or "Gate," through which men could arrive at the knowledge of Truth. The significance of this title in a Muhammadan country may be appreciated when it is recalled that, according to Muhammadan belief, the door of knowledge was closed twelve centuries ago, when the Muhammadan Messiah, or Mahdi, disappeared from amongst men, and will not be re-opened till the Messiah come again. The Bab began his mission as a "Door," by opening the people's minds to the real truths of their own religion. Like all great prophets, he did not come to destroy, but to fulfil. He did not tell his Muhammadan hearers that they had been deluded all these years by a false prophet, but he did, however, rate them soundly—as Jesus did the Scribes—for their hypocrisy, and for their distortion of true religion. He also explained to them the true meaning of their prophecies and traditions that a Mahdi should come; foretelling the advent of Baha Ullah. The words of the Bab were naturally greeted with derision by the Muhammadan "Pharisees," and the Bab had to endure insult and persecution, culminating in his imprisonment and death. He was shot, by order of the Persian Government, in a public square in Tabriz.

The life of the young reformer was not sacrificed in vain. During his lifetime, great numbers of earnest men and women had allied themselves to his cause, and had been diligent in spreading his teachings throughout Persia, so that soon the movement grew to such an extent that the Persian Government and the Mullahs, or priests, became alarmed, seeing in it a serious menace to the supremacy of Islam, and believing that it must have some political as well as religious meaning. Orders were given to plunder and persecute the followers of the Bab, and during those dark years many thousands gave up their lives, or en-

dured the greatest tortures for their Faith. Here we find a record of heroic devotion, bravery, and self-sacrifice, which, as Professor E. G. Browne says, may perhaps be paralleled in history, but cannot be surpassed.

The Bab had left behind him a beautiful hope as a legacy to his followers, namely, that "He whom God shall manifest" should arrive and complete what he (the Bab) had only imperfectly begun. For several years after the death of the Bab, which occurred in 1850, the movement seemed in a precarious condition. It had a bad reputation with the Persian Government, it was looked down upon with contempt by nearly all the Persians of wealth and position, its followers could only meet together secretly, and no one dared to breathe the hated name of Babi; indeed, it seemed for a time as though the Mullahs had succeeded in crushing out the young Faith entirely. There was the greatest need for the coming of the "Promised One," to save the movement from extinction, and to restore the zeal and courage of the persecuted Babis. They were not to be disappointed in their hope, for, during the early sixties, there arose one whose grand personality, wonderful powers of utterance, and inspired writings, proclaimed him to be the "Manifestation" for which the Babis were waiting; and when, indeed, Baha Ullah publicly declared that he was the "Promised One," whose coming the Bab had foretold, the great majority of the Babis hailed him with joy as their Lord and Redeemer.

Baha Ullah was born in 1817, and came of a wealthy and noble family. As a young man, he became a follower of the Bab, though he had never seen him. His prominence as a teacher of the new Faith led to his imprisonment in Tehran. For some time he was kept in chains, until finally his wealth was confiscated, and he was exiled to the city of Baghdad, by arrangement with the Sultan of Turkey. While there, he continued to teach the people, and his influence over them became very great. During two years he withdrew himself to the mountains, near Baghdad, and lived apart from men, passing his time in prayer and meditation. On his return, he publicly proclaimed his mission, which was that of establishing peace and religious unity in the world. He called to men of every race and creed to assist him in establishing the Kingdom of God and the brotherhood of man upon the earth. The Muhammadan Mullahs of Baghdad soon became alarmed at having a man of such influence and power in their midst, and petitioned the Ottoman Government to remove him. Baha Ullah was accordingly summoned to Constantinople, and thence banished to Adrianople. In Adrianople Baha Ullah wrote those famous letters (sent later from Acre) to the Kings of Europe and to the Pope, calling on them to abandon their thoughts of warfare and to assist in establishing unity. The letters also contained prophetic utterances which were afterwards fulfilled. One such utterance, following upon a

slight put upon Baha Ullah's mission, foretold the downfall of Napoleon III. at a time when this adventurer, after the famous *coup d'état*, held absolute power as Emperor of the French. Another such utterance, following upon a gracious letter sent by Queen Victoria to Baha Ullah, foretold for Her Majesty a phenomenally long and prosperous reign, at a time when the monarchy in England could still be said to be under the remains of a cloud. After a few weeks spent in Adrianople, Baha Ullah was again banished to a still more inaccessible spot, the little fortress town of Acre, or Akka, on the coast of Syria. Here, with his little band of followers, Baha Ullah passed some of the most terrible years of the exile, for Acre could only be described as pestilential, and it seems probable that Baha Ullah was sent there in the hope that fever would soon quietly rid the world of him. Baha Ullah spent most of his time while in Acre in teaching the new faith to those few followers who could hold communication with him, in writing his instructions and admonitions to the world, in sending epistles, or "Tablets," to followers in different parts, and in writing a book, known as the Book of Laws. In 1892, after forty years of exile and imprisonment, Baha Ullah's earthly ministry came to an end. He left word to his disciples that after his departure they should look to his eldest son, Abbas Effendi, as their leader and teacher—the one on whose shoulders his mantle should fall, the exponent and promulgator of his teachings to the world.

Since 1892 Abbas Effendi, who thereafter assumed the title of Abdul Baha (the Servant of God), has been the leader of the Bahai movement, and under his guidance it has grown and expanded until its influence has become felt in all quarters of the globe. A striking example of this was witnessed by me when I visited Acre in 1906, and met men there from India, Burma, Persia, Arabia, Egypt, Turkey, Russia, France, England and America, all assembled to listen to the teaching of the Master (the name by which Abdul Baha is universally called). These men, belonging to various races, creeds and sects, were gathered round one table, breaking bread together, and greeting each other as brothers. Can such a scene be paralleled in any other spot on earth?

TEACHINGS OF BAHAIISM.

I am further indebted to Mr. Sidney Sprague for the following summary of the principal teachings of Bahaiism. It seems to me preferable to give an authoritative Bahai exposition like this, rather than an exposition of my own:—

The Bahai movement claims to be the Divine instrument for bringing religious unity into the world. The long roll of its martyrs, the wonderful lives of its founders, its regenerating influence in Persia, the fact that people of nearly every race, creed and sect have been attracted to it, and finally

its progress in the Western world, all these things compel at least interest. The young Persian Bab gave to his followers certain forms and doctrines, and some rules drawn up in a book known as the "Bayan"; but at the same time he continually proclaimed that he was but the herald of one greater who should come after him, and he told his disciples to be in constant expectation of "Him whom God shall manifest." The Bab, indeed, inaugurated a great reform, but his movement remained more or less Persian and Muhammadan, and one feels that it never could have become universal. It remained for Baha Ullah, who came after the Bab, to give to the movement its truly broad, catholic and universal spirit. In the "Book of Laws," Baha Ullah tells his followers that the sword must forever be put away: in its place the "Word" must arise. He proclaims universal peace, and calls upon the nations to settle their differences by a board of arbitration. He pleads for a broad spirit of friendship and tolerance, to be shown to all the peoples of the earth: "Ye are all the fruits of one tree," as he expresses it. He enjoins his followers to seek for a universal language. He says: "This is the means of union, if ye knew it, and the greatest source of concord and civilisation, did ye recognise it." He tells parents that they must educate their children, boy and girl alike, giving them the best instruction they can afford, and the poor must be educated by a board of councillors to be elected in each city, for he considers that until ignorance be uprooted there can be no true progress. All must learn and practise some craft, trade, or profession, which, if practised conscientiously and diligently, will be considered as the highest act of worship. There are no priests connected with this religion, and those who teach this Faith should not receive any pay, but support themselves by other means. The acquisition of the arts and sciences is recommended. Marriage is advised, and celibacy and asceticism are condemned. Baha Ullah wishes his religion to be one of joy and gladness. He strongly condemns gambling, the use of opium, intemperance, and other vices, and he lays down some interesting hygienic laws. A law is given advocating kindness to animals, and beasts of burden are not to be ill-treated or overloaded. Both the Bab and Baha Ullah preached the emancipation of women. Under this teaching, woman assumes her rightful position as the equal of man. In the following words, Baha Ullah tells his followers how the new religion should be taught to the world: "Beware lest ye make the Word of God the cause of opposition and stumbling, or the source of hatred among you. If ye have a word or an essence which another have not, say it to him with the tongue of love and kindness. If it be accepted and impressed, the end is attained; if not, leave him to himself, and pray for him, but do not molest him." It will thus be seen that the message of the Bahai movement is one of peace to the world, and that the Bahais consider this "Mani-

festation" as but another outpouring of divine truth upon the earth; that Bahais are lovers of the Light from whatever horizon it may appear, looking on the different "Prophets," or founders of religion, as so many different lamps through which this Light shone forth, and by which all the world has been illumined; therefore Bahaim considers all religions to be divine, and possessing the essence of Truth which has since become obscured by the superstitions and ceremonial practices added by man. In other words, the teaching of the Bahai Faith is that the Logos, or Word, spoken of in the first chapter of St. John, has manifested itself on this earth, in past ages, at various times and to various peoples; those in whom this Word has been fully manifested and perfected, are men known as the "Prophets" or "Manifestations of God," and through them we hear the voice of God speaking to humanity. The distinctive claim of the Bahai Faith is that the eternal Word has manifested itself in our day, more powerfully than ever before, in the person of Baha Ullah. Besides the writings already mentioned, Baha Ullah, while in prison, composed several books dealing with metaphysical, philosophical and social problems. These books were written in Persian and Arabic, and but three or four of them have been translated into Western tongues. Some of the best translations are in French, namely, "Le Livre de la Certitude" (*Kitab-ul-Iqan*), "Les Paroles Cachées en Persan" and "Les Préceptes de Bahaim" translated by M. Hippolyte Dreyfus, and published by Ernest Leroux, Paris. The most important work of Baha Ullah, the "*Kitab-ul-Aqdas*" (Most Holy Book), has not yet been fully translated.

Mr. Sidney Sprague's description of Bahaim is characterised by calmness and simplicity. For greater picturesqueness of exposition one must turn from the Westerner to the Easterner. A Persian Bahai of high authority, formerly a Muhammadan doctor of divinity, favoured me with the following graphic explanation of his new creed:—

There is only one God. There is only one Truth. God is infinite. Truth is infinite. Man, being finite, cannot know God; cannot know Truth. Man knows something of God; something of Truth. This is because there has been a finite Manifestation of God; a finite Revelation of Truth. The Manifestation of God is one. The Revelation of Truth is one. Moses was the Manifestation; so was Jesus, so was Muhammad, so was Baha Ullah. All these are one. The Pentateuch was the Revelation, so was the Gospel, so was the Quran, so was the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas*. All these are one. Is this hard to understand? Consider the sun. The sun in the heaven is above my reach. Here in my hand is a mirror which contains the sun. To my senses there is no difference, except in degree, between the sun in the heaven and the sun in the mirror. Both suns give out light and heat and

energy. Yet they are not two suns. Nor has the sun come down from its place in the heaven in order to go into the mirror. To-day I smash this mirror. To-morrow I procure another mirror, and find the sun in that too. The second mirror is not the same as the first mirror. The sun in it is the same sun. Moses and Muhammad are not the same man. The Manifestation in them is the same Manifestation. It may be objected that the light that Moses shed and the light that Muhammad shed seem different. True. In mirrors of differently coloured glass the sun presents differently coloured appearances. But what is colour? Colour is incomplete light. The seven prismatic rays, when all are present, give complete light. The seven prophetic dispensations,* when all are present, give complete Truth. It is the mission of Bahaim to bring about such a combination. Will it be contended that some or any of the Prophets gave forth no light, not even coloured light? Consider this: Was there ever a prophet who did not denounce perjury, theft, adultery and murder; who did not enjoin charity, morality, dutifulness and reverence? That is why Bahaim contemns no religion, and reverences all religions. At the worst, even if the glass of some religions be smoked, it admits a certain quantity of light. There are some eyes, weak and watery, which cannot bear light at all unless it come through smoked glass.

ESOTERIC PHILOSOPHY OF BAHAIM.

I have never met two men, I have never read two books, whose accounts of Bahai teaching wholly agree. It would not be difficult for me to present to you many different concepts of Bahaim, gathered in my travel, each resting on seeming authority. This is, perhaps, only natural in the case of a religious movement which, setting out to emancipate the intellect, turns each individual mind loose in a new world of vivid thought to reason out its own faith by its own strength. The following half-mystical, half-transcendental, play of ideas proceeds from a school of esoteric Bahaim in Persia, whose existence appears to be unknown to Europe:—

Bahaim teaches that man, in his earliest spiritual weakness, has to support himself by props. These props are seven in number. They are indispensable aids to man's spiritual growth. Without them man would faint and collapse. They put him upon his feet, they enable him to walk, they give him strength, confidence, courage, and hope. But still they are props, and as props they are to be used only to the end that they may ultimately be dispensed with. Man's spiritual progress, in fact, consists in learning to discard these props one by one, as a young

* According to one version—Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Jesus, Muhammad, and Baha Ullah. According to another version—Moses, Zoroaster, Confucius, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, Baha Ullah.

swimmer learns to discard floats, and to rely more and more on his own God-given powers. The *rationale* of the process is explained by Baháism as follows :—

When man, after passing successively through the mental stages of brutalism, heathenism, and pantheism, arrives at last at the conception of one omniscient and omnipotent God, he cannot easily bear the greatness of the thought. He is appalled by the majesty of the Deity. He is paralysed by his own insignificance. He dare not approach his terrible Maker, though there is need to pray for bounty, for love, and for light. To his help comes the first prop—an intermediary—the Priest. The Priest, by separation from the common people, by detachment from carnal engrossments, by purification of body and sanctification of mind, may venture on behalf of sinful humanity to kneel in supplication before God's great judgment-seat. Is this idea of priestly intercession wrong? asked Baháism. Is it an evil thing that man should begin the spiritual ascent by confessing his own littleness and God's greatness? By no means. But what is a priest? A good and holy man. Especially he is a man. Cannot then all men hope to become good and to make themselves holy? When man realises (as he is destined to realise) that he and the priest are not two different orders of being, but two manifestations of the same order of being, the mission of the priest will be accomplished, and humanity will become a race of priests. Therefore, says the Logos, through the mouth of Baha Ullah, as recorded in "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Spirit. I have ordained for thee, from the Tree of Splendour, the holiest fruits. Why hast thou laid them aside and been contented with those that are inferior? Return, therefore, to that which is best for thee in the Highest Horizon.

"O Son of Man. Let thy satisfaction be in Me, and not in those who are inferior to Me, and seek not help from any beside Me, for none save Me will ever satisfy thee.

"O Son of Spirit. My right to thee is great and cannot be denied. My bounty to thee is overflowing and cannot be withheld. My love for thee is existing and cannot be repulsed. My light to thee is apparent and cannot be obscured."

When man's first spiritual need has thus been satisfied, and the prop discarded, a second spiritual need asserts itself, the need for a Lawgiver. God, it is felt, has a will; that will expresses itself in laws; those laws are to be heard and obeyed. But just as man in his first self-abasement dare not speak to God except through the mouth of a priest, so man dare not at first listen to God except through the ears of a lawgiver. This is the meaning of the book of Exodus which records (XX. 19) that the Children of Israel said to Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai, "Speak thou with us and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die." But what, asks Baháism, is a lawgiver? A man. A man who has fitted himself to receive the Word of God. Cannot all men so fit themselves?

If not, what is the meaning of that strangely reiterated verse in the New Testament, "He that hath ears to hear let him hear"? And what is the meaning of the Old Testament Psalm, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or who shall stand in His holy place? He who hath clean hands and a pure heart?" Can only Moses ever hope to ascend the spiritual Sinai? Can only Moses ever hope to have clean hands and a pure heart? Baháism remarks that when God first called to the child Samuel (I. Samuel III. 4) the undiscerning boy ran to Eli and said, "Here I am, for thou didst call me." Thus does man continually turn away his ear from his God to his lawgiver. But Eli answered, "I called thee not. It shall be if He call thee that thou shalt say, Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth." Thus is the second prop discarded. Therefore, says the Bahai "Logos" in that same book called "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Spirit. The best of all to Me is justice. Cast it not aside if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not, that thou mayest be faithful to Me, for by it thou wilt be strengthened and see all things with thine own eyes, and not with the eyes of men, and know them by thine own knowledge and not by the knowledge of any in the world. Meditate this—how thou shouldst be.

"O Son of Man. The Light has shone upon thee from the Horizon of the Mount, and the Spirit of Holiness has breathed in the Sinai of thy heart. Therefore cleanse thyself from obstacles and imaginations, and enter into this Mansion, that thou mayest be fitted for the everlasting life and prepared to meet me, where no death, no trouble and no calamity can befall thee."

Man's third spiritual need is for a Prophet. The law of God being given, there is wanting in man the spirit to honour and obey it; and a prophet arises whose divine illumination, fervour, eloquence and passion stir the slumbering hearts of the people. But what, asks Baháism again, is a prophet? What where Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel and Ezekiel? What was the writer of the Book of Revelation? They were men. And has not God made all men of the same clay and breathed into them the same spirit? When jealous disciples complained to Moses that some quite ordinary people in the Israelite camp were presuming to play the prophet, the great Hebrew leader exclaimed, "Would to God ye were all prophets." And so goes the third prop. Therefore says the Logos in "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Existence. My Lamp thou art, and My Light is in thee; be enlightened by It, and seek not any beside Me, for I have created thee rich, and bestowed My grace abundantly upon thee.

"O Son of Existence. By the hands of power I made thee and by the fingers of strength I created thee and deposited in thee the Essence of My Light; therefore depend upon It and not upon anything else, for My action is perfect and My command has effect. Doubt not this and have no uncertainty therein.

"O Son of Man. Cheer thy heart with delight, that thou mayest be fitted to meet Me, and become a mirror of My beauty."

Man's fourth spiritual need is for a Saviour. Man cannot view his own wickedness without dreading a catastrophic penalty, which, he believes, not himself but only a specially appointed redeemer can avert. Oppressed by the vision of the wrath to come, man feels that he must throw himself into the arms of a Saviour. Baháism hesitates to disturb man's belief in this awful subject. "The fear of the Lord," says the Old Testament, "is the beginning of wisdom." The beginning, yes, but not the end. What is a Saviour? asks Baháism. A man, born of woman. A man with power to save men. The true function of a Saviour is thus to save by example, to save by pointing the way of salvation; in other words, to demonstrate on the spiritual plane what all the world accepts on the physical plane—that God helps only those who help themselves. A Saviour is a lighthouse, not a lifeboat. Away then with this fourth prop. Therefore says the Baháí book of "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Perception. My Fort thou art, therefore enter therein that thou mayest be saved.

"O Son of Man. Thou art My possession, and My possession will never be destroyed. Why art thou afraid of thy destruction? Thou art My light, and My light will never be extinguished. Why darest thou extinction? Thou art My splendour, and My splendour will never be veiled. Thou art My garment, and My garment will never be worn out. Therefore dwell in thy love to Me, that thou mayest find Me in the Highest Horizon."

Man's fifth spiritual need is for a Sacrifice. Whether the underlying idea be propitiation or expiation, there must be, it is thought, a great atonement, to be consummated in the sacrifice of life. Baháism approaches this subject, as it approaches the preceding subjects, with reverence. But who, asks Baháism, is the victim of the sacrifice? A man of flesh and blood. The essence of the doctrine is not affected (for the present purpose) by the assertion or the denial of the divinity of the being who is sacrificed, because in either case it is from a being walking this earth of ours in the outward form of a man that the sacrifice is demanded. Shall man, in the long course of his spiritual evolution, rise to the height of striving to embody in his own life the grand examples of the Priest, the Lawgiver, the Prophet and the Saviour, and then shrink from imitating the yet more sublime example of the Sacrifice? It is recorded that Jesus said:—"Except a man be born again he cannot enter the Kingdom of Heaven." To be born again one must first die, because birth is essentially the beginning of a new life. What is that which must die or be sacrificed? The old life of sin. There is, says Baháism, a still higher view. That which is merely human in man must die, in order that that which is divine in man may be born. This is the supreme sacrifice

which every man must perform, not vicariously, but in his own person, ere he can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And thus the fifth prop is dispensed with. Therefore it is written in "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Man. Thou desirest gold, and We desire thy separation from it. Thou hast realised the riches of thyself therein, but I know that thy riches lie in purifying thyself from it.

"O Son of Man. Distribute My possessions among My poor, that in heaven thou mayest receive from the boundless treasures of glory and from the stores of eternal bliss. But by My Life, the sacrifice of the spirit is more glorious, couldst thou but see with My eye.

"O Son of Man. For everything there is a sign. The sign of love is patience through My ordeal and long-suffering for My sake.

"O Son of Man. The sincere lover longs for suffering as the rebel craves for forgiveness and the sinner prays for mercy.

"O Son of Existence. Keep my command because of the love for Me, and deny thyself if thou lovest My pleasure.

"O Son of Spirit. If thou desirest Me, love not thyself, and if thou seekest My pleasure, regard not thine own, that thou mayest die in Me and I live in thee?"

Man's sixth spiritual need is for a divine incarnation. Man seeks to know God, to see God. Man cannot of his own finite power set out to look for the infinite God. He must wait patiently and humbly till God in his own chosen time be pleased to manifest Himself. Such a manifestation, accommodating itself to the human limits of sensory perception, materialises as an incarnation—spirit clothed with flesh—Divinity visible by its humanity—God in man. Here, then, for once, a man indeed becomes the mirror of his Maker. But why only for once? asks Baháism. According to the book of Genesis all mankind was created in the image and after the likeness of God. All mankind is thus, in virtue of its divine similitude, something more than "human": it has some elements of the divine. And so the greater incarnation appeals to all lesser incarnations. Or, as the Old Testament marvellously puts it—"Be ye holy, for I am holy." In the New Testament man is adjured to put off corruption and to put on incorruption; to put off mortality and to put on immortality. What is corruption but change, and what is mortality but catastrophic change? How shall a man put off changefulness and put on changelessness unless he attain to a perfection from which no change can be betterment—unless he become divine? An incarnation, then, is perfection descended upon and manifested in one man to show how all other men may hope to ascend to and become manifestations of the like perfection. The supreme purpose, in brief, is to turn man's reverence upon himself. Hereby departs man's sixth prop. Therefore declares the "Logos" in "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Spirit. I created thee sublime, but thou hast degraded thyself. Therefore ascend to that for which thou wast created.

"O Son of Spirit. I have created thee rich. Why dost thou make thyself poor? I made thee mighty. Why dost thou degrade thyself? From the Essence of Knowledge I manifested thee. Why seekest thou another beside Me? From the clay of love I kneaded thee. Why searchest thou for another? Turn thy sight unto thyself that thou mayest find Me standing within thee, powerful, mighty and supreme.

"O Son of the Throne. Thy hearing is My hearing; hear thou with it. Thy sight is My sight; see thou with it, that thou mayest testify to Me in thy inmost soul, a supreme holiness, and that I may testify to thee, in Myself a high position.

"O Son of Existence. Thy heart is My home; purify it for My descent. Thy spirit is My outlook; prepare it for My Manifestation."

Man's seventh and last spiritual need is for a heaven. The flesh has its dwelling-place of pain: where shall the spirit abide in bliss? It will have been understood from the present exposition that the predominant theme of Bahai theology is that man has to be taught to look within for that which he has all along been seeking without. Why should it not be so with man's need for a Heaven? asks Bahaism. In the scientific world it was not until educationalists realised that the art of education is to draw out, not to put in, that the curricula of the schools were rationalised. Spiritual education, properly understood, is also a drawing out of that which is within. This is the meaning of that wonderful declaration in the New Testament: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you." Surrender, then the seventh and last prop. And therefore it is written in "Hidden Words":—

"O Son of Existence. Thy Paradise is My love, and thy heaven is My nearness. Therefore enter thou and tarry not. This is what was ordained for thee in Our highest kingdom and supreme majesty.

"O Son of Spirit. The first utterance is—Possess a good, a pure and enlightened heart, that thou mayest possess a continual, eternal and immortal kingdom."

FUTURE OF ISLAM.

Time will not permit me on this occasion to enter any further into a philosophical study of the teachings of Bahaism. It will be sufficiently apparent, I think, that there has arisen in Islam, thanks to the freshness and fineness of Persian thought, a regenerative influence of almost incalculable energy. It only remains for me, in conclusion, to notice, very briefly, the argument of those who think that Islam, in falling from its proud estate, has fallen like Lucifer, never to rise again. The argument, as I understand it, is based upon the following assumptions: that Islam has lain dormant too

long; that Islamic countries are stranded centuries behind the times; that the very inertness of the Muhammadan world in an age of strenuous progress proves its senility; that, in fact, Moslem culture stands to-day exactly where it stood in the days of the "Arabian Nights." I shall not attempt here to controvert any of those assumptions, because that would involve me in a comprehensive survey of the social, political, and economic conditions of 175,000,000 of the human race, spreading itself with pointing out that even if all the assumptions be granted in substance, they count in favour of Islamic hopes rather than against; because they indicate that the career of Islam closely conforms with the normal in history. Almost every great religion has passed through a phase of stagnation. Almost always the period of stagnation is one thousand years. For just a thousand years the infant religion sleeps in the arms of its priests. Thereafter it is a grown child and runs alone. For a thousand years the priests nursed Judaism. In 1491 B.C. we have Moses declaring—"This shall be the priest's due from the people, from them that offer a sacrifice, whether it be ox or sheep; and they shall give unto the priest the shoulder, and the two cheeks and the maw. The first-fruit also of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the first of the fleece of thy sheep, shalt thou give him. For the Lord thy God hath chosen him out of all thy tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons for ever." In 397 B.C.—that is, one thousand years later—we have the Hebrew prophet Malachi saying—"And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you . . . Ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the Lord of Hosts. Therefore have I also made you contemptible and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept My ways, but have been partial in the law." For a thousand years the priests nursed Brahmanism. According to authorities, Vedic Brahmanism established itself in India about 1600 B.C. In 550 B.C.—that is, one thousand years later—Buddha arose to overthrow Brahmanic ecclesiasticism. For a thousand years the priests nursed Hellenic Paganism. The siege of Troy, which appears to be about the first recorded fact of Greek history, is generally supposed to have occurred, if it occurred at all, about 1200 B.C. In 146 B.C.—that is, one thousand years later—Greece became a

Roman province, and so lost the power to work out her own independent destiny. For a thousand years the priests nursed Roman Paganism. The half-mythical foundation of Rome is supposed to date from 753 B.C. In 324 A.D.—that is, one thousand years later—Christianity was established as the State religion in Rome. For a thousand years the priests nursed Christianity. In the fourth century after Christ priestly authority first asserted itself successfully in the Christian Church. In the fifteenth century—that is, one thousand years later—John Huss started the Reformation. With these historical parallels in mind, let us now remark that for a thousand years the priests nursed Islam. The Saracenic Empire, with its powerful hierarchy, dates from the eighth century, A.D. The spirit which begat Babism and Bahaism began to manifest itself in Persia at the close of the eighteenth century, that is, one thousand years later. I am far from propounding the “one thousand years” formula as a positive argument. I am far from trying to read a new meaning into the Psalmist’s rhapsody, “A thousand years in Thy sight is but as yesterday.” I would only say this: the fact that Islam has slumbered for a thousand years affords no sufficient justification for the belief that there can now be no awakening. For my own part, I believe that events are shaping in Asia which may end in re-constructing the whole fabric of present-day internationalism and may add a chapter to the world’s history as dramatic and as momentous as any that has been written.

DISCUSSION.

The CHAIRMAN (Professor Browne) said that, while entertaining a very great affection and admiration for the Babis, he was not prepared to admit either that they were to be considered as mere reformers of Islam, or that they had exercised any great influence in bringing about the present national movement in Persia. He pointed out that, in a sense, the ideals of the Bahais, which aimed at a universal religion and a universal language, were in sharp contrast to those of the Nationalists, which aimed at the maintenance of the integrity of Persia and of the Persian characteristics. He also dissented from the author’s view that Bahaism was necessarily tolerant, and he contended that the Bab had assigned to himself a more important position than that which the Bahais were disposed to ascribe to him. In his own view it was unfair to say that the Mohammedans had not contributed to the national movement in Persia, since Sayyid Jemal-ud-Din, the well known

protagonist of Pan-Islamism, who was very far from being a Bab, was undoubtedly one of those who had done most to inaugurate the national movement. Quite apart from the question as to the dispute between Subh-i-Ezel and Baha as regards the succession, he had never succeeded in obtaining satisfactory answers to the following questions:—(1) What new light does the Bahai doctrine throw upon metaphysical or spiritual truth? (2) In what respect is the system of ethics which it advocates superior to Christianity? (3) Can it be maintained that, in the application of those ethics, the Bahais are materially more consistent than the Christians or the Moslems?

M. HIPPOLYTE DREYFUS thought there was no contradiction, as the Chairman seemed to imply, between the fact that Subh-i-Ezel had been in a way appointed by the Bab as his successor, and the fact that later on Baha Ullah claimed to be a manifestation of God, viz., the one foretold by the Bab himself, because the Bab only appointed his successor in order to have an organisation ready to wait for the one whom God would manifest. Baha Ullah was much more advanced than the Bab; his religion was a universal one, while the Bab was merely a Shiah reformer, and that accounted for the difference between them. The influence of the Bahais in the revolution could not be denied, a statement he was able to make because he was in Tehran at the time of the revolution, when the Mohammedan clergy took refuge in Qum. At that time they were quite decided not to return to Tehran unless the Shah himself came there and apologised and dismissed all the European functionaries employed by the Government. It was decidedly an anti-foreign movement. The Bahais thought it was a pity to have such a big movement degenerating into a sectarian and clerical movement, and they therefore asked for a constitution and education; and that, in fact, was the principle of Bahaism.

Prof. G. HAGOPIAN said he had the honour of making the acquaintance of Jemal-ud-Din, about 1892, when he was a refugee from Persia, and was instrumental in enabling him to give a lecture at the National Liberal Club on the condition of his country. He would be delighted to hear from any travellers in Persia whether such a regeneration had yet taken place in that country that it would be possible in the future to find the same spirit animating the people of the country as was recently evidenced in London by the British people when King Edward, the Peacemaker, was carried to his last resting-place—the spirit of progress and peace.

Mr. W. A. MOORE, in reply to the last speaker’s question, thought the conduct of the Turkish Government since the establishment of the Constitution in Turkey was an absolutely conclusive proof that they desired both peace and progress, and although things had not gone by any means so far or so well in Persia, to deny that the Persian constitutional movement was a

progressive movement was a complete denial of fact. He was rather astonished at the use made by the author all through his paper of the words "priest" and "priesthood," which he did not believe were correct words to employ in reference to Islam. He did not think there was anything sacerdotal at all in the whole of Islam. With regard to the author's glorification of the Bahais, personally he supported the Chairman's contention, because during the actual troubles in Persia, he happened to be in Tabriz, and the word that he always heard was Babi, and that was the stick that was used by the reactionists to beat the Constitutionalist party. The title of the paper seemed to him to be misleading, because if Islam was regenerated in the way the author suggested, it ceased to be Islam altogether. Bahaism was not really a religion at all, but more or less a philosophy. It was a product which came from the East, and was a kind of universal toleration. When, for instance, the author stated that truth was one, he was uttering one of the immortal platitudes of the world which had been said in every age. It was a great truth which was always striking people afresh, but it did not make a new religion to say that truth was one. The analogy between the sun and the mirror which had been referred to had a very distinct Athanasian touch about it. It reminded him of the newspaper which some years ago started a column on curios and antiquities, which was written by a man who had come absolutely fresh to the subject, and who was making discoveries every day that had been made before, but the result was that he made the subject much more interesting than an expert would have done. He could not help thinking that some of the philosophic truths that were put forward as representing Bahaism were in much the same category. They were a product of modern mentality, a process of thought which was going on all over the world. He did not agree with the author that the Turkish movement was in any way an outcome of such a religion. He thought it was much more true to say that the religion itself was a symptom rather than a cause. Such a movement of thought was taking place not only in Islam, but in Japan, and many of the Young Turk leaders were distinctly free-thinkers. The forward movement towards universal toleration and brotherhood took the form of a desire for international agreement and universal peace, and was a sort of cosmopolitan movement. The Chairman had stated that if Persia were left alone he believed she would pull through. In one sense he was in complete agreement with the remark. If Persia could be isolated, and her internal struggle took place as between the old and new régime, which was practically between evil and good, there was not the slightest doubt which would ultimately win; in fact, if she had been left alone from the beginning there would have been no doubt which would have won already. But to suppose that Persia had been, or was going to be, left absolutely to herself, seemed to him utterly to ignore

the facts. Persia had to deal with her neighbours, and the question was how she was to get along with them, and how they were to be prevented from taking part in the movement. He thought Persia would get through if, in her external affairs, she led a quiet life. He was quite sure that in the future she would win only by the process of moderation, for which the modern movement in the East had such an extraordinary capacity.

The CHAIRMAN entirely agreed with Mr. Moore's criticism of the use of the word "priest" by the author. It was 22 years since he was in Persia, and the word Bahais was then hardly ever used at all, the term Babis being universally used throughout the country. With regard to tolerance, he was not quite sure whether, if Bahaism succeeded in capturing Persia, it would be any more tolerant than Islamism. Personally, he was very much disinclined to think that there was any considerable number of Babis or Bahais among the Turks, because, so far as he knew, the Young Turkish movement was identified with a literary movement having its origin entirely in French sources, a large proportion of the Young Turks being Free-Thinkers.

Mr. BERNARD TEMPLE, in reply to the question of whether Bahaism was the cause of the awakening which was at present visible in Persia and other Islamic countries, said that in such big discussions it was difficult to say what was the cause and what the effect. He did not claim for Bahaism more than that it was perhaps the most conspicuous and remarkable expression of the awakening which, undoubtedly, was taking place in the East, particularly in the Islamic East. So far as he had made a comparison between the Mohammedan religion and Bahaism, he hoped he had made it clear that he was not a Bahai, nor an apologist for the Bahai religion or its teaching; he merely wished, as a traveller, to give some of his observations upon the course of the movement in Persia and its meaning. Although he had in many ways a great admiration for Bahaism, he was not prepared to rebut every critical remark that could be addressed against it. Recent travellers in Persia were agreed that the most progressive elements in that country were associated directly or indirectly with the Bahai movement. He quite admitted it was inappropriate to use the term "priest" in connection with Islam, but the difficulty he experienced in that connection was that he made a comparison between religions which had priests and the Islamic religion, which maintained religious functionaries for whose office and status there was no equivalent in the English language. When he used the term "priests" in relation to Islam he meant that there existed in Persia and other parts of the Mohammedan world men who claimed to have a monopoly of knowledge regarding the religion of Mahomet, and the common people were bound to have recourse to those learned people

for that knowledge, which was not obtainable otherwise. The Quran was in Arabic, a language which even to the Arabs was, in its Quranic form, practically unknown; and the Quran and the literature encompassing it could only be communicated to the ignorant people by a learned class, which was careful to preserve its monopoly of learning; and in that sense he spoke of the mullahs as priests, not wishing to institute any closer comparison between the mullahs of the East and the priests of the West. He was glad it had been pointed out that the movement in Turkey owed, practically, nothing to Bahaism. What he had wished to convey in that connection was not that Bahaism had inspired the revolution in Turkey, though he was prepared to show it had gone a considerable way towards inspiring the movement in Persia: he wished to show that there was, not in Persia alone, but more or less throughout the Islamic world, a real spirit of progress which, so far as historical comparisons went, could only be likened to the spirit of the Reformation that existed in Europe. That spirit had various manifestations, one of the most marvellous of which was the Bahai movement. Another remarkable manifestation, if considered separately, was the political revolution in Persia and in Turkey, which had had the extraordinary effect of sweeping away the old-fashioned absolutism, the relic of centuries, and substituting in its place that for which people had been striving in the West for countless years, viz., constitutional government with Parliamentary institutions. How much of the inspiration that had given rise to those great political movements was due to some particular source or man was a moot question. His great object on the present occasion was to show from the point of view of a recent traveller how very effective those various eruptive forces were, and how intimately one must be connected with the other. The remark which had been made that Persia could best make progress under the new *régime* by getting along well with her neighbours, raised an enormous question. While that advice sounded ideal, he was sorry to have to say that his feeling was, after twelve months' residence in Persia, that it was almost as difficult for a country like Persia to get on well, at any rate with one of its neighbours, under present circumstances, as for a lamb to get on with a wolf.

On the motion of the CHAIRMAN, a vote of thanks was accorded to Mr. Temple for his paper, and the meeting terminated.

SIR ELDON GORST'S REPORT ON EGYPT AND THE SOUDAN IN 1909.

I.

It is a great advantage to be presented with a complete annual report of the progress achieved in Egypt and the Soudan so soon after the period to

which it relates. Sir Eldon Gorst's interesting narration is framed very much after the model of the Indian Administration Reports, with this important difference, that the latter are seldom available until long after the expiry of the year under review. Hence the Indian reports, through their belated appearance, lose much of their significance and interest.

The present report is dated 26th March last, and its very first comments deal with the assassination of the late Prime Minister, about a month previously, so it may be considered quite up-to-date, and in this and other respects it may serve as an example which many other British official reports in various parts of the world would do well to emulate. On the subject of the murder Mr. Roosevelt has recently spoken strongly and fearlessly: Sir Eldon Gorst's remarks are couched in much the same vein. He says of the assassin that he was "one of those miserable creatures of feeble intellect and disordered ideas, who are unconscious dupes of the greater criminals, who preach violent methods which they themselves are afraid to carry into effect." Of the victim, Boutros Ghali Pasha, who first entered the Ministry in 1893 as Minister of Finance, Sir Eldon remarks that "his death is an irreparable loss to Egypt, and that it will be long before the Khedive and his country find a more devoted, single-minded, and capable servant."

During 1909 the Press Law, which had been revised in the early part of the year, was applied with great, perhaps too great, moderation. Two papers were warned and one was suppressed, the latter having been already suspended under the ordinary law by the native tribunals, and its editor sentenced to twelve months' imprisonment. Another editor was sentenced to three months' imprisonment for passing scurrilous libels on the late Boutros Pasha and another high native official. These warnings, however, have not been enough to prevent the extreme Nationalist journals from attacking the authorities with virulence and contempt, and unless this attitude is definitely abandoned it will become necessary, so Sir Eldon significantly remarks, to apply the Press Law with greater severity than heretofore.

The cotton crop, in spite of a good Nile and favourable weather, has been much below the average of recent years. High prices have to some extent compensated for the falling off of the yield, but, nevertheless, the result comes as a great disappointment to those who had hoped for some improvement of the financial position since the crisis of 1907. The Agricultural Bank returns prove again that the smaller cultivators have been hit by the financial depression. A further proof that the crisis has not yet passed away is supplied by the falling off of the imports in the trade returns, though this was partly due to a fall in prices of many chief articles of consumption; and lastly, it is noticeable that the revenue has suffered, especially under those heads which depend directly on the available resources of the public,