

THE BĀBĪ AND BAHĀ'Ī RELIGION

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THE BĀBĪ AND BAHĀ'Ī RELIGION

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Foreword to the first edition

This brief outline of the background and development of the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions has been prepared by Sūfī A. Q. Niyāz at the request of Wakālat-e-Tabshīr, Rabwah.

It is based mainly on a series of articles in the 'Review of Religions', and two books on the subject: one by Maulawī Faḍal Dīn and the other by Maulānā Abul 'Āṭā'.

It is hoped readers will find the subject dealt with as compactly and comprehensively as was possible in a brief study of the kind aimed at in these pages.

Mirzā Mubārak Aḥmad
Secretary, Foreign Muslim Missions
Rabwah:
10th February, 1960.

Foreword to the present edition

'The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religion' is a short but comprehensive treatise in English on the teachings of Mirzā 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb of Shiraz (Iran) and his successor (who later broke away from Bāb and introduced his own religion, Bahā'ī ism) Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī Bahā'ullāh, was compiled by A. Q. Niyāz and published by Wakālat-e-Tabshīr, Rabwah, Pakistan, in 1960. It was reprinted in 1967. Because the book deals with a contemporary religious movement—Bahā'ī ism*—which alleges that it replaces Islam as a world religion and is a quite active evangelical movement, it needs to be looked at with critical but impartial approach as an Islamic response to it. We deem that the treatise in question is an adequate response to the challenge of Bahā'ī ism to Islam and needs to be reprinted and widely published.

The book covers (1) the history of Bābī ism and Bāh'ī ism and their basic tenets; (2) the true nature of the claims of Bāb and Bahā'uallāh; (3) a comparison between the Islamic and Bahā'ī Sharias; and (4) the question why the Qur'an and Islamic Sharia are irreplaceable.

* Bahā'ī ism is an offshoot of Bābī ism—the faith propagated by 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb. Bābī ism was itself offshoot of Ithnā 'Ashariyyah sect of Shiite Islam.

Şūfī A. Q. Niyāz, a great scholar in his own right, compiled the book from the Scholarly literature of Jamā‘at Aḥmadiyya, such as books and articles by Ḥaḍrat Maulānā Abul ‘Aṭā’ Jālandharī, who was the first to publish, and bring it in public *Āl-Āqḍāṣ* the Holy book of Bahā’īs, which till then was not circulated even among Bahā’īs, except their trusted elites, let alone the non-Bahā’īs. Moreover, he was very well versed in the Bābī and Bahā’ī literature and had met great Bahā’ī leaders.

Here, we would like to make one general observation about Bahā’ī ism. Bahā’ī ism inspite of its so called worldwide reputation remains an esoteric creed and a secret organization the true teachings of which, especially about the real nature of Bahā’ullāh's claim, are known only to the selected few so much so that its own followers are kept ignorant about these facts. However, an attractive and acceptable facade is erected around the nucleus of the teachings to attract and exploit the credulous common man. Moreover, as a consequence of the above, Bahā’ī ism is very adept at disguising itself behind various masks to appeal to various religions and creeds.

The name of Muḥammad^{sa}, the Holy Prophet of Islam, has been followed by the symbol ^{sa}, which is an abbreviation for the salutation ‘may peace and blessings of Allah be upon him.’ The names of other

prophets and messengers are followed by the symbol ^{as}, an abbreviation for ‘on whom be peace.’ The actual salutations have not generally been set out in full, but they should nevertheless, be understood as being repeated in full in each case. The symbol ^{ra} is used with the name of the Disciples of the Holy Prophet^{sa}. It stands for Raḍī Allāhu ‘anhu/‘anhā/‘anhum (May Allah be pleased with him/with her/with them).

In transliterating Arabic words we have followed the following system adopted by the Royal Asiatic Society.

- ا at the beginning of a word, pronounced as *a*, *i*, *u* preceded by a very slight aspiration, like *h* in the English word ‘honour’.
- ث *th*, pronounced like *th* in the English word ‘thing’.
- ح *h*, a guttural aspirate, stronger than *h*.
- خ *kh*, pronounced like the Scotch *ch* in ‘loch’.
- ذ *dh*, pronounced like the English *th* in ‘that’.
- ص *s*, strongly articulated *s*.
- ض *d*, similar to the English *th* in ‘this’.
- ط *t*, strongly articulated palatal *t*.

- ظ *z*, strongly articulated *z*.
- ع ‘, a strong guttural, the pronunciation of which must be learnt by the ear.
- غ *gh*, a sound approached very nearly in the *r* ‘*grasseye*’ in French, and in the German *r*. It requires the muscles of the throat to be in the ‘gargling’ position whilst pronouncing it.
- ق *q*, a deep guttural *k* sound.
- ء ’, a sort of catch in the voice.

Short vowels are represented by *a* for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *u* in ‘bud’); *i* for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *i* in ‘bid’); *u* for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *oo* in ‘wood’); the long vowels by \bar{a} for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ or \bar{A} (like *a* in ‘father’); \bar{i} for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ or $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *ee* in ‘deep’); *ai* for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *i* in ‘site’)*; \bar{u} for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (like *oo* in ‘root’); *au* for $\text{—}^{\text{—}}$ (resembling *ou* in ‘sound’).

Please note that in transliterated words the letter ‘e’ is to be pronounced as in ‘prey’ which rhymes with ‘day’; however the pronunciation is flat without the element of English diphthong. If in Urdu and Persian words ‘e’ is lengthened a bit more it is transliterated as ‘ei’ to be pronounced as ‘ei’ in ‘feign’

* In Arabic words like شيخ (Shaikh) there is an element of diphthong which is missing when the word is pronounced in Urdu.

without the element of diphthong thus 'ك' is transliterated as 'Kei'. For the nasal sound of 'n' we have used the symbol 'ń'. Thus Urdu word 'میں' is transliterated as 'meiń'.*

The consonants not included in the above list have the same phonetic value as in the principal languages of Europe.

We have not transliterated Arabic, Persian or Urdu words which have become part of English language, e.g., Islam, Mahdi, Qur'an, Hijra, Ramadan, Hadith, ulema, umma, sunna, kafir, pukka etc. •

For quotes straight commas (straight quotes) are used to differentiate them from the curved commas used in the system of transliteration, ' for ع, ' for ء. Commas as punctuation marks are used according to the normal usage.

The Publishers

* These transliterations are not included in the system of transliteration by Royal Asiatic Society.

• *Concise Oxford Dictionary* records Qur'an in three forms—Quran, Qur'an and Koran.

THE BĀBĪ AND BAHĀ'Ī RELIGION

Origin and Development

Among variants of the Shia point of view there is a sect called the Ithnā 'Asharia. The Shias regard Ḥaḍrat 'Alī as invested with special sanctity, to an extent where it involves denial of the authority of the three Khalīfas who preceded Ḥaḍrat 'Alī in this office, namely, Abu Bakr, 'Umar and Uthmān. According to the belief of the Ithna 'Asharia, there have been twelve rightful Imams after Ḥaḍrat 'Alī, eleven of them having died after the normal span of their lives, but the twelfth having disappeared and gone into hiding in some cave, to reappear towards the end of the world as the expected Imam Mahdi to bring the mission of his Imāmat to completion.

Shias of the Ithna 'Asharia sect also hold that ever since the time the twelfth Imam went into hiding, he keeps one of his followers, the best and most devoted, in the position of a Bāb, i.e., a door through which the rest of his followers could maintain spiritual contact and communion with him. According to Alqāmī, a noted Shia writer and divine, "To this day there have always been among his followers people of special devotion who have held the position of a Bāb (door)

in relation to him, with functions to serve as a link between the Imam and his followers for the communication of what should and what should not be done."¹

In Shia history there have been four people who have claimed the position of a Bāb, the last among them having been Abul Ḥasan 'Alī bin Muḥammad-al-Samrī, who died in the year 260 of the Hijra, according to one source, in 328 according to another.

Subsequent to the death of the fourth Bāb, above-mentioned Abul Ḥasan, the idea about the existence and the necessity for the presence of a Bāb began to weaken. Towards the end of the 12th century of the Hijra it had practically faded out since popular expectations in regard to the reappearance of the Hidden Imam had not been fulfilled.

The Ithnā 'Asharia sect had gained a considerable amount of footing in Iran where some people tried to keep the belief in the necessity for a Bāb alive among the people; and the idea such people tried to exploit was that the time for the reappearance of the Imam was drawing very near. Foremost among those who worked for this revival were men like Shaikh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī and Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī. These two are the most important for the purpose in hand since the Bābī and the Bahā'ī religions grew out of their teaching and

¹ *Ikmālud dīn*, page 56.

the positions they took up in regard to a number of questions.

Shaikh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī was born in 1167 Hijra in a tribe of Bahrain, known by name of Bani Sakhr. His father's name was Zainuddin al-Aḥsā'ī. Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī was the founder of the sub-sect of the Ithnā 'Asharia which is known as the Shaikhiyyah. He died in 1242 Hijra (A.D. 1826). The ideas he preached were essentially of the nature of Shia beliefs, but he brought forth rather a different interpretation of the Qur'an and the Hadith, this being the reason why those who accepted his way of thought came to be known as a new sect called the Shaikhiyyah.²

That Shaikh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī was a true Shia is quite clearly borne out by *Alkawākib*, page 42. With regard to the Imam Mahdi, Aḥmad Aḥsā'ī's idea was that the twelfth Imam, 'Askarī, who was held to have gone into hiding, was still alive, and would reappear at the proper time, which now was going to be very soon. His main point was the good news he professed to bear that the time of the reappearance of the Hidden Imam was very near³. On this rallying point Al-Aḥsā'ī gathered together a considerable number of followers.

² Collection of Journals printed in Egypt, page 77.

³ *Al-Kawākib*, page 45.

In fact some of these have held him to be the Mujaddid of the 13th century⁴.

In his own lifetime Aḥmad Al-Aḥsā'ī had appointed Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī as his successor. Rashtī was born in Rasht in 1205 Hijra. When Aḥmad Al-Aḥsā'ī died in 1242 Hijra, Kāẓim Rashtī became the head of the Shaikhiyyah sect. While in the main he strove to spread the teaching of Aḥmad Al-Aḥsā'ī, he also differed in some points, this being the reason why his followers came to be known by a different name, i.e., the Kashfiyyah. Kāẓim Rashtī died at Karbala in 1259 Hijra.

Kāẓim Rashtī divided his followers into three groups. The most important among them were the people who remained with him day and night. Before these he opened the innermost chambers of his heart. Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb, who became the founder of the Bābī religion, was the foremost among these, and when he put forth his claim to being himself the Bāb, most other members of this inner group of the followers of Rashtī accepted his claim. One among these was a woman named Umm-e-Salmā to whom Kāẓim Rashtī had given the title of Qurratul 'Ain.

⁴ *Arrisālatul Tis'a 'Asharia*, page 11.

It is to be carefully noted that neither Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī nor Kāẓim Rashtī laid any claim to be recipients of Divine Revelation. Both had been emphasising the near approach of the time when the Hidden Imam was to reappear, and it was no matter for surprise that a large number of their followers were on tip-toe, so to say, to hear his call. In fact many zealots among them wandered about in the jungles and wastes in the hope of coming across him by good luck.

Claim of Bāb

As to the time when 'Alī Muḥammad put forth his claim to being the Bāb, and the precise nature of this claim, we come across the following in Bahā'ī sources:

- (i) One day in a mosque in Būshaihar he claimed that he was the Bāb for reaching the concealed personage who was expected to appear soon.
- (ii) In the presence of mullah Ḥusain Bashrū'ī, who was a prominent follower of the Shai-kiyyah sect, 'Alī Moḥammad first declared his mission as Bāb.

In Bāb's book entitled Bayān the exact time of this declaration is given as 1260

Hijra, the fifth of Jamādīul Awwal, two hours and fifteen minutes after sunset⁵.

Beginning at first with a claim that he was the Bāb, 'Alī Muḥammad also claimed later that he was the expected Mahdi as well. But he never claimed to be a prophet, nor did his followers accept him as such. However, he claimed to be the "*Nuqṭah*" (point), but left the meaning of this expression conveniently vague.

His activities and those of his followers soon came to be looked upon with grave suspicion, especially as there was a considerable measure of secrecy observed by him and his followers in the matter of the inner teaching, so much so that the central scripture of the Bahā'ī faith, entitled the Bayān, one hardly ever sees anywhere even to this day. This secrecy gave rise to a deep suspicion in the mind of the authorities that the inner teaching bore the taint of violent political aims, for, otherwise, it was argued, there was no ground for the strict secrecy observed.

The authorities first acted by placing certain restrictions upon 'Alī Muḥammad. This was in 1262 Hijra. He was to remain confined to his house; was not to mix with people; and was to refrain from

⁵ May 23, 1844, of the Christian era.

propagating his views. His uncle, Haji 'Alī, had to stand surety that these instructions would be obeyed.

As to the question why the government took this seemingly oppressive stand in regard to a religious movement, only one quotation need be given here. According to *Makātīb 'Abdul Bahā'*, Vol II, page 266, "During the days of the advent of Ḥaḍrat-e-'Ala, (Founder of the Bābī religion) the, teaching was that heads should be cut off, books and leaves burnt, places demolished and laid waste, and a general slaughter made, except in the case of those who rendered belief and homage."

Evidently this was not the kind of teaching which the established government of the country could very well leave to spread in the land unchecked.

Another interesting fact also deserves to be borne in mind. On Ramaḍān 21, 1262 Hijra, the ulema of Shiraz, acting through the administrative agencies, called upon 'Alī Muḥammad to appear before the people in a mosque, where he was asked to recant from his claims and views. There upon 'Alī Muḥammad mounted the pulpit and made a remarkable speech. It was remarkable in the sense that those present failed to get any idea as to what he was driving at. According to *Al-Kawākib*, page 88, "The audience was left in no position to understand whether he had spoken in renunciation of his views or in

support thereof." But this source admits that the ulema were reassured that he had given up his claim. 'Alī Muḥammad then resumed the life of isolation he had begun to lead some time before. Some other historical sources state that in response to the call by the ulema, Ali Muḥammad "mounted the pulpit and in a clear, loud voice renounced and repented of his views as demanded by the ulema. Then he came down and kissed their hands."⁶

In this connection mention also needs to be made of the written recantation and renunciation of his views which 'Alī Muḥammad submitted to Nāṣiruddīn Shāh, the Heir-Apparent at that time.⁷

Following this recantation, or explanation, or whatever it was intended or taken to be, 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb took outwardly to a life of comparative seclusion. But inwardly the activities of the movement continued more or less as before, though of course greater care was taken to keep them secret. Clashes with the public and the authorities, however began to occur frequently, so that the government at last arrested 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb and put him into prison. When disturbances continued even after that, the authorities decided that he should be shot, along with

⁶ *Al-Ḥarāb*, by Muḥammad Fāḍil, printed in Egypt, page 173.

⁷ *Kashful Hiyal*, Vol. II, pages 88, 89.

two followers. One of these recanted at this juncture and was spared, while 'Alī Muḥammad and the other follower were shot in 1850 of the Christian era.

At the time of his death 'Alī Muḥammad was barely thirty years of age, and his mission not more than six years old. He was succeeded by, Mirzā Yaḥyā, who took the title of "Şubḥ-e-Azal" (Morning of Eternity).

In 1852 several Bābīs made an attempt on the life of the King, but failed and were arrested. A plot was suspected and many more Bābīs were put to death among them the beautiful but fiery Qurratul 'Ain.

Mirzā Yaḥya, or Şubḥi Azal, thereafter removed himself to Baghdad from where he peacefully propagated his views. Himself he lived in seclusion, leaving the direction of affairs in the hands, of his brother, Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī. This position lasted for ten years, during which time Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī was content with the second position assigned to him. But then he took his stand on the basis of certain prophecies of 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb which spoke of "one whom God was to manifest."

It is to be noted that these prophecies had been left as vague and undefined as the meaning of "Nuḡṭah" one of the titles taken up by 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb. These prophecies gave no indication as to the time or signs when this manifestation from God was to take

place. He had simply said that when the expected one came he would be recognised by all. In 1863 Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī declared that he was the one whose advent had been foretold by 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb, and he took the title of Bahā'ullāh, meaning the Splendour of God.

But Mirzā Yaḥyā, with some of his followers, refused to accept this claim, the split giving rise to two sections, the Azalīs and the Bahā'īs—those who remained with Ṣubḥe Azal in his denial of the claims of Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, and those who accepted the latter's claim that he was the Bahā'ullāh.

Following the unsuccessful attempt on the life of the king when several Bābīs were arrested, Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī was among them. He remained in prison for about four months, was released, and soon afterwards moved to Baghdad, where he thought that he would perhaps be better in a position to pursue his ambitions and schemes. Ṣubḥ-e-Azal also thereafter went to live in Baghdad.

The rivalry between the two sects, the Azalīs and the Bahā'īs, began to give rise to quarrels between the followers of both, so that the Turkish Government decided that Ṣubḥ-e-Azal and Bahā'ullāh should be kept at different places. In 1868 Bahā'ullāh and his followers were exiled to 'Akkā in Syria, while Ṣubḥ-e-Azal was sent to Famagusta in Cyprus.

Bahā'ullāh died on 16th May, 1892, and was succeeded by his son, 'Abbās Āfandī. But another son named Muḥammad 'Alī advanced claims of his own for succession. He gained but few followers, but in 'Akkā itself was successful in obtaining custody of Bahā'ullāh's tomb.

The Azalī sect has since been losing ground while the Bahā'īs have made some progress in gaining converts in some places, in Europe and USA among others, though much ground is left for speculation in regard to their precise number and the exact nature of their prevailing teaching, since there is reason to believe that they conveniently shift their ground from one climate to another.

Main Points

Thus, from a close study of the background from which the Bābī movement rose the following interesting and rather significant points emerge beyond any kind of doubt whatsoever:

- (a) The Bābī movement began as an offshoot of the Shia point of view, the central doctrine having been the position of the Hidden Imam and the importance of the Bāb as an intermediary between him and his followers. The Ithnā 'Ashariyya and the Shaikhiyyah, which represent the parent body of Bābī and Bahā'ī thought, laid so much empha-

sis on the near approach of the time when the Hidden Imam was to reappear as the Imam Mahdi that the hopes of devout followers rose to white heat. 'Alī Muḥammad first claimed to be the Bāb, then went a step further by claiming that he was the Imam Mahdī so eagerly expected. After 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb, Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, who called himself Bahā'ullāh, initially exploited in his own favour certain passages in the writings of 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb which vaguely appeared to speak of the appearance of another teacher after him: but later he seems to have overshot those marks, for he ended by abrogating the Islamic Sharia, a point which we shall discuss in some detail at another stage.

- (b) As is universally admitted to be usual with the Shias, the Bābīs observed a considerable measure of secrecy in regard to their doctrine and inner aims.
- (c) Some of these aims were undeniably political, with a possibility, even a probability of recourse, if practicable, to violent means for the attainment of those aims.
- (d) Due to (b) and (c) a head-on clash with the government and portions of the public was only natural.

The General State of Affairs in Persia at the Time

In the history of Persia this was a period of extreme decadence, political as well as religious. Aggressive sectarianism was at its height. Says, 'Abbās Āfandī: "In Iran different sects and separate groupings exist in large numbers, such as Mutasharī'a, Shaikhīyyah, Şūfīa, and Naşīrīyyah, etc., all of which regard the others as *Kāfirs* and *Fāsiqs*."⁸

About the middle of the 13th century the Shias in general, and the Shaikhiyyah in particular, were waiting for the appearance of the Imam Mahdi with an eagerness which almost bordered on impatience⁹. Another Bahā'ī writes: "All the followers of Shaikh Aḥmad and Sayyid Kāẓim in those days were waiting for the appearance of the Promised One with a great deal of eagerness and impatience."¹⁰

Moreover, like many other Asiatic countries, Iran at that time was preparing to rise against the old system of absolute monarchy, while European statesmen in the leading countries had their fingers on the pulse of the country, waiting for a chance to turn events to their own advantage. In a serious study of the genesis of the Bābī and Bahā'ī movement, factors

⁸ *Maqālah Sayyāh*, page 113.

⁹ *‘Aşr-e-Jadīd*, Arabic Edition, page 22.

¹⁰ *Risālatul Tis‘a ‘Asharia*, page 20.

such as these cannot be overlooked. It is incontestable that the Government of Iran, to begin with, did not take up any attitude of hostility towards the movement¹¹ and this continued to be the policy of the Government until the Bābīs and Bahā'īs took to the path of rebellion, following which the Government, of course, had to adopt a severe line of action. There is also reason to believe that the movement had contact with some foreign powers. We read in Bahā'ī history that when some Bābīs fired at the Emperor in an attempt to assassinate him many of them were arrested, and "Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, Bahā'ullāh, also was imprisoned, and in one district alone 400 villages belonging to him were confiscated. And if the British and Russian Embassies had not taken an interest in the case, world history might well have been deprived of the events of an illustrious life"¹². It is also known that when the Bāb was executed, the Russian Council managed to take a photograph and sent it to his Government¹³. Bahā'ullāh himself writes: "When we started from Iran, we were accompanied by horsemen of Iranian and Russian Governments until we reached Iraq to be received with due respect."¹⁴

¹¹ *Maqāla Sayyāh*, page 16.

¹² *Bahā'ullāh ki Ta'limāt*, printed at Agra, page 18.

¹³ *Al-Kawākib*, page 446.

¹⁴ *Nabdhatu min Ta'limul Bahā*, page 71.

Life of 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb prior to his Claim

'Alī Muḥammad Bāb was born in a family of businessmen and traders. When he was about fifteen years of age he went into business with his uncle. As regards his education, "since he was born in a trader family, his education had been mainly confined to arithmetic necessary for book-keeping, as was the case in India for some time, and as continues to be the case in Iran even now. It is likely that this education also included the learning of the Holy Qur'an by heart, as was usually the case in most old-fashioned families."¹⁵

Right from the start 'Alī Muḥammad was a follower of the Shaikhiyyah sect, having been brought up by his uncle who was a zealous member. Thus the atmosphere in which he spent his childhood was one that was permeated by a great hope and expectation in regard to the appearance of the Hidden Imam. The effect of this atmosphere on the mind of 'Alī Muḥammad was so deep that as soon as his uncle set him up in business in partnership with a son of his own, he began to show signs of an inner agitation and mental absorption. "He did not appear to be happy with the claim the business made upon his time and mind. He began to show a preference for spending his

¹⁵ *Bahā'ullāh kī Ta'limāt*, page 4 and *Risālatul Tis'a 'Asharī'a*, page 28.

time, in seclusion. He would extricate himself from the business of the shop, climb to the roof, and there devote himself to prayer and meditation."¹⁶

At this stage he began to write in support of the Shia doctrine, with some monographs on the Hidden Imam, which attracted a considerable amount of attention in Shaikhiyyah circles. "The Bāb wrote in detail in regard to the Imam Mahdi and his characteristic attributes, and he always withheld his pen from writing anything against the Shia view. In fact he supported and extolled this view, holding it to be correct, including the belief in regard to the Hidden Imam."¹⁷

‘Alī Muḥammad married when he was 22, and his friends and relations thought that now perhaps he would settle down. After one year a child was born, but died in infancy. Now more disturbed in mind than ever before, he left home and went to Karbala.

This was 1258 Hijra, when Kāẓim Rashtī was yet alive. In addition to visiting the tombs of celebrated saints, ‘Alī Muḥammad also attended the *dars*¹⁸ of Kāẓim Rashtī¹⁹. He returned from Karbala to Bushahr

¹⁶ *Al-Kawāḳib*, page 64.

¹⁷ *Al-Kawāḳib*, page 66.

¹⁸ A lecture or discourse by a learned religious scholar in an informal class which anyone interested can attend. [Publisher]

¹⁹ *Al-Risāṭul Tis'a 'Asharia*, page 29.

after some time, but his restlessness of mind did not leave him. Then only a few months afterwards Kāẓim Rashtī died in 1259 Hijra, and this event had a profound effect on 'Alī Muḥammad. He closed his shop and returned to his native town, Shiraz.

His Initial Claim

It has been stated already that, to begin with, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad only claimed that he was the Bāb, which claim was no more than that of Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'i and Kāẓim Rashtī before him, or that of the earlier Bābs. The Badasht Conference was held in 1264 Hijra, and we have it on the authority of *Tadhkiratul Wafā*²⁰ that till that time 'Alī Muḥammad had not put forth his claim that he was the expected Imam Mahdi. It appears that he made this claim for the first time on his return from the castle of Chihriq. This was 1264 Hijra, shortly after the Badasht Conference.

In *Tadhkiratul Wafā*²⁰ we have the following passage: "Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī. mullah Muḥammad 'Alī Bārfarushī, and Ummi Salma Qurratul 'Ain used to meet at night. The declaration had not yet been made in regard to the Qāimiyyat of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad, Bahā'ullāh and mullah Bārfarushī passed a resolution

²⁰ *ibid* page 307.

in regard to open preaching and the abrogation of (earlier) sharias."

We learn from *Al-Kāwākib* that when he put forth the claim that he was the Mahdi long being awaited by the Muslims, a violent disturbance took place.²¹

Condition in general of the followers of Bāb

With the exception of a few people, the early followers of Bāb were rather narrow minded, ignorant, and prone to violent fanatical fervour. In *Bahā'ullāh kī Ta'līmāt*, pages 12 and 13 we read: "Those who accepted the claim of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad came to be known as Bābīs. The history of these Bābīs makes extremely painful and pathetic reading, for most of them were illiterate, simple, credulous, and good at heart. In mosques and Imam Bārās these people had from childhood listened to dissertations on the expected advent of the Innocent Imam Qā'im, Āl-e-Muḥammad, Ḥaḍrat Mahdi^{as} in words which stirred the heart to its depths. Now, if the Bāb had not been imprisoned these people would have gone to him seeking to know and understand his teaching. But since this was not possible, on the whole they remained ignorant of his teaching of which fact there is ample proof in their actions."

²¹ *ibid* page 397.

In *Tārīkh Amri-Bāhā'ī*²² we read: "With the exception of a very limited number no one seemed to have really recognised the Bāb, only a few having grasped his teaching. On the basis of that inner fire which the common people are capable of evincing under a strong religious impetus, the devotees, in a manner of speaking were mad after the Bāb. It was their belief that it was binding upon them that they should all gather under his banner and be ready to shed their blood so that a revival and regeneration should take place, and all difficulties and troubles should melt away and disappear. But they did not really understand his teaching. Some of them even believed that what was forbidden before the appearance of the Bāb had become lawful now."

This was the condition of the Bābīs in the beginning. In regard to their end, the following passage from the writings of 'Abdul Bahā' Āfandī would not be without interest. "They are steeped in the darkness of superstition."²³

The prominent four among Bāb's followers

The most prominent among Bāb's followers from the earliest times were the following four 'mullah Ḥusain of Bushrawaih, to whom the title of Bābul Bāb

²² *ibid* page 28.

²³ *Khutabāt Abdul Bahā'*, volume 1, page 258.

(Gate of the Bāb) was given; Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī who later came to be known as Bahā'ullāh, of whom it is said that when news in regard to the Bāb spread, the first to support his claim in Teheran was Bahā'ullāh²⁴; mullah Muḥammad 'Alī Bārfarushī; and the daughter of mullah Ṣāliḥ Al-Qazwainī, Ummi Salmā by name. On account of her golden hair, in some historical records she is spoken of as "Zarrīn Tāj", meaning Golden Crown. Among the Bābīs she later on came to be known as Qurratul 'Ain. Born about 1231 Hijra, she was married to her cousin mullah Muḥammad. Under the influence of her uncle, mullah 'Alī, she had early joined the Shaikhiyya sect. Surprisingly beautiful and intelligent, she is said to have won the title of Qurratul 'Ain from Sayyid Kāẓim. After the demise of Sayyid Kāẓim she used to teach and instruct his disciples. At this stage she was about 30 years of age. When 'Alī Muḥammad claimed to be the Bāb, she joined his followers.

Qurratul 'Ain had children from this marriage, but since her husband and her father-in-law were not well disposed towards the Bābī movement, the relationship became strained, and she gave up living with her husband. When some friends tried to bring about reconciliation, she is reported to have said on one

²⁴ Bahā'ullāh ki Ta'limāt, page 17.

occasion in regard to her husband: "That *Khabīth* (unworthy and undesirable man) cannot be a proper mate for a woman like me".²⁵

Later on when mullah Taqī, her father-in-law was killed in Qazwain. some people thought Qurratul 'Ain had a hand in the affair, and some of her friends were arrested. Thanks to strenuous efforts made on her behalf by Ḥusain 'Alī (Bahā'ullāh), she succeeded in slipping to Teheran. In those days she did not observe *pardah*. In *Nāsikhul Tawārīkh* it is stated that she looked upon *purdah* between males and females as something reprehensible. In the circle of her friends she appeared without a veil, but when speaking to the common people she usually had one on. This roused a great deal of unfavourable comment in Bābī circles, and a question on the point was addressed to the Bāb. This was during the time when the Bāb was a prisoner. The Bāb's verdict supported Qurratul 'Ain, and Sayyid 'Alī Bashār, the man who had raised this question, was rebuked as one who was weak and shaky in belief. This answer from the Bāb was not welcomed by some among his followers, who left the movement. When the Badasht Conference was held, Qurratul 'Ain took up a very bold attitude. On this occasion she is reported to have said quite openly that

²⁵ *Al-Kawākib*, page 203.

their time being the time of *fatrat*²⁶ the former religious laws had become null and void. (*Nāsi Khul Tawārīkh*, vol. III). She was executed in 1852 for complicity in an attempt to raise a rebellion following the failure of a Bābī attempt on the life of Shāh Nasīr-ud-Dīn.

Ṣubḥ-e-Azal

When Bāb's apprehensions increased in regard to his own life, in 1265 Hijra he appointed Mirzā Yaḥyā, at that time only 19, as his successor. This Mirzā Yaḥyā among the Bābīs is known by the title of Ṣubḥ-e-Azal. Following the execution of the Bāb, Ṣubḥ-e-Azal was accepted as the Executor of the last will and testament of the Bāb, and the head of the Bābī movement. Evidence on this point is so full and so convincing that no Bahā'ī can afford to reject it.

Political nature and aims of the Bābī movement.

It was noted earlier that from the very outset there was an air of great secrecy about the movement, which increased following the claim of the Bāb that he was the long awaited Mahdi. Suspicion in Government circles in regard to the aims of the movement was a natural result of secrecy, and this suspicion increased with the development from day to

²⁶ Transitional period. [Publisher]

day in the political aims of the movement. Following the claim of the Bāb that he was the Mahdi, disturbance took place in many places, with varying degrees of bloodshed, culminating in the arrest of the Bāb and his imprisonment in the fortress of Mākū.

In the Badasht Conference held in 1264 Hijra resolution was passed to the effect that all Bābīs should converge on Mākū in an organised manner, so that all possible efforts should be made to encompass liberation of the Bāb from imprisonment.²⁷

The Bābīs who responded to this call have been thus described by Bāhā'ī historians: "Most of them carried arms and moved in bands of about twenty or more"²⁸.

In 1264 Hijra the Bābīs took possession of the fort of Tabrasī, put it in good repair and installed themselves in it. Muḥammad Shāh of Iran died at about this time, which greatly encouraged the Bābīs.

Even prior to the execution of the Bāb, disturbances had occurred in a number of places, with clashes between the Bābīs and Government forces. In places like *Zanjān Māzandarān* and *Nīrīz* the army had suffered considerable losses. According to a Bāhā'ī historian in one clash alone about four hundred

²⁷ *Al-Kawākib*, 227.

²⁸ *Al-Kawākib*, page 225.

army men were killed, of which number 35 were officers²⁹. The Bābī battle-cry in these clashes was "Yā Şāhibul Zamān," which shows that Jihad had been proclaimed among them.

Following the execution of the Bāb, resentment against the Government reached white heat among his followers, of which the attempt on the life of the king was a result. According to 'Aşr-e-Jadīd, Urdu, page 31: "August 1852 an event occurred for the Bābīs which raised such a storm that the lives of all were put into danger. A young man, Sādiq by name, who was a Bābī, was so enraged by the martyrdom of his master that, fired by a desire for revenge, he made an attempt on the life of the king."

When and how was the ambition born to abrogate the Islamic Sharia

For some time the followers of the Bābī movement continued to observe the Islamic Sharia. 'Abdul Bahā' Āfandī writes in connection with the Badasht Conference "See how careful were the Bābīs in sticking to Islamic habits and ritual. They were under the impression that in this way they were striving to establish the truth. Indeed to that day all had depended on the Islamic Sharia, not a single injunction having

²⁹ *Al-Kawākib*, page 276.

been changed till that time" (*Tārīkh Bahā'ullāh mein Muḥadathāt-e-'Abdul Bahā'*, page 20)

The background of the Badasht. Conference was that the Bāb was, in prison, while followers of the movement, generally speaking, were in great distress. Religious decrees had been issued by the ulema against the Bābīs, and the Bābī rally was designed to think out ways and means for meeting the situation. Outcome of the conference was a resolution that an organised and armed attempt should be made to rescue the leader of the movement. On the other hand, in order to avenge themselves on the ulema, the tendency was born and accelerated that they should cut themselves away from Islam altogether. This step, therefore, was; for the greater part, a retaliatory measure against the ulema: Bahā'ullāh himself writes in *Iqtidār*³⁰: "If 'the Muslims had not failed to yield belief to the claims of the movement, the Islamic Sharia would not have been abrogated."

As mentioned earlier, the four who took the most leading part in this Conference were: Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, mullah Muḥammad 'Alī, mullah Ḥusain Bushrawaih, and Ummi Salmā, Qurratul 'Ain. This inner group of the leadership of the movement frequently consulted each other, the main point under

³⁰ Pages 47 and 48.

discussion having been that the Islamic Sharia should be abrogated³¹. The result was that a large number of the Bābīs began to incline to this view. But a small portion thought that there was no valid reason for abrogating the Islamic Sharia, and that no change in it could be held, permissible³². Qurratul ‘Ain was in the first group, being in fact one of its most vehement exponents. She insisted that the Bāb should have a sharia of his own, and that the time had come when the Islamic law had to be changed. But the other Bābī leaders were extremely apprehensive that any step of this kind would radically displease the rank and file of the movement, and was likely to be repudiated by them. Discussion continued till at last Qurratul ‘Ain came out with a proposal that since the Islamic law did not ordain death for a woman apostate, she would take upon herself the responsibility to move the idea publicly that the time had come when the Islamic Sharia had to be abrogated and abandoned. If the proposal was well received, so far so good; but if any very great deal of resentment was expressed, she would take back what she said, and the incident would be closed for the time being. On a suitable occasion, when the other prominent leaders had deliberately

³¹ *Al-Kawāḳib*, page 219.

³² *Al-Kawāḳib*, page 220.

failed to put in an appearance, Qurratul ‘Ain raised the question³³.

But the people in general were staggered when they heard her. They took a complaint against her to mullah Muḥammad ‘Alī, who was in fact collaborating with Qurratul ‘Ain in the matter. He managed to silence the critics, expressing his readiness to look into the matter carefully with Qurratul ‘Ain. Conversations later took place on the point, but those who were really deeply religious at heart began to perceive that the whole activity was a sort of diplomatic move to allay suspicion; and seeing this many of them went back to their homes.

According to the well thought out scheme Bahā’ullāh intervened in the controversy, but he sided with Qurratul ‘Ain. This created great resentment among the followers. ‘Abdul Bahā’ writes that at first almost all of them turned their backs, but later some people returned³⁴. Then it was decided that for final decision the question should be referred to the Bāb in prison. Bahā’ī history has it that the Bāb agreed with Qurratul ‘Ain and the decision to abandon the Islamic Sharia was finally taken³⁵.

³³ *Al-Kawāḳib*, page 221.

³⁴ *Tadhkirtul Wafā*, page 308.

³⁵ *Al-Kawāḳib*, Page 223.

The Bābī sharia

When we study the Bābī movement in its historical perspective, we find that it can be said to have coined three separate sharias after deciding to abandon the Islamic Sharia: namely, those embodied in *Al-Bayān*, *Al-Mustaiqaz*, and *Al-Aqdas*. The author of *Al-Bayān* is 'Alī Muḥammad known as the Bāb; that of *Mustaiqaz* is Mirzā Yaḥyā, known by the title of Şubḥ-e-Azal, appointed by Ali Muḥammad Bāb to succeed him: while the author of *Al-Aqdas* is Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, the man who played a prominent part in the movement in the life of Ali Muḥammad Bāb and who, later, on his own claim, become Bahā'ullāh, the founder of the Bāhā'ī movement, which is a development of the Bābī movement. According to the Bāhā'īs the sharia of *Al-Bayān* too has been abrogated in turn. Nor do the Bāhā'īs have faith in the sharia embodied in *Al-Mustaiqaz* by Şubḥ-e-Azal, leader of the Bābī movement appointed to that post by 'Alī Muḥammad the founder, but whose position was challenged after some years by Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, Bahā'u'llāh, who became the founder of the Bāhā'ī movement. The followers of Bahā'u'llāh denounce Mirzā Yaḥyā, Şubḥ-e-Azal, and ignore the sharia embodied by him in *Al-Mustaiqaz*. Those who call themselves Bābīs today hold faith in *Al-Bayān*, taking *Al-Mustaiqaz* to be only a supplement of the former. Those who call

themselves Bāhā'īs attach no importance either to Al-Bayān or Al-Mustaiqaz: their sharia is embodied in Al-Aqdas, of which the author is Bahā'ullāh.

Al-Bayān

After the decision to abrogate the Islamic Sharia taken at the Badasht Conference, 'Alī Muḥammad, Bāb, started writing *Al-Bayān* while he was in prison in Fort Maku. Some people think that the duration of his imprisonment in this fortress is nine months, while others extend it to about a year and a half. But in any case all agree that *Al-Bayān* was written during this time, whether we take it to have extended to nine months or to a year and a half. 'Abdul Bahā' says that the Bāb wrote *Al-Bayān* in the fort of Māku where he was in prison³⁶.

The Bahā'ī historian 'Abdul Ḥusain confirms this view³⁷. No one is permitted to give any commentary on Al-Bayān³⁸ Bāb's idea in regard to *Al-Bayān* was that he would divide it into 19 parts, with 19 chapters in each part But he could not carry out this plan as he had originally conceived it³⁹. In actual fact he wrote

³⁶ *Tārīkh Bahā'ullāh*, page 2.

³⁷ *Al-Kawākib*, pages 382, 405.

³⁸ *Bahā'ullāh ki Ta'limāt*, page 8.

³⁹ *Al-Kawākib* page 406.

only eight parts complete, while of the, ninth parts he wrote only nine chapters⁴⁰.

It is to be noted here with care that this is a curious kind of sharia of which the author did not have time or an opportunity enough to complete it.

Şubḥ-e-Azal and his book

Mirzā Yaḥyā, titled Şubḥ-e-Azal, was half brother from the father's side of Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, who called himself Bahā'ullāh and became the founder of the Bāhā'ī movement. The Bāb, 'Alī Muḥammad, had appointed Mirzā Şubḥ-e-Azal as Waṣī after himself, i.e., the Executor of his will, and leader of the movement founded by him. At first this position of Mirzā Yaḥyā was accepted by all followers of the Bāb, including Mirzā Ḥusain All. But, later Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī challenged his half brother in this position, managed to gather the greater portion of the followers round him and became Bahā'ullāh.

Mirzā Yaḥyā claimed that after the Bāb he was the 'Maşdar-e-Amr, source of all authority.

Bahā'ullāh and his followers hold that he was the "man whom Allah had manifested" as foretold in Al-Bayān. But Şubḥ-e-Azal claims this position for

⁴⁰ *Al-Kawākib* 410.

himself. Among the old Bābīs, the followers of Subḥi-e-Azal came to be called Azalīs.

Al-Mustaiqaz, the book written by Şubḥ-e-Azal as the new sharia following the abrogation of *Al-Bayān*, was ignored by Bahā'ullāh, who has accused the followers of Şubḥ-e-Azal that they had taken their leader as their God⁴¹.

Some salient points of the sharia of Al-Bayān

The sharia embodied by Bahā'ullāh in Al-Aqdas will be discussed at a stage when we come to a detailed study of Bahā'ullāh and his claims. But a passing reference to some salient points of the sharia of Al-Bayān seems advisable:

1. The Bāb has directed that no follower of his should read any book other than Al-Bayān⁴².
2. The Bāb has directed that all books other than those written by him should be destroyed⁴³.
3. The Bābī sharia directs that all who did not accept this sharia should be put to death⁴⁴.
4. The principle has been laid down that all Bābīs were pure people, while all those who failed to

⁴¹ *Majmū'a-e-Aqdas*, page 125.

⁴² *Wāhid* 4, *Bāb* 10.

⁴³ *Al-Munāzirāt*, page 167.

⁴⁴ *Makātib*, Volume 2, page 266.

accept the Bāb were impure and dirty, and the same principle applied to all their belongings and things connected with them. The Bāb has further explained this point by saying that even if the non-Bābīs bathed in the sea a thousand times every day, they could not become clean and pure in body.⁴⁵

5. The Bāb began the fifth Wāḥid of the fifth Bāb Al-Bayān as follows: "Those who do not accept the Bāb and his religion, all their belongings should be snatched away from them, if that is possible: but if they accept him their property can be returned to them.
6. The Bābī Sharia ordains that where a man was in possession of a hundred *misqāls* of gold, he should hand over 19 *misqāls* to the Bāb and 18 disciples called the Ḥarūful Ḥayī. In case these had died, the gold was to be given to their heirs⁴⁶. It has also been ordained that of everything the best portion was for the Bāb; the middle one for disciples specially near and dear to him; and only the lowest quality was for the use of the common people.
7. It has been written that it is the duty of every Bābī king that he should not allow any non-Bābī to live

⁴⁵ Bāb 2, Wāḥid 6.

⁴⁶ Bāb 16, Wāḥid 8.

in his realm. This is also binding upon the other Bābīs as well. The only non-Bābī who could be allowed to live in the country was one who carried on some trade of benefit for other people⁴⁷.

8. It is ordained in the Bābī sharia that any one who hurts the feelings of the Bāb, or his successors after him, was to be killed; and for bringing about his death every possible means could be adopted⁴⁸.
9. Just as the use of intoxicants is forbidden, similarly the use of medicines also is prohibited.

History of the Bahā'ī Movement

Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, Bahā'ullāh, was born in Teheran on November 12, 1817, father's name being Mirzā 'Abbas Nurī. It is said that the Qāchārī kings used to select their ministers and advisers from this family, which originally came from Nur in the district of Māzandrān*. According to Bāhā'ī sources, Bahā'ullāh was not educated in any school or college. His father passed away when he was only 22. Five years after this Bahā'ullāh joined the Bābī movement. In 1844 when he put forth his claim he was 27 years of age. In

⁴⁷ *Bāb 4, Wāhid 8.*

⁴⁸ *Al-Bayān 15, Bāb Wāhid 6.*

* Here z is pronounced as 'su' in the English word pleasure. In Persian it is written as *ماژندران*.

collaboration with Qurratul ‘Ain, he was the man who devised the plan to abandon the Islamic Sharia, a resolution to this effect having been passed at the Badasht Conference, as mentioned earlier. In, 1850 when the Bāb was executed while he had not yet had time to complete the new sharia, Mirzā Ḥusain ‘Alī was greatly shocked and upset. But he immediately busied himself in schemes to carry out the intention of the Badasht resolution.

Bahā’ullāh’s Schemes after Execution of the Bāb

While Bahā’ullāh was still deep in devising his plans some Bābīs made an attempt on the life of the king, but failed. Bahā’ullāh was among those arrested in this connection. He remained in prison for four months, of which the effect on his mind may be gauged from his own words: "During the period of imprisonment, on account of hardship caused by the chains in which I was kept, and the foul air of the cell, I could get very little sleep. But sometimes when sleep did come, it seemed as if something were falling from my head on my breast—like a big stream falling down from the top of a hill. This resulted in a peculiar feeling, as if a tire were burning in all my limbs. During such moments words and passages came on my lips of such stupendous, awful import that I do not

think there is any one in this world who could bear to hear."⁴⁹

As to what were his thoughts during these sleepless hours in the prison cell, Bahā'ullāh himself has told us "Day and night in prison I used to review the actions of the Bābīs and the conditions under which they were living and felt greatly pained by the fact that in spite of the lofty position in view of their mission, and their high intelligence and thorough grasp, they were guilty of such an act as daringly to make an attempt on the life of the king. One result of this contemplation was that on being released from prison I would make the utmost effort to educate and civilize the followers of the movement. One night I heard the following voice in a vision, and the same voice and words seemed to be coming from all sides: "Indeed we shall help thee with thy pen. Do not be afraid"⁵⁰.

In view of this it would not be very far wrong to conclude that following the execution' of the Bāb, the thoughts of Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī were full of the urgent need for some man of calibre to assume leadership of the movement, and that in his own mind he felt convinced that he himself was the man for the task.

⁴⁹ *Lauḥi ibni Dha'ib* Urdu, page 17.

⁵⁰ *ibid* page 16.

Move to Iraq and the reason behind that move.

The Bāhā'īs say that Bahā'ullāh was exiled to Iraq by the Persian Government, but this does not appear to be correct. The fact seems to be that on coming out of prison, when he saw the intensity of feeling still prevalent in the country against the followers of the movement, he thought it would be risky if he claimed for himself leadership of the movement that had won such odium in the eyes of the common people. He therefore, managed to obtain permission from the king to travel to Iraq, and for holding this view we have the following basis.

1. We learn from the author of Maqālah Sayyāḥ that "Ḥaḍrat Bahā'ullāh requested that he be permitted to go on a pilgrimage to the sacred places. After, a few months, having obtained permission from the king and 'the prime minister, he set out, attended by some minions of the 'king"⁵¹.
2. Bahā'ullāh himself writes "In accordance with the permission granted by the king, I proceeded to Iraq"⁵².

These passages seem to establish that though Bahā'ullāh was a follower of the Bābī movement which had decided to abandon the Islamic Sharia

⁵¹ *Bābul Hayyāt*, page 47.

⁵² *Bābul Ḥayyāt*, page 128.

altogether and start a new religion,' he dissembled before the Government of the country, pretended to, be a Shia, and obtained a passport to go abroad on the plea that he desired to visit the sacred places of the Shias in Iraq.

In any case he reached Iraq in Muharram, 1269 Hijra.

Opposition from Şubḥ-e-Azal.

Another reason why Bahā'ullāh decided to leave Iran was most probably the presence in the country of Mirzā Yaḥyā, Şubḥ-e-Azal, who had been installed in the position of leader of the movement by the Bāb himself some time before he was executed. He may have thought that in Baghdad he would be in a position to work more freely, in view of the difficulties his rival might create for him in case he stayed in Iran and tried to work from a base in that country.

It appears, however, that Mirzā Yaḥyā, too, was fully aware of the surcharged atmosphere in Iran. Nor does he seem to have failed to perceive that by installing himself in Iraq his rival had managed to secure greater freedom. He, therefore, himself managed to move into Iraq and settle in Baghdad, as Bahā'ullāh had done⁵³.

⁵³ *Bābul Ḥayāt*, page 56.

Bahā'ullāh goes to Sulaimānīyyah

After a period of bickering between the two for one year, Bahā'ullāh moved to Sulaimānīyyah in Kurdistan. For some light on this struggle between the two rivals reference should be made to Professor Browne in *Muqaddamah Nuqṭatul Qāf*.

During this period before he came to Baghdad a second time, Bahā'ullāh, it appears, was in contact with some Naqshbandī people, of which some trace is discernible in his later writings. One Bāhā'ī historian has opined that during this period of two years Bahā'ullāh was mentally preparing himself for the position he subsequently claimed for himself⁵⁴.

Return to Baghdad from Sulaimānīyyah

But on his return to Baghdad he found the same old trouble on his hands from his rival. As one way out, he tried to procure the return of Şubḥ-e-Azal to Iran. Bahā'ullāh himself writes: "It was decided that Mirzā Yaḥyā should go to Iran with these documents and try to propagate them in that country"⁵⁵.

Mirzā Yaḥyā, however, did not fall into this trap, and stayed on in Iraq, close on the heels of his rival.

⁵⁴ *Tārīkh Amr-e-Bāhā'ī*, page 30.

⁵⁵ *Lauḥi ibni Dha'ib*, Urdu, page 112.

In 1278 Hijra, during his stay in Baghdad, Bahā'ullāh wrote *Īqān*, in which his approach is that of a disciple of the Bāb. As mentioned earlier, he was, however, preparing himself mentally for a claim superior to that of the Bāb, but based initially on a prophecy which the Bāb appears to have made in regard to 'Whom Allah would manifest'. This claim had obtained possession of his mind, but he was also hesitant in putting it forth from fear that followers of the movement may not take kindly to it.

Another significant fact connected with his stay in Baghdad is that after some time the Government of Iran began to receive unfavourable reports concerning the activities of Bahā'ullāh, and Teheran began to urge upon the Turkish Government that he should be moved from Baghdad to some other place where he may not be in a position to do any harm to the interests of the Government of Iran. These representations obtained favourable consideration from the Turkish Government, with the result that it was decided to move Bahā'ullāh to Constantinople. This development had this immediate effect on Bahā'ullāh that the claim which he had been deliberately holding back, waiting for some favourable moment to make it, he now went ahead in putting it forth. Another circumstance which also might have helped him in this direction was that some followers of the Bāb had

started to come forward with a similar claim in their own behalf, and Bahā'ullāh might have felt that if he waited longer there was danger of his being left behind in his bid for support among the Bābīs.

In any case he put forth his claim in 1863 while he was still in Baghdad⁵⁶. But to begin with, the claim was rather privately made in the presence of a few chosen friends and companions⁵⁷. It is also to be carefully noted that Bahā'ullāh has never claimed that the basis of his claim was any light or command to this effect from Allah. Rather it is clear that he took this step urged on by his own judgment and desire.

To Constantinople

During his stay in Baghdad Bahā'ullāh had obtained Turkish citizenship for his friends. Partly due to this reason, and partly because it was also the desire of the Government of Iran that he be well looked after, the Turkish Government treated him with considerable ceremony and honour. 'Abdul Bahā' says that in the course of this journey the Turkish officials showed much respect and consideration, with a degree of formal ceremonial everyday when the caravan started on the day's journey, or halted to camp for the night. In Constantinople itself the

⁵⁶ *Shauqī Āfandī in the World Religion*, page 5.

⁵⁷ *Āṣr-e-Jadīd*, Urdu, page, 36.

caravan was received with much respect and lodged as guests of the Government, then soon moved into bigger accommodation, the first having proved inadequate for the large number of members of the party⁵⁸.

In Constantinople the party remained for about four months during which time the struggle between Mirzā Yaḥyā, Şubḥ-e-Azal, and Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī Bahā'ullāh became more acute than ever, and the Turkish Government moved them all to Adrana (Adrianople). They reached this place in December 1863. Among the Bāhā'īs Adrana is known by the name of *Arḍul Sirr*. The unpleasantness and struggle between the two rivals continued here as well.

After five years in Adrana, during which time the struggle between the two rivals had continued unabated, Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī publicly put forth his claim which towards the end of his stay in Baghdad he had announced privately in the presence of some select friends only. His claim was that he was the leader in regard to whom there was a prophecy in Al-Bayān⁵⁹.

Ḥashmatullāh Bahā'ī writes: "Left without a leader, when the Bābīs reached a very sad state,

⁵⁸ *Bābul Ḥayāt*, page 92.

⁵⁹ *Prof. Browne in Muqaddamah Nuqtatul Qāf*.

Bahā'ullāh in Adrana declared that the man in regard to whom the Bāb had given glad tidings, and for whose sake he had sacrificed his own life, was he (Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī himself): that *Man Yuḏhiruhullāhu* was his own title, and that of no one else. This declaration at first stunned most people, but gradually his claim was accepted by all Bābīs: and from that time those who yielded belief to Bahā'ullāh came to be known as Bāhā'īs⁶⁰.

There is no evidence in Bāhā'ī records that this claim on the part of Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī was in any way based on light or commandment from Allah.

Departure for 'Akkā

With the advancement of this claim on the part of Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī, relations between him and Ṣubḥ-e-Azal deteriorated still further, and it began to appear as if it was impossible that both should live at peace in the same town. In *'Aṣr-e-Jadīd* we read: "In Adrana he generally proclaimed that he was the expected manifestation, to which a large part of the Bābīs yielded belief; but a small group under Mirzā Yaḥyā put up bitter opposition, and went over to join the Shias, the old enemies of the Bābī movement. This quarrel continued to grow more and more bitter every

⁶⁰ *Bahā'ullāh kī Ta'īmāt*, pages 19 and 20.

day, until the Turkish Government sent Bahā'ullāh and his friends to 'Akkā, while Mirzā Yaḥyā was sent to Cyprus, This happened in August 31, 1868"⁶¹.

When Bahā'ullāh reached 'Akkā, his party comprised 72 members. Since the Turkish Government had some suspicions in regard to the Bābīs in general, it took this precaution that in the group of Bahā'ullāh four Azalīs (followers of Ṣubḥ-e-Azal) were included, while four followers of Bahā'ullāh were put in Subh-e-Azal's party. Professor Browne has given the names of these eight men, and added that of these four the Bahā'īs poisoned one even before they had left for 'Akkā, and the remaining three were disposed of in similar manner after reaching 'Akkā. Mirzā Naṣrullāh Tafrashī was the name of the man poisoned before leaving for 'Akkā "After reaching 'Akkā the remaining three were killed by the Bahā'īs in one night"⁶².

Following these murders, the Turkish Government for a brief period brought a hard hand to bear upon the Bahā'īs, but they managed to bribe some of the corrupt officials and obtained a considerable measure of facilities locally⁶³, so that they were not subjected to any restrictions.

⁶¹ *Aṣr-e-Jadīd*, Urdu, page 37.

⁶² *Muqaddamah Nuqtatul Kāf*.

⁶³ *Al-Bābiyun fit Tārīkh*, page 22.

Was Bahā'ullāh a prisoner in 'Akkā?

Some Bahā'ī historians have sought to create an impression that Bahā'ullāh was in 'Akkā as a prisoner. For instance Ḥashmatulāh says: "From 1868 to 1892 Ḥaḍrat Bahā'ullāh remained in prison in 'Akkā, and after forty years in prison, he died at the age of 75, in a garden about a mile outside 'Akkā"⁶⁴. "Now even if we assume that all the time he was in 'Akkā he was being held as a prisoner, even then from 1868 to 1892 makes 24 years at the most, in no case forty. But it is altogether wrong to say that at 'Akkā Bahā'ullāh was treated as a prisoner. From what we know of the circumstances of his life in 'Akkā, we can say that the word 'prisoner' was never applicable to him. 'Abdul Bahā' himself admits that though technically Bahā'ullāh may be said to have been in 'Akkā, yet it was a confinement during which he was treated with great honour, never as a common prisoner⁶⁵. In regard to the early years which the Bahā'īs describe as 'prison', Bahā'ullāh's son, 'Abdul Bahā' himself says: "Ḥaḍrat Bahā'ullāh was a prisoner only in name, for the orders of Sulṭān 'Abdul 'Azīz were never formally cancelled. But in fact in his life and behaviour he showed such dignity that all

⁶⁴ *Ta'limāt*, page 22.

⁶⁵ *Khitābāt* 'Abdul Bahā', volume 1, page 144.

rendered him great respect and thought very highly of him. The Governor of Palestine used to envy his position of respect and his influence. The Governor, Mutaşarrif, generals, and prominent officers requested interviews with considerable humility, and even these were seldom granted"⁶⁶.

Even before the long period of his life spent in Bhajah, the treatment given to him was such that 'Abdul Bahā' says: "In spite of the harsh order of Sulţān 'Abdul 'Aziz, which did not permit me to see him, I presented myself at the door in a carriage; and taking him with me I went to the palace (garden of Muḥammad Pasha and the bungalow) and no one tried to stop me. I left him there, and returned to the town myself. He remained in this beautiful and lovely place for two years. Then it was decided that he should go to Bhajah"⁶⁷.

On the same page 'Abdul Bahā' describes life in Bhajah in the following words: "At that place the doors of grandeur and majesty were opened on him." The reason for the great courtesy and leniency shown by the local authorities was: "On account of the large number of presents received from his followers he had

⁶⁶ *'Aşr-e-Jadīd*, Urdu page 44.

⁶⁷ *'Aşr-e-Jadīd*, page 44.

big sums of money, at his disposal, which he spent just as he deemed fit"⁶⁸.

Here it is also to be remembered that Bahā'ullāh also received considerable amounts from the Turkish Government for his maintenance. 'Abdul Bahā' admits this as well. "For the maintenance of Bahā'ullāh and Azal 'the Government made very comfortable arrangements"⁶⁹.

The story that Bahā'ullāh lived in 'Akkā as a prisoner and a persecuted man is pure invention made to suit the needs of their propaganda designed to create sympathy for Bahā'ullāh and the Bahā'ī movement.

Life at 'Akkā

In 'Akkā, when he found the atmosphere favourable for the purpose, Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī began to implement the scheme he had worked out carefully, but which had suffered a set-back in the execution of the Bāb, a scheme of which the central point was to abandon the Islamic Sharia. The Bābīs believe that if the Bāb had not been executed so soon after the Badasht Conference, he would have succeeded in abrogating the Islamic Sharia. Allah gave a long life

⁶⁸ *Aṣr-e-Jadīd*, Arabic, page 45.

⁶⁹ *Maqālah Sayyāh*, Arabic, page 68.

to Bahā'ullāh, and this man also had some ample means for the task he had planned for himself. From the time he arrived in Iraq, to the time of his death (1269 to 1309 Hijra), for full forty years he lived among the Arabs. In spite of this the new sharia which he embodied in *Aqdas* stands as a living proof of failure in the task of producing a better book than the Holy Qur'an. In fact *Aqdas* is so faulty that the Bahā'īs up to this day have never dared to bring it into the open. It is not available in the market. In fact it has never been published, for it is guarded as something secret which should not be allowed to fall into the hands of anyone except the close inner circle of a few people.

In regard to the daily pursuits of Bahā'ullāh at 'Akkā, 'Aṣr-e-Jadīd says "The greater part of his time was spent in prayer and devotion, contemplation, in study of the sacred books, in the *nazūl* of the *Alwāḥ* and in improving the moral tone and the spiritual education of friends and followers"⁷⁰.

From the words 'sacred books and *Alwāḥ* in this passage are meant those dissertations, answers to queries, or letters which Bahā'ullāh dictated, since according to the Bahā'ī view every word and writing of Bahā'ullāh, is an *Ilhām* (inspiration). In other

⁷⁰ 'Aṣr-e-Jadīd, Urdu, page 46.

words these books did not descend on Bahā'ullāh, but Bahā'ullāh sent them down on his disciple. At the end of *Īqān* we read the following words 'descended from Bahā'ullāh'.⁷¹

Bahā'ullāh's last will and testament in regard to his successor.

The Bahā'īs say that two years before his death Bahā'ullāh wrote his will, which is called *Kitāb 'Aḥdī* and entrusted it to 'Abdul Bahā'. This document has been reproduced in the book of Bahā'ī history entitled *Al-Kawākibul Durriyah*. Bahā'ullāh had written in '*Aqdas* that after his death the authority would lie with his two sons. In his will also he wrote: "Indeed we have chosen the Akbar after the A'zam", i.e., Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī, the younger son after the elder son⁷².

It is to be noted here that Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī does not hold this will to be correct, nor do his friends. And it is also surprising that 'Abdul Bahā' also failed to entrust leadership to his younger brother after his own time, but proceeded to install his own grandson, Shauqī Āfandī in that position. In any case it stands proved that the last will and testament

⁷¹ Descended from al-Ba'i wal Ha'i (i.e. *Bahā'ullāh Iqān*, page 216).

⁷² *Al-Kawākibul Durriyah*, Persian, volume II, page 22.

dictated by the 'Alīm and Khabīr (Bahā'ullāh's God) was cancelled and disobeyed by his own eldest son.

***Aqdas*, book of the new sharia of the Bahā'īs.**

The Bahā'īs claim that the sharia compiled by Bahā'ullāh and embodied in his book entitled *Aqdas* is the best among sacred and heavenly scriptures; and that the solution for all the world problems of mankind lies, in this book. Abul Faḍal, a Bahā'ī missionary writes: "Bahā'ullāh has compiled a sharia without which the task of reformation and civilizing the people is impossible and unreasonable to expect. *Aqdas* is the greatest and the best remedy for the ills of mankind, and for attracting the human heart it is the most powerful magnet⁷³.

Bahā'ī Attitude in Regard to Publication of this Book.

In view of this claim it is not possible for any sensible person to believe that the Bahā'īs to this day have never plucked up courage enough to make the book public by publishing it for the benefit of all who might wish to study it, irrespective of the fact whether he was a Bahā'ī or not. There are any number of Bahā'īs who have never seen this book, much less read it. Such being the case, the question as to how far

⁷³ *Al-Farā'id*, page 13.

the Bahā'īs observe the sharia embodied in this book does not even appear to arise, for how can anyone observe a sharia who never in his life catches even a passing glimpse of the book in which it is embodied. Most members of the Bahā'ī movement would appear to have joined it merely on hearsay. And when a reasonable person comes to think of the matter, there appears to be no earthly reason why the Bahā'īs should behave in such an extraordinary manner in regard to a book which they believe is the crowning glory of their faith, and the salvation of mankind. This question was raised before the Bahā'īs in Egypt and Palestine by missionaries of the Aḥmadiyyah movement on many occasions; but each time it was met with a stony silence, or transparent evasion, pure and simple. Prohibiting the Bahā'īs from publishing the *Aqdas*, or from making it public in any other way, the foremost leader of the movement after Bahā'ullāh, his own son Abdul Bahā, writes: "If *Aqdas* is published, it would spread and fall into the hands of mean and hostile people. Therefore it is not permissible that it should be printed. Some irreligious and shaky people like Mīrzā Mahdi Beig succeeded in getting a copy into their hands, and this has been published. But since this book has been published in journals of the *mulhidīn* (heretics), the people in general have been able to form some idea of the

enmity they bear in their hearts. What they say therefore, is unreliable and their statements meaningless and confused. But if the Bahā'īs themselves were to bring out the book, then it would be a different matter"⁷⁴.

In regard to *Aqdas*, Maulānā Abul 'Aṭā', a well-known divine and missionary of the Aḥmadiyyah movement, writes in his *Bahā'ī Tahrik par Tabṣīrah*: "From 1931 to 1936 I have been in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Egypt. In Haifa I twice met the present leader of the Bahā'īs, namely, Shauqī Āfandī. In the course of my interview on June 7, 1933, I requested that I be allowed to have a look at *Aqdas*. He told me clearly that he did not happen to have a copy with him, but that I might find it in Iraq. After that, with a great deal of endeavour, I succeeded in obtaining a copy through a friend, and had it printed at the Aḥmadiyyah press in Kabābīr, Jablul Karmal. In 1938, when I was in Bombay, on June 9 and 10, in the Bahā'ī Hall, in the presence of the local president of the Bahā'ī movement, I obtained an opportunity to compare the copy with me with the copy which happened to have been made available for me for consultation at that place. On this occasion I also showed my own copy to the

⁷⁴ *Jawāb Nāmah Jamā'at Bahā'ī*, page 37, printed in Egypt 1338 Hijra.

Bahā'īs there, which they confirmed to be genuine after having a look at it."

Maulānā Abul 'Aṭā' has reproduced the entire *Aqdas* in his book of the title above mentioned, with this challenge that if anyone proved his copy to be wrong or faulty, he would be prepared to give a prize to the person who did so. And interestingly enough the prize so far has remained unclaimed.

COMPARISON BETWEEN THE ISLAMIC AND THE BAHĀ'Ī SHARI'ĀHS

There can be no Comparison Between the Holy Qur'an and *Aqdas*

About thirteen hundred years ago Allah Almighty sent down the Holy Qur'an as a complete and comprehensive Sharia, the most clear and vigorous scripture and the best code for all mankind. At the same time a claim to this effect was advanced in the Holy Book itself "If all mankind, their big and small, were to come together, aiming to produce another book like it, they shall never have the power to do so, even though some of them might become the helpers of others in the task"⁷⁵.

The basis of this claim is explained in the next verse as follows: "We have fully explained for the people in this Qur'an all that pertains to their good and well being."⁷⁶

This challenge of the Holy Qur'an has never been taken up by anyone in the East or the West, and it stands even today. Attempts here and there in history

⁷⁵ 17:89.

⁷⁶ 17:90.

have been made by some people to produce books of sharia to match the Holy Qur'an, but all such attempts stand in human history as ghastly failures. From Musailmah Kadhdhāb this story extends to people like 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb and Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī Bahā'ullāh. People try to put out the Light of Allah with the breath of their mouths, but Allah is determined fully to fulfil its purpose, however much the unbelievers might dislike it.

The book entitled *Aqdas* which Bahā'ullāh produced to replace and supersede the Holy Qur'an in Arabic; and according to a Christian writer, Khadūrī Ilyās, he had desired to produce something superior to the Holy Qur'an. But its language, throughout, is extremely unimpressive, in places entirely wrong. Although Bahā'ullāh appears to have made an attempt to capture the style of the Holy Book, he has altogether failed even as an imitator.

The clumsy, unimpressive style of expression and wrong grammar and usage apart, in point of substance and subject matter, there is all the less possibility of any valid and justifiable comparison between the two books. We give below the following rather detailed but brief study.

And all other things apart, Bahā'ullāh's own sons and successors appear to have felt their weakness on this point. In regard to Mirzā Muḥammad 'Alī, the

younger son, we read in Bahā'ī history: "The sons of Bahā'ullāh have spread the idea among the followers of other religions that their father had not claimed to be a prophet in his own position and right, nor did he compile any new sharia. Rather, he was a *Walī* and *Qutab*, and he always followed the Islamic Sharia. But of course our brother 'Abbas Āfandī has raised another fraud, and laid the foundation of another sharia"⁷⁷.

This shows that with the exception of 'Abbās Āfandī all sons of Bahā'ullāh gave out that their father was a follower of the Islamic Sharia. They also said that he had made no new sharia, which plainly means that *Aqdas* in their estimation also could in no way be compared to the Holy Qur'an. When Maulānā Abul 'Aṭā' interviewed Muḥammad 'Alī in Bhajah, he had said that, as in Islam, he prayed five times a day.

As for 'Abdul Bahā' 'Abbās Āfandī, in 1338 Hijra he decreed that it was not permitted that *Aqdas* should be printed and published. (*Jawāb Nāmāh Jamā'at* page 37) This shows that inside his heart he knew quite well that this book had no chance when it came in comparison with the Holy Qur'an. And all members of the Bahā'ī movement, by failing to publish it, seem to prove by their action that they in

⁷⁷ *Al-Kawākib*, Persian, volume 11, page 31.

fact feel so ashamed over it that they cannot even pluck up courage to make it public.

The Bahā'ī sharia is in Three Parts

The Bahā'ī sharia can be divided into three parts. Matters and questions pertaining to early stages of civilization and culture, which mainly comprise principles which mankind in general already believe in and tries to live by, as for instance that superfluous growth of nails should be removed: to sit on a chair or stool is more convenient than sitting on the ground: one should wear clean clothes, etc., there being no need for us to go into details over such questions. But it is to be noted even here that wherever Bahā'ī ism has tried to make a departure from Islam, the attempt has produced ridiculous or ugly substitutes for principles laid down by Islam. Things which have been copied down or imitated by Bahā'ullāh from the Holy Qur'an in these he has tried to make some amendments on the basis of his own intellect, but in all such cases he has only made a mess, without making the least contribution to the progress of mankind. A notable thing in this connection is that Bahā'ullāh appears to have a gravely faulty idea in regard to the attributes of the Divine Being, for invariably the wrong attributes are invoked or referred to in the wrong places. The substance of a passage and

the Divine attributes in its connection do not appear to have any affinity at all. This is a quality of *Aqdas* which no discerning reader will fail to notice. The third part, which really is the body of the Bahā'ī sharia, comprises only a few principles.

Below we set down some of the main characteristic features of the Bahā'ī sharia

1. According to the Bahā'ī sharia, religion has nothing to do with politics. Therefore the Bahā'ī sharia gives no guidance with regard to principles on which the politics and administration of a country should be based. Bahā'ullāh says: "By Allah, we intend no interference in your countries, having come only for changing the hearts". This passage 'Abdul Bahā' has tried to explain as follows: "Religion has nothing to do with political matters. Religion concerns itself with the soul and its perception."⁷⁸
2. In the Bahā'ī sharia all things have been held pure (*Aqdas* 161,162). According to this principle the flesh of animals like pigs and swine is regarded as fit for human consumption, this being the reason why in regard to pork and bacon there is no other mention as to whether their use is permitted or not.

⁷⁸ *Khiṭābāt*, volume 1, page 176.

‘Alī Muḥammad Bāb prohibited smoking⁷⁹. But Bahā’ullāh himself indulged in it⁸⁰. On the basis of this principle, the Bahā’ī sharia makes no distinction between articles of food and drink fit for human consumption and those not fit, as in the case of the Islamic Sharia. ‘Abdul Bahā’ has further clarified this point: "Some Western friends requested a code for use by American Bahā’īs in the matter of articles of diet. ‘Abdul Bahā’ replied that in the matter of material food he did not wish to interfere: they were free to eat what they liked. We interfere only in the case of spiritual food⁸¹.

3. In the matter of dress, males are permitted to use silken garments⁸². There are no restrictions in the matter of dress⁸³. In regard to growing a beard or shaving it, all restrictions have been removed⁸³. But in no case is man to shave off his head, since the hair on the head are a decoration⁸⁴. There is no permission for eating out of gold and silver plates,

⁷⁹ *Al-Risālatul Tis ‘a ‘Asharīyya*, page 109.

⁸⁰ *Makātīb ‘Abdul Bahā’*, Volume 1, page 327.

⁸¹ *Badā’ul Āthār, Safar nāmah Abdul Bahā’*, Volume 1, page 23.

⁸² *Aqdas* 22.

⁸³ *Aqdas* 344.

⁸⁴ *Aqdas* 101.

but the keeping of photographs for decoration in homes is forbidden⁸⁵.

4. For cleanliness it is prescribed on the one hand that pure 'Itr and rosewater is to be used. On the other it is said it is enough if the whole body is bathed only once a week⁸⁶. The feet are to be washed during winter once every three days, and during summer once every day⁸⁷.
5. In the Bahā'ī sharia a man is forbidden to marry the widows of his father. Apart from that there is no restriction. It is written in *Aqdas* "The widows of your fathers are forbidden unto you, and we felt a shame in saying anything in regard to boys"⁸⁸
6. Human semen has been held not dirty hygienically⁸⁹. Therefore, it is to be presumed, a bath is not necessary after sexual intercourse, nor would discharge necessitate a fresh ablution for prayer. Nor is there any need for anyone to trouble to remove drops of semen from clothes if any should happen to fall thereon.

⁸⁵ *Aqdas* 64.

⁸⁶ *Aqdas* 228.

⁸⁷ *Aqdas* 330.

⁸⁸ *Aqdas* 235.

⁸⁹ *Aqdas* 158.

7. No one is permitted to marry more than two wives⁹⁰, though Bahā'ullāh himself had three. But 'Abdul Bahā' has given out in the West that the Bahā'ī sharia allows only monogamy. On this basis it is written in *'Aṣr-e-Jadīd*⁹¹ that Bahā'ī ism forbids polygamy.

The Bahā'ī historian writes: "It is to be remembered that the Bahā'ī religion does not uphold polygamy, although in *Aqdas* a male is permitted to have two wives, but justice in that case would be binding as a condition. And 'Abdul Bahā', who is the rightful commentator of the book, has said that since the dealing out of justice among one's spouses is impossible, one should be content with only one wife"⁹².

Further it is to be noted that in this statement Mirzā 'Abdul Ḥusain has made a manifest misstatement, for in *Aqdas* the permission to have two wives is not conditional on the dealing out of equal justice in the case of the two wives.

By pronouncing judgment that the dealing out of equal justice is not possible, 'Abdul Bahā' has proved virtually that, in his opinion in any case, and in the

⁹⁰ *Aqdas* 130.

⁹¹ *Arabic*, page 174.

⁹² *Al-Kawākib*, Persian, Volume II, page 9.

opinion of many other modern minded Bahā'īs, Bahā'ullāh in this connection had set down a meaningless principle, which his son and disciples had to set right.

8. The Bahā'ī sharia has no guidance to give as to what ways are helpful in guarding chastity, and what ways are not so helpful—in fact are injurious. On the other hand there are passages which tend to indicate that the author of the Bahā'ī sharia has sought only to play with this basic human problem. In the Bābī and Bahā'ī religion there are no instructions to guide and control the social intermingling of the opposite sexes—a problem which has shown many dangerous trends in Western countries. The mode of conduct set by Quratul 'Ain is a distinctive feature of Bahā'ī women.

It is lawful in the Bahā'ī religion to take a virgin into one's service (130). Comment here seems superfluous.

It is also to be borne in mind that the Bahā'ī sharia prescribes no punishment for fornication except that the fornicator should pay nine *misqals* of gold into the Bahā'ī House of Justice. But the remarkable thing in this connection is that the House of Justice here mentioned has not yet come to be set up.

It is interesting to compare the punishments prescribed for murder by mistake, which is one hundred *misqāls* of gold, while according to Bāb for injuring the feeling of another person the penalty is nineteen *misqāls* of gold.

In other words, fornication is a much minor offence as compared with murder by mistake or injuring the feelings of another person. Further it is to be noted that anyone who burns down the dwelling of another deserves to be burnt alive.

9. Following in the footsteps of the Bāb, Bahā'ullāh has prescribed that there should be nineteen months in a year (*Aqdas* 269).
10. In the sharia manufactured by him, Bahā'ullāh has made some attempt to remove the defects which are to be found in the sharia prepared by the Bāb, although in one place he has said of himself that he himself was responsible for the descent of *Al-Bayān*, which would seem to mean that he claims the book was written under inspiration from himself⁹³. Of the errors which Bahā'ullāh has sought to remove, four may be mentioned by way of example: (a) the Bāb had ordered that all books other than *Al-Bayān* were to be destroyed. But in the opinion of the Bahā'īs this order of the

⁹³ *Majmū'a Aqdas*, page 90.

Bāb can become the root of great conflict in the world, and Bahā'ullāh has cancelled it; he has written that Allah had forgiven them for what had been written in Al-Bayān in regard to the destruction of all other books⁹⁴. (b) The Bāb wrote that the penalty for injuring the feelings of another is nineteen *misqāls* of gold. But Bahā'ullāh has said that in his time Allah had cancelled it. (c) Bahā'ullāh says it was forbidden in Al-Bayān for any one to ask any question in regard to it, but Allah had cancelled the order⁹⁵. (d) Another interesting case is furnished by the following words of Bahā'ullāh: "Allah had ordained that every one should present himself in the august presence with his most precious thing as a gift, but as a sign of grace we have cancelled this order⁹⁶.

11. Out of the penalties prescribed by Bahā'ullāh for various offences, the one for fornication has been mentioned, while for a person who burnt down the dwelling of another there are two penalties: that he should be burnt alive, or sent into prison for life⁹⁷. The penalty in case of theft has been set down in the following words: exile in the case of the first

⁹⁴ *Aqdas* 166.

⁹⁵ *Aqdas* 267.

⁹⁶ *Aqdas* 245.

⁹⁷ *Aqdas* 129.

offence: imprisonment in case of a second offence: and some mark to be burnt on the forehead for a third offence by which all should be able to know him for what he is⁹⁸.

The penalty for assault and battering is still more interesting. It is written that for battering the penalty would depend on the kind and intensity of the blows dealt, of which details were to be given later⁹⁹. But they have not been given to date, which seems to mean that the sharia after all is still incomplete.

12. Bahā'ullāh has made most orders dependent on the institution of the House of Justice. He has prescribed that the properties of the heirless should come to the House of Justice (54 and 52). But the fact remains that this House of Justice has not come into existence to this day.
13. All the revealed world religions have been striving to establish the Unity of God. But Bahā'ullāh claimed divinity for himself, as would be shown at another place in this treatise. In regard to the Qibla, Bahā'ullāh has directed that during his lifetime the Bahā'īs should offer their prayers with their faces turned towards him, or in his direction. Afterwards the Qibla would be the place where he

⁹⁸ *Aqdas* 102.

⁹⁹ *Aqdas* 122.

might meet his end. Prayers then were to be offered facing his tomb or grave (14, 15, 292).

An interesting question here would be in which direction did he turn his own face when saying his prayers? Or would it be wrong to conclude here that himself he never took the trouble to offer any?

It is also to be remembered that, since his death, the Bahā'īs actually say their prayers facing in the direction of his grave in 'Akkā¹⁰⁰.

The Bahā'īs prostrate themselves in *sajdah*, at his grave.

14. The changes made in the Islamic mode of prayer are also a notable feature of the Bahā'ī sharia. Bahā'ullāh has prescribed nine *rak'ats* for morning, afternoon and evening (13). Then he has said that details of prayers he had given in another paper (19). But it is to be remembered that this detail is nowhere to be met with. To this day there is a difference of opinion among the Bahā'īs in regard to their being nine rak'ats or not. Simply for the sake of taking a different stand than that of Islam Bahā'ullāh has forbidden any prayer in connection with the eclipse of the sun or the moon (27), and he has prescribed six *takbīrs* for the funeral prayer. Besides, he has declared that

100 *Durūsul Dayāna*, page 24.

prayer in congregation had been deemed unnecessary, except in the case of the funeral prayer. All other prayers were to be offered singly, in contrast with Islam where the five obligatory prayers are held binding to be said preferably in congregation, except in specified cases when they could be offered singly by each individual.

15. With regard to fasting Bahā'ullāh has taken this new stand that whereas the Islamic calendar being lunar, the month of fasting went all round the year, passing through all seasons, the Bahā'ī month of fasting has only nineteen days, and comes always in the same season. The second departure he has made from it is that in Islam those who happen to be on a journey during the period of fasting, or who happen to be ill, have to make up later. But in the sharia of Bahā'ullāh they are not called upon to make up the deficiency (42). Moreover in Bahā'ī fasting all that is needed is that one should not eat or drink anything from sunrise to sunset. The early meal before dawn is not necessary, nor is one required to refrain from sexual intercourse between man and wife during the time they are fasting.
16. The Hajj (pilgrimage to the Ka'bah) is held binding in Islam on all Muslims who have the means and health for the journey. In contrast with

this Bahā'ullāh has laid down two pilgrimages for his followers: one to the house of Bāb in Shriaz, the other to Bahā'ullāh's own house in Baghdad

17. Bahā'ullāh has made a departure from Islam in the matter of *Zakāt*. He had laid down that one who possessed a hundred *misqāls* of gold should give nineteen *misqāls* to God (210). In another place he has said "*Zakāt* is obligatory for you on all grains and other things". This order has been given by him who has sent down the *Āyāt* in strong parchment. In the near future, if God wills, we shall set down details in this behalf (314). Bahā'ullāh died long ago, but these details still remain to be set down.

It is also to be carefully noted that the wording of the passage above referred to shows conclusively that Bahā'ullāh composed this sharia entirely on his own, not on the basis of any Revelation or *wahī* from Allah.

Further it is to be noted that during his life Bahā'ullāh kept the control of properties of the movement in his own hand, leaving it in the hands of his sons after his death; and it was only after the death of these sons that anyone else was to have a say in their management and control (98). Evidently, in this way he turned financial resources of the movement into a family concern for the benefit of his own person and then of his heirs.

The income from *Zakāt* is public property in Islam. In addition, individuals spend on the poor in charity according to their means and noble impulse. Islam has discouraged begging, but if someone resorts to it in distress, Islam does not absolutely forbid it. In fact it has ordained on the rich and directed them that the poor too have share in their wealth: But while on the one hand Bahā'ullāh strengthened his own hold on public properties, he forbade that help be extended to any needy person, "From whomsoever anyone begs, it is not permissible for him to give anything to the beggar" (315).

For the well-to-do Bahā'ullāh directs that they should be laid to rest in costly boxes of crystal and expensive woods, and silken clothes (270, 279).

18. Bahā'ullāh has remained silent about intoxicating drinks. Also about pork and bacon. But he has twice written opium is forbidden (233, 409). While ignoring questions of such great importance, he sometimes astounds the intelligent reader with fuss over trifles (331).
19. Bahā'ullāh has directed that it is the duty of every Bahā'ī that he keeps his home well decorated (64). The second point in this connection is that every nineteen years he is to change all the furnishings (328), and it would be interesting to find out, if one could, how far the Bahā'īs act upon this ad-

vice tendered as a principle in the Sharia. Surprisingly enough, Bahā'ullāh has not indicated what was to be done with the old furnishings. Also in the same breath he has said that in case the people could not observe this principle, Allah would forgive them (329).

To lay down a principle in one breath and then to cancel it in the next is a peculiarity of the Bahā'ī sharia.

20. On the point of *mahar* (alimony) in marriages, Bahā'ullāh has ordained that it is to be nineteen *misqāls* of gold in all cases, whether of people living in towns or in the countryside. This seems to be extremely unreasonable and impolitic, for all are not of the same standard of means. There are many people in the world for whom this *mahar* is too much. Are such people to remain celibate because they cannot afford the *mahar* prescribed ?
21. The rules laid down by Bahā'ī sharia in regard to division of property of the deceased among his heirs is altogether arbitrary. It does not seem to be based on any principle, except that departures have been made from the Islamic Sharia—departures which seem to have brought no additional benefit.
22. One point in the Bahā'ī sharia is that it is forbidden for anyone to sell slaves (150).

In comparison with the principles laid down by Islam with the aim to abolish slavery, this aspect of the Bahā'ī sharia appears to be altogether pointless. Islam ordains that slaves can be made only in case where they are caught fighting with arms in battle to interfere with the freedom of conscience of other people (The Qur'an 9:67). And then in regard to slaves made in such cases Islam has directed that some of this number are to be set free without any ransom at all, while from others ransom is to be insisted upon, the sum to be demanded depending on a number of factors. Out of these, not to be released without payment of a ransom, it is permissible, even praiseworthy, for any one to buy them and set them free.

By laying down that for the Bahā'īs it is not permitted that they sell any slaves, Bahā'ullāh has in fact perpetuated the slavery of those who happen to be slaves, since no one can now buy them and set them free. Further, Bahā'ullāh has nowhere said anything about the desirability of people setting their slaves free.

23. The Bahā'ī sharia permits interest on loans.
24. Bahā'ullāh has directed that a world language should be evolved, a new language, while Islamic point of view is that Arabic being the mother of all languages, and being the most virile and compre-

hensive as a vehicle of expression, it deserves to be made the universal language.

This brief study of the Bahā'ī sharia would be enough to indicate that the departures made from Islam are either pointless or absurd. They seem to have been made simply for the sake of making departures, for they bring no additional benefit in any way. In some places they denote a tendency to cater to certain modern trends in society in the Western countries, but since these trends in themselves are highly superficial, or of doubtful value for mankind, the desire to pander to them is questionable, to say the very least.

In this category fall all those departures made on the question of polygamy, slavery, financial dealings on the basis of interest, and points connected with cleanliness and personal hygiene. While these departures denote, on the one hand, failure on the part of Bahā'ullāh to appreciate the deep wisdom of the Islamic point of view, they indicate on the other his utter inability to frame a code of laws and regulations for the benefit of human society which, at the hands of an intelligent person, could deserve serious attention. Wherever a departure has been made, the framer of the Bahā'ī sharia has stumbled very badly.

Another point lies in the two books which embody the two sharias, namely, the Holy Qur'an and *Aqdas*.

While on the one hand, the Holy Qur'an has been in the hands of mankind for the last thirteen hundred years, with a clear and ringing challenge for all to bring a better book, or the like of it, in regard to *Aqdas* the Bahā'ī themselves feel weakness in their own hearts and cannot pluck up courage enough to bring it into the light of day.

THE QURĀN IS A LIVING BOOK & THE ISLAMIC SHARIA IS IRREPLACEABLE

Bahā'ism founded on the belief that the Islamic Sharia deserves to be abandoned.

The starting point of the Bābī and Bahā'ī case is the belief that the Holy Qur'an no longer can meet the needs of human society under the changed conditions prevailing in the world today. Very often the Bahā'īs do not say this openly and frankly: they prefer to work on the mind of people by leaving this crucial question in the dark. To begin with, they start talking about the belief among some ignorant Muslims that certain verses of Holy Qur'an have been abrogated: and once they have made sure that the mind of an intended victim has been well prepared to accept this erroneous doctrine, the rest of the task is easy for them, for where five or ten, or a hundred, or in some cases even 500 verses of the Holy Qur'an can be taken to have been abrogated, the leap becomes possible to a point where one can say that the whole Qur'an needs to be replaced with another book, and the Islamic Sharia needs to be replaced by another law.

On June 7, 1933, Maulānā Abul 'Aṭā, a well known Aḥmadiyya missionary, had a talk in Haifa

with Shauqī Āfandī, leader and head of the Bahā'īs. When all Muslims, with the exception of the followers of the Aḥmadiyyah movement, accepted the doctrine of abrogation in the Holy Qur'an, what is the harm, he asked on this occasion, if the Bahā'īs take the stand that the whole Qur'an and the Islamic Sharia need to be replaced with something more modern and better suited to meet the changed conditions? In this the Bahā'īs have said nothing new, he added. But this stand on the part of the Bahā'īs is not correct or justified. If the Muslims happen to have accepted the idea of abrogation of some verses of the Qur'an, it does not necessarily follow that this idea is also correct, so that the Bahā'īs or anyone else should complacently proceed to raise superstructures on it. The real question which needs to be settled first is whether, in the light of the Holy Qur'an, abrogation of any of its verses can be held acceptable or not.

Correct meaning of the verse (107 of Al-Baqarah)

Those among the general Muslims who believe that some verses of the Holy Qur'an have been abrogated by certain other verses, and all the Bahā'īs, are misled in this connection by the following verse: "Whatever sign, We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, We bring one better than that or the like thereof. Dost thou not know that Allah has the power to do all that

He wills"¹⁰¹. They interpret this verse to mean that Allah herein says that if He will abrogate the Qur'an, He will bring another, a better one, in its place, or one quite like it. But the basis of this inference on their part is altogether too flimsy, as becomes amply evident the moment one gives proper thought to the context in which this passage occurs. The construction of the sentence, in the first place, denotes that the statement made in it is conditional. What has been said is just this that if Allah were to choose in his wisdom to abrogate an *Āyah*, or cause it to be forgotten, he would bring another like it, or a better one in its place. How can this conditional statement be taken to mean that Allah has indeed chosen to abrogate the *Āyah* spoken of here, or to replace it with one better or like it? And how does it follow that by the word *Āyah* in this verse the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic Sharia is meant? Even if we accept the Bahā'ī meaning, and also their view that by *Āyah* here is meant the Qur'an, the utmost that would follow is just this, and no more, that whenever Allah decides in his wisdom to abrogate the Holy Qur'an, he would do so by bringing another book like it, or a better one to replace it. It cannot in any way mean that he has in fact chosen to do so at this time, and in this case.

¹⁰¹ The Qur'an 2:107. [Publisher]

The fact is that by the word *Āyah* in this sentence is meant not the Holy Qur'an, but the previous Sharias and Scriptures. Use of the word in this sense is quite established in the Arabic language and usage; it is fairly common in this sense in the Holy Qur'an itself. The verse which goes before very clearly points to the fact that this is the meaning in which it has been used here. Allah says therein: "Those who disbelieve from among the People of the Book, or from among those who associate gods with Allah, desire not that any good should be sent down to you from your Lord; but Allah chooses for His mercy whomsoever He pleases"¹⁰². This passage which precedes the verse in question shows very clearly that here an objection has been met which was raised by the People of the Book and those who associate gods with Allah, namely, if they accepted the Holy Qur'an they would have to hold that the previous Scriptures had been abandoned and abrogated. Allah has replied to this objection by saying He chooses for His favour whomsoever He pleases, and for reasons best known to Him in His wisdom He had selected another people to become the bearers of another Book and another Law, to say the least, which was better than the one that was entrusted to them. The People of the Book, Jews and Christians, and those who associate gods with Allah, have here

¹⁰² The Qur'an 2:106. [Publisher]

been invited to study the Holy Qur'an and see for themselves if it was not better than the Scriptures or stories in their hands. After a study in this light, if they found that the Qur'an was a better Book, it was undoubtedly their duty to yield belief to it. The verse in question, thus, only means that with the coming of the Holy Qur'an all previous sharias had been abrogated by this new Book and new Law.

When does a new Law come?

This verse, moreover, clearly lays down the principle as to when and under what kind of circumstances a new Scripture and a new Law is sent down by Allah. This, we are told, happens in two cases: (a) when a sharia specifically meant for catering to the needs of a particular group of humanity, outlives the time of its utility and needs to be replaced; (b) or when a previous sharia no longer remains in its pure and original form, having suffered through human interference from one cause or another; (c) or when a previous sharia, owing to some limitation to which it is subject, no longer can suffice for the changed needs of changed situation. In any of these cases a new sharia will come, and it will be better than the one it replaces, or in any case will be as good as the one which had suffered from human interference.

Seen in this light, the Holy Qur'an and the Islamic Sharia need no replacement, and the Bābī and Bahā'ī claim that a new sharia is needed cannot be substantiated.

Bābī and Bahā'ī leaders themselves admit that the Holy Qur'an embodies a complete, comprehensive and universal sharia.

Not only do the contents of the Holy Qur'an show that it is a perfect code of laws and the best book for the spiritual guidance and uplift of mankind, the Bābī leaders themselves admit that it is so. 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb wrote: "Since at the time when the Holy Qur'an was revealed the people of those days prided themselves over their mastery of the language, Allah sent down this book in such a beautiful, vigorous and perfect style of language that nothing better can be imagined. And in this book the truth of the claims of the Holy Prophet Muḥammad has been established on the most evident, manifest and irrefutable basis" (Al-Bayān Ms.)

'Abdul Bahā' writes: "Among the miracles of the Holy Qur'an one is that it stands on a sure foundation of reason and wisdom in everything it teaches. On the basis of complete certainty it has propounded a sharia which for the people of this age forms the very essence of spiritual life. In addition to formulating a

sharia the Qur'an also explains some weighty points of History and Mathematics which run counter to the theories accepted in those days, and it has been proved that the Qur'anic view is the correct one"¹⁰³.

Bahā'ullāh himself says: "The faulty intelligence and grasp of human beings cannot fully comprehend the vast body of truths embodied in the Holy Qur'an, just as a spider cannot hunt down and catch a bird"¹⁰⁴.

‘Abdul Faḍal, a well-known Bahā'ī missionary, says These verses of the Holy Qur'an clearly indicate that the principles of sharia, its details, the arguments which support it, its origin and achievement, in short everything has been fully and conclusively dealt with in it, no aspect of any worthwhile question having been left incomplete or inconclusive"¹⁰⁵.

Bahā'ullāh wrote during his life at ‘Akkā: "The sharia of Muḥammad is complete and perfect in every way. The fault lies with the Muslims that they do not live up to it. If the Muslims were to act upon it, there would be peace in the whole world"¹⁰⁶.

¹⁰³ *Khatābāt Abdul Bahā*, Volume 1, page 58.

¹⁰⁴ *Haft Wādī*, page 43.

¹⁰⁵ *Al-Durarul Bahiyah*, page 134.

¹⁰⁶ *Bābul Ḥayat*, page 68.

The Qur'an safe from interference.

The Holy Qur'an being a complete book, and since it embodies a comprehensive code for the guidance and uplift of mankind for all its needs till the end of time, the only occasion for abrogation could have risen if it had been possible for any human or other agency to interfere with its text. And here the fact is that at the very moment when this book was being revealed Allah said: "it is We Ourselves have sent down this book and We Ourselves shall be responsible for its safety and purity"¹⁰⁷ and the entire history of Islam and the Muslims bears testimony to the fact that, Allah has indeed fulfilled this promise. So much so that even the most hostile critics of Islam admit this. Noldke says "Efforts of European scholars to prove the existence of later interpolations in the Qur'an have failed" ¹⁰⁸.

Sir William Muir wrote: "There is otherwise every security internal and external that we possess that text which Muḥammad gave forth and used"¹⁰⁹.

Thus we find that in accordance with the Divine promise History bears testimony to the fact that the Holy Qur'an has remained perfectly safe against

¹⁰⁷ The Qur'an 15:10.

¹⁰⁸ *Encyclopaedia Britannica* under Qur'an.

¹⁰⁹ *Life of Muḥammad*.

human interference of every kind. The question of abrogation in its case, therefore, does not rise.

Testimony of the Qur'an itself.

The Bahā'īs admit that the Holy Qur'an is the Word of God, but add that in their view it was to be abrogated after a time, and now has been so abrogated. But the Holy Qur'an, as they concede, is the Word of God, repudiates this view in the most emphatic terms, and claims that it will stand and remain applicable till the end of time.

1. "This day have I perfected your religion for you and completed My favour upon you and have chosen for you Islam as your religion."¹¹⁰
2. "Surely the true religion with Allah is Islam."¹¹¹
3. "And whoso seeks a religion other than Islam, it shall not be accepted from him, and in the life to come he shall be among the losers."¹¹²
4. "Shall I seek for judge other than Allah, when He it is Who has sent down to you the Book, clearly explained? And those to whom We gave the Book, know that it has been sent down from thy Lord with truth; so be thou not of those who doubt. And

¹¹⁰ The Qur'an 5:4.

¹¹¹ The Qur'an 3:20.

¹¹² The Qur'an 3:86.

the word of thy Lord has been fulfilled in truth and justice. None can alter His words: and he is the All-Hearing, the All-Knowing."¹¹³

5. "And this is a blessed Message which We have sent down: will ye then reject it?"¹¹⁴
6. "Indeed this is a Message for all the worlds. And indeed you shall realise the grandeur of the prophecy after some time."¹¹⁵
7. "And We have revealed unto thee the Book comprising the truth and fulfilling that which was revealed before it in the Book, and as a guardian over it"¹¹⁶

The Holy Qur'an, thus, claims that it preserves those portions of the earlier dispensations which are of permanent value.

8. "We have sent down to thee the Book explaining all things, a guide, a mercy, and glad tidings for Muslims."¹¹⁷
9. "We have explained in detail in this Qur'an for the benefit of mankind every kind of similitude. But man in most things is contentious."¹¹⁸

¹¹³ The Qur'an 6:115, 116.

¹¹⁴ The Qur'an 21:51.

¹¹⁵ The Qur'an 38:88, 89.

¹¹⁶ The Qur'an 5:49.

¹¹⁷ The Qur'an 16:90.

10. "We have put forth for people in this Qur'an every kind of parable in order that they may receive admonition."¹¹⁹
11. "Say, if the whole of mankind and the Jinns were to come together to produce the like of this Qur'an, they could not produce the like thereof, even if they backed up each other with help and support. And we have explained to man in this Qur'an every kind of similitude: yet the greater part of men refuse to accept it except with ingratitude."¹²⁰
12. Do they say, "He has forged it." Say, "Bring ye then ten Sūrah's forged, like unto it, and call to your aid whomsoever ye can other than God, if ye speak the truth."¹²¹
13. "Indeed those who repudiated the Message when it came to them, (they are in manifest error), for verily it is a book that dominates: falsehood cannot reach it, neither from the front, nor from behind; it has been sent down by Him who is Ḥakīm and Ḥamīd (the possessor of all wisdom and all praise)."¹²²

¹¹⁸ The Qur'an 18:55.

¹¹⁹ The Qur'an 39:28.

¹²⁰ The Qur'an 17:89, 90.

¹²¹ The Qur'an 11:13.

¹²² The Qur'an 41:42, 43.

14. "Then we put thee on the right way of Religion, so follow thou that way, and follow not the desires of those who do not know."¹²³
15. "Indeed it is a Message to all the words for whosoever will go straight."¹²⁴
16. "Behold, this is the word that distinguishes (good from evil). It is not a thing vain, for amusement."¹²⁵
17. "It is Allah who has sent down the Message in the form of a book, the most suitable for human nature, which when they read it who have the fear of Allah in their hearts, they tremble (are stirred to their deepest depths) and they turn to His remembrance. This is Allah's guidance; with it He guides those He wishes to make successful; and who can guide him whom Allah should reject as having gone astray."¹²⁶
18. "Indeed it is the exalted Qur'an (Message which shall always be read over and over again) in a book well guarded, which none shall touch except the pure."¹²⁷

¹²³ The Qur'an 45:19.

¹²⁴ The Qur'an 00:27, 28.

¹²⁵ The Qur'an 86:14, 15.

¹²⁶ The Qur'an 39:24.

¹²⁷ The Qur'an 56:78-80.

19. "Indeed this Qur'an guides to that which is most sure, strong, and most enduring, and it gives glad tidings to the Believers who do appropriate deeds that for them is a great reward."¹²⁸
20. "And the Messenger said, O my Lord, indeed my people have taken this book as a thing abandoned."¹²⁹

Now this verse, taken in the context in which it stands, indicates that on the Day of Judgement the Holy Prophet would complain before Allah that his people had abandoned the Qur'an. Evidently, the people here spoken of are the Muslim peoples, those who call themselves by this name. What requires very careful thought here is this: If the Holy Qur'an was indeed destined in God's wisdom to be superseded by another book, then how could the Holy Prophet stand up on the Day of Judgement and proceed against his own people on the basis that they had abandoned the Book? Would not the reply in that case be justified that it was abandoned because it had been replaced by another sharia? The Bahā'īs say that for the question under discussion Bahā'ullāh's advent was the Day of Judgement spoken of here. But even in that case the Divine Promise of protection for the Holy Qur'an

¹²⁸ The Qur'an 17:10.

¹²⁹ The Qur'an 25:31.

militates against any supposition on the part of Bahā'īs that this Book was ever intended by the Almighty to be replaced with another. In fulfilment of this promise, when the followers of Muḥammad did in fact look as if they had abandoned the Qur'an as the guiding principle of their lives, Allah raised a servant of this dispensation to revive the Islamic Sharia, Aḥmad, the Promised Mahdi, who said: Do not make the Holy Qur'an into a thing abandoned, for your life lies in it. Those who yield respect to the Qur'an shall be treated in heaven with respect. Those who give preference to it over every Hadith and every saying, shall themselves be given preference in heaven. For mankind on this earth there is no other book except this one; and for the sons of man there shall now be no Prophet and no Shafī' except Muhammad, the peace and blessings of God be upon him."¹³⁰

21. "Recite thou this book from thy Lord which has been sent down upon thee. There is none to change His words, and thou shalt not find any shelter except with him."¹³¹

This verse clearly indicates that after stumbling a great deal the world shall return to the Holy Qur'an for this Sharia is destined to endure for ever, and there

¹³⁰ *Kashī' Nūh* page 30.

¹³¹ The Qur'an 18:28.

is none who can bring about its abrogation or destruction.

22. "Allah had made the Ka‘bah into the inviolable House for the people, destined to endure for ever, as a means of support and uplift for mankind, as also the Sacred Month and the offerings and the animals with collars. That is so that you may know that Allah knows all things well."¹³²

In this verse Allah as mentioned the Ka‘bah as the place of pilgrimage for all time to come, and He has referred to it as an argument to establish His own existence, and as a sign of His all embracing knowledge, wisdom and power. In other words the Hajj of the Ka‘bah is not to be abolished as long as the world lasts; and when the Islamic Hajj is never to be abolished, it is only too just and natural to conclude that the Sharia in which this Hajj forms one of the main pillars is never to be abolished or replaced with another.

23. "The reckoning of months with Allah has been twelve months by Allah’s ordinance since the day He created the heavens and the earth. Of these four are sacred. That is the right creed."¹³³

¹³² The Qur’an 5:98.

¹³³ The Qur’an 9:36.

In this verse a calendar year of twelve months has been spoken of as an arrangement in force since the time heaven and earth were created, and one that is destined to continue for all time. But the Bahā'ī year has 19 months.

24. "An Apostle from Allah, rehearsing scriptures, pure and holy: in them are Books destined to endure."¹³⁴

This verse says quite clearly that in the Holy Qur'an all the teachings of earlier dispensations which deserve to be preserved have been embodied.

25. "All praise belongs to Allah Who has sent down the Book to His servant, and has not put therein any crookedness. He has made it a guardian, that it may give warning of grievous chastisement from Him, and that it may give the believers who do good deeds the glad tidings that they shall have a good reward."¹³⁵

The Qur'an here is spoken of as faultless, not lacking in any respect. The conclusion here is, quite obviously, that it will never need to be replaced at any future time.

26. "Therefore set thy face to the Religion that is destined to endure, before there come from God

¹³⁴ The Qur'an 98:3, 4.

¹³⁵ The Qur'an 18:2, 3.

the Day in which there is no chance of averting." ¹³⁶

Meaning of *Al-Qayyim*.

The word *Al-Qayyim*, which qualified the word *Dīn* in the above verse is derived from *qiyām* and *qaum*. The meaning of *Qiyām* is to stand up and to endure. *Qāma 'alal amri* means *dāma wa sabata* stood for all time¹³⁷, became firm in its place for ever and did not move from there¹³⁸. The word *Qayyim* has much greater force and intensity of meaning than the root it is derived from, since it is what in Arabic is *sīgha mubālighah**. This word also carries the meaning that it is never to be abrogated or changed¹³⁹.

A Conclusive Argument

In addition to all these arguments, the Holy Qur'an has set forth another, still more conclusive for all times to come. It says: "Seest thou not how God sets forth a parable? A goodly Word, like a goodly tree, whose root is firmly fixed, and its branches reach into the heavens—it brings forth its fruit at all times,

¹³⁶ The Qur'an 30:44.

¹³⁷ *Agrab*.

¹³⁸ *Lisān*.

* Part of speech which intensifies the meaning of the root word from which a word is derived.

¹³⁹ *Mufridāt*.

by the leave of its Lord. So God sets forth parables for men, in order that they may receive admonition"¹⁴⁰.

In other words the truth and principles embodied in the Holy Qur'an are firm and everlasting like a rock, and they yield fruit at all times. They are never dead. The Holy Prophet has said that to revivify Islam at the turn of every century Allah will raise Reformers from amongst the Muslims themselves who will from time to time extricate Islam from all excrescences for one reason or another which should accumulate on it. History bears out that these reformers have been appearing throughout the centuries since the inception of Islam, the latest of which number came just at the time when the followers of the Bāb and Bahā'ullāh were saying that the Islamic Sharia had been abrogated and replaced by another. Had Islam and the Holy Qur'an ceased to yield fruit like a healthy and vigorous tree, the Bābī and Bahā'ī design to abrogate it might have succeeded: but now since the tree itself is full of life, standing firm on its own roots, it is idle to think that it can be uprooted by shallow and superficial designs such as those of the Bābīs and the Bahā'īs.

¹⁴⁰ The Qur'an 15:25, 26.

Bahā'ullāh Claimed Divinity for himself.

History shows that two kinds of people have at different times claimed the allegiance of their fellowmen: (a) Those who claimed to be Prophets and Messengers of God; (b) and those who claimed Godhead and Divinity for themselves setting themselves up as more than human. In the Holy Qur'an we read that at the time when Allah sent Moses for the deliverance of Israel, the ruler of Egypt at the time claimed that he himself was their supreme Lord and Master, their Deity, and that if they dared to worship any other God than himself, he would treat them with dire punishment¹⁴¹. In fact he threatened that in that case he would put them into prison.

When Allah sends down any of his Apostles, He himself establishes the truth of their claim by means of powerful signs and miracles, and by the light of their teaching. Therefore, whenever a Messenger of Allah appears, his claim as such has to be carefully studied, to be accepted or rejected on merit. But where a frail human being goes so far astray in regard to his own position as to claim Godhead and Divinity for himself, his claim needs no study at all, being on the very face of it wrong and most preposterous.

¹⁴¹ The Qur'an 26:30.

The misunderstanding, or difference of opinion in regard to the claim of Bahā'ullāh has risen for two reasons. In the first place he never based his claim on grounds on which the Apostles and Messengers of Allah base their claims: he never made his claim openly and publicly, keeping back a portion of it even from his followers of the innermost circle. He also directed his followers that they should take care to keep their property, their movements and their beliefs secret from the outside people. Secondly the writings of Bahā'ullāh, especially the book known as *Aqdas*, has never been published. This enables the Bahā'īs to change their stand and outlook whenever they consider such a change to be advantageous for them selves. Bahā'īs themselves admit this. "Generally speaking, due to the unavailability and scarcity of the books of the Bāb, Bahā'ullāh and Abdul Bahā', certain misunderstandings in regard to some historical sects and their teachings have sprung up"¹⁴².

Moreover, the attitude taken up by 'Abdul Bahā' Āfandī has caused misunderstandings to increase. In spite of the fact that the Islamic prayer in congregation has been forbidden in the Bahā'ī sharia, and the Islamic prayer itself has been abrogated, 'Abdul Bahā' to the end of his life continued to offer his prayers in

¹⁴² *Bahā'ullāh Ki Ta'limāt*, page 2.

congregation in Muslim mosques behind non-Bahā'ī Imams¹⁴³.

Although in Europe Abdul Bahā said that a man could be a Bahā'ī, even though he may never have heard of Bahā'ullāh, but Bahā'ullāh's own writings do not uphold this point of view. With *Aqdas* kept safely hidden, such vague and meaningless things could be said with impunity by his followers and advocates. But now, since we have managed to bring this important document full into the open, it is no longer possible for the Bahā'īs to take shelter behind such seemingly innocent and harmless platitudes. Whatever the precise nature of his claim, there is not the least possible shadow of doubt that, as he saw things, acceptance of his claim was a basic starting point in a man's spiritual progress. Those who do not believe in him, Bahā'ullāh dubs them down as Mushrik. He who rejects his claims is lost and gone astray¹⁴⁴. All other sharias except his own he pronounces as unfit for human guidance¹⁴⁵. All acts of devotion, all good deeds he has made dependent upon his own pleasure and approval¹⁴⁶. He has held that rejection of his

¹⁴³ *‘Asr-e-Jadīd*, Arabic, page 72.

¹⁴⁴ *Aqdas*, 1.

¹⁴⁵ *Aqdas* 291.

¹⁴⁶ *Aqdas* 75 to 78.

claim deserves punishment, and he says that those who turn away from his claim will go to hell.

But it is not correct to attribute to Bahā'ullāh any claim of prophethood. He never claimed to be a *nabī*. He seems to believe in the Holy Prophet being *Khatamul Nabīyyīn* in the same sense as the generality of Muslims interpret this expression¹⁴⁷.

‘Abdul Faḍal, a well known Bahā'ī missionary, writes: "This idea of the Shaikh (‘Abdul Salām) that the Bāb and Bahā'ullāh claimed prophethood for themselves is altogether wrong and imaginary. Everyone acquainted with Bahā'ī literature knows fully well that this claim is neither to be found in the *Alwāh*, nor have any of their followers used this word in regard to them"¹⁴⁸.

In the book entitled *Al-Bahā'īya*, published in Egypt, one reads: "Bahā'ullāh, ‘Abdul Bahā’, or the Bāb, none of them ever claimed to be a prophet" (Page 49).

In the Bahā'ī journals entitled *Kaukab-e-Hind* we read "Neither does the word Nabī (Prophet) occur in the *Āyah Mubaarakah*, nor has the Promised One of the Furqān been called a *nabī* nor do the Bahā'īs take Ḥaḍrat Bahā'ullāh as a prophet: and this has been

¹⁴⁷ *Alwaḥi-Mubāarakah*, page 405.

¹⁴⁸ *Al-Farā'id*, page 275.

openly proclaimed a number of times in *Kaukab-e-Hind*.¹⁴⁹

Bahā'ullāh Claimed Godhead and Divinity.

Then what did the claim of Bahā'ullāh precisely amount to? *Kaukab-e-Hind* answers this question as follows "The Bahā'īs hold that the epoch of prophethood has come to an end. They hold that prophethood has come to an end even among the followers of Muḥammad. But of course they do not hold that the Power of God has come to an end. Therefore they accept a new manifestation of the power, which goes a step beyond prophethood, implying thereby the end of the epoch of prophethood. This is the reason why the Bhā'īs never say that prophethood has not ended and that the Promised One of all the religions is a *nabī* or *rasūl*. What they say is this that advent was a *Mustaqil Khudā'ī Zāhūr*¹⁵⁰.

Moreover, it stands only too true to reason that one-step beyond prophethood is nothing else but Godhead and Divinity itself.

Part Man and Part God.

In spite of Bahā'ullāh's claim to Divinity, it was and always shall be quite impossible for the Bahā'īs to

¹⁴⁹ *Kaukab-e-Hind*. Delhi, Volume VI, Number 4, May 17, 1928.

¹⁵⁰ *Kaukab-e-Hind* Volume VI, Number 6, June 24, 1928.

run away from the fact that he was just as much a frail human being as any one else. They have therefore taken the stand that in this respect he was like Jesus Christ.¹⁵¹

Some people think that the Aḥmadis are alone in attributing Godhead and Divinity to Bahā'ullāh. But this is not so. Here three examples shall suffice.

Shaikh Rashīd, Editor *Al-Manār*, Egypt, writes: "The Bahā'īs are a culmination of the Bāṭinī sect who worship Bahā'ullāh, believing in his Godhead and Divinity. The Bahā'īs have their own separate sharia"¹⁵².

A well-known Christian scholar, Ilyās Khadurī, writes: "In numerous places in his book Bahā'ullāh has by implication, and also openly claimed Godhead and Divinity for himself."¹⁵³

Maulawī Sanāullāh of Amritsar, who was a bitter opponent of the Aḥmadiyyah Movement, insisted for a long time that Bahā'ullāh claimed prophethood. But at last he had to admit that Bahā'ullāh, according to his followers, had claimed Godhead and Divinity. "Till now we have been insisting that Shaikh Bahā'ullāh had claimed prophethood for himself. But

¹⁵¹ *Aṣr-e-Jadīd*, Urdu, page 52, 53 & 254.

¹⁵² *Almanār* Volume XIII, Number 10, Shawwāl 30, 1328 Hijra.

¹⁵³ *Muqaddamah Aqdas*.

today the Bahā'ī organ, *Kaukab-e-Hind*, has very strongly refuted our stand"¹⁵⁴

From the writings of Bahā'ullāh himself in regard to this question, the following two references should suffice:

1. Bahā'ullāh says: "He who is at the moment speaking from prison, is the creator of all things, and the originator of all names. He has borne great hardships in order to give life to the world"¹⁵⁵.
2. "Other than myself, who am in prison, alone at the moment, there is no God"¹⁵⁶.

¹⁵⁴ *Ahlihadith*, Volume XXV, Number 35, July 6, 1928.

¹⁵⁵ *Majmū'ah Aqdas*, printed Bombay, page 286.

¹⁵⁶ *Mubīn* page 286.

SUMMARY

The Bābī and the Bahā'ī movement are developments out of the Ithnā Asharīah doctrine in regard to the *Imam Ghāib* (Hidden Imam),

Popular ideas and expectations connected with this doctrine have always had a deep political tinge in regard to aims, which those who held them kept carefully hidden from outsiders, from fear of getting into trouble with the administrative authorities.

The movements started by Shaikh Aḥmad Al-Aḥsā'ī and Kāẓim Rashtī shared this political tinge to the fullest

And the same holds true in regard to the movements started by 'Alī Muḥammad Bāb and Mirzā Ḥusain 'Alī Bahā'ullāh.

In fact the Bābī movement soon began to come into open clash with the rulers of Iran. Rebellion and blood shed led to strict measures against the Bābīs, which in turn drove the real aims and impulse of the movement more and more underground.

Exasperated by the opposition of the Muslim Ulema, Bāb and Bahā'ullāh decided to cut themselves away from the Islamic Sharia.

Each of the two manufactured a Sbariyah for himself.

The sharia of Bāb is embodied in Al-Bayān. That of Bahā'ullāh is embodied in *Aqdas*.

Departures from Islam seems to have been made merely for the sake of making departures, for they do not confer upon mankind any additional benefit as compared to the Islamic Law which these sharias seek to replace.

Taken on an intellectual plane, these sharias expose themselves as crude and clumsy attempts to take the place of the Holy Qur'an. Departures made in regard to polygamy, Interest, number of daily prayers, their timing, instructions in regard to ablutions and personal hygiene, and the law of inheritance are either pointless, arbitrary, without any basis on sound reason that anyone can see, or simply absurd. Or they seem to cater for certain superficial social trends which half-baked and ignorant people take as signs of culture, civilization and progress.

Neither the Bāb nor Bahā'ullāh claimed to be a prophet of God. Nor do their followers hold faith in them as such.

Bahā'ullāh ended by claiming Divinity for himself, and no very great amount of intelligence is needed to reject outright the claim of a person who claims Divinity.