

History and Doctrines of The Babi Movement

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by

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PART I

History of the Babi Movement

CHAPTER I

Mirza Ali Muhammad Bab

THE SHAIKHIS AND THE IMAM MAHDI

The Shaikhiyya is a Shia sect of recent growth and is reckoned among the *Ghulat* by the orthodox Shias. It was founded in A. H. 1210 by Shaikh Ahmad Zainuddin on whose death in A. H. 1212 Sayyid Kazim of Rasht became its head. The majority of the Shias recognize twelve Imams beginning with Ali and ending with Muhammad, son of Hasan Askari, who is known as the Mahdi whose appearance is awaited by the Muslims. The Shia belief is that while the first eleven Imams died, the twelfth has only disappeared, his disappearance taking place in A. H. 260, and that he will reappear before the day of judgment to fill the earth with justice and to make the truth triumphant. The Shaikhis say that since the believers need his guidance and direction at the present moment as well, there must be an individual in direct communication with the hidden Imam. Such an individual they call the *perfect Shia*, and first Shaikh Ahmad, and then his successor Sayyid Kazim, was recognized as the means of such communication. The distinctive characteristic of this sect is that they consider their head as the intermediary through whom communication may be sought with the hidden Imam, Mahdi. On account of this position he was looked upon

with extreme reverence by the members of the sect as a *quasi-divine* personage.

MIRZA ALI MUHAMMAD AS HEAD OF THE SHAIKHI SECT

Among those who gathered round Sayyid Kazim of Rasht, head of the Shaikhi sect, was a young enthusiast, called Mirza Ali Muhammad, son of Sayyid Ridza of Shiraz, and a cloth merchant by profession. Mirza Ali Muhammad was born in the year 1235¹ A. H., corresponding to the year 1819 of the Christian era. While still a young man he gave himself over to hard devotional exercises. It is related that he used to stand in the sun in the hot season with uncovered head on the top of his house and there repeat certain formulas — a practice which he continued for some time. After this he repaired to Karbala, and there received education in the doctrines of the Shaikhi sect as a disciple of Sayyid Kazim with whom he seems to have stayed about a year or two according to the *Nasikh ut Tawarikh*². The followers of Bahauallah are inclined to disown his connection with the Shaikhi sect, but there is strong and conclusive testimony to the effect that on the demise of Sayyid Kazim, Mirza Ali Muhammad was chosen as the head by one section of the Shaikhis, others fixing their choice on Haji Karim Khan of Kirman. Moreover, the early Babi leaders, chief followers of Mirza Ali Muhammad Bab, such as Mulla Husain of Bushraweh, Mulla Muhammad, Ali Barfurushi, Qurrat ul Ain, Aqa Sayyid Hussain of Yezd and many others were all members of the Shaikhi sect. Sayyid Kazim died in 1259 A.H. without nominating his successor, and no leader seems to have been chosen for some time. Five months had passed away after the death of Sayyid Kazim when an influential Shaikhi, Mulla Husain of Bushraweh, came to Shiraz and there paid a visit to his old comrade Mirza Ali Muhammad. The latter made enquiries as to the leadership of the Shaikhi sect and then told

1. Travellers Narrative p. 2.

2. *Nasikh ut Tawarikh*: Raudzatus-Safa.

Mulla Husain that he, Mirza Ali Muhammad, possessed the attributes of a leader as stated by the deceased Sayyid. Mulla Husain after a little hesitation accepted his claim which was that of being the Bab, *i.e.* an intermediary between the hidden Imam Mahdi and the adherents of the Shaikhi sect. It is not certain when Haji Karim Khan, the rival leader of the Shaikhis, was chosen, but it is a fact that a section of the Shaikhis did not accept Mirza Ali Muhammad, and after his increasingly higher claims, that section remained loyal to the Shaikhi doctrines under Haji Karim Khan, and after him under Sayyid Ahmad, son of Sayyid Kazim.

ASSUMING THE TITLE OF BAB

It was on the 5th of Jumadi 1, 1260 A.H., corresponding to 23rd May, 1844 that Mirza Ali Muhammad claimed to be the Bab by which name he is known to this day, notwithstanding his higher claims to be the Imam Mahdi and afterwards that the head of a new dispensation. There was nothing new in assuming the title of the Bab. As we have already seen, the head of the Shaikhi sect was looked upon as occupying exactly the very position which Mirza Ali Muhammad claimed for himself at first. In fact, Mirza Ali Muhammad himself designated both his predecessors as two Babs. The word *bab* means a *gate*, and as indicating an intermediary between the hidden Imam Mahdi and the Shias, the word was already in use in Shia literature. In that sense it first came into use with the first disappearance of Imam Mahdi (Muhammad, son of Hasan Askari) in the year 260 A. H. The period of 68 years after his supposed disappearance is termed as the time of *ghaibat-i-sughra* or the *minor absence*. This period came to an end according to the Shia doctrine in A. H. 328, which year ushered in the period of *ghaibat-i-kubra*, or the *major absence*. It is alleged that immediately after the death of Hasan Askari, his son Imam Muhammad withdrew himself from public appearance, but during the first period, called *ghaibat-i-sughra*, he contrived to remain in touch with his followers through four men who are called *Abwab-i-arba'a* or *the four babs* or *gates*. This period of the *minor absence* ended with

the death of the last of these four persons, Abul Hasan, Ali bin Muhammad, Samri who died in 328 A.H. Thenceforth the Imam entered into the second period of his absence called the *ghaibat-i-kubra*, from which, it is said, he would emerge before the day of judgment, restoring justice and truth in the world. Later on, the word *bab*, as signifying *means of communication*, came into use among the Ismailis who used the word symbolically for the Shaikh or spiritual leader who initiates followers into the mysteries of religion (Ency. of Islam). Thus the word *bab* as indicating the means of communication between the hidden Imam and his followers was taken by Mirza Ali Muhammad from either the Ismailis or earlier Shia literature.

HIS FIRST ATTITUDE TOWARDS ISLAM

So great was the reverence which the head of the Shaikhi sect enjoyed as the mouthpiece of the hidden Imam Mahdi that Mirza Ali Muhammad does not seem to have experienced the least difficulty in convincing his followers about his higher claims. The sect had been brought up in the tradition that when the Imam or the head says anything, he cannot be questioned as to the why and wherefore of it. His authority could never be questioned because his word was the word of God. At the outset, Mirza Ali Muhammad and his followers adhered to the tenets and practices of Islam. We not only hear of a pilgrimage being undertaken to Mecca by the Bab, but controversies were held with the Mullahs in which the Bab and his followers took the position that they were Muslims. During this period the Bab also wrote commentaries on several chapters of the Holy Quran.

HIS CLAIM TO BE THE MAHDI AND HIS PLANS

Though Mirza Ali Muhammad claimed a Divine mission from the first, when he announced himself to be the Bab, the higher claim to be the *Qaim* or the Imam Mahdi developed a little later. It was at Mecca, where he went to perform a pilgrimage, that he first made a public announcement of the higher claim *i.e.*, eight months after the first claim; but, as we learn from Mirza Jani, a plan had already been chalked out before proceeding to Mecca,

and emissaries had been dispatched in all directions with the message that the people should gather together under the flag of the Mahdi at the back of Kufa, to which place he was to come on his return from the pilgrimage. Mecca was no doubt chosen as the place of announcement because some *hadith* spoke of the Mahdi announcing his claim at that Holy City. The *Nasikh ut Tawarikh* does not make quite an unwarranted statement when it attributes to the Bab the intention of making a sally from Kufa with drawn swords to bring about a revolution in Persia. The idea of setting up a kingdom of Babi saints seems to have taken full possession of the Bab's mind from the very first; and even the Babi historian, Mirza Jani, the earliest historian of the Bab, lends support to this view³. But the messengers sent by the Bab did not bring favourable reports, and sufficient numbers were not forthcoming to mature his plan, which had accordingly to be changed, and instead of going to Kufa he took up his residence in Bushire on his return from Mecca, and from that place sent his emissaries to preach his advent secretly to the people. The authorities, however, got wind of it, and Hussain Khan, the Governor of Fars, submitted some of his lieutenants to cruel persecution. In the month of Ramadan 1261 A. H., the Bab was brought from Bushire to Shiraz by orders of Hussain Khan. As the Bab did not preach his claim to be the Mahdi publicly, Hussain Khan made him disclose it by a stratagem. He related to the Bab a dream on account of which, he said, he did not put his emissaries to death. The Bab,

3 *Nuqtatul Qaf*. p.111: "In short after sending his messengers to the cities of the Muslims and letters to the King and the Ulama of those who were outwardly Muslims he himself went to Mecca, and it was generally known that on his return he would appear at the back of Kufa and make manifest his affair. This rumor was correct but it was conditional on the contingency that the Muslims should gather together and make a movement on their own account and out of love, and respect the messengers of the great leader so that manifestation of mercy may make manifest the command of God, and make apparent the signs of grace for the tranquillity of their hearts. Afterwards, as the matter turned out to be against the doctrines of the Muslims and they assumed an attitude of rejection and denial and persecuted his messengers and did not gather together behind Kufa, there occurred a delay in the affair of God and the doors of grace were closed on them."

believing him to be sincere, divulged his claim before him and even promised to bestow on him the kingdom of Turkey when he conquered the world. The result was that rigorous restrictions were placed on the movements of the Bab. It was in Rabi 1 1262 A. H. (March 1846) that he secretly escaped from Shiraz.

According to the *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*, the Bab was called upon to hold a discussion with the Ulama before being imprisoned, and when he was beaten by orders of Hussain Khan he recanted and begged pardon for what he had said. As the Bab's later recantation at Tabriz is now an established fact, there is no reason for discrediting the statement of the *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*.

THE BAB AT ISFAHAN AND CONVERSION OF MUTAMID UD DAULA

On reaching the precincts of Isfahan, the Bab sought the permission of Mutamid ud Daula, Manuchihr Khan, to reside in his province, which was granted. The Bab here became more cautious and did not make any declaration of his claim to Mahdship. On the other hand, he gave himself out only as the Bab of the Imam Mahdi, for Mirza Jani tells us that the governor of Isfahan sent word to the Imam of Juma Masjid that "the man who claimed to be the *Bab* of the Imam had come."⁴

The death of Manuchihr Khan soon afterwards though brought the Bab's days of liberty to an end. The one year at Isfahan had passed in great comfort and security, so much so, that even a new marriage had been contracted. It was during this time that the movement gained great strength. The leaders of the movement were working with great zeal, and throughout the length and breadth of the country the word had gone forth that the Imam Mahdi had come. So long had the Shia world waited for the hidden Imam that many people hailed the news, and though vast numbers did not actually join the movement, the agitation was very great. Suddenly the events again took an unfavourable turn, so far as the triumph of the Bab was concerned. The new governor was not favourably disposed towards

the Bab, and sending for the Bab he let him know that he was unable to protect him any longer: "It is therefore advisable that you should depart to Tehran, if it so please you, or, according to your original intention, to Khurasan."⁵ Under these orders and an escort the Bab had immediately to leave for Tehran. But before he entered the capital, orders were issued for his removal to Maku. Here he remained from March 1847 till his execution in July 1850, being removed to the fort at Chihrique during the last six months of his life.

THE BAB AT TABRIZ: HIS SECOND RECANTATION

On his way from Maku to Chihrique, the Bab stopped at Tabriz for a few days, and it was here that he recanted, proof of which is contained in two documents which Professor Browne has now published in his 'Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion,' along with their translation. The first of these documents was written by Amir Arslan Khan as a report of the discussion between the Bab and the Mullas held in pursuance of orders from Tehran. In this discussion the crown-prince, Nasiruddin Mirza, was present, and there were also Ulama of the Shaikhi sect, Haji Mullah Muhammad and Mulla Muhammad Mamqani, as Mirza Jani tells us.⁶ In this document it is affirmed that the Bab "apologized, recanted and repented of and asked pardon for his errors, giving a sealed undertaking that henceforth he would not commit such faults."

THE BAB'S THIRD RECANTATION IN HIS OWN HANDWRITING.

The second document which is a recantation in the Bab's own handwriting is produced below in its entirety. No date is given but it is very likely later than the verbal recantation. Probably his verbal recantation in the presence of Arslan Khan and others was thought insufficient and a written recantation was demanded. This letter which was addressed to Nasiruddin Shah, then Crown

5 Nuqtatul Qaf. p. 123

6 *Ibid.*, p. 133

Prince, who sent it to his father, Muhammad Shah, runs thus:—

“May my life be thy sacrifice! Praise be to God such as He deserves and merits, in that He hath caused the manifestations of His grace and mercy under all circumstances to comprehend all of His servants. Praise be to God and again praise, that He hath deigned to make one like your Excellency the source of His clemency and mercy, by the manifestation of whose kindness He hath pardoned His servants, cast a veil over (the faults of) sinners, and shown mercy to the transgressors. I take God to witness on His part that this weak servant never intended aught contrary to the good pleasure of the Lord of the world and the company of Saints. Although my very existence is in itself utterly faulty, yet since my heart firmly believes in the Unity of God (glorious is His mention), and the Prophethood of His Apostle and the saintship of the community of saints, and since my tongue acknowledged all that hath been revealed on the part of God, I hope for His mercy. Never have I desired aught contrary to the will of God, and, if words contrary to His good pleasure have flowed from my pen, my object was not disobedience, and in any case I repent and ask forgiveness of Him. This servant has absolutely no knowledge connected with any claim. I ask forgiveness of God my Lord and I repent unto Him of (the idea) that there should be ascribed to me any (Divine) mission. As for certain prayers and words which have flowed from my tongue, these do not imply any such mission (*amr*), and any (apparent) claim to any special vicegerency for His Holiness the Proof of God (on whom be peace) is a purely baseless claim, such as this servant has never put forward, nay, nor any claim like unto it. Therefore it is thus hoped from the clemency of His Imperial Majesty and of your Excellency, that they will exalt the head of him who continually prays for them by the favours and graces of their clement and compassionate court. Farewell.”⁷

THE BAB TAUGHT AND PRACTICED THE DOCTRINE OF *TAQIYYA*

The Bab, however, did not stick to these recantations. In all probability they were made in accordance with the doctrine of *taqiyya* which allows the telling of a lie in respect of one's religious beliefs to escape persecution. The Babis had a free recourse to it. Nay, the Bab himself taught this doctrine. Mirza Jani tells us that on the night preceding his execution he told his friends to make *taqiyya* and have no hesitation in denying, even cursing, him. "After that he said: "My friends, when they question you tomorrow about my truth, make *taqiyya* (i.e., utter a lie) and deny (me) and curse (me), for this is the commandment of God to you."⁸ Many other instances of *taqiyya* are met with in the Bab and the Babis. Mirza Jani tells us that when Muhammad Ali Barfurushi, whose rank in the Babi movement is second only to that of the Bab himself and who is called *Janab-i-Quddus*, was brought before the prince after the Tabrasi surrender, and was questioned as to the reasons for the insurrection, he made an absolutely false statement which Mirza Jani, on account of his great reverence for him, describes as a statement made by way of *fitna* or trial, which means a false statement. He knew that the Prince would not allow him to escape with his life, and accordingly tried to put the blame on Mulla Husain of Bushraweh who had been slain earlier in the siege of Shaikh Tabrasi. Here is the gist of his statement as given by Mirza Jani: "His statement was 'the insurrection was really the work of Akhund Mulla Muhammad Husain, not mine. I too went (to Tabrasi) for the sake of investigation and was made a prisoner'. He made statements like this, and it is also said that he cursed the Akhund Muhammad Husain of Bushraweh."⁹

BAB'S SECRET ORGANIZATION

While the Babi movement was making adherents rapidly and some men of influence had joined its ranks, the actual claim of

8 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 247

9 *Ibid.*, p. 192

the Bab remained doubtful. The Babi leaders, however, were by no means uncertain that he claimed to be the Mahdi. A strong secret organization seems to have existed from the first to spread the movement. There is not the least doubt that the plan which aimed at the gathering of his followers at Kufa and which failed only because the Muslims in general refused to accept him as the Mahdi, was a secret one known only to the leading Babis. Then when he returned from the pilgrimage and settled at Bushire, his followers were secretly preaching the doctrine of his being the Mahdi, and it was only by a stratagem that the Bab was made to disclose it before Husain Khan, the governor. Again, when restrictions were placed on his movements, he was still secretly carrying on the propaganda eluding even the authorities, as Mirza Jani says explicitly: "He wrote answers secretly, keeping the utmost secrecy." Manuchihr Khan's offer of 50,000 horsemen also shows how secret help was forthcoming. Even so late as 1890 Professor Browne was astonished at the secret organization of the Babis: "That the contents of a telegram sent from the Prince-Governor of Isfahan to his deputy should be known at Acre may appear astonishing, but I have more than once been amazed at the rapidity and completeness with which the Babis become informed of all that concerns their interests."¹⁰ The existence of a secret organization in the Babi movement, at the time of which we are speaking, is really admitted by the Babis themselves, as Abbas Effendi says in his *Travellers' Narrative* when speaking of the secret plan by which Mirza Yahya was made the Bab's successor that "secret correspondences were in the process" at the time.¹¹ It was due to this strong secret organization at the back of the movement that the Persian Government had to encounter three or four Babi insurrections which were put down only with the greatest difficulty by a weak Government.

MULLA HUSAIN OF BUSHRAWEH

Though the Bab was in prison, the most powerful leaders of the movement were at perfect liberty. The first of these was

¹⁰ The Episode of the Bab. p. 409.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 63

Mullah Husain of Bushraweh who was Bab's right hand man and had received the title of *Bab-ul-Bab*. In fact, he became the Bab after Ali Muhammad became the Mahdi or the Point. Besides that, he is called the *Qaim i-Khurasani* or the one arising from Khurasan. He was the first man who accepted Mirza Ali Muhammad as the Bab and as he held a high position among the Shaikhis, his lead was followed by the members of the sect generally. Again it was he, who after open declaration by the Bab that he was the Imam Mahdi, led the insurgent movement against the Persian Government at Shaikh Tabrasi.

MULLA MUHAMMAD ALI OF BARFURUSH

The second leader of the Babi movement was Haji Muhammad Ali of Barfurush who is called *Janab-i-Quddus*. He was a member of the Shaikhi sect before Mirza Ali Muhammad claimed to be the Bab, and when the Bab went on a pilgrimage to Mecca, he accompanied him.¹² Mirza Jani says that he claimed the rank of *Quddusiyya* (holiness) which signifies the *raj'a* (return) of the Messenger of God, the Holy Prophet Muhammad, and that he established his claim by sound arguments.¹³ In fact, Mirza Jani is of opinion that Muhammad Ali was the greatest man among the followers of the Bab, so that when Mulla Husain and Muhammad Ali met each other at Barfurush, Mulla Husain stood up "as a contemptible slave" before Muhammad Ali. Mirza Jani further tells us that all three, Mulla Husain of Bushraweh, Muhammad Ali of Barfurush and Qurrat-ul-Ain (who is the third of this trio of Babi leaders) are spoken of in prophecies, and their appearance is as much a fulfillment of earlier prophecy as the appearance of the Bab.¹⁴

QURRAT-UL-AIN

The third leader of the Babi movement, and the one to whom the movement owes some of its greatest achievements, is Zarrin

12 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 139

13 *Ibid.*, p. 152

14 *Ibid.*, pp 152, 153

Taj. She was the daughter of a Shaikhi, Mulla Salih of Qazwin, one of the companions of Syed Kazim of Rasht who gave to the girl the name of *Qurrat-ul-Ain* (i.e. consolation of the eyes). When Syed Kazim of Rasht died, and Mulla Husain was still in search of one who should succeed him, Qurrat-ul-Ain wrote a letter expressing her belief in Ali Muhammad. She is said to have possessed enormous wealth, all of which she spent for the success of the movement of the Bab. With wealth she also possessed beauty and eloquence, and was a great instrument in popularizing the movement. But she did not always keep herself within bounds. On one occasion when she was at Baghdad and gave lessons in the Holy Quran, some of the Babis refused to eat the food cooked by non-Babis as being impure and were starving. On that occasion, Qurrat-ul-Ain proclaimed that she was a manifestation of Hazrat Fatima (the Holy Prophet's youngest daughter) and that her eye was as Fatima's blessed eye and that everything on which she cast her eye became pure. Thereupon she ordered food to be brought from the bazaar and then cast her eye on it and it became lawful for the Babis. Afterwards she made certain statements in speaking of the doctrine of Unity which were denounced by some of the Babis as heretical and they went so far as to curse her, and complained to the Bab. But instead of a warning or denouncement she received the title of *Tahira* (the pure one) from the Bab, by which name she was henceforth known. Qurrat-ul-Ain was married to Mulla Muhammad, son of her uncle Haji Mulla Taqi, but as he did not accept the Bab's claims, she refused to live with him as his wife. Her father tried his best to restore the relations between the husband and the wife, but Qurrat-ul-Ain would not yield, saying that her husband not having accepted the truth was *khabith* (impure), and that the pure and the impure could not remain in conjunction. She further held that this want of affinity between the two amounted to divorce and that therefore no formal divorce was needed. Haji Mulla Taqi, her father-in-law, was murdered by the Babis on account of his hostility and it was suspected that Qurrat-ul-Ain had incited the murder, and she fled to Khurasan. After this she was divorced formally by her husband.

THE BADASHT OR SHAHRUD CONFERENCE

With this trio of leaders, enjoying full freedom, the restraint put upon the movements of Mirza Ali Muhammad Bab did not in any way impede the progress of the Babi Movement. When the Bab was still in the prison at Maku, Muhammad Shah, the ruling Prince died. Immediately before or after that, Mulla Husain of Bushraweh paid a secret visit to the Bab at Maku. There and then the Bab told him to go back to Khurasan by way of Mazindah and, we are told, also prophesied his martyrdom. On his way there he met Janab-i Quddus at Barfurush, and the latter also left Barfurush at the same time. Before taking up the story of the message with which the Babul-Bab was entrusted, the Badasht incident compels our attention. Here met together, Haji Muhammad Ali of Barfurush and Qurrat-ul-Ain. "The sun and the moon were gathered together," as Mirza Jani puts it. The *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh* reports the use of the same phrase by the Babis, but makes very serious allegations on its basis. These hostile allegations may be exaggerations but even Mirza Ali's version, a devout follower of the Bab as he was, throws serious reflection on the character of the Babi leaders. Here, we are told, "they made to pass the mysteries of unity and secrets of worship from the treasury of measurement to the plain of consummation, and raised the veils of manifoldness from the face of the beloved one of the desired object and gave away some cups of the essence of the wine which is delicious to those who drink, until a party not knowing themselves began to sing in a new tone in the tree of ecstasy...and their cries of joy went above the seventh heaven." All limits of the law were declared to be null with the manifestation of the *Point*, for a law was needed for the weak ones: "And in the traditions it occurs very often as regards the religion of the Hazrat-i-Qaim (*i. e.*, the Mahdi) that his faith shall abrogate all faiths...and the commandments of His Holiness are the commandments of *batin* (*i. e. esoteric*), and necessarily when that which is hidden, the esoteric, comes, the outward commandments go."¹⁵ It was here at Badasht that

15 Nuqatatul Qaf. p. 151

Janab-i-Quddus declared communism and the community of wives, declaring everything to be lawful for the *Qaim* who possessed unlimited power to give the wife of one to another and to join together any male with any female that he chose. Here is Mirza Jani's account:

“The substance of the commandments of the religion of the Qaim, on whom be peace, is the commandment of Unity, viz., that all property is the property of His Holiness, and all the men are the slaves of His Holiness, and all the women are the handmaidens of His Holiness. He may give to any one that which he chooses and he may take from any one that which he desires in accordance with the verse, ‘O God, Lord of the Kingdom, Thou givest the Kingdom to whom Thou pleasest and takest away the Kingdom from whom Thou pleasest.’ And there is a tradition that His Holiness will interchange husbands and wives, like the master who gives away his own slave, and surely the right of ownership of His Holiness among men is equal to the right of the ownership of the master in his handmaiden and slave, and the essence of the religion of His Holiness is Unity and Knowledge and Love...In short after he had sprinkled some drops of the ocean of Unity for his companions, a party in the desert of Badasht lost their senses and one party were in their senses, and one group was astonished and a party were mad and a party fled away, and on account of their cries and their noise and their joy, the people of that place were anxious as to who these people were.”¹⁶

RESPECT FOR LAW AND ORDER

We have seen how at Baghdad the food which was illegal for the Babis, because it was prepared by the impure hands of non-Babis, became lawful simply by Qurrat-ul-Ain casting her glance on it, they could even commit murders under the impression that a person forfeited his life who spoke ill of any of their leaders. Their fanaticism has been worked up to a point when

16 Nuqtatul Qaf, pp. 153, 154

they could be made to commit any excess thinking that they were within their rights. Only the Babis were pure, all others being impure, and in doing away with impurity, the question of the legality or illegality of the means adopted could not disturb their minds. The qualms of conscience, the limits of the law, were all things for weaker people; they had outgrown that stage. As Mirza Jani quotes Muhammad Ali of Barfurush: "Even of this nature are the commandments of the laws of all the prophets, for these commandments relate to those who are still on their way to reach a goal. When the traveller reaches the goal, the commandments relating to the journey are cancelled in his case. For instance, when the cultivator sows the seed of melon what he aims at is the melon, but so long as the melon does not ripen and is yet hidden in the secret of the flower and leaf and the branches and the stem and the fibre, for the sake of its manifestation the cultivator looks to water...and all other conditions (relating to its growth) and keeps before his eye the commandments relating to what is necessary and unlawful and permissible and hateful, but as soon as the melon ripens and it is picked up, all the commandments relating to the guarding of the plant are given up."¹⁷ If even the Babi historian has no hesitation in thus depicting the Babi leaders as bidding farewell to the limitations of the law, the impression that must have been left on the non-Babi mind can be easily imagined. The *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh* represents Qurrat-ul-Ain as addressing the Babis somewhat as follows: "O companions, the time in which we are living is counted as the time of cessation of laws, and all the commandments of the law are today made null and void and this fasting and prayer and praising (of God) and invoking blessings (on the Prophet) is useless work. When Mirza Ali Muhammad Bab takes possession of the seven continents and makes the various religions one religion, he will bring a new law."

17 *Nuqtatul Qaf.* 150, 151.

MULLA HUSAIN'S ADVANCE ON BARFURUSH WITH AN ARMED FORCE

The death of Muhammad Shah was a signal for the Babis. The Bab's vicegerent, Mulla Husain, had already received the commandment and with seventy men, all armed, he was on his way from Khurasan to Mazandran, his force gaining strength during the journey. Hearing of the death of Muhammad Shah, he ascended the pulpit and addressed the assembly, saying that he had only been waiting for this news and that he had nothing in mind but becoming a martyr and that anyone who had come for worldly avarice should turn back immediately.¹⁸ By this time they were in all two hundred and thirty men, of whom two hundred swore allegiance to him and thirty took permission to go back. With these two hundred, Mulla Husain came to Barfurush. The Saidul Ulama asked the citizens not to allow the Babis to enter the city. Admission being refused, there was some altercation and the result was that one of the citizens shot an arrow which killed one of Mulla Husain's companions. At this the Babi leader drew out his sword and the citizens who seem to have been unarmed were attacked.¹⁹ Seven of them were killed, and thus entrance was effected into the city of Barfurush at the point of the sword. Mulla Husain encamped in an inn outside the town.

BABIS FORTIFY THEMSELVES AT SHAIKH TABRASI

Meanwhile Abbas Quli Khan who was not on good terms with the Said-ul-Ulama came to Barfurush, and he advised Mulla Husain to leave, as matters were still unsettled owing to the death of Muhammad Shah, and there was not likely to be any inquiry regarding the murders committed, especially so when blood had been shed on both sides. So the Babis left Barfurush and reached the fort at Tabrasi where they stopped and took up a fortified position. Muhammad Ali Barfurushi also joined them here.

¹⁸ Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 155

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 156

BABI DEPREDATIONS AND APPOINTMENT OF MAHDI QULI KHAN TO DEAL WITH THE INSURRECTION

News of this was sent by the Said-ul-Ulama to Tehran and Nasiruddin Shah issued orders for their dispersal. But before any steps were taken against them, the Babis began to loot the neighbouring villages; "whenever the villagers hesitated or refused to give what they required, their houses were burnt."²⁰ Regarding one of these where it was suspected a party of irregulars had taken shelter, Mirza Jani tells us that the Babis "attacked the village by night and took it. They killed one hundred and thirty men and the rest fled. The village was destroyed and the food-stuffs were all taken to the fort."²¹ The excuse for committing this depredation is very strange: "The reason for destroying the village and taking away their property was this that the head of the village and its residents had first verified (the Bab's claims) and received benefits from the Babis. But as soon as they showed that they rejected those claims and became inimical, it was necessary for His Holiness to repel them according to the commandment of the...law."²² Thus they gathered in the fort provisions sufficient for two years. Prince Mahdi Quli Mirza was appointed to deal with them, and Abbas Quli Khan, who had advised the Babis to leave Barfurush lest they should be called to account for the murders committed there, was appointed to help him. Abbas Quli Khan was at first much impressed by the Babis, but meeting Muhammad Ali Barfurushi and hearing from him that he claimed to be "Sultan in truth" and the assertion that "the whole world would be under his sway and all the kings of the East and the West would humble themselves before him,"²³ he was convinced that the movement was not a religious movement, but rather, it was a revolutionary movement aiming at the subversion of the Persian Government, though Mirza Jani assures us that he failed to understand the real meaning of the

20 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, P. 241

21 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 161

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162

23 *Ibid.*, pp. 162

Babi leader. The Prince encamped at a little distance from the fort and sent a letter to Mulla Husain enquiring whether they wanted reform in religion or kingdom of the world. The reply given by Muhammad Ali Barfurushi was rather evasive:

“Our claim is religious. The first thing necessary is that the Ulama should meet us and understand our truth and admit it. After that the king of the Musalmans should acknowledge obedience to us, and help the true religion, and the subjects should also admit the truth of it. It is now three years that the truth has manifested itself with that argument on which the religion of Islam takes its stand which is the Quran.”

BABIS BREAK THE TERMS AND MAKE A NIGHT ATTACK

The Prince wrote back to the Babi leader that he was issuing orders for the Ulama to gather together. Notwithstanding this, the Babis made a night attack upon the Prince’s camp and set fire to the camp. While the troops were yet unable to realize what had happened, three hundred Babis fell upon them and killed as many as they could. Prince Mahdi Quli Mirza escaped with his life by taking to the jungle. The reason given by Mirza Jani for the Babis making a night attack while deceiving the Prince that they were waiting for the Ulama to hold a discussion with them is entirely incredible. It is said that this was done because the Prince was bidding for time and contemplated a night attack, but not the least evidence is produced in its support.

THE BABIS SURRENDER

However, the Prince returned with fresh troops and laid siege to the fort. In the struggle that ensued and continued for some time, Mulla Husain was killed; thirty Babis deserted and Muhammad Ali Barfurushi at last surrendered with two hundred and thirty men after nine months’ siege. The Government troops, it is said, fell upon them after they had laid down their arms and killed many of them, but the leader of the insurgents, Muhammad Ali Barfurushi, with a number of men, was imprisoned. It was

there that Janab-i-Quddus made a statement unworthy of any honest leader of men. His greatest admirer, Mirza Jani, says that when the Prince asked him why he had brought about this disturbance, his reply was: "The real cause of this disturbance was Mulla Muhammad Husain, not I; I went there to make enquiry and fell into his clutches." "It is also stated," says Mirza Jani, "that he cursed the Akhund (Mulla Husain). Whoever understands the secret of what passed between Hazrat-i-Quddus and Janab-i-Tahira and realizes their tone as to what it was that they meant, also understands the true meaning of this saying, not otherwise."²⁴ This statement shows clearly that the Babis had taken the offensive. The false excuse, however which is such a sad comment on the character of a Babi leader of such eminence, did not prove effective in saving his life. Some European writers think that they were burnt alive; as a matter of fact, it was only the corpse of Haji Muhammad Ali Barfurushi that was burned after he was put to death, as Mirza Jani tells us.²⁵

SOME REMARKS ON THE TABRASI INSURRECTION

The question may be asked, Was the Tabrasi incident a persecution by the authorities of some religious fanatics? A little reflection on the historical facts as handed down to us does not allow us to answer the question in the affirmative. In the first place, the Babis who gathered at Shaikh Tabrasi came not only from the different provinces of Persia but also from places outside Persia, such as India and Turkey. This would not have been possible unless it was done in pursuance of a preconceived plan. Evidently the object was to set up a small Babi kingdom in the heart of Persia which may, in time, by gaining strength, upset the Government of the Shah. In support of this is the fact that the time chosen for the rising was the occasion of the death of Muhammad Shah when naturally the control of the Government was a little loosened. The leaders were all agreed upon this. The Bab himself had ordered it, and his two assistants, the Bab-ul-

24 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 192

25 *Ibid.*, p. 198

Bab and Janab-i-Quddus, led the movement. All these facts show that it was not by chance that four hundred armed men had assembled at a particular place; the whole affair was premeditated and well-arranged. Thus Mirza Jani writes while speaking of Mirza Yahya, the Subh-i-Azal, who at the time was but a lad of 15 or 19: "But his love (for the Bab) was very great, so much so that when orders proceeded from the Presence of the Highest Lord that the companions (Babis) should go to Khurasan, he too intended to go thither."²⁶ On another occasion Mirza Jani tells us that "it was the general impression of the people that whenever His Holiness (the Bab) went forth (to fight), several thousand men would go forth with him...in Azarbaijan there were several thousands of friends."²⁷ Secondly, we find Mulla Husain himself giving a choice to the 230 men who followed him, either to remain with him to seek martyrdom or to return to their homes, and thirty of the men did actually return. Surely the other two hundred could have safely returned to their homes as well if they had chosen to do so. But they remained evidently *to accomplish some object*. Thirdly, if they were simply a peaceful gathering *en route* to Karbala, why did they make a forced entry into Barfurush and then go back to Shaikh Tabrasi. Fourthly, before the Government took any steps against them they took possession of a fort which they strongly fortified and took in provisions sufficient for two years. Nor could this be a defensive action, for there was no army against them in the field and nor had the Government even ordered their arrest. None of these facts can agree with the theory that they were a peaceful party proceeding to Karbala who were attacked by a government bent on persecuting them. On the other hand, the Government took action against them very cautiously, and only when they began to commit atrocities on the civil population. The whole incident leads an impartial reader to the conclusion that the Babis took up the sword to establish a Babi Kingdom, as they sincerely believed that to fill the earth with

26 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 240

27 *Ibid.*, p. 251

justice, the Mahdi must in accordance with the traditions take up the sword. The men who fought had clearly this end in view as Mirza Jani tells us speaking of the desertion of some of them: "In short, some of the companions who were weak...and believed that His Holiness would attain to kingdom of this world."²⁸

THE NIRIZ REBELLION

Syed Yahya of Darab was one of the most distinguished Babi leaders. Fanaticism in him had been worked to the highest pitch, so that when Mirza Jani asked him as to how far his father accepted the Babi doctrine, his reply, made emphatic with a strong oath, was: "If my father, with that grandeur of his rank and the greatness of his position should deny this manifestation of resplendent light, I should myself be his murderer in the way of the beloved one, notwithstanding that a father like him and a son like me is only rarely met with."²⁹ After accepting the Bab, he became a zealous preacher of the new doctrine and many people swore allegiance to him. While he was thus gathering people around him at Yazd, the governor sent men to arrest him. The Syed did not yield and after a trifling collision between the two parties, he retired with a number of followers into the citadel of Yazd. He held out for some time against the Governor's men. Seven of the Babis and thirty of the Governor's men were killed in the struggle, but ultimately he managed to escape while his followers surrendered. Syed Yahya fled to Shiraz, and thence to Niriz where he had many followers. Here too his presence became the occasion of creating disturbance and the Governor, who was sympathetic to him, advised him to leave the place. The castle to which he betook himself was besieged by the Governor who was attached to him advised him to leave the place. The castle to which he betook himself was besieged by the Governor's men, but Syed Yahya held out, and the force in the fort continued to swell in numbers as the Governor was

28 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 185

29 *Ibid.*, p. 122

already unpopular with the people of Niriz. The Babis made a night sally on the people of Niriz, and according to the *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh* killed men and women without any distinction. The Governor's brother Ali Askar Khan was killed and his three sons were made prisoners. This victory gave further support to the Babi insurrection and further help was sent to the Governor from Shiraz. The two parties waited for a few days, the besiegers trying to win over Syed Yahya by peaceful methods. But 300 Babi again made a night attack. By this time, however, the people of Niriz who had gathered round Syed Yahya began to lose heart and desert the fort, until only seventy men were left with him, and thus Syed Yahya was prevailed upon to leave the fort as he saw the uselessness of continuing the struggle with his own men decreasing daily while fresh help continued to reach the royalist forces. According to *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh*, some men from the fort fell upon Syed Yahya and murdered him, while according to the Babi historians he was executed, and his followers were made prisoners and carried to Shiraz where they were put to death. Thus ended the first Niriz rebellion. Another insurrection broke out there two years later when the Babis were successful in killing the Governor Zainul Abidin Khan. But the royal forces were again successful in stamping out the rebellion.

THE ZANJAN REBELLION

The suppression of the Niriz rebellion was followed by another very severe one at Zanjan. Mulla Muhammad Ali of Zanjan was a powerful preacher and he was one of those who were expecting the advent of the Mahdi at any time. Notwithstanding a claim to having abrogated the Law of Islam, the Bab wrote to Mulla Muhammad Ali to lead the Juma prayers at Zanjan. Before this, as Mirza Jani tells us, the Mulla had given up Juma prayers in obedience to the new law, but having received orders now he proceeded to the mosque, and notwithstanding opposition from the Muslims led the prayer. The Governor invited him to his place and the prevented his return to his house, probably intending that he should be sent to Tehran, because he had been a prisoner there when Muhammad Shah

had died, and on that occasion he had escaped from prison. When the Babis came to know that the Mulla was detained by the Governor and fearing the consequences of his being sent to Tehran, they rushed to the Governor's house and liberated the Mulla from his custody. When news of this reached Tehran, a force was sent to arrest him but he took refuge in the fort, and about a thousand Babis gathered round him and the government force was defeated. Reinforcements were sent, and a large party of the besieged seeing the strength of the government forces lost heart and fled, leaving only about three hundred men with Mulla Muhammad Ali. The Mulla ultimately died in action but those within the fort continued to fight. At last they had to surrender; some of them were put to death and others imprisoned.

SOME REMARKS ON THE NATURE OF THE BABI MOVEMENT

There is not the least doubt that the agents of the Tehran Government were sometimes unnecessarily cruel to the Babi insurgents or to their families; it is also true that innocent Babis sometimes suffered along with those who really merited punishment; but it is equally true that the Babi movement was not a peaceful religious movement. In the first place, it was too fanatical to abide peacefully with the Muslims. The Babis looked upon all Muslims who did not believe in the Bab as essentially impure, and thought they could be put to death for not accepting the Bab. We have seen how Qurrat-ul-Ain's uncle was murdered simply because he did not speak well of the Shaikhi leader. Again, such a renowned man as Syed Yahya Darabi is reported by Mirza Jani to have expressed the view that he would with his own hand kill his father if he should deny the Bab. In fact, the Babi movement at this time was quite different from what it became later. Anyone who reads Mirza Jani's history will see that instead of love and forgiveness for the persecutors, the hearts of the Babis were full of hatred even for the innocent men who could not agree with their religious views. They would kill them if they could; but if they could not, they would hate them with all their heart. Secondly, after the first three years of waiting the

Babi movement rose in revolt against the Government again and again. There were four rebellions on the part of so small a community in a period of less than two years, and the harshest measures of the Government failed to make it abide by the laws of the land. Thirdly, the movement was too impatient to bring about a political revolution, thinking, that as the Mahdi, the Bab was sure to overcome his enemies. He had even promised them Divine help saying that ten of them would overcome a thousand of the enemy. The conviction was rooted deep in their hearts that the Mahdi would soon conquer the world, and this conviction came more from the hadith regarding the Mahdi than from any verses of their new scriptures to which these masses had really no access at all. And not only was the Government faced with a serious situation, but even the peaceful citizens feared the Babis, as they would put to death anyone who offered any resistance.

EXECUTION OF THE BAB

It was under these circumstances that the Government had to take the final step of giving orders for the execution of the Bab. He had not abided by the recantation he had made at Tabriz. Instead of that, when removed to Chilrique he had given greater prominence to his claim to be the Imam Mahdi. The result of it was that if a revolt was suppressed in one part of the country, another broke out in another place. Perhaps the weakness of the Tehran Government was a temptation to the Babi zealots who burned with the passion to bring about a change and to sweep off what they looked upon as impure. Mirza Jani tells us that the Bab had now prepared himself for death. Having received letters from Mirza Yahya, the *Subh-i-Azal*, he was extremely glad that there was a man who could lead the movement after him. He sent to him his writing material, clothing, seal and sundry articles, and wrote a will appointing him his successor, and asked him to write the eight parts (*Wahids* or Unities as they are called in the Babi terminology) of the Bayan, the Bab's Scripture, which he could not finish.³⁰ But he was not yet willing to be

30 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 244

killed, Mirza Jani assures us, and nobody could kill him: "He had full control on the universe and his will was the will of God, and the will of God is above all that is desired"³¹

At last orders were issued from Tehran for his execution and he was brought from Chihriq to Tabriz and again questioned by the Ulama as to his claims. He affirmed that he claimed to be the *Imam-i-Qaim*, and Ulama signed the *fatwa* of his death.³² Dr. Cormick with two Persian doctors was deputed to examine the Bab and to give his opinion as to whether he was sane. On the night before the execution, he asked his friends to kill him as he did not like to be killed in disgrace by the hands of an enemy. Here are Mirza Jani's words: "In short, on the night, the morrow of which was the day of the martyrdom of that *Essence of Possibility*, he said to his companions, 'They would make me a martyr on the morrow in the utmost dishonour. So let one of you come forward to give me martyrdom, so that I may not meet with the disgrace at the hands of the enemy, for to be killed by a friend is to me preferable than being killed by an enemy.'³³ But even this desire of his was not to be fulfilled, for his friends all refused to do such a dastardly deed. Then he made his last bequest in the following words: 'O friends! when they question you tomorrow about my truth, make a false statement (*taqiyya*) and deny and curse (me) for such is the commandment of God to you.'³⁴

Mulla Muhammad Ali was the only man who was executed along with him. It happened, however, that when the smoke of musket fire cleared, Mirza Ali Muhammad was not there. The bullet instead of hitting him hit the rope with which he was hung and Mirza Ali Muhammad fled to a closet from which he was brought again. Mirza Jani is sure that the escape was due to the fact that he was not yet willing to be killed and therefore could not be killed, but willing or unwilling he had to submit to the same process a second time, and this time he was killed.

31 Nuqtatul Qaf. p. 245

32 *Ibid.*, p. 245

33 *Ibid.*, p. 246

34 *Ibid.*, p. 247

He was averse to receive his death at the hands of the "Satanic" forces which he had come to defeat; he or his teachings had prompted insurrections which failed miserably; his dearest friends perished in the attempts to make the Mahdi's cause triumph; he was fully conscious that his object was not attained; he had shown what agony his heart experienced when he asked his own friends to do him to death so that he may escape the disgrace of receiving death at the hands of his enemies; but fate would not yield to him and he had at length to yield to his fate. Thus passed away on the 8th July 1850 at the early age of thirty-one a man, who, while himself in prison, kept the whole of Persia in a state of turmoil for a period of six years, and with him closes the first chapter of the history of the Babi Movement. In its first phase the movement is an entire failure, with its founder dying a disgraceful death at the hands of his enemies, with the object which he was to accomplish entirely unfulfilled, and with the scriptures of his religion cut off in the very midst of their revelation.

CHAPTER II

Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal

BAB APPOINTS MIRZA YAHYA AS HIS SUCCESSOR

Mirza Yahya was the son of Mirza Buzurg of Nur, a younger half brother of Mirza Husain Ali, better known as Bahauallah. In the fifth year of Bab's manifestation when the news of the death of Janab-i-Quddus reached Mirza Yahya, he had a severe attack of fever, and after three days the signs of *Quddusiyya* appeared in him and he became the *raj'a* (return) of Quddus, as Mirza Jani tells us.³⁵ News of this having reached the Bab, he was joyful in the extreme and conferred on him the title of *Subh-i-Azal* or *the Morning of Eternity*. Soon afterwards he made over his writing material, clothing and seal to Subh-i-Azal and charged him with the completion of the Bayan, which he himself left in an unfinished condition. The Bayan was to contain nineteen divisions or unities, each division containing nineteen chapters. But as death was awaiting him before he could carry out his entire scheme, he entrusted the writing of the remainder of his scripture of nearly half of the new law which was to be revealed through him, to his successor, Mirza Yahya. The Bab also made a will in favour of Mirza Yahya which runs as follows:

“God is Great, Great His greatness. This is a letter from God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting, to God, the Guardian, the Self-Subsisting. Say, all have their beginning in God; say, all to God shall return. This is a letter from Ali

35 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 243

before Nabil³⁶ the Reminder of God for the worlds, to him whose name is equivalent to the name of the One³⁷ the reminder of God for the worlds. Say, all begin with the point of the Bayan. That, O thou, name of the One, guard what has been revealed in the Bayan and enjoin the same, for thou are surely the way, the great truth.”³⁸

MIRZA YAHYA’S UNCONTESTED LEADERSHIP

Mirza Yahya thus assumed the leadership of the movement under a clear authority, though he was only nineteen years old at the time. His leadership was not contested by anybody, not even by Bahauallah. The Bab had not only appointed him as his successor but had conferred upon him the very titles which he himself had assumed. But what is more, he had made over to him his writing material and entrusted him with the work of completing the Bayan, the great revelation of the Babi movement. He was thus made an intermediary under the Bab’s own authority for receiving the revelation of the new age for which God had originally chosen the Bab, and his life and leadership was thus the life and leadership of the Bab himself. But if the authority which brought him to the fore, was so uncontested, the time itself was hard for other claimants. The movement had spent its force in the great insurrections, and a man of Mirza Yahya’s silent and assuming habits was needed at the helm of its affairs. With all his ambitions and aspirations, Bahauallah had to remain in the background so long as there was fear of the movement being crushed altogether under a new persecution. But under the peaceful leadership of Mirza Yahya danger awaited the movement in another direction.

36 Ali before Nabil would be Ali Nabil, but as the letters of Nabil (nun 50, ba 2, ya 10. Iam 30) indicate the number 92 according to the abjad system, and the letters of the word Muhammad (mim. 40, ha 8, mim 40, dal 4) also indicate the same number, the word Nabil is looked upon as the equivalent of Muhammad, and Ali Muhammad Bab is meant.

37 The Arabic word is wahid (One) and in the abjad system it indicates the number 28: so does Yahya: and therefore, it is Yahya to whom the letter is addressed.

38 Browne’s Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf, pp. 1d, 1h

DHABIH'S CLAIM TO DIVINITY

From the very beginning there had been a tendency on the part of the Babi leaders to give themselves exaggerated importance. High-sounding titles were assumed and every leading member claimed to be a manifestation of some one of the earlier sages. When Mirza Ali Muhammad, no more content with being the Bab, became the Mahdi, Mulla Husain became the Bab; Haji Muhammad Ali of Barfurush who had the title of Janab-i-Quddus was the *raj'a* (return) of the Holy Prophet Muhammad; Zarrin-Taj who had the titles of Qurrat-ul-Ain and Tahira claimed to be a manifestation of Fatima, the Holy Prophet's daughter;³⁹ and all three of them had their flags like Mirza Ali Muhammad himself. In the year following the death of the Bab, the Babi movement experiences two great trials in the claims of Dhabih and Basir, though they did not, notwithstanding his higher claims, contest the leadership of Mirza Yahya.

Dhabih (lit., the slaughtered one) was an uneducated confectioner who stunned a meeting of the Babis by bursting out, "Surely I am God, there is no God besides me."⁴⁰ The hearers complained about the heretical utterance to Subh-i-Azal. He is reported to have replied that in every manifestation in the case of any individual whatsoever the reality is "Surely I am God," for the sign of Unity is to be met with in every thing, and that he loved such claimants provided they were true in their claims, but that a claim to be the "Point" was another matter. In the latter case it was necessary that he should show signs: "for instance, the *Zikr*, Peace of God be on him, became Manifest with the arguments of the tongue of signs, and he could write a thousand verses in six hours without stopping the pen, and as for me, a thousand verses flow from my pen in three hours and I have appeared on a higher plane, and if any one today desires to advance a claim, he ought to write a thousand verses in an hour and a half."⁴¹ Some people however did not understand his

39 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 140

41 *Ibid.*, pp. 251, 255

40 *Ibid.*, p. 253

meaning and pressed the complaint on which the Subh-i-Azal wrote three *mims* to *Janab-i-Dhabih*, and this the latter interpreted as meaning *mago*, *manawis*, *manashin*, i.e., do not write, and do not sit with the friends, and *Dhabih* assumed silence. "This was", says Mirza Jani "the first injustice which the people of the Bayan did to the manifestations of the Blessed Tree of Azal; they did not realize that the more branches and leaves a tree brings out, it is the excellence of the tree and the more fruit does it yield, and these poor men thought that the excellence of the tree is in its being without leaves and branches. At any rate this injustice is severer than the injustice of the enemies."⁴²

THE CLAIM OF BASIR

The second manifestation in the seventh year after the Bab's claim with the blind Indian who received the title of *Janab-i-Basir* (the seeing one) from Mirza Yahya. He claimed to be the *raj'a* (return) of Hasan, son of Ali, and wrote a letter to that effect to Subh-i-Azal and Bahauallah, and the former wrote back to him confirming his claim. But the Babi community was again divided into two parties, one party accepting the truth of his claim and the other rejecting it. This dissension in the movement is said to have gone on for six months. At the same time, other claims seem to have been advanced, and Mirza Jani speaks of four of them, one in the land of *Ta* (Tehran), one in the land of *Fa* (Fars), one in Baghdad, one of Aqa Muhammad Karawi, "and others like these,"⁴³ adds our historian. This plague of manifestations however received a temporary check on account of the attempt on the Shah's life which brought about a fresh persecution of the Babis, and which broke out again in a severe form at Baghdad after the removal of the Babi headquarters to that place.

BABI ATTEMPT ON THE SHAH'S LIFE

The leadership of Mirza Yahya, young as he was, did not lend any support to the Babi revolutionary tendencies. Though he

42 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 255

43 *Ibid.*, pp. 260, 261.

was not well-disposed towards the Persian Government, he seems to have preferred a peaceful course. But fiery spirits were not wanting in a movement which had been brought up under the traditions of Mirza Ali Muhammad bab, Mulla Hussain of Bushraweh, Muhammad Ali Barfurushi and Qurrat-ul-Ain. Thus we find, about two years after the execution of the Bab, some Babis making an attempt on the life of the Shah. This took place on 17th May 1852, when the Shah was out riding, but the shot miscarried. The leaders of the movement in all probability had nothing to do with this attempt, but it was surely an act of revenge for the blood of the Bab, and if it had succeeded, a severe uprising of the Babis would have followed which it would have been hard for the Government to suppress. Such a course of action seems to have been contemplated beforehand, as Mirza Jani tells us on the basis of a tradition from one of the Imam: "He says, O you companions of the *Qaim* (Imam Mahdi)! when this takes place (*i.e.* the Mahdi is left unhelped, you ought to stick to your houses like the old mat laying in the house for which no one cares, *i.e.* you should keep yourselves entirely concealed and express *taqiyya* before the enemies, *i.e.* escape being noticed by telling a lie) and sit down (by ceasing your activities) as we sit down in the time of enemies, for the enemies have no mercy on us, and their anxiety is to blot out all traces of truth. After that when a mover moves, by which is meant the taking of vengeance for the blood of his holiness the *Zikr* (Bab), and he holds up the banner of truth, run to him in all haste and let there not be any delay, and help the oppressed one, though you may have to walk over the snow."⁴⁴

CONSEQUENCES TO THE BABIS

Now the attempt on Nasir-ud-din Shah's life is not mentioned in Mirza Jani's history, the *Nuqtatul Qaf*, as that history was written before it, but the plan for a revenge for the Bab's blood is laid down here in unmistakable words, and Mirza Jani's writing only shows what the attitude of the Babi mind was at the

time; that there was even something in the nature of a lot, and the Babi leaders must no doubt have known of it. At any rate, there seems no doubt that the Babis were waiting for the result. That there may have been a plot is not altogether out of the question, for the Babis had a very strong secret organization as a reference to Bab's history clearly shows. But even taking the attempt at its face value, as the individual action of some fanatics, the harsh measures adopted by the Persian Government, though cruel, were not entirely unjustified. Four or five insurrections had already been suppressed by Nasir ud Din Shah's government with the utmost difficulty, and it had a great fear of the Babi organization. Cruel tortures were inflicted on the two men arrested on the spot to discover if there was a plot but to no effect. They confessed, however, that they had done this to avenge the death of the Bab. The Austrian Capt. Von Coumoens⁴⁵ says that an edict was issued for the annihilation of the sect, but it seems doubtful. No one touched Mirza Yahya, the head of the movement; even Bahauallah, who at that early date was more active than his younger brother, was only cast into prison. Prof. Browne has given in his Notes on the *Traveller's Narrative* a list of twenty-eight persons who were executed. Surely if an edict had been issued for the annihilation of the sect, thousands would have been killed, notwithstanding the resort to *taqiyya*. It also appears that avowed Babis were released when their innocence was established, for originally about forty were arrested. How could the prisoners be released if there was an order for the general assassination of the Babis? The *Nasikh-ut-Tawarikh* gives the names of five Babis who were released. That tortures may have been inflicted goes without saying, and that the hatred towards Babis was extreme is a fact, but the picture of

45 See his letter as quoted in Prof. Browne's 'Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion' (p. 268). The Captain does not seem to have been well informed. Though living among the Muslims he tells us that the Muslims pray to the Prophet and so do the Babis: "These Babis are heretics though they pray to the Prophet, yet they differ in many usages from the orthodox Mussalmans." Again, writing in 1852, he tells us that "this sect was founded about fifteen years ago by a certain Bab who was shot by the King's command.

harrowing tortures drawn by the Captain seems to be highly exaggerated. The famous Qurrat-ul-Ain shared the fate of those who were in any way suspected to be connected with the attempt, though the strict watch under which she was kept is a decided fact in favour of her innocence.

HEADQUARTERS OF BABI MOVEMENT REMOVED TO BAGHDAD

The head of the movement Mirza Yahya, the *Subh-i-Azal*, fled to Baghdad, but his elder brother Mirza Husain Ali, Bahauallah, was arrested and remained in the prison for four months. An inquiry did not prove his complicity, and through the good offices of the Russian minister he obtained his release and was permitted to leave the Persian territory and settle in Baghdad where he moved to in October 1852. The headquarters of the Babi movement were thus transferred to Turkish territory. This was no doubt a wise step. Having experienced so much trouble at the hands of the Babis, the Persian Government was extremely suspicious of them, and the removal of their headquarters to Turkish territory was in the interests of both parties. But notwithstanding the removal of the headquarters, the movement continued to gain ground in Persian territory. In fact, being in its early stages an offshoot of the Shia sect, it was more suited to the Persian temperament, and the Sunni Turk has had little fascination for it.

HE WHOM GOD SHALL MANIFEST

The Turkish Government once more afforded peaceful ground to the Babi movement for its development, and the vexing problem of new claims and manifestations reappeared in a severer though a different form. The Bab had spoken of the advent of one after him who he called *man yuzhir-u-hullah* or *he whom God shall manifest*. The Bayan was full of his praises. When he appeared, all were to believe in him as he would abrogate the Bayan as the Bayan abrogated the previous laws. As regards the time of his appearance, the limit was 1511 or 2001 years after the Bab. Thus the Bayan says:—

“If he appears in the number of *Ghiyath* and all enter, no one shall remain in the fire. If (his advent) goes so far as *Mustagith* all shall enter, none shall remain in fire but all shall be transformed into his light.”⁴⁶

But he might come at any time, so much so that the Subh-i-Azal when charged with the writing of about half of the Bayan which was left unfinished by the Bab, was informed at the same time that in case *he whom God shall manifest* appears in his time, he should abrogate the Bayan and “act on that which I reveal on your heart.”⁴⁷

ASADULLAH'S CLAIM

Mirza Asadullah, who had the title of *Dayyan*, was the first man who laid claim to be *he whom God shall manifest*. The Bab had appointed him as an amaneuensis to Subh-i-Azal, and he knew the Hebrew and Syriac languages. The Subh-i-Azal repudiated his claim and so did Bahauallah; the former called him *ab-ush-shurur* (father of mischiefs) and denounced him in strong terms and the latter held many controversies with him. But he persisted in his claim and was ultimately killed. According to Count Gobineau he was drowned in the Tigris with a stone fastened to his feet.⁴⁸

According to the *Hasht Bahisht*, however, it was Bahauallah who instructed his servant Mirza Mahmud of Mazandran to slay him.⁴⁹ It appears, however, that he was not got rid of until he had secured some success and some following. His followers are known as the *Asadiyyun*. Professor Browne in his note on the *Mustaiqiz*, a writing of Subh i- Azal, has shown that Subh i-Azal openly incited his followers to murder him. The following note

46 Persian Bayan, Wahid II, ch. 17. quoted from the Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf, p. XXVI. Ghiath indicates the number 1511, and Mustaghith 2001, in the abjad system.

47 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 244

48 Persian Bayan. Wahid II. ch. 17. quoted from the Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf, p. XXVI. Ghiath indicates the number 1511, and Mustaghith 2001, in the abjad system.

49 Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 244

about it occurs on p. 218 of '*Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*' :

“This book is interesting on account of its opening passage (in Persian) wherein Subh-i-Azal relates his conversion and also on account of its denunciations of Mirza Asadullah of Khuy, known as *Janab i-Dayyan*, a prominent follower of the Bab, who, after the death of the latter, laid claim to the supreme authority in the Babi community, and was by some of them drowned in the Tigris or Euphrates, as mentioned by Gobineau. That he had a certain following appears from reference to the *Asadiyyun* by Subh-i-Azal, who not only reviles him in the coarsest language, but expresses surprise that his adherents ‘sit silent in their places and do not transfix him with their spears,’ or ‘rend his bowels with their hands.’ ”

OTHER CLAIMANTS TO THE OFFICE OF ‘HE WHOM GOD SHALL MANIFEST’.

After Mirza Asadullah, several other Babis claimed to have appeared in fulfillment of that very prophecy. Prof. Browne mentions several names such as Mirza Abdullah Ghaugha, Husain Mailani known as Husain Jan, Syed Husain Hindiani and Mirza Muhammad Zarandi. It is not known what the end of these claimants was; only about the last named Professor Browne tells us that he became a follower of Bahauallah, and then quotes an important Babi writing call the Hasht Bahisht: “Matters reached such a pass that whoever arose from his sleep in the morning donned the dress of this claim.”⁵⁰

BAHAULLAH’S VOLUNTARY EXILE INTO THE SULAIMANIYYA MOUNTAINS

It was about this time that Mirza Husain Ali, Subh-i-Azal’s elder brother, also contracted this disease of exaggerated claims, but he was careful not to disclose his claim at once, for he knew strong would not yield to his claim. The affairs of the Babi movement were at this time practically in his hands, as Mirza

50 Browne’s *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*. p.m.

Yahya was a man of retiring habits. Signs of disagreement between the two brothers began to appear, and in 1854 Bahauallah went into a voluntary exile and retired into the Salaimaniyya mountains. Bahauallah's followers say that he did this to extinguish the fire of envy which kindled in the hearts of Mirza Yahya and his companions. But the fact is, as Professor Browne has made clear, that some of the Babi leaders had reprimanded him for what they thought indicated that he meant to lay claim to be the *promised Manifestation*:

“At a later period in the sojourn of the Babis at Baghdad, according to the author of *Hasht Bahisht*, some signs of renewal and compliance became observable in the checks of the circumstances of Bahauallah. Some of the older Babis, like Mulla Muhammad Jafar Naraqı and Mulla Rajab Ali Qahir and Haji Syed Muhammad Isfahani and Haji Syed Jawad Karbalai and Haji Mirza Ahmad and Haji Mirza Muhammad Radza and others were much perturbed on seeing these indications and they reprimanded Bahauallah, and were so hard on him that he, being displeased, left Baghdad and for two years remained in the Sulaimaniyya mountains. And during this time the Babis were not aware of his whereabouts. When they at last came to know where he was, Subh-i-Azal wrote a letter to him and asked him to return to Baghdad. He too returned in obedience to these orders.”⁵¹

BAHAULLAH MATURES HIS PLANS FOR A HIGHER CLAIM

Though Bahauallah came back to Baghdad, yet instead of giving up his idea of laying a claim to be the promised manifestation he had matured his plans. And his course of action was, as later events show, to nullify the influence of Mirza Yahya. We have seen that among the Shaikhis and the Babis, the word of the head of the sect was everything to the followers. Mirza Ali Muhammad himself did not put forward any claim until he was recognized as the head of the Shaikhi sect. The several claimants of the Babi sect beginning with Mirza Asadullah had failed

51 Browne's *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*, pp, lt, m

because Subh-i-Azal, the head of the Babi movement, was against them. Bahauallah knew this well, but he also knew that it was impossible for him to become the head of the movement so long as Subh-i-Azal was alive. The only way open to him was to undermine the authority of Subh-i-Azal, and this he was in a position to effect, because he was in sole charge of the affairs of the movement. Prof. Browne says:—

“Bahauallah, who had for a long time been solely in charge of Subh-i-Azal’s affairs and was practically the real manager of the Babi affairs, though in name headship rested with Subh-i-Azal, gave himself over entirely to the idea of claiming this position, (*i.e.*, the promised Manifestation, and in particular Aqa Mirza Aqa Jan Kashi, who afterwards became the writer of his verses and obtained the title of Janab-i-Khadimullah, strongly incited and urged him in this idea, and the signs of this claim became more and more manifest day by day on the pages of the circumstances of Bahauallah but the great difficulty was the presence of the old and leading Babis who were entirely opposed to his ideas, and it was necessary that the utmost consideration should be give to this.⁵²”

PERSIAN GOVERNMENT’S FRESH ANXIETY ON ACCOUNT OF BHAULLAH’S ACTIVITIES

Thus to achieve his object, Bahauallah was able during his sojourn at Baghdad to control the movement entirely, all the authority slowly passing away from Subh-i-Azal who became a figure-head with only some devoted followers. Bahauallah’s activities in this direction were so great that after ten years had passed over the exile of the leaders to Baghdad, the movement once more began to cause anxiety to the Persian Government. The officers of that government noted Bahauallah’s activities and their impression was that these were directed against Persia. Accordingly we find the Persian Government making a representation to the Turkish authorities that the Babi headquarters

52 Browne’s Persian Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf, pp. lt. m

may be removed to some more distant place, so that Bahauallah's activities may not lead to a revolt in Persia again. The original letter, now published by Prof. Browne in his "Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion." with an English translation, is dated 12th Dhul Hajj 1278 A. H. (May 10, 1862), and the document is very interesting as it shows that the persecution of the Babis by the Persian Government was due to political reasons. The letter ignores Mirza Yahya which shows that it had no apprehension from him, but that it feared that Bahauallah's activities may result in some fresh trouble to the Persian Government. I give below a few extracts from this letter:

"But by chance and through the ill-considered policy of former officials, one of them, to wit, Mirza Husain Ali of Nur, obtained release from Anbar prison and permission to reside in the neighbourhood of the Shrines, whose rank is as that of God's throne, whither he departed. From that time until now, as your excellency is aware, he is in Baghdad, and at no time has he ceased from secretly corrupting and misleading foolish persons and ignorant weaklings. Sometime, moreover, he has put his hands to sedition and incitements to murder, as in the case of his most accomplished Reverence Mulla Aqa of Darband whom they grievously wounded with intent to kill, though Providence permitted him to survive for some while, besides sundry other assassinations which took place. Yet had his affair not then reached the pitch which it has now attained; nor had he gathered round himself so many disciples and followers as, it is heard, he has done in these days; nor did he dare to display the ambitions which he harboured, or to surround himself with armed and devoted men when going to and fro...

"For the character and nature of this misguided sect in the dominions of the Persian Government, and their boldness and audacity in the most perilous enterprises have been repeatedly put to the proof, and it is clear that the principles of this new, false and detestable creed are based on two horrible things, first an extraordinary hostility and

enmity towards this Islamic State, and secondly an incredible pitilessness and ruthlessness towards all individuals of this nation, and a readiness to lose their own lives in order to achieve this sinister object.”⁵³

BABI LEADERS REMOVED TO ADRIANOPOLE

It will be seen that throughout this letter the complaint is in particular against the machinations of Bahauallah, and Subh-i-Azal, the nominal head of the movement, is not so much as once mentioned. This shows clearly that Bahauallah was at this time secretly engaged in organizing the Babi movement in his own manner and for his own interests. But before his plans bore fruit and before he could announce his claim, the Turkish Government took action on the representations of Persia and issued orders for the removal of both Mirza Yahya and Mirza Husain Ali to Adrianople. The Persian Government representation is dated 10th May 1862, and Mirza Jawad tells us that Bahauallah left Baghdad on 20th April 1863 accompanied by his three sons and two wives and a number of disciples and after stopping at Constantinople for four months he reached Adrianople on 12th December 1863. His relations with the Subh-i-Azal had by this time become so strained that the two left Baghdad by different routes and at different times. According to Mirza Jawad, it was in 1863 that Bahauallah promulgated the *Lauh-ul-Amr* (i.e. the Tablet of Command) in which he made the announcement that he was the promised one of whom the Bab had spoken in the Bayan, *he whom God shall manifest*. But it seems there is a mistake. The claim does not seem to have been announced till later on, very probably 1867, when there was a rupture which took place in the latter year even according to Mirza Jawad. Prof. Browne comes to the same conclusion.

“The date when Bahauallah put forward his claim to be ‘he whom God shall manifest’ is given in some Babi writings as A. H. 1280 (A. D. 1863-5). Nabil, in his versified chronology, says that Bahauallah was fifty years old at the

55 Browne's Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 279-287

time of his manifestation, which as he was born at the beginning of A. H. 1233 (A.D. 1817) would give A. H. 1253 (A. D. 1866-7) as the date. This latter date seems more probable, since the manifestation is generally considered to have taken place at Adrianople (which partly for this reason, partly on account of equivalence in the numerical values of the two words *Edirne* and *Sirr*, is called by the Bahais *Arđz-i Sirr*, (the Land of the Mystery), where Bahauallah and Subh-i-Azal, with their families and principal disciples, were living in exile from December 1864 until August 1868.”⁵⁴

RELATIONS OF SUBH-I-AZAL AND BHAULLAH

We have seen how at Baghdad, first Mirza Asadullah and afterwards a number of other persons laid claim to be the manifestation promised in the Bayan. All considerations lead us to the conclusion that it was at that time that Bahauallah was infected with the same idea, but he was gifted with a political brain and he sought to have the control of the movement transferred to his hands before making the announcement. He was yet executing his plans when the Persian Government, scenting danger of a fresh revolution of the Babis, wrote to the Turkish Government, and Bahauallah had to leave for Adrianople. He wanted to get rid of the Subh-i-Azal, and so on receiving orders of deportation to Adrianople, he told Subh-i-Azal to proceed to Persia, which if he had done, he would surely have been cast into prison. Mirza Jawad says:

“When the journey to Constantinople was decided on, His Holiness our master ordered him to take with him the writings of His Holiness the Harbinger (*i. e.* the Bab), and go to Persia to have them copied and published.”⁵⁵

54 Browne's *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*, 32 33.

55 *Material for the Study of Babi Religion*, p. 21.

BAHAULLAH OPENLY CLAIMS TO BE “HE WHOM GOD SHALL MANIFEST”

Five years before Bahauallah obeyed the orders of Subh-i-Azal and returned to Baghdad from his voluntary exile; he could now afford to give orders to Subh-i-Azal. Such was the change brought about in the relative position of the two brothers in the Babi movement by Bahauallah's intrigues, Bahauallah would surely have remained the sole dictator. As it was, however, he could not get rid of him, and at last at Adrianople he found the opportunity to fulfill the desire which he had so long secretly cherished in his heart. Evidence on this point is so conclusive that Prof. Browne who reads the Babi history in the spirit of an admirer comes to the same conclusion. I have already quoted from his Persian introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf. Here is one more passage :

“It was during this sojourn of the Babis at Adrianople that Bahauallah took the veil off the face of the matter, and brought to manifestation his hidden desire which we had no doubt long entertained, after having gathered together the necessary means and prepared the way for it, and openly claimed to be *man yuzhiruhullah*, (he whom God shall manifest), and sent messengers and letters to all sides and invited the Babis generally to accept his claim, many of whom after a good deal of consternation and perplexity accepted his claim and deserted Subh-i-Azal.”⁵⁶

OPEN RUPTURE BETWEEN SUBH-I-AZAL AND BHAUALLAH.

Subh-i-Azal and his devoted companions who knew from the first the trend of Bahauallah's thoughts rejected his claim, and open rupture took place between the two. The movement which had hitherto retained more or less the appearance of the persecuted, now began to show its true colours. That it had hatched plots and committed murders, killing men for not accepting its doctrines, and resorted to rebellion against constituted authority to bring about revolution, is clear from its history as already

56 Browne's Persian Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf, pp. ma, mb.

related. But as it was pitched against the state forces which, however weak, were capable of inflicting excessive punishment on it, an outsider not taking the trouble to go beneath the surface, gave it credit for heroic sufferings at the hands of its apparent persecutors, but as soon as peaceful conditions were restored, and differences began to surface within the movement, the mask was taken off. We have seen how Mirza Asadullah, who had gained some following by his claim to be *'he whom God shall manifest,'* was secretly drowned in the river, a crime which must be laid at the door of both Subh-i-Azal and Bahauallah, because they were both one at the time. And now the two brothers had to settle account with each other.

ALLEGED ATTEMPT TO MURDER EACH OTHER

Before the open rupture came, Mirza Yahya is said to have made an attempt to poison Bahauallah. He invited him to tea and offered him a cup in which there was poison, but Bahauallah did not drink the whole cup. One of the wives of Subh-i-Azal was offered, it is said, of what remained in the cup, by Bahauallah and it is alleged that she showed symptoms of poisoning though she did not die. The health of Bahauallah, we are further told, became so disordered after this incident that his Babi physician feared for his life, and had the sickness at last transferred to himself by means of a prayer. Thus the physician died and the patient was saved.⁵⁷ The story is not only given by Mirza Jawad but Bahauallah himself has given this version.⁵⁸ The Hasht Bahisht's version, however, is that Bahauallah had prepared poisoned food for Azal, and as it was flavoured with onions, Azal refused to partake of it because he disliked onions, and Baha had perforce to eat some morsels, and thus fell sick, falsely accusing Azal of having poisoned him.⁵⁹ Strangely enough, another story of an alleged attempt on the life of each is related by the other. A certain barber is said to have been approached by Subh-i-Azal to

57 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion. pp. 22, 23.

58 The Episode of the Bab, p. 359

59 *Ibid.*

cut the throat of Bahauallah with his razor when he went to shave him, but he disclosed the secret to Bahauallah's party.⁶⁰ The Hasht Bahisht, however, says that it was Bahauallah who arranged that Muhammad Ali the barber, should cut Azal's throat while shaving him, and Azal having divined his design refused to be shaved by him.⁶¹

BAHAULLAH'S FOLLOWERS MURDER FOUR AZALIS

While in justice to Subh-i-Azal, it must be remarked that Bahai allegations are not supported by sufficiently strong testimony, the Azali allegations against Bahauallah find a strong support in the assassination of Azali leaders by Bahauallah's followers a little later, which is clearly proved and in some cases even admitted. While yet at Adrianople Mirza Nasrullah, a follower of Subh-i-Azal, was poisoned to death by the Bahais. Three more Azalis were killed at Akka, all in one night, by the Bahais. These were Syed Muhammad of Isfahan, a learned man and an old Babi, Aqa Jan and Mirza Radza Quli. Besides these, the leading Azalis in different places were done to death. Professor Browne says:

AZALI LEADERS MURDERED ONE AFTER ANOTHER BY BAHAIS

Besides these four Azalis, many other old and learned Babis who remained loyal to Subh-i-Azal, some of them being personal companions of the Bab, so much so, that some of them were even among the *letters of Hayy*, were removed one after another. Among these Aqa Syed Ali Arab, one of the *letters of Hayy*, was killed at Tabriz; Mulla Rajab Ali of the *letters of Hayy*, was killed in Karbala; Aqa Muhammad Ali Isfahani, his brother, was killed in Baghdad; Haji Mirza Ahmad Kashani, brother of Haji Mirza Jani of Kashan, author of *Nuqtatul Qaf*, was also killed in Baghdad; Haji Mirza Muhammad Ridza, Haji Ibrahim, Haji Jafar merchant, Husain Ali, Aqa Abul Qasim

60 Materials for the study of the Babi Religion, p. 23

61 The Episode of the Bab, p. 359

Kashani, Mirza Buzurg Kirmanshai and others were killed in different places⁶².

TRUE NATURE OF THE MOVEMENT REVEALED

Bahau'llah may not have incited these murders in the eye of law but morally he must be held responsible for all this innocent blood, shed. The only fault of these men was that, being men of position – they had remained faithful to Subh-i-Azal, and their murder one after another, in some cases before the very eyes of Bahau'llah, shows, that the followers of Bahau'llah more resembled a body of anarchists, not caring for shedding innocent blood in the execution of their object, than a religious community burning with the desire to sow love and concord. Had there been a pitched battle in which people were killed the case would have been different. But in this instance murder after murder was committed secretly, for no other reason than certain religious differences. And this in a country where law and order was prevailing and where courts of justice were ready to take action against any excess one individual committed against another. It is true that the Azalis did not shed the blood of the Bahais, but this was because they were in the minority. Had they been in the majority, there is little doubt that they would have done what the Bahais did thereby reflecting the true nature of the spirit in which the movement had developed.

BAHAULLAH DEPORTED TO AKKA, AND AZAL TO CYPRUS

The Turkish Government showed a true knowledge of this spirit when on the first signs of disturbance appearing between the two sections of the Babi community, it issued orders for their removal to two different places; Bahau'llah with his followers were deported to Akka, and Subh-i-Azal to Famagusta in Cyprus. Had both sections been allowed to live together at Adrianople, they would have cut the throats of each other. Subh-i-Azal accused Bahau'llah of having stopped even the share of

62 Browne's Persian Intr. to Nuqtatul, Qaf. p. mj.

his allowance, as fixed by the Turkish Government, so that he was compelled to complain to the Government: He has not given us the allowance apportioned to us by the Government; yea he withholds from us bread and water.⁶³ The Bahais say the complaint was false, but in view of the fact that the Bahais had not the least scruples in shedding innocent blood of Azalis, the Azali allegation does not appear to be baseless. In short, the rift between the two parties became permanent, and henceforth Subh-i-Azal, who was appointed by the Bab to be his successor, represented only a minor section of the Babis, called Azalis, while the majority consisting of the followers of Bahauallah discarded the name of Babi and called themselves Bahais.

END OF SUBH-I-AZAL.

The history of Subh-i-Azal after this may be disposed of in a few words. He led the rest of his uneventful life in Famagusta apparently under straitened circumstances, for he had not many followers to support him, and could barely live on an allowance of 1193 *pias* monthly which he received from the Turkish Government, perhaps owing to a large family. The movement thus having no financial backing died almost a natural death. Mirza Yahya lived to a good old age and died on the 29th of April 1912. At his death, none of the Babis being there, the funeral service was conducted by the Muslim Imam of the Famagusta mosque. He nominated as his successor the son of Aqa Mirza Muhammad Hadi of Daulatabad. His eldest surviving son is said to be a 'a poor man who is obliged to earn his living as a railway porter in Famagusta'. Another is said to be demented; a third Ridzwan Ali by name has become a Christian and has adopted the name of Constantine the Persian.⁶⁴ Thus ended the second phase of the Babi movement, the movement as continued under the first successor of the Bab, a successor chosen by the founder himself, and entrusted with the great and important task of completing the Babi scripture Bayan, a suc-

63 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.24.

64 *Ibid.*, p.314.

cessor who, as the author of the *Hasht Bahisht* tells us, was called *Nuqta-i-Thani* or the Second Point, the Bab himself being the First Point, *Wahid* or the *One* and who is spoken of in more than twenty thousand verses of the *Bayan*.⁶⁵

65 The Episode of the Bab, pp. 353, 354.

CHAPTER III

Mirza Husain Ali, Bahauallah

WHY BHAULLAH WAS NOT CHOSEN AS HIS SUCCESSOR BY THE BAB

Mirza Husain Ali, son of Mirza Buzurg of Nur was born on 2nd Muharram A.H. 1233 (12th Nov. 1817) in the province of Mazandran. He was one of the early followers of Bab and was present at the Badasht conference which so gravely scandalized the Babi movement. He was then thirty-two years of age, but was not yet counted among the leaders. When the Bab was put to death at Tabriz on July 8, 1850, and Mirza Yahya, his younger brother, was raised to the leadership of the movement in accordance with the will of the Bab, Mirza Husain Ali, who had assumed the title of Bahauallah, submitted to the new arrangement. In fact, it is said that he had himself written letters to the Bab recommending Mirza Yahya, Subh-i-Azal. Mirza Jawad says that on account of the great celebrity which Bahauallah enjoyed, he was the person whom people considered fit for leadership, but some of the leaders of the Babi community made representations to him, saying that if he assumed the headship, his life would be in great peril owing to the hatred and malevolence of the Mullas and the officials, and Mirza Yahya was chosen, so that the life of Bahauallah may be safe and another person should be the target of the enemy's attacks. Here is his statement as translated by Prof. Browne:

Now as for the circumstances of Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal), who has been mentioned before, the facts are that His Holiness our Master, during the days of his sojourn in

Persia, enjoyed great celebrity and supreme importance in this matter with the ministers of State and notables of the people, the eyes of all being directed towards him. Then there came before him one of the leaders of this community...and represented to him that the hatred and malevolence of the doctors and lawyers of Persia exceeded all that could be imagined, while the hatred of the Prime Minister Mirza Taqi Khan also was fierce and his influence great, and the Government likewise despotic in its commands. In these circumstances His Holiness our Master Bahauallah was in great peril, and consequently it was necessary that the regards of these persons should be directed towards some other person.

And since, for various considerations, they did not deem it expedient to appoint a stranger, Mirza Yahya (Subh-i-Azal) was chosen to this end.⁶⁶

The Traveller's Narrative (whose unknown author is no other than Abbas Effendi) gives the same account. Here we are told that this scheme was hatched jointly by Bahauallah and Abdul Karim, the Bab's trusted intimate: He, together with Mulla Abdul Karim, considered it as expedient that in face of the agitation amongst the doctors, the aggressiveness of the great part of the people of Persia and the irresistible power of the Amir Nizam, whereby both the Bab and Bahauallah were in great danger and liable to incur severe punishment, some measure should be adopted to direct the thoughts of men towards some absent person...And since they did not consider an outsider as suitable, they cast the lot of this augury to the name of Bahauallah's brother Mirza Yahya...And since secret correspondences were in process, the Bab highly approved of this scheme.⁶⁷

CHOICE OF AZAL AS THE HEAD A FARCE.

From this it would appear that the choice of Subh-i-Azal by the Bab was simply a farce. The whole matter was arranged

66 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 19, 20.

67 The Episode of the Bab, pp. 62, 63.

secretly by Bahauallah and his supporters, and the Bab himself was simply an instrument in carrying out Bahauallah's will. The suggestion casts serious doubt as to the Bab's claim to revelation, for, as we have already seen, he wrote a will in favor of Subh-i-Azal which is called a writing from God the Guardian and Self-subsisting. Let the reader ponder over the words of this will: "This is a writing from God, the Guardian, the Self-subsisting." Not the least doubt is left that the Bab calls a Divine revelation what had been then arranged secretly and suggested by Bahauallah and his friends. And to compound the deception Mirza Yahya is called God, the Guardian, the Self-subsisting, his name is said to be the equivalent of the name of God, he is called the Path, the mighty Truth, while according to both Babi historians he was nothing more than a stop gap at the utmost. Equally damaging is the fact that Bahauallah placed his own brother at the forefront of the movement, not as an act of self-sacrifice which should have been expected from a religious leader of his position, but as a treacherous measure, to safeguard his own life by putting the halter round the neck of his brother. We are told in plain words by both the Babi historians that the agitation of the masses against the Babi movement was so great, the Mullas were so bent upon its extermination and the highest officials of the State bore such enmity to it that it was feared that the successor to the Bab would share the fate of the Bab, and therefore Bahauallah was advised not to assume the leadership.

Was it not a dastardly act of treachery by Bahauallah towards his own brother? This incident speaks volumes for the character of Bahauallah. It would have been quite different if Mirza Yahya had offered himself to save his brother's life, or even if he had been taken into confidence, but he was deceived as being offered a high position while he was actually being placed in a perilous one.

BAHAULLAH AT ACRE.

We have already noticed Bahauallah's plans to usurp Subh-i-Azal's authority and the final separation ending in disturbances which necessitated the deportation of Subh-i-Azal to Cyprus and

of Bahauallah to Akka (Acre). Bahauallah left Adrianople for Akka on the 5th of August 1868, reaching there on 30th August. He was first kept in the military barracks under strict watch. The food allowed him seems to have been the ordinary jail food, later a food allowance was substituted. A guard was kept at the door, and for some time no Babi could leave the barracks without the guard's permission. Bahauallah considered his removal to Akka as an act of oppression on the part of the Turkish Government and is said to have communicated to the officer in charge of the party that on account of this oppression, Adrianople and the surrounding territory would shortly pass out of the hands of the Turks, ordering him, at the same time, to conceal what was said until the time for fulfillment should come⁶⁸. The Russo-Turkish war is said to have fulfilled this prophecy, but though the Turks lost much of their territory as a result of that war and subsequent wars, Adrianople remains to this day in their hands.

BABIS PERSECUTED AND PUT TO DEATH

When news of the new *manifestation*, of Bahauallah's claim, reached Persia, the Government naturally feared the repetition of the revolutions associated with the name of Mirza Ali Muhammad Bab, the first claimant. A number of Babis gathered together at Tabriz intending to go to Adrianople. The Persian Government had such fear of these people that it ordered their arrest. The authorities sent for instructions from the capital, and received orders to put to death three of them and release the rest. Accordingly Mirza Mustafa, Shaikh Ahmad and Mirza Ali Naqi were put to death on 8th January 1867. It is difficult to say what the particular charge against them was, but it is clear that they were not put to death simply on religious grounds, for in that case only three of them would not have been chosen for this punishment. There were other important men among them, Mirza Jawad being one of them, but all of them were released. Of the two other men who were put to death at Zanzan in the same year, Aqa Najaf Ali was the man who had remained in constant attendance on Bahauallah since the days

68 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.30.

of Baghdad. Having now come over to Persia he was arrested but was released while the writings in his possession were confiscated. Later he was arrested and put to death. Again at Baghdad, in 1868, the Babis gathered together for some rejoicing on the anniversaries of Bab and Bahauallah on the 1st and 2nd of Muharram which are days of mourning for the Shias. The latter therefore resented this and began to molest the Babis. On account of constant disturbances, in which the Babis being in the minority were naturally the sufferers, the Government had to banish the Babis to Mosul for their safety. It was perhaps to remedy these and other similar sufferings of the Babis, or to seek relief from the hard life at Akka by gaining access to Persian territory, that Bahauallah sent in, one Mirza Badi in 1869 to Nasiruddin Shah with a letter. But the Shah had so great a fear of the Babis after the attempt on his life that he ordered the arrest of the messenger who was ultimately put to death.

ASSASSINATION OF SYED MUHAMMAD AND TWO OTHER AZALIS BY BAHAIS

Bahauallah's life at Akka was rather uneventful except for the circumstance that the Babis who remained faithful to Subh-i-Azal were killed by his followers. The Turkish Government had ordered the banishment of four Bahais to Cyprus and of four Azalis to Akka, thinking perhaps that these men would act as a check on the intrigues of either party. Syed Muhammad, an old Babi of great learning and Aqa Jan, another Azali, were, under these orders, banished to Akka. They were first detained in the military barracks but afterwards obtained permission to live in the city. Here, it is alleged, Syed Muhammad began to make mischief and to excite the native population of Akka against Bahauallah. Mirza Jawad says:

Among these actions was that they concocted a treatise of certain holy verses culled from many different tracts and tablets, inserting therein phrases calculated to excite hatred between different nations and of this they made numerous copies, which they distributed amongst high and low.⁶⁹

69 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 52.

On account of this the Bahais planned the death of Syed Muhammad and his companion. A certain follower of Bahauallah having brought the matter to the notice of the master, was simply told: Go hence and do not perpetrate that wherefrom mischief will result. Mirza Jawad himself, being one of the conspirators, asked the master's permission for the horrible deed, but was forbidden to take the contemplated action. This half-hearted prohibition had however no effect upon the followers who assassinated Syed Muhammad and his two companions on the 22nd January 1872.

ASSASSINATION JUSTIFIED

Mirza Jawad justifies these cold-blooded murders on the ground that as in the East religious passions are easily excited, therefore persons guilty of exciting these passions could have been murdered in the interest of peace.⁷⁰

NATURE OF THE BABI MOVEMENT AS REVEALED BY ITS ASSASSINATIONS

This act of murder on the part of Bahais was not however a solitary one. One Azali had already been poisoned at Adrianople. But subsequent to this, all influential followers of Subh-i-Azal were one after another murdered throughout Persia. I have already mentioned the names of some of them as given by Prof. Browne. By these acts of murder, the Babi movement had in its third phase unmasked itself entirely and had shown that it followed the principles of the Ismailia sect in getting rid of any one who was considered to be an obstacle in the way of the movement. The secret murders of the Azalis by the Bahais, and the earlier insurrections and the plot on the Shah's life, do not leave the least doubt that, whatever its good intentions, the Babi movement resembled more an anarchist movement than a religious reform movement. This aspect of the movement moreover, shows clearly that the Persian Government was quite justified in its distrust of the Babi movement, and therefore, though it might

70 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 52.

have exceeded the limits sometimes, it was not quite wrong in suppressing with a strong hand the insurrectionary risings of the Babis. Had it shown the least lassitude in dealing with it, the result would have been that the Babis would have wrought the destruction of the Persian kingdom in the same manner as the Ismailis wrought the destruction of the Muslim empire at an earlier date. They could not do what the Ismailis did simply because they were not allowed to acquire sufficient strength.

THE END OF BAHAUDDAH

For some time Bahauddah lived within the town of Akka, but as his condition grew more affluent, he removed first to one place and then to another outside Akka towards the end of 1877. The latter place was situated at about half an hour's distance from Akka, and while he lived here with his second wife and children, his followers and Abbas Effendi, the eldest son, lived in Akka; and none could visit him in the place without obtaining his permission first. But not withstanding a change for the better in external conditions, a spirit of despondency pervaded his life, and the same was reflected in his alwah (Tablets) written in those days. As Mirza Jawad tells us:

In short, notwithstanding these circumstances and materials of glory, ease and joy, we used to discover signs of sadness in His Holiness our Master Bahauddah, to an extent which neither writing nor utterance can express, and which hath never been witnessed at any time, as appears from sundry Holy Tablets.

And further:-

He also said repeatedly, addressing some of the companions: I desire a dark and narrow dwelling that I may lament and weep over my wrongs!⁷¹

Who can say what the reason of this despondency and sadness was? Did his conscience bite him for the murder of innocent Azalis which his followers so unscrupulously perpetrated? Was it that a sense of failure preyed upon his mind? He had made a start

71 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 60, 61.

with big claims but compared with these claims, he had achieved nothing. The end drew near and the last illness came on the 10th May 1892, and nineteen days afterwards (the Babi's sacred number) he breathed his last on 28th May 1892.

BAHAULLAH'S CHILDREN

Bahauallah reached a sufficiently old age. He was 76 at the time of his death. He had two wives. By his first wife, he had several children, all of whom died young with the exception of Abbas Effendi, who assumed the headship of the movement after his father's death, and his sister. By his second wife he had also several children of whom Muhammad Ali became a rival claimant to Abbas Effendi. He wrote many books, the most important of these being the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas*, which contains the new law revealed to Bahauallah and which abrogated the *Bayan*.

POSITION OF BHAULLAH IN THE BABI MOVEMENT

Bahauallah's position in the Babi movement has been very aptly compared to that of Paul in Christianity, and certainly his differences with Subh-i-Azal are more or less a repetition of the differences of Paul with Peter. Peter and Azal both represent the conservative spirit of the two movements, while Paul and Bahauallah stood forth for the progressive spirit. The message of Christianity was originally meant for the Jews but that nation was obdurate against it. Paul liberalized the movement, removing the fetters which bound it down to the Jewish nation. He saw that the message of Christ which was rejected by the Jews could be made to suit the idolatrous gentiles, and he had the boldness to step in and work a slow and gradual change in the movement. The apostles of Jesus were averse to this innovation but Paul did not care for anyone. He introduced a new meaning into the message of Christ, took up the pagan institutions and gave them Christian names, so that the religion which had failed to appeal to the Jews strongly appealed to the pagans of the Roman Empire. The same was the case with Babism though the circumstances were slightly different. In this case, Mirza Ali

Muhammad came with a special message for the Shia Muslims, claiming to be the hidden Imam Mahdi, *al Qaim*, whom they had long waited for. His preaching did not appeal to the Muslims; he tried to wield the Mahdi's sword but miserably failed losing his own life. His successor tried to bring about the triumph of Babism by peaceful preaching but the result was a stalemate. Bahauzzah saw with a keen eye that the Bab's message as the mahdi was an absolute failure, and the movement was destined to die — as it actually did under Azal's leadership afterwards — if a new impetus was not given to it. This was the real question before Bahauzzah. He was a zealous preacher of Babism, but he saw that the Bab's claim as Mahdi had entirely failed and there was no chance of success in pressing it any more. The zeal of the older days was almost gone, and only a new claim could rouse new interest. This was the reason which led him at the old age of fifty to advance the claim that he was the one of whose advent the Bab had given the promise. The Mahdi had come and gone without accomplishing any object, and so the *new manifestation* entirely abrogated the Bab's law. From the Mahdi's message to the Muslims, it became in the hands of Bahauzzah, as Christianity in the hands of Paul, a message to the world at large. But though Bahauzzah had enlarged the message, and made it sufficiently plastic to suit the needs of any religious community, yet he was not destined to see his object accomplished, and this was the reason that his later years were so full of sorrow and sadness. He had given a new meaning to the Babi movement, but he had not the means to carry that message to other peoples. The great majority of the old Babis, by fair means or foul, had been brought over to his side, but practically the movement remained limited to Persia and to the Shia Muslims, and Bahauzzah died without seeing the fulfillment of his dreams of a world-wide movement.

CHAPTER IV

After Bahauallah

ABBAS EFFENDI SUCCEEDS BHAULLAH.

After Bahauallah, the headship of the Bahai movement was not so much a religious question as a family dispute. Bahauallah had two wives. His eldest surviving son by his first wife was Abbas Effendi, and Muhammad Ali was his eldest son by his second wife. On the former Bahauallah conferred the title of Ghusn-i-Azam, or the most mighty Branch, and on the latter that of Ghusn-I-Akbar or the most great Branch. On the ninth day after his death, Abbas Effendi chose nine persons from among the Bahais, and disclosed to them the testament of Bahauallah, concealing one portion of it, as Mirza Jawad tells us, who was one of the nine.⁷² The same was read over again in a larger assembly but the portion concealed was still not disclosed.

A DISSENSION.

On the strength of this will, Abbas Effendi assumed the headship of the movement, but Muhammad Ali and many other prominent followers of Bahauallah repudiated his claims. Among the latter were such important leaders as Mirza Jawad, Ibrahim Khairulla, the famous Bahai missionary to America, and Janabi-Khadimullah. Abbas Effendi, however, soon advanced higher claims which, according to Mirza Jawad, belong exclusively to Divine Theophanies and even proclaimed in public in America that he was the Messiah and the Son of God, and in India that he was the promised Bahram.⁷³ But a claim to being a manifesta-

72 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 75.

73 *Ibid.*, p.77. By the promised Bahram is meant the expected savior of the Zoroastrians.

tion of the Divine Being could not, according to Bahallah's explicit writing, be made by anyone before a thousand years elapsed after him: Whosoever layeth claim to a Dispensation before the completion of a full thousand years is a liar and prevaricator...And whosoever construes this verse or interprets it otherwise than as it hath been obviously revealed is deprived of the spirit of God, and of His mercy which encompasseth all the worlds.⁷⁴ Thus a second great schism in the Babi movement appeared after the death of Bahallah.

GROWING HATRED BETWEEN THE TWO SECTIONS.

The sectarian difference between the two parties however soon developed into a feeling of severe hatred and great animosity. The followers of Abbas Effendi called the followers of Muhammad Ali Naqidzin, or covenant breakers, while the latter call the former Mushrikin on account of their undue reverence for Abbas Effendi. Thus Mirza Jawad says:

But Abbas Effendi hath nullified this most great gift and most high and glorious aim, since, he for his private ends and personal aims, hath instituted hatred and discord amongst the people of Baha...and whosoever does not agree with him in his ideas and statements, and does not speak evil concerning his brother Muhammad Ali Effendi "the most great Branch and the Holy Family is accounted a 'violator' (naqidz) of the covenant and a 'vacillator' (mutazalzil), nay, an infidel, wherefore they avoid him and hold it unlawful to speak, or converse, or have any dealings with him."⁷⁵

Matters did not end with the abuse and hatred of each for the other. Abbas Effendi even deprived Muhammad Ali and the rest of the family of Bahallah of their allowances:

The partisans of Abbas Effendi held a meeting in his audience chamber at his suggestion, took counsel with one another, and agreed that what was given of the necessaries of life to the Holy

74 Kitab ul Aqdas.

75 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 80, 81.

Family and to his brothers was on no account permissible; wherefore Abbas Effendi cut it off completely, so that he compelled them to borrow for household expenses, because they were deprived of means. This was a wrongful act on his part, because what (revenue) reached him from different countries was not his private property, but belonged to the entire Holy Family.⁷⁶

The relations of the two parties became so strained that when Dziaullah, a younger brother of Muhammad Ali, died in 1898, Abbas Effendi and his followers absented themselves from the funeral, and Abbas is accused by Mirza Jawad of having made an attempt to abduct his widow, who was only saved by the timely help rendered by Mirza Jawad and Janab-i-Khadimullah and others of the party. Mirza Aqa Jan of Kashan, or Janab-i-Khadimullah, one of the most honored companions of Bahauallah, gave utterance to a protest against Abbas Effendi in 1897, declaring his deeds and words to be contrary to God's commands; and when the matter was brought to the knowledge of Abbas, he at once appeared on the scene, seized him by the hand and expelled him from the house bare-headed and bare-footed while his followers beat him on the head and face. Abbas himself struck him with his hand a painful blow. From the Holy Place, they took him by command of Abbas Effendi and imprisoned him in a stable, after they had taken from him such writings and letters as he had on him. After that they denounced him as reprobate, apostate, hypocrite and devil, notwithstanding the recommendations of His Holiness our Great Master concerning him and His command to them in the book of the (last) Testament, and in other Tablets also, to honor the servant.⁷⁷ When Dr. Khairullah, the famous Babi missionary to America, renounced the cause of Abbas Effendi in favor of the younger brother, and Abbas Effendi sent Mirza Hasan Khurasani to win him back, the latter threatened him with death if he did not acknowledge Abbas. A letter of a partisan of Muhammad Ali to Khairullah further shows that the followers of Abbas were

76 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 85.

77 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 87, 88.

resolved to accomplish their purpose and spread abroad their vicious principle even by the shedding of blood and the destruction of lives by hidden methods and secret intrigues. Although blood-shed on a vast scale as in the Bahai-Azali dissensions was not resorted to, instances are not wanting in which blood was actually shed, such as in the case of Mirza Yahya of Jedda, one of the partisans of Muhammad Ali who was put to death by the followers of Abbas Effendi.⁷⁸

REPETITION OF THE HISTORY OF AZALI-BAHAI DIFFERENCES.

That Abbas Effendi had higher pretensions than mere headship of the Bahai community is abundantly clear from all accounts of him. This, in fact, is the reason why the majority of Bahais sided with him. It was just a repetition of what happened in the differences between Subh-i-Azal and Bahauallah. Subh-i-Azal remained true to the teachings of the Bab and upheld the pure doctrines of the Babi movement, while Bahauallah was bold enough to declare the teachings of the Bab to be abrogated and advanced higher claims; yet it was Bahauallah whom the Babis generally followed while Subh-i-Azal who had, for fourteen years, enjoyed the honor of being the accredited head of the movement was deserted almost en masse. It was the love of the novel and the high-sounding which led the Babis on, and hence they flocked under the banner of Bahauallah in preference to Subh-i-Azal. Abbas Effendi was fully aware of the mystery and attraction of a new claim, of another manifestation. It proved successful, notwithstanding the fact that Bahauallah had declared in plain words that any claimant before a thousand years had elapsed was a liar. Just as all the teachings of the Bab proved useless before the attraction of Bahauallah's claim, in a similar manner Bahauallah's utterances availed nothing before Abbas' assumption of Divinity.

Mirza Jawad may lament "Abbas Effendi's claim to Divinity, his practical assumption of the place of Bahauallah by declaring

himself to be the *Manifestation of Service* which is the greatest of the Divine Manifestations, and peculiar to the Father, the Lord of Hosts (Jehovah) alone,⁷⁹ but no reason would avail against the sentiment which is aroused by the perceived halo of divinity encircling a human head. This would apply particularly in a country like Persia where exaggerated views of Imamate already existed and where exaggerated sufic tendencies made any and every mystic utterance a more powerful instrument of conviction rather than a cool and reasoned statement. This is, in fact, the reason why Babism has appealed either to Shiaism which makes the Imam more or less a Divine person, or to Christianity which acknowledges a man-God. In this lies the secret of the success of Bahaim in Persia and America, while Sunni Turkey, in which the headquarters of the movement have been since its birth, has remained quite unaffected by it.

SPREAD OF THE MOVEMENT TO AMERICA.

It was however by chance that the Babi movement gained access to and became popular in America, which is the most remarkable phase of the Babi Movement after Bahauallah. In fact, the movement, notwithstanding the widening of the scope by Bahauallah would still have been a sectarian movement, were it not for the ground it has gained in America. The man through whom the movement attained this great achievement was a late convert to the new faith. Ibrahim George Khairullah was a Syrian born in 1849 who obtained higher education at Beirut. In 1872 he left Syria for Egypt where he made the acquaintance of Haji Abdul Karim of Tehran, and was through him converted to Babism in 1890. In 1892 he went first to Russia and then to New York on a business trip and not as a missionary, but he soon found that the message of Babauallah found ready listeners among Christian Americans. In 1894 he adopted Chicago as his dwelling place and as the center of his missionary activities. Here he had some success in making converts, and he sent information of this to his friend Haji Abdul Karim and through him

79 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.111.

to Abbas Effendi. In 1897 the mission was extended to New York where regular classes were opened for instruction in the new faith. A number of converts were made in many of the important towns, and by the year 1898 when Khairullah paid a visit to Akka with some American converts, the movement had gained considerable ground in America.

METHODS OF PREACHING ADOPTED BY DR. KHAIRULLAH.

As to the methods of preaching adopted by Khairullah we have fortunately a most disinterested source in the letters of Miss A.H., an American correspondent of Dr. Browne, published in the "Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion". In her first letter Miss A.H. says:

"The lecturer, a Dr. Khairullah, has made the most astounding statement regarding Baha, but the proofs brought forward are sadly inferior to the claims set forth, so it seems to me. Most of them are verses taken from the prophetic books of the Bible. According to this Doctor, Baha was God himself. He teaches that God did not manifest through the personality of Baha, as in the case of Jesus, but that he really was God and that He will not come again during this cycle. We are all called upon to believe this, or else for ever lose our chance of salvation. Believing it makes us the adopted children of God, and we are given the power of creation... Those who die without hearing of Baha are reincarnated and have another chance; those who have already heard do not. Mirza Yahya is scarcely spoken of, but when he is mentioned he is called Satan....there is not the slightest reference, throughout the entire course, to the development of character, and those who claim an inner guidance are particularly censured and ridiculed... At the last lecture the people are told, if they believe in the Manifestation, to write a letter to Abbas Effendi who is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ, stating their belief and begging to have their names recorded in the 'Book of the Favorites'. They are informed that Abraham, Jacob,

Moses, Joshua and Daniel are reincarnated and are at Acre, the Holy Place. The doctor further says that he has been sent by the Father and Jesus Christ to deliver the message concerning the '*Manifestation*' to the people of this country. He claims there are fifty-five million believers at the present time. A great mystery is made of the whole thing and the ideas are given out in minute portions, as we, it seems, are accounted slow of understanding in this country. The 'message' or 'pith' as it is called is not given until the eleventh lesson. The effect upon the people is very strange. I never knew any one idea to create so many different and curious impressions.

In another letter she says:-

"There is little chance for discussion at any lecture, as the doctor has an extremely funny way of telling people who oppose his views in the class that they are 'excused'... At the first lecture the people are requested not to talk over what they are told with outsiders. An air of mystery is over the whole affair and infinitesimal things are most erroneously magnified, and the way in which (some) matters are minimized in order to maximize others is truly remarkable; I mean interpretations of the English Bible... Public talks on reincarnation, evolution, and Bible interpretation are given, but the '*Manifestation*' is not taught outside of the classes or in some private way. A great deal is made of visions; they are seeing Acre, Abbas Effendi, the old man at Acre, that, we were told, is Joshua reincarnated, and others of the household⁸⁰.

FORM OF INITIATION INTO THE MOVEMENT.

The letter-form which the new convert had to sign is given in one of the letters as follows:

In God's name, the Greatest Branch, I humbly confess the oneness and singleness of the Almighty God, my Creator, and I believe in His appearance in the human form;

80 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.124.

I believe in His establishing His holy household; in His departure, and that He has delivered His kingdom to Thee, O Greatest Branch, His dearest son and mystery. I beg that I may be accepted in this glorious kingdom and that my name may be registered in the 'Book of Believers'. I also beg the blessings of worlds to come and of the present one for myself and for those who are near and dear to me (the individual may ask for anything he likes); for the spiritual gifts which Thou seest I am best fitted for — for any gift or power for which Thou seest me to be best fitted⁸¹.

I may add a few quotations from the summary of the lessons of Khairullah as given by the same correspondent. Thus in the fourth lesson:

We communicate with God through talking with Him. Use of the right Name is the pass-word. When you become believers, the 'Greatest Name' will be given you to be used in time of need. Prayers are pass-words and we have used prayers of our own making; have used the wrong pass-word; should not compose them. If we do not use the right pass-word, God will hear but He will not answer...If you use these prayers earnestly you will have dreams or visions which will come to pass. I promise you that you will have revelations if you use them...

Many have been sent by God, Noah, Moses and others; but the teachings were all corrupted. When they become so, God sends another...The Muhammadan is the most corrupt of all.

A few days...after the death of Muhammad his teaching was corrupted⁸².

WILD STATEMENTS ABOUT BAHAUULLAH

The following account of Bahauallah's life as given in the 11th lesson is very interesting from the historical point of view:—

In 1852-1853 the Incarnation of God (Baha) appeared.

81 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.121.

82 *Ibid.*, p.131.

He left Tehran as an exile in 1852. He was of family of Kings. Went to Baghdad to River Chebar with 7,000 prophets (Ezkiel xliii, 3). Here he manifested himself for five days as the Lord of Hosts, having been previously shaved by a a barber (Isaiah vii, 20), after which he veiled himself. Jesus Christ (Abbas Effendi) as a boy was with him. In 1863 the Sultan invited the '*Manifestation*' to visit Constantinople. At this time there were thirty thousand believers. He appeared before the Sultan, who asked for proof of his divinity. Baha asked the Sultan if he believed in Muhammad. The Sultan said that he did, and Baha asked for a sign. The Sultan replied that the Quran was a proof. Baha then wrote a book larger than the Quran in six hours as a sign of his own divinity.⁸³

That a man of Dr. Khairullah's learning and position in the Babi movement should be able to make wild statements like the above in a lecture and that the educated Americans of the twentieth century should adopt a new religion on the basis of such fiction passes all understanding. It only shows the unscrupulousness of the preacher and the credulousness of the congregation. That Bahauallah wrote a book larger than the Quran in six hours in the presence of the Sultan of Turkey as a sign of his divinity would only show how credulous people were duped with supposed miracles. Bahauallah was never admitted to the presence of the Sultan, and nobody could recite the Quran in six hours — to say nothing of writing a book larger than it in that time. And a book of this size, written all on one occasion, does not exist among the known writings of Bahauallah.

In another lesson Dr. Khairullah is reported to have made the astounding statement that Bahauallah wrote forty million tablets, no two alike.⁸⁴

83 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p.138.

84 *Ibid.*, p.139.

ABBAS EFFENDI AS REAPPEARANCE OF JESUS CHRIST

It would be seen that Dr. Khairullah did not preach Babism or Bahatism to the Americans but he preached what he thought would impress his audience. He would give them new ingenious interpretations of obscure Bible prophecies and make mystic utterances. There were promises of their needs being satisfied by the utterance of the "Great Name" which he would only disclose to the chosen ones, and promises of their seeing visions and receiving revelations by joining the movement. What appealed most to the Christian mind was the representation of the coming of Bahauallah as the coming of God. The ordinary Christian mind is not perturbed in the least at the mention of God assuming the human form for the guidance of humanity. And while Bahauallah's advent was the advent of God the Father. Abbas Effendi's appearance was the advent of Jesus Christ. The *manifestation* left the earth in 1892, leaving the kingdom to Jesus Christ.⁸⁵

And the Millennium was near at hand: "The Millennium is to come in 1917; this is the Resurrection when one out of every three will become a follower of Baha⁸⁶."

The following from an American newspaper, the New York Herald of August 12, 1920 shows the new direction which Khairullah had given to the Babi Movement: "Is Christ living in the world today? There are tens of thousands of persons who believe that he is; that the kingdom of heaven has been established upon earth. The re-appearance of Christ on earth was deemed to be more effective in winning over the Christians, and accordingly the Babi preacher gave to his movement a turn which had not been dreamt of either by Bahauallah or even Abbas Effendi, though the latter on seeing how successfully the idea worked allowed it as one proper to the movement."

ABBAS EFFENDI AS INCARNATION OF FALSEHOOD

Again and again is Abbas Effendi called Jesus Christ though

85. Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 139.

Khairullah never saw him. Yet when he paid a visit to his supposed Jesus Christ in 1898, what did he find? A man teaching deceit and falsehood and playing duplicity! Such was Abbas Effendi. It is difficult to say what would have been Khairullah's opinion about Bahauallah if he had ever met him. Mirza Jawad tells us what Dr. Khairullah actually saw at Acre:

As an instance of this, Abbas Effendi invited Colonel Bedri Bey...to partake of food at his table with the American pilgrims who were there at the time. Before they entered the dining room, however, Abbas Effendi commanded them through their interpreter at the time, Bahiyya, the daughter of Khairullah, to deny all knowledge of the French language if Bedri Bey should desire to converse with them in that tongue! So when all were gathered at the table, Bedri Bey inquired if any of the Americans was conversant with the French language, for if so, he would like to converse with them in it, since he did not know English. In obedience to Abbas Effendi's command they all denied such knowledge, though four of these respected ladies spoke French very well⁸⁷.

KHAIRULLAH DESERTS ABBAS

On account of the occurrence of many an unpleasant event between Khairullah and Abbas Effendi, and after finding that there was duplicity in Abbas Effendi's dealings with him, Khairullah renounced Abbas and became a partisan of Muhammad Ali. It was then, we are told, that Khairullah found that Abbas Effendi's teachings were inconsistent with those of Bahauallah and that Abbas claimed divinity. The relations became so strained that Abbas Effendi had to send other missionaries to America. Khairullah tried to wean his American converts from Abbas, but the great majority remained faithful to the man whom Khairullah himself had described as the Son of God or reincarnation of Jesus Christ. The progress of the movement received a great set-back on account of these dissensions and Abbas Effendi tried to win back Khairullah, but the mes-

87 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 106-107.

senger sent rather made matters worse. The following account of what the messenger, Mirza Hasan Khurasani, said is given by Dr. Khairullah:

I came here especially to bring you back to your allegiance to Abbas Effendi, and am prepared to stay ten years if necessary. If you return to Abbas Effendi, I will cause the American believers to follow you as head in everything even better than heretofore. If you will not listen to me and become a follower of Abbas, your abode will be in the bowels of the earth. I came here because of pity for you, and to save you. If you will not listen, your life will be short.

If Abbas Effendi should give me a word to cut you to pieces, or to tear your eyes out or to kill you, I will do so at once⁸⁸.

EXTENT OF THE SUCCESS OF THE BABI MOVEMENT

It is difficult to say how far success has actually been attained by the Babi movement in Persia and America. There are different estimates of the number of the Babis. Dr. Khairullah when he first went to America gave 55 millions as the number of the Babis but there seems to be as much truth in this as in the forty million tablets written by Bahauillah. The lowest estimate is that given by Mirza Muhammad Mahdi Khan who gives 7,200 as the total number. Lord Curzon writing in 1892 thought there were nearly a million Babis in Persia. I think even this to be an exaggerated estimate, as a well-informed friend from Persia has very recently informed me that the present estimate of the Babis in Persia is about 100,000. The progress of the movement after Bahauillah's death naturally became slow, as no strong incentive remained to draw the people, and Abbas' claim to Divinity does not seem to have made much impression upon others than Babis as such claims have become an ordinary thing. In America the estimate given in 1900 by A.P. Dodge, a Bahai, was 3,000, and

88 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 154

little progress seems to have been made after that. A letter written by Khairullah to Prof. Browne in 1917 shows that up to that time movement was very slow:

The Bahai movement in America became slow and dull since the sad dissension reached the West nineteen years ago (i.e., in 1898). I thought then that to call the people to this great truth was equivalent to inviting them into a quarrel. But the visit of Abbas Effendi Abdul Baha to this country, his false teachings, his misrepresentations of Bahaism, his dissimulation and the knowledge that his end is nigh, aroused me to rise up for helping the work of God, declaring the Truth, and refuting the false attacks of theologians and missionaries. Now I am struggling hard to verify the cause of God after its having received by the visit of Abbas Effendi a death-blow⁸⁹.

89 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp. 171

PART II

Teachings of Babism

CHAPTER I

The Manifestation

IMPORTANCE OF THE DOCTRINE OF *MANIFESTATION* IN THE BABI MOVEMENT

The doctrine of the '*Manifestation*' occupies the same place of importance in the Babi or Bahai religion as the doctrine of Divine Unity in Islam or the doctrine of Trinity or Atonement in Christianity, and therefore, before we proceed to discuss the teachings of Babism it is necessary to understand what the '*Manifestation*' signifies in the Babi teachings. Without a clear understanding of this basic principle of the Babi faith, we cannot realize the true message of Babism. The present day Babis (or Bahais, as the majority really is) hesitate to answer in plain words the question whether the 'manifestation' is a prophet of God or God incarnate. The answer to that question is often given according to the taste of the hearers. To the Muslims, Bab and Bahauallah are represented as Divine manifestations in the sense in which they understand the prophets of God as manifestations of the Divine Being, while to a Christian audience they are represented as Divine as the Christians believe Jesus Christ to be Divine. Yet the two views are poles asunder. Before clearing this point, however, I will quote Professor Browne who has very ably summed up the Babi theory of the 'Manifestation' in his introduction to the *Nuqtat-ul-Qaf*:

THEORY OF THE MANIFESTATION SUMMED UP

According to the Bab's conception as set forth, for instance, in the Persian Bayan, God, while comprehending all things, is Himself incomprehensible. As 'none but Himself Knoweth Himself,' Knowledge of God must be understood as meaning knowledge of His *Manifestation*; i.e. of the Prophet of the cycle; refuge in Him as refuge in His *Manifestation*; meeting Him as meeting His *Manifestation*, 'for none can meet the Most Holy Essence' (II, 7 and III, 7),⁹⁰ and 'what is intended by the return of the Angels to God is the return of the saints to '*Him whom God shall manifest*,' seeing that there neither hath been nor is any (direct) way to the Eternal Essence" (II, 10). What is manifested is the Will (Mashiyya) of God, which created all things and stands to them in the relation of Cause to Effect or Fire to Heat. This Will is the *Nuqta* or the '*Point*' (II, 13; III, 7 and 8) of each prophetic cycle and manifests itself in the Revelation proper to that Cycle. Thus Muhammad is the *Nuqta-I-Furqan*, or the *Point of the Quranic Dispensation* as Mirza Ali Muhammad is the *Nuqta-I-Bayan*, or *Point of the Bayanic Dispensation*, and the two are identical (I, 15; VIII, 2). Adam who is placed in the Bayan (III, 13) 12,210 years before the Bab, was the first Manifestation and '*that which was obeyed in him* was identical with *that which was obeyed in other Prophets*' (VII,2). These Manifestations of the Divine Will (Mashiyya) are identical (VII, 10; VIII, 2, etc.), like the Sun which rises day after day (VI, 12; VII, 15; VIII, 1); all the earlier ones exist for the latest (IV, 12), which in turn needs, all of them (V,4); and they have neither beginning nor end (III, 15; IV, 12), for there were other worlds before Adam (IV, 14), and there will be other Manifestations after '*Him whom God shall manifest*'⁹¹ (VII 13; IX, 9). Each Manifestation is more perfect than the last and includes all preceding ones (III, 13), and each time the Divine Will returns with increased strength and fuller Utterance, so that Adam may be compared to the embryo, the Bab to a boy 12 years of age (the

90 The references in brackets are to the Persian Bayan.

91 *Ibid.*

lapse of a thousand years in the life of the world evidently corresponding to one year's growth in the Manifestation, Adam, as we have seen, being placed 12,210 years before the Bab) and '*He whom God shall manifest*' to a lad of 14 (III, 12) or 19 years of age (III, 15; V, 4). A new Manifestation comes as soon as the evolution of the human race has prepared men for it (VI; 13), but only God knows when it will be (VII, 10; III, 15).⁹²

TWO DIFFERENT CONCEPTIONS OF THE REFORMER

This is a very full and impartial statement, based as it is on the clear words of the Bayan, of the Babi theory of Theophanies, and the later law of Bahauallah does not introduce any change, so far as the basic doctrine of the Babi religion is concerned. The real question to be solved is whether what the Babi movement calls a manifestation or a Nuqta (the Point) falls within any of the conceptions already accepted by any of the religions or nations of the world, or it is a new conception altogether, and if so, what is it. The prevailing conceptions with regard to the office of the religious reformer are:

1. That he is a mortal just like any other mortal, but he holds special communion with God Who reveals to him His will, and he thus becomes the recipient of Divine revelation. Such is the conception of a reformer in almost all the great religions of the world. Islam in particular lays stress upon this point rejecting all theories to the exclusion of prophethood, and maintains in the clearest words that revelation was granted to all prophets in the same manner as it was granted to the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The Prophet is a mortal receiving a message from God, which he is commissioned to deliver to humanity.

2. That God Himself assumes the human form and becomes a mortal for a while to save humanity. Such is the conception of the Reformer to a limited degree in Hinduism and Christianity. I say *limited*, because while Christianity accepts that mortals receiving Divine Revelation continued to appear for thousands

92 Introduction to *Nuqtatul Qaf*, pp. 26-28.

of years to reform the world, it adds to this long list a single case of God appearing in flesh in the case of Jesus Christ, and though Hinduism does not limit the appearance of God in human shape to a single example like Christianity, yet it does recognize the appearance of prophets also, of mortals receiving Divine revelation. This is technically *Divine Incarnation*, and the reformer is both perfect God and perfect man. He has a two-fold capacity; he is Divine as well as mortal.

THE BABI MANIFESTATION IS GOD IN FLESH

It is evident that there can be no third theory in this connection. Either it is the man who receives the Divine message or it is God who wears the human garb. We have therefore to see to which of these categories the Babi Manifestation belongs. We know that Mirza Ali Muhammad's first claim was that he was the *Bab* or the intermediary through whom access could be had to the hidden *Imam Mahdi*; his next claim was that he was the very *Mahdi*, or the *Qaim*, the *Imam* that was to arise; and lastly that he was the *Nuqta* or the *Point*. The doctrine of the *Manifestation* did not assume its final shape till late in his life. As to the *Bab* he may be only a "servant" but as the *Nuqta* or *Point*, he is quite different. The *Point* has two stations, one of Divinity (*uluhiyya*) and the other of servitude (*ubudiyya*) i.e., humanity. Now it is clear at a glance that a claim to two positions, the positions of Divinity as well as servitude or humanity means nothing more nor less than being a Divine Incarnation. The only distinction between the Prophet and the Incarnation is that the Prophet has one capacity, that of humanity, while the Incarnation has two capacities, humanity as well as Divinity, and Mirza Ali Muhammad as the *Nuqta* lays claim in express words to Divinity along with servitude. The *Bayan* more-over tells us that 'the Point has existed from all eternity' 'that it has always held the position of precedence; it is the Primal Will'⁹³, and what is recent in it, is only the assumption of flesh.

BAB'S CLAIM TO DIVINITY

The claim to Divinity looks so audacious today that many people are not prepared to believe that the founders of Babism and Bahatism ever laid such a claim, or that sensible people could accept it, and therefore they think that the opponents of Babism make an untrue accusation against that faith. As a matter of fact many Shia sects, called the Ghulat (or Extremists), have held a belief in the Divinity of some of their Imams, and Babism in its first phase was only one of these ghali (extremist) sects. As I have already remarked, extreme reverence for the Imams led many of the sects to develop the doctrine of the divinity of their Imams. For instance, the *Sharifiyya*, believed that God entered into the Holy Prophet, Ali Fatima, Hasan and Husain, and according to some of them became one with them. Mughira, founder of one of the extremist sects, claimed divinity for himself, and so did the founders of the *Mansuriyya*, *Khitabiyya* and some other sects⁹⁴. The *Nasiriyya* and the *Ishaqiyya* are also two of the extremist sects who look upon the Holy Prophet as God Himself, and one part of them believes in the entering of God into him and of becoming one with him.⁹⁵ And if the diseased brains of some followers of Islam, which preached in the clearest words that the Holy Prophet was no more than a mortal, could go to such extremes, than the doctrine of the incarnation of the Divine Being finding ready acceptance among certain groups is not that surprising. And we find the Babi movement making an attempt similar to that of Christianity by accepting first Mirza Ali Muhammad and then Bahauallah as God. In common parlance Mirza Ali Muhammad was known as *Hadzrat-i-Rabbiyal-Ala* (my Lord, the Highest) among the Babis, and *Haqq ta'ala* (God Almighty) is one of the titles by which Bahauallah is known in Persia⁹⁶. Prof. Browne, than whom none has more carefully studied the available Babi literature, comes to the same conclusion. "But, from the Bab's own later writings such as the Persian

94 Ma'ariful Millat in Najiiyya wan Nariyya by Syed Abul Qasim, pp. 62, 63.

95 *Ibid.*, pp. 60.

96 Ency. of Religions and Ethics, Art. Bab.

Bayan, as well as from what is said by Mirza Jani and other contemporary writers, it is clear that he was regarded as a Divine being, and that in a very full sense."⁹⁷ In fact, Mirza Jani, the earliest historian of Babism, was so convinced of God appearing in human form that he upheld the view of those who laid a claim to Divinity after the death of the Bab, thinking that this was the fruit which the healthy growth of the tree of Babism must bring forth. In short, the Bab put himself forward as God, and his followers believed him to be so.

BABI AND SUFI DOCTRINES OF DIVINITY IN MAN

It must be further borne in mind that the Bab did not claim divinity in the sense in which some Sufis speak of the Divine in man. It is true that the Babis try sometimes to explain away the Bab's claim to Divinity in the Sufi sense, but this is rather due to the doctrine of taqiyya which the Babis have carried to the farthest extreme, so that it is difficult to say what their actual belief is. In this respect, as in many others, they resemble the Ismailis, and their doctrine is often not disclosed fully except to such as deserve to be fully trusted. Here is Prof. Browne's experience of the Babis:

That they adapt their conversation to those with whom they are speaking, there is no doubt. With a Muhammadan they will speak of the coming of the promised Imam Mahdi...With a Christian they will speak of the expected coming of Christ and the signs thereof...So also in speaking with a Zoroastrian or a Sufi, they will use arguments likely to commend themselves to their interlocutor⁹⁸.

Prof. Browne also relates an incident showing that the Babis hesitate to explain fully the doctrine of Bab and Bahau'llah's divinity before a novice:

"I remember on one occasion, during a discussion in which I was engaged with a learned Babi at Shiraz, some point arose connected with the nature of the divinity which

97 Ency. of Religions and Ethics, Art. Bab.

98 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 882.

they attribute to Bab and Baha, and Manifestation of the Divine in general. One who was present was about to offer some further explanation when the chief speaker checked him saying, *hanuz pukhta na shude ast*, i.e. he is not yet ripe. This remark naturally suggested to me the idea that the doctrine was only disclosed by degrees, as the mind of the enquirer was found prepared to receive it⁹⁹.

That there may be some men with the Sufic tendencies even among the Babis cannot be denied, but the doctrine of the Divinity of Bab and Bahauallah as explicitly taught by the two is quite different from the Sufic explanation of the Divine in man. The Sufis do not believe that any man really becomes God. The basic Sufi idea goes only to the extent that certain Divine morals find, as it were, their reflex in man. Hence they never address a man as God, as Babis addressed Bab and Bahauallah, nor do they lay claim to the Divine attributes of being Omniscient and All-powerful, the Living, the Sustainer and so on, which words are repeatedly used by Bahauallah concerning himself. And not only do Bab and Bahauallah speak of themselves as Divine but the Bab also speaks of the next manifestation as being Divine. Here are a few expressions about him in the Bayan:

He is the Most Great Name. (III, 8)

He is not to be asked, why he does any thing. (III, 1)

All excellence in the world of contingent

Being is from him. (III, 13)

He is Divine. (III, 13: Viii, 1)

All the Bayan is his and he best knows its meaning, since he is in truth its author. (VI, 1)

He is the source of all Divine Names attributes. (V, 9)

He is eternally pure. (VI, 17)

He is the fulfillment of the words, there is nothing like him, *lais kamithli hi shaiun*.¹⁰⁰

99 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p.882.

100 See Prof. Brown's Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf. The concluding words are the words in which the Holy Quran speaks of the Divine Being.

BAHAULLAH'S CLAIM TO DIVINITY

So far as to Bab's idea of the Manifestation. But Bahauallah is clearer on this point. Though he often refers to himself as the *mazlum* or the oppressed one, meaning one who was persecuted, yet he, at the same time, repeatedly calls himself God, Creator, Merciful, Mighty, Omniscient, Lord of the Day of Judgement, Controller of winds, *etc.* and applies to himself every attribute which has been applied to the Divine Being. The following few examples taken at random from the Kitab-ul-Aqdas, Bahauallah's chief work which contains the new law he gave to the world, will show that Bahauallah claimed Divinity for himself in no unequivocal terms:

When the morning of Manifestation spread its banners *He who had spoken on the mount Sinai* came into the world, the learned men stood up against him. Verily we mention in this place Muhammad who has got mixed his flesh with the flesh of his Lord and his blood and his body with his body and his bones with the bones of his Lord, the Mighty, the Gracious. My High pen bears witness that he has gained what no one else before him has gained and to him has come that the like of which the ear has not heard. On him be My glory and the glory of My Majesty and Omnipotence.

O Abu Talib! Thou art he who hast aimed at the highest goal, and hast traversed lands and seas until thou didst reach this noble valley in which has been raised the voice of the Glorious One saying that there is no God but I, the Protector of all that exists and all that shall exist.

O Aqa Bala! the Lord of the worlds praised thee in His great Prison with a praise which brings thee nearer God, the Mighty, the Indulgent.

O Abdul Khaliq! See and think that when the Creator came, the creatures turned aside from Him... Say, I swear by God that the Hidden One has come and the dwellers of the Sinai have fallen down senseless.

O Sayyid! the Lord of the world praises thee from His Great Prison.

O people of the earth! when the sun of My beauty sets down

and the heaven of my body is hidden, do not be perturbed. Stand up for the help of My affair and raising aloft of My word among the worlds; We are with you in all circumstances and help you with truth, for We are powerful. (P. 14).

O people of Insha! Listen to the call of the Master of Names; He calls you from the direction of His Great Prison that there is no God but I, the Powerful, the Lord of Greatness, the Controller, the High, the Knowing, the Wise. (p.45).

Surely He informed you beforehand of what this Reminder, the Wise one, shall speak. He said, and His word is true, that He shall speak in all conditions, that there is no God but I, the Alone, the One, the Knower, the Aware. This is a position which God has given specially to this Manifestations. (p.49).

O Isa! Be glad that the Lord of what is above the heavens and beneath the earth remembers thee... Say this is the land in which the voice of the Son of Mary was raised who gave the people the glad tidings of this Manifestation, and when it appeared, the High ones began to say, surely the concealed Unseen has come with an authority which can be seen. This is a place about which the spirit and the residents of the highest paradise make circuits; the Master of names bears witness to this but the people do not listen. Put off all besides Me and hold My Book and thus doth command thee the tongue of My Majesty from this resting place in which is seen nothing but God, the Master of Existence. O friends of the Beneficent one in the cities! listen to the call of the Oppressed one who has appeared with His name the Sustainer. (p.96.)

O great ones of the earth! surely the day of help has come, and the One who spoke on the Mount Sinai has appeared... When thou hast obtained the tablet of God and found the scent of the shirt, turn thy face in the direction of the Prison, and say Praise to Thee, O my God, for Thou hast made me hear Thy call. (p.101.)

Say, by God! That has appeared which was written in the Books of God, the Lord of worlds. Surely He is the one who is called *Yawah* in the Taurat and the Spirit of Truth in the Gospel and the Great News in the Quran.

Surely we mention now the third letter, the believer in Me... so that he came and stood near the door and entered after per-

mission, meeting the Countenance, and heard and said, For thee is praise, O God of the unseen and the seen, and for Thee is praise, O Lord of lords, I bear witness that Thou wast hidden in the eternity of eternities and Thou didst manifest Thy-self. (pp.. 111, 112)

O Nasir! The One Aware remembers Thee and He remembers the days when thou wast standing near the door and thou didst hear the call of God, the Lord of Lords...See and remember when the One who spoke on the Mount Sinai spoke with thee and the face of the Manifestation turned to thee. (pp. 116, 117).

Say, O People of the Bayan! the Master of the servants has come on the appointed day. (P.123.)

On thee and on those who believe it is incumbent that you recite the words in which we praised God, the Lord of the eminent chair — He is the Mentioner and the One mentioned (p. 170).

O Sikandar! the Master of Decree has come for the life of the mortals and the people seized him and imprisoned him in this distant place.

God bears witness that besides Him there is no God and the one that speaks in the Great Prison that He is the creator of things and the inventor of names; He bears afflictions for giving life to the world and that He is the Great Name which was hidden in the eternity of eternities. (p.330.)

Surely the signs have appeared and the arguments have become manifest and the Promised One has come with His name, the Guardian, the Sustainer. (p.334.)

BOTH BAHAI SECTIONS ARE AGREED ON BAHAULLAH'S DIVINITY

That Bahaullah claimed to be an incarnation of the Divine being is only too clear from the above quotations. He is the One who spoke on the Mount Sinai while those whom he addresses are those who became senseless on his appearance, referring of course to Moses and his companions. The one in prison is no other than the Creator. Now calling himself Creator, he has left no doubt as to his claim to Divinity, and if he has elsewhere spoken of himself as a man, it is just in accordance with the doc-

trine of Divine Incarnation or God in flesh. And his followers too took him for God. We have the clearest proof of this in the dissensions between Abbas Effendi and his younger brother Muhammad Ali. The former, following in the footsteps of his father, claimed Divinity for himself, and Mirza Jawad tells us in his Historical Epitome that one of the reasons why Dr. Khairullah, the famous Babi preacher in America forsook Abbas Effendi after serving him for many years was that Abbas claimed Divinity and thus arrogated to himself the dignity which properly belonged only to Bahauallah. I quote Mirza Jawad to show that even the leading followers of Bahauallah, to say nothing of the ignorant masses, believed that Bahauallah was really God Himself. Mirza Jawad, enumerating the different reasons which compelled sensible Bahais to throw off allegiance to Abbas Effendi, says:

First Abbas Effendi's claim to Divinity, in that He declared himself to be the Manifestation of Service which is the greatest of the Divine Manifestations, and peculiar to the Father, the Lord of Hosts (Jehovah) alone. This is the supreme limit of Manifestation which none claimed save His Holiness Baha (to whom be glory) who explicitly declared in numerous Tablets that He was the Servant, the Visage and Very Self of the Eternal Essence. Again he declares himself to be the Enunciator (Mubayyin), that is God, as the Supreme Pen has explicitly declared in different passages. So likewise he claims to be the Center of Covenant which is God alone, Baha, who Himself covenanted with Himself before the creation of the heavens and the earths that man should worship none save God alone¹⁰¹. This passage from Mirza Jawad shows clearly that all Bahais looked upon Bahauallah as God and that they looked upon his words as very clear and explicit on this point to allow of the least doubt. After Bahauallah's death, the Babi (or Bahai) movement was again split into two, but neither of the sections differed with the other on the point of Bahauallah's Divinity. Had there been the least doubt on this point, a divergence of views among the con-

101 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 111

tending sections would necessarily have been the result; and the unanimous acceptance of Bahauallah as God by all Bahais is the surest evidence that Bahauallah claimed Divinity for himself.

BAHAI PROPAGANDA IN AMERICA BASED ON BAHA'S DIVINITY

The Babi propaganda in America affords an equally strong and conclusive testimony on the point. I have already quoted Miss A.H. of Brooklyn who was an interested yet impartial student of the Babi Movement. Here are a few quotations on the point from her letters to Prof. Browne:

According to this doctor, Baha was God Himself. He teaches that God did not manifest through the personality of Baha, as in the case of Jesus, but that He really was God. God never takes a female form as He selects the stronger one to manifest Himself¹⁰². In the form of initiation into the Babi movement occur the words: I humbly confess the oneness and singleness of the Almighty God, my Creator and I believe in His appearance in the human form; I believe in His establishing His holy household"¹⁰³. In lesson five it is clearly stated that Baha was a Manifestation of God, but in lesson eleven He is God Himself. I was much puzzled and asked Dr. Khairullah about it. He very humbly attempted to explain and began by saying that Baha was Manifestation only, but before he ended he certainly spoke of him as being God.¹⁰⁴ In her abstract of the 5th lesson given by Dr. Khairullah, Miss A.H. of Brooklyn has:

"God is for ever unknowable. He wished to make Himself known, and as the finite cannot comprehend the Infinite, He made a form, He chose a 'Face' that through that He might become known to us. He is not the form; it only represents Him"¹⁰⁵. In the abstract of the thirteenth lesson we read:

"People object to the Manifestation because of his being married. A real man ought to marry; a monk is the invention of

102 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, p. 117

103 *Ibid.*, p.121

104 *Ibid.*, p. 126

105 *Ibid.*, p. 132.

priests. God came as a man, had a father and mother, fulfilled his own law, and married...The greatest reason why God should marry is that the race is grafted through His having children. He is the Tree of Life and we are grafted¹⁰⁶.

BAB AND BHAULLAH AS DISTINGUISHED FROM OTHER MANIFESTATIONS

That the 'Manifestation' in the Babi or Bahai movement is Divine Incarnation is thus clearly established by the testimony of the Bab, the claim of Bahauallah and the evidence of their followers. But, it may be argued, both Bab and Bahauallah look upon Adam, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, may peace be on them, as Manifestations. This is quite true but a distinction is made between the previous and the later Manifestations, or between the prophets of God and Bahauallah. In a pamphlet written by a Bahai, the difference between the claims of Bahauallah and the prophets that have gone before him is thus described:¹⁰⁷

The distinctive characteristic of this Manifestation (*i.e.* Bahauallah) from all other Manifestations (*i.e.* the prophets) is this that they stood in two places. When they utterly forgot their own existence and annihilated their existence completely, they cried out, I am He, and when they were again conscious of their own existence, they said, I am I. But this shining Manifestation (*i.e.* Bahauallah) was the very He (God) who had worn the clothes of I (man)...Hence it was that he said, there is none in the world but myself. The *Point* also predicted that he would say under all circumstances, verily I am God, there is no God but I, the one and without a prayer, the Omniscient and the Knower of all secrets. All the Manifestations that have hitherto appeared and that shall appear to the day of judgement were as looking glasses, and every one according to his capacity spoke of that sun of reality (*i.e.* God) but this Manifestation is that very sun ...

106 *Ibid.*, p. 141.

107 I take this quotation from an article written by me in the Review of Religions, vol. 6.

The essence of Unity is that the Manifestation of Truth and the Hidden One who cannot be known, should be considered as one, in this sense that the deeds and the injunction and the prohibitions of the one should be considered as those of the other and that there should be no idea of union with or separation from Him... This is a place which in the heavens and the earth is limited to one only and cannot be shared by anybody else... Regarding the place of the Great Sinlessness and the dignity of doing what one likes, he (Bahau'llah) says, 'In the Great Sinlessness this Manifestation has no associate, for he is the Manifestation of doing what he likes in the kingdom of will. This place God has particularized for His own person, and no share has been decreed for any body else in this mighty place. Verily this is an embroidery which the hands of Power have woven for the person of God only, and it does not become anybody except Him Who sits on the throne of All-powerfulness doing what He likes. And again he said, The Great Sinlessness is the characteristic of the Glorious God, none is an associate with him in this.

THE GREAT SINLESSNESS

The position of Great Sinlessness which is the special privilege of Bahau'llah only as distinguished from sinlessness which the prophets can claim is thus described in the Tablet entitled *Ashra'qat* (by Bahau'llah):

Know that sinlessness has several meanings and several grades. He whom God protects from falling into errors deserves to be called sinless in one sense, and so also the person who is preserved by God from sin and disobedience and turning aside and unbelief and *shirk* and other such things; every one of such persons may be called sinless. But as regards the Great Sinlessness, it is for him only who attains to such a high dignity that he no more submits to injunctions and prohibitions and who is purified from faults and forgetfulness, for he is the Light which is not followed by darkness, and he is the Right with which there is no wrong. If such a person pronounces water to be wine or heaven to be earth or paradise to be hell, it is all true

in which there is not the least doubt, and no one has the right to object or to ask the why and wherefore of these things. He who objects shall be counted among those who have turned aside from the right path; thus it is written in the Book of God, the Lord of worlds. For verily he cannot be questioned about what he does while all others shall be questioned of all they do. For verily he has come from the heaven of the Unknown and with him is a banner that he may do what he wills, and with him are the armies of mightiness and power. Upon all others lies the obligation that they should hold fast and act upon the laws and commandments which are given them. If any one departs a single hair's breadth from these commandments, all his deeds shall be as naught. (p.22).

GOD AND MAN IN ONE

The fact that Bahauallah speaks of himself as a man is not inconsistent with his claim to Divinity, for according to the theory of incarnation God appears in the form of a man, and therefore God and man are combined in one personality that is spoken of sometimes as God and sometimes as man. Exactly the same is the position of Jesus Christ who is regarded both as perfect God and perfect man. When Baha addresses himself to his disciples, he speaks of himself as God, the Ruler of the Universe, the Controller, the Omniscient, the Knower of the seen and the unseen, the Lord of the worlds, Aware of all secrets, the Mighty and so on; he even calls himself Jehovah. He sometimes speaks of God and prays to Him, but for all practical purposes he himself is God, as the god beyond is unknowable. He prays but he is the supplicator as well as the One to whom supplication is made, the Dhakir and the *Madhkur*¹⁰⁸.

His command is the command of God and cannot be questioned. Even if he calls the light darkness or the south north, he is right and must be believed. But when he addressed himself to those high in position over him, he assumed humility. The letter written to the Shah of Persia stands in marked contrast with the

tablets to his disciples. It begins thus:

O king of the earth! Listen to the cry of this slave. I am a slave who believes in God and His signs and I have sacrificed my life in His way...I do not invite people except to thy Lord and the Lord of the world. And further on he says: O Sultan! I was an ordinary man and sleeping...and He gave me the knowledge of what was....and He commanded me to raise a cry between earth and heaven.

THE IDEA OF REVELATION ACCORDING TO BAHÁ

Though Baháullah often speaks of revelation, but it is not revelation in the sense in which it is generally understood. It is not a message from a Divine source to a mortal; it is not the word which the Holy Spirit brings; no, it is not even under the influence of the Spirit that the mortal speaks. On the other hand, whatever the Manifestation says, it is all revelation. It is God Who speaks in the man. He often calls himself *Mukallim-i-Tur*, the *One Who spoke on the Mount Sinai*. He does not place himself in the position of Moses, the man spoken to, but in the position of God Who spoke. Revelation in a restricted sense is the word which the Spirit brings to the Prophet, and in a wider sense, the word which the righteous one speaks under the influence of the Spirit, but the utterances of Baháullah do not fall in either of these categories, nor could they consistently with the theory that it was God Himself Who had appeared in flesh. This is evident to any one who reads any of the Tablets or the *Kitab ul Aqdas*. I have already noted that when he prays to God, he calls himself *al-Khakir* or the *supplicator*, by which is meant Baha the man, and *al-Madhkur* or the *One to whom the supplication is made*, by which is meant Baha as God. Again, he speaks of himself as being the speaker on the Sinai and the Revealer which is inconsistent with the received idea of revelation. Thus:

Surely, We have revealed a tablet about truth; joy for him who reads it and holds it firm — a command from Him Who commands, the One Aware...Thus has spoken my most high pen in this position which is decorated with the breathings of the revelation of thy Lord, the Hearing

One, the Seeing One. O Husain, listen to what the speaker on the Sinai speaks.¹⁰⁹

O Nasir! the One Aware remembers thee and remembers the days when thou wast standing near the door and didst hear the voice of God, the Lord of lords... Surely he mentions thee afterwards as he mentioned thee before... See, then remember when with thee did talk the Speaker on the Sinai and to thee did turn the face of the Manifestation.¹¹⁰

Surely the most high pen has come into motion and intends mentioning his friends who have advanced towards the rising place of the revelation of their Lord, the Mighty, the Praised one... O party of God! To you has been sent a book written by the pen of God, the Lord of 'Arsh, the Great'.¹¹¹

RELATION OF THE TWO MANIFESTATIONS, BAB AND BAHA

The most interesting question in this connection is as to the relation in which the two Manifestations, Bab and Bahauallah, stand to each other. That any importance which the movement set on foot by the Bab can claim to day, nay its very existence in the world, is due to the impetus given to it by Bahauallah, is a matter on which there can be no two opinions. But the two Manifestations have followed each other with a rapidity which strikes at the very root of the theory of the Manifestation. The theory of the Manifestation was formulated and advanced by the Bab and upheld by Bahauallah. According to this theory Manifestations of the Divine Being will continue to appear in the world one after another, each succeeding Manifestation being more complete than the previous one and being necessitated by the new needs of humanity. Jesus appeared after Moses, and Muhammad (may peace be on him) after Jesus, and Bab after Hazrat Muhammad, and each time the Divine will returned with increased strength and fuller utterance. Thus Adam is com-

109 Kitab ul Aqdas, pp. 114, 115

110 *Ibid.*, pp. 116, 117

111 *Ibid.*, pp. 120, 121

pared to an embryo and the Bab to a boy of twelve years of age, there being twelve thousand years between Adam and Bab according to the latter. Now six hundred years elapsed between Jesus and the Holy Prophet Muhammad and over 1,200 years between the latter and the Bab. The question therefore arises, why was a Manifestation needed only fifteen years after the Bab? Bab, no doubt, according to the Babi theory, had come with a great message, with a more complete message than that of his predecessor, the Holy Prophet Muhammad. The world had taken over twelve hundred years to need a new Manifestation after the Holy Quran. Numerous revolutions had taken place during the interval; great and mighty changes had been witnessed by the world; the old world had gone and a new world had sprung up in its place; science and knowledge had made unthought of progress; and the appearance of a new Manifestation of the Divine will was reasonable according to the Babi theory of Manifestations. But during the fifteen years that elapsed between the death of the Bab and Bahauallah's claim, there was not the least perceptible change in the world. Civilization had not advanced by one step; the world had not witnessed any revolution. The question is not only where was the need for a new Manifestation but also, why was Bab's Manifestation so soon abrogated? Why a message more complete than the Quran, as Bab claimed it to be, lasted only for fifteen years? And even during this short interval, that message remained unknown to the world at large, none knowing of it but a fraction of the Persian Shia Muslims. Certainly God in His wisdom could not send a message to humanity which was to be abrogated before it ever became known to the world.

BAB AS FORERUNNER OF BAHA, AN IDEA OF LATER GROWTH

The followers of Bahauallah do not face these questions, nor do they ever try to answer them. But they have tried to shelve the difficulty of the rapid succession of one Manifestation after the other by making the Bab a mere forerunner of Bahauallah, just as John the Baptist was a forerunner of Jesus Christ. Bab, it

is said, was sent merely to announce the good news of the coming of him whom God shall manifest. But the whole history of the Babi movement up to the time of Bahauallah and every word of the Bayan, the Babi scripture, belies the Bahai theory of the Bab being a harbinger of Bahauallah. As Prof. Browne says:

The theory now advanced by the Bahais that the Bab considered himself as a mere herald or forerunner of the Dispensation which Bahauallah was shortly to establish, and was to him what John the Baptist was to Jesus Christ, is equally devoid of historic foundation. In his own eyes, as in the eyes of his followers, Mirza Ali Muhammad inaugurated a new prophetic cycle, and brought a new revelation, the Bayan, which abrogated the Quran, as the Quran had abrogated the Gospels, and the Gospels the Pentateuch¹¹².

BAB'S PROPHECY ABOUT THE NEW MANIFESTATION

It is true that the Bab spoke of one coming after him whom he calls man yuzhiruhullah (he whom God shall manifest). It is also true that he spoke of him as being greater than himself, on whose coming the Bayan was to give place to the new law, but this was in accordance with his theory of the Theophanies, in which each succeeding Manifestation was greater than the previous one and therefore abrogated it. And if the Bab laid great stress upon the acceptance of the new Manifestation, it was due to the fact that he himself met with an obstinate rejection from the Muslims, and he did not want his followers to make the mistake which, he thought, was being made by the followers of his predecessor. He even went so far as to predict that it was impossible that any one should lay a false claim to that office (Bayan VI, 8),¹¹³ whereas we find that before Bahauallah about seven or eight men laid claim to it and the Babis rejected them all under the guidance of Subh-i-Azal and Bahauallah himself. No doubt, the Bab said the

112 Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 24.

113 Prof. Browne's Index of Bayan; see Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf p. 71.

time of the appearance of the new Manifestation was known to God alone, but he could never conceive of his appearance so soon after him. Nay, there are positive indications in his prophecies that he could not appear so soon. In the Bayan, his revealed Scripture, is met with the statement that the time of his appearance was to be within the number of Ghiath, that is 1511 years, and that at any rate it could not exceed the number of Mustaghath i.e. 2001 years. It is not sufficient answer to this that these were the limits within which he was to appear and that appearing 15 years after the Bab still brings him within these limits. It is damaging to Bab's authority as an inspired person that he should give the limits of fifteen hundred and two thousand years when the prediction was to be fulfilled within fifteen years. His giving these extensive limits and considering himself abrogator of the law of Islam shows clearly that he expected his appearance at a distance of time more or less similar to that at which he himself appeared after the Holy Prophet Muhammad whom he considered to be his immediate predecessor.

**UNIVERSAL ACCEPTANCE OF BABISM
WAS A CONDITION PRECEDENT TO THE
APPEARANCE OF THE NEW MANIFESTATION**

As I have said, there are clear indications that the new Manifestation could not appear so soon. For instance, it is expressly laid down that when he comes, all should have been educated in the Bayan (V, 5).¹¹⁴ Now the Bayan, as we have seen, was incomplete when death overtook the Bab, and he had entrusted Mirza Yahya, his successor, with its completion. For all to be educated in the Bayan was simply impossible before it was completed, and we know that Mirza Yahya never completed it. Moreover, the Bayan is, to this day, a book unknown to "all", nay unknown even to the Babis. It has never gone into print; and the manuscripts made from it are so few that probably no Babi or Bahai, with the possible exception of the two heads of the movement, has got a copy of it. Therefore, as even the Babis —

114 Introduction to Nuqtatul Qaf p. 71.

to say nothing of all people — have not been educated in the Bayan, the condition precedent to the appearance of the new Manifestation was not fulfilled in 1867 when Mirza Husain Ali laid claim to that office; nay, it is not fulfilled to this day. It may be asked, why then did the Bab give instructions to Mirza Yahya, his successor in the leadership of the movement, that if “he whom God shall manifest” appeared in his life time, he should consider the Bayan abrogated. I think it was done simply to show the importance in which he held the new Manifestation. Or, maybe he was under the impression that his religion would be very soon accepted by the world and his work would thus be accomplished and a new Manifestation may then take his place.

The Bayan states expressly that before the coming of the new Manifestation, “all must adopt his religion” (VII, 5)¹¹⁵. The Bayan, we are told by Prof. Browne, “contains regulations for the conduct of the Babi state, and implicitly assumes a time when Persia at least shall have adopted Babism as the state religion.”¹¹⁶ We further find it stated in the Bayan that no non-Babi should be allowed to live in five provinces of Persia, Azarbaijan, Fars, Iraq, Khurasan and Mazandran. The attitude to be adopted by Babi kings towards non-Babis was not to be one of tolerance; they are told to expel non-Babis from their countries. Now these directions assume the prevalence of the Babi religion and its adoption by kings as well as subjects. Hence if the Bab’s statement regarding the new Manifestation’s possible appearance in his successor’s lifetime must be taken literally, the only conclusion which can be drawn from it is that the Bab was under the impression that his religion would be spread in the whole world in the lifetime of his successor, and the purpose of his advent being thus accomplished, the new Manifestation may appear soon. But this was only a very remote contingency, and the Bab’s real view was that the time for which his law should last was nearer two millenniums than one millennium.

115 Prof. Brown’s *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*, p. 30.

116 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

BAHA GIVES 1,000 YEARS AS MINIMUM LIMIT FOR APPEARANCE OF A MANIFESTATION AFTER HIM

While Bahauallah claimed to have come within twenty years of Bab's death, in his own turn he made it incumbent upon his followers not to accept any one within a thousand years. This was clearly a precaution against his authority being undermined by any one of his followers as he had undermined the Bab's authority. Bab had laid down that the next Manifestation would appear within 1,500 or two thousand years after him. Seventeen years, argued Bahauallah, were as well within this time limit as 1700; so as a safeguard against a similar claim after his death, he laid it down that no one appearing within a thousand years after him should be accepted. There seems to be very little seriousness in the whole affair about these time limits which became the playthings of this or that claimant. And what purpose did a new Manifestation serve, one may ask, seventeen years after the first? It is true that the new claim kept up the interest of those who would otherwise have become slack. It gave a new impetus to the movement no doubt and served to keep alive the old fanaticism inspired by a God in human form. But beyond that we find nothing. There is no new principle laid down which the Bab had not made known. The movement rests upon the basis of the Manifestation as the Bab preached. Even the details of the law do not show any great change. And if there is any change, what reason in the world can be ascribed for it? A more perfect law than that of the Quran, we are told, was given in the Bayan; yet while the former lasted for nearly thirteen centuries according to the Bab's teaching, the latter could not hold its own for even twenty years.

THE TWO PILLARS OF THE BABI MOVEMENT, BAB AND BHAULLAH, CANNOT STAND TOGETHER

While the claims of Bab and Bahauallah are the two pillars on which the foundations of the Babi movement rest and the fall of either brings the whole construction down, that movement has to face the serious question that the theory of Divine Manifestations falls to the ground if both Bab and Bahauallah

were true in their claims. The theory of Divine Manifestations was preached by the Bab and he claimed to have come with a new message, a new religion and a new law. But that message was declared null before it was made known to the world, that religion was superseded before it was preached to the world and that law was abrogated before it was acted upon. Nay, the very book, which according to the Bab had to take the place of the Holy Quran, was for ever thrown into the corner of oblivion before it was promulgated in the world. To say that the Bab was John the Baptist of the Babi movement is to show utter ignorance of the theory of Divine Manifestations. The Bab's claim was that he was a Divine Manifestation, independent of any one who should come after him and complete in himself, not needing the help of any other Manifestation. He was entrusted with the whole message that was to be delivered to the world at that stage. He was as good a Divine Manifestation as the one that was to appear after him, and if the later Manifestation was greater than him, it was not due to any defect in him but it was a necessary condition of the theory of manifestations in which each successive Manifestation was greater and more perfect than the previous one. It was, according to the Bab, a necessary law of growth. According to his theory Jesus was greater than Moses, and the Holy Prophet Muhammad was greater than Jesus, while he himself claimed to be greater than all of them because he came after all; and in accordance with this theory he acceded superiority to him who should come after him. But he never accepted the minor position into which the followers of Bahauallah would put him for the sake of Bahauallah's claims. With Bahauallah's claim the Bab's claim thus falls to the ground, and the Babi movement stands on the horns of a dilemma. If it accepts Bahauallah, it must give up the Bab, but if it gives up the Bab, it can have no Bahauallah, as Bahauallah without the Bab is simply inconceivable.

CHAPTER II

The Laws of Bab and Bahauallah

Both the Shaikhi leaders preceding Mirza Ali Muhammad, viz., Shaikh Ahmad and Syed Kazim, were prolific writers, and so was Mirza Ali Muhammad. He began to write before he laid claim to be the Bab, and his first work written in his capacity as a member of the Shaikhi sect shows the extreme reverence he had for the Imams. Prof. Browne who obtained a copy of this book in his travels in Persia gives a brief description of it in his article on Babism in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. The *Ziarat Nama*, as it is called, contains instructions and prayers for visiting the shrines of the Imams. Prof. Browne says:

This work seems to me of the utmost interest and importance in tracing the gradual formation of the Bab's ideas, and, so far as I know, it is the sole record of this early period of his life, before he put forward any claim to Divine inspiration. In spite of the faults of grammar and obscurities of style which mark this along with all the other compositions of the Bab, there is something sublime and beautiful in the thought concealed beneath the somewhat uncouth phraseology.¹¹⁷

The following passage referring to the author himself would not be without interest to the student of Bab's claims at a later date:

With what language shall I confess my faults? And with what regard shall I look upon my actions? By your glory! were any but you aware of what I had acquired (i.e., what

117 *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1889, p. 901

sins were chargeable to me), he would not look towards me, and would fly from the terror of the justice of God with regard to me, but ye, notwithstanding the greatness of your state, and the loftiness of your rank, and the glory of your brightness, and the completeness of your proofs, have pardoned me, and concealed me, as though I had not committed any fault, nor wrought any wrong.¹¹⁸

Apparently the Imams are here addressed Omniscient and Omnipotent. They are aware of the sins of Mirza Ali Muhammad but they have pardoned him. He addresses them as a worshipper of God would address the Divine Being. As Prof. Browne tells us, he approaches them in supplication, offers them praises, desires complete submission to them and total annihilation in them, nay his very "limbs quake" before them and "his skin creeps" as he adores them.¹¹⁹ Only the most ignorant even among the Shias would stoop so low before the Imams and ascribe to them Divine dignity as Mirza Ali Muhammad has done in the *Ziarat Nama*. The devotion here paid to the Imams is quite incompatible with the idea of Divine unity as known to and preached by Islam. It is the worship of tombs and saints condemned by Islam as derogatory to human dignity as any other kind of idol-worship. But in this is concealed no doubt the germ of his own claim later on to be the Manifestation of the Divine Being.

The idea of a new law abrogating the Law of the Holy Quran does not seem to have been entertained by Mirza Ali Muhammad at the time of the announcement of his *zahir* (manifestation). At any rate in his writings after that he is still a Muslim bowing before the authority of the Holy Quran, only giving it his own interpretation. His earliest work after the claim to be the Bab is the commentary on the twelfth chapter of the Holy Quran, i.e., the chapter entitled Joseph. This chapter contains 111 verses and the comment on each verse is called a *surah* of the Bab's book. A copy of the book is in the library of the British Museum, and Prof. Browne who has had access to it gives

118 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 901

119 *Ibid.*, pp. 905, 906

a brief account of it in his article on Babism in the Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society. The Bab claims it as a revelation from God. Prof. Browne says:

The book is entirely in Arabic and is obscure and ungrammatical, like the rest of the Bab's writings...it must have been composed between May 1844 and December 1845, and therefore stands midway between the *Ziarat nama* and the Persian Bayan. In it a distinct claim to a Divine mission is put forward...It is interesting to observe that the claim put forward at this period by Mirza Ali Muhammad is that he enjoyed a special spiritual communion with the twelfth or absent Imam (*Imam-i-Ghaib*) whose return, as the Imam Mahdi, the Shiites are expecting.¹²⁰

And again

Outwardly, at least, the dictates of Islam seem to be in the main accepted, and the Quran is not declared to be abrogated. Thus it is written, whoever denies Islam, God will not accept from him any of his actions in the Day of Resurrection...

The month of Ramazan is ordered to be kept as a fast, and no mention seems to be made of the new month of fasting, consisting of nineteen days, which was afterwards instituted.¹²¹

It was probably after his commentary on sura *Yusuf* that the Bab wrote one on sura *Kauthar*. Extracts from this book are given in the *Ihqaqul Haq* by Mirza Muhammad Taqi. Here too Mirza Ali Muhammad, while claiming a Divine mission, speaks of himself only as an intermediary between the hidden Imam Mahdi and the believers, and as one sent to serve the cause of the Holy Quran. In view of the undeniable fact that he had given himself out as the Imam Mahdi as early as his pilgrimage to Mecca, the claims advanced in both these books are difficult to reconcile with the higher claim; but the doctrine of *taqiyya* seems to have facilitated matters for him and his followers, and while he

120 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, 1889, p. 905, 906.

121 *Ibid.*, p. 907.

claimed publicly only the humbler position of the Bab, he was no doubt agitating the country by his claim to be the expected Mahdi through the secret organization at his command. A few quotations from the commentary on sura *Kauthar* would show how he was advancing both claims at one and the same time.

Today it is not right that there should be an argument for any one except my person, and truly God has made manifest his (my?) Affair in such a state that no one dare hesitate in or doubt it, for He has chosen a man from among the non-Arabs for guarding the religion of His Apostle and his Saints¹²².

They surely disbelieve who say that the *Dhikr*¹²³ of the name of thy Lord claims revelation and Quran.¹²⁴

And I bear witness that any one who lays claim to Thy saintship or lays claim to bring the Quran or a revelation the like of which is forbidden to the people or diminishes anything from Thy religion or adds thereto, he is surely a disbeliever.¹²⁵

We come now to the Bayan in which Mirza Ali Muhammad laid claim to be the founder of a new religion. I have already dealt with the basic doctrine of that religion in the last chapter. Next both in importance and originality to the doctrine of the "Manifestation" in the Babi religion is the doctrine of the "Letters of the Living." In this world God is represented by the *point* (i.e. Mirza Ali Muhammad) and his eighteen disciples who are called Huruf-i-Hayy or the *Letters of the Living*¹²⁶, the numerical value of the word Hayy, which means the living, being eighteen. Mysticism plays a great part in formulating this doctrine. God is One, which is in Arabic wahid, and the numerical value of wahid is again nineteen. "Thus 'One' represents the unmanifested essence of God and nineteen the first manifestation of the same."¹²⁷ In the Bayan this doctrine, like the doctrine of

122 Ihqaqul Haq, pp. 118, 119.

123 It is one of the titles by which the Bab is known.

124 Ihqaqul Haq, pp. 119.

125 *Ibid.*

126 Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society, p. 921.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 920.

the Manifestation, is represented as a universal doctrine in all religions. For instance, in Islam, the Holy Prophet, his daughter Fatima, the twelve Imams (as accepted by the Shias), and the four Babs are said to constitute the "Letters of the Living," although according to the doctrine preached, there should have been eighteen besides the Holy Prophet who is the founder of Islam. And in the next cycle, "He whom God shall manifest" will make his own choice of the eighteen disciples¹²⁸, as the Bab had made in his own cycle. The "Letters of the Living," we are told in the Bayan, "were created before all other things from the soul of Nuqta, or Point, and infused into all things...to them are given the 'Most Comely Names' which are the nearest of all souls to God." They are in fact "the signs of God's Names to His creatures...and their hearts are mirrors wherein only God is seen...each day of each month and each month of each year is specially connected with one of the Letters of the Living."¹²⁹ Strangely enough, Mirza Yayha was undoubtedly one of the Letters of the Living, though instead of being a mirror wherein only God is seen, he was the very devil according to Bahauallah who was also one of the Letters of the Living. Another of these Letters of the Living was Syed Muhammad, the Azali leader, who was murdered at Akka by Bahauallah's followers

On account of this doctrine of the eighteen "*Letters of the Living*" plus the "*Point*" the number nineteen received the utmost sanctity in the Babi law, and its importance remained as great in Bahauallah's religion.

According to the Bayan, the sacred number nineteen was to flow through all things.¹³⁰ Hence it is that the Babi year contains nineteen months, each month being of nineteen days. The Bayan which was left incomplete was to consist of 19 *wahids* (parts), each *wahid* containing nineteen chapters. The most trivial orders are based on the number 19. Everyone, whether male or female, was to serve the Point for nineteen days (IX:5). Every one who

128 Index to Nuqtatul Qaf, p. 75.

129 *Ibid.*

130 Quoted in Ihqaqul Haq, p. 152.

had the means should present nineteen precious stones to him whom God shall manifest (VIII:5)¹³¹. Every one who caused sorrow to any person should give away nineteen mithqals of gold, or if he had not the means, nineteen mithqals of silver, or, failing even that, should ask forgiveness nineteen times (IV:18)¹³². Any one who takes away the clothing of another had his wife prohibited to him for nineteen days¹³³. Nineteen rings inscribed with the names of God are to be left by every believer to his heirs (VIII:2)¹³⁴. Then there were nineteen fasts, and nineteen mithqals of gold were to be paid out of hundred to the "Letters of the Living" or their descendants (VIII:16)¹³⁵. In short, as Prof. Browne says:

It is unnecessary to describe in detail the part played by the sacred number in the ordinances of the new religion. The system of coinage, the construction of places of worship, the fines inflicted for transgressions, and the taxes to be levied, are all arranged on the same basis, so that to quote from the Bayan (Vahid VII, Ch: VIII), 'it seems to be seen that the mystery of the vahid will gain currency till it pervades all things, until even the pens in the pen-case shall be according to the number of the vahid.'¹³⁶

In this connection, it may be noted that the Bab laid stress on the virtue of talismans. Thus in the Bayan he recommended the study of sciences bearing on the construction of talismans (III:16). For this purpose he recommended rings of red cornelian bearing the inscription: Say, God is truth and besides God is creation and all are His worshippers.¹³⁷ Prof. Browne has given a facsimile of a babi talisman in his *Nuqtatul Qaf* which was given to him by Subh-i-Azal in 1896. In this talisman there is an inner circle containing a square divided into seven equal parts both in

131 *Ihqaqul Haq* p. 158.

132 *Ibid.*, p. 193.

133 *Ibid.*, p. 194.

134 *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*. p. 88.

135 *Ibid.*, p. 90.

136 *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* p. 923.

137 *Intr. to Nuqtatul Qaf*, p. 88.

length and breath, each of these small squares containing a repetition of the same writing. Then there are seven outer circles, each of which is divided into nineteen equal segments. Each of these segments contains either a letter or some other symbol, while the outermost has the Ayat ul Kursi (the 255th verse of the 2nd chapter of the Holy Quran) portioned into the different segments, and the one inside it has some Divine names. Prof. Browne tells us that the writing outside the inner circle is in gold and lithographed, while the writing inside and around the inner circle is in black and in the Bab's own hand. There is not the least doubt that the Bab had much faith in the virtue of letters and signs. Rings were to be placed even on the fingers of the dead, the inscription in the case of the males being, "And whatsoever is in the heavens and the earth and between them is God's, and God is the knower of all things"; and in the case of females, "And the kingdom of the heavens and the earth and what is between them is God's and God is powerful over all things".¹³⁸ The permutations of letters play an important part even in the names of God without reference to the meaning conveyed by the word thus formed. For instance, the following different forms of *wahid* (one) are used as invocations, each to be repeated a hundred times *wáhid, wahid, wahnád, auhad, muwahhad, muwahhid, mutawahhad*.

The doctrine of Resurrection in the Babi faith, as stated by Bab as well as Bahauallah, assumes a peculiar significance. There are not many references to heaven and hell, and where there is any mention of these, heaven is synonymous with belief in the Manifestation, *i.e.*, Bab or Bahauallah, and hell is unbelief, its essence being ignorance and denial. In the Index of the Bayan as given by Prof. Browne, we find the following headings as to Bab's teaching on heaven and hell:

No heaven higher than belief. II, 1.

Believers in the Bayan themselves constitute heaven. II, 6

Bayan is heaven. II, 9.

Heaven is wherever believers are or have been. II, 9.

The heaven of the Furqan (i.e. the Quran) is the Bayan. II, 16.

The heaven of everything is its perfection, III 17.

The heaven of each age is the perfection of that age. III, 13.

No hell worse than unbelief. II, 1.

Hell truly exists and has endless aspects or phases but ignorance (or unbelief) is the essence of all of them.

Hell is the Eternal No. II, 17.

Whoever turns from the Bayan is already in the hell. II, 6.

Wherever no believer is found, there is a portion of the land of hell. II, 10.

Whoever enters the Balance of Denial enters hell. II, 13.

There are references to heaven and hell after death, as for instance in Bayan II, 16 where it is stated that "whoever has entered the heaven of the Manifestation shall be in heaven after death"¹³⁹ or Bayan VIII, 11 where we find that unbelievers are "transported after death to the Treasury of the Hell."¹⁴⁰ Yet from the way in which all references to the Resurrection are explained away in the two Babi Scriptures, as indicating the coming of the Bab or Bahauallah, it does not appear that the Babi movement recognizes in true earnestness a life after death. If it does, it says nothing definite about it. The Resurrection or the life after death as spoken of in the previous scriptures is here interpreted as conveying quite a different meaning. The Resurrection, we are told in Bayan, "is the period of any Manifestation from the first appearance of the 'Tree of Truth' until its decline"¹⁴¹ The following statement occurs in the Bayan VII, 15:

To the disappearance of the Tree of Truth is the Resurrection of the Quran, for till a thing does not reach its perfection, its Resurrection does not appear. The perfection of the religion of Islam ended with the beginning of the Manifestation (of Bab). And from the beginning of the Manifestation to its disappear-

139 Prof. Browne's Index of Bayan.

140 *Ibid.*

141 *Ibid.*

ance, the fruit of the tree of Islam, whatever it is, will become manifest. And the Resurrection of the Bayan comes with the Manifestation of manyuzhiruhullah, for the Bayan is today in the position of the life-germ, and in the beginning of the Manifestation of Manyuzhiruhullah, the end of the perfection of Bayan will appear.¹⁴²

We are also told that the day of Resurrection "is externally just like any other day and it passes by while many are unaware of it."¹⁴³

The Kitab-ul-Aqdas, which is the new scripture of the Bahais and which abrogated the Bayan, does not speak of heaven or hell, or of a life after death at all. In the other Tablets that are available there are but stray references. On one occasion we read: "Soon, will the polytheists see their place in the Fire, and the unitarians in the kingdom of God, the Lord of what is and what shall be."¹⁴⁴ A little further on in the same collection, we read: "Surely the exertion of those who disbelieve is wasted; they will soon find themselves in painful chastisement."¹⁴⁵ But the fire in which the polytheists, meaning all disbelievers in Bahauallah including Azali Babis, find themselves is only the fire of denial, as we find it explained in another Tablet: "They say, where are heaven and hell? Say, O you polytheists who doubt, the heaven is (your) seeing me and the hell is your own self."¹⁴⁶ In Bahauallah's writings, the Resurrection is explained as his own appearance, following the explanation given by the Bab, though contradicting him in the details:

Some of them say, Have the signs come down? Say, Yes by the Lord of the heavens. And has the Hour come? It has already passed away, by the Manifester of the arguments. Surely the *haaqqqa* (lit., *sure calamity* but meaning *resurrection*) has come and the truth has come with argument and authority. The *Sahira*

142 Prof. Browne's Index of Bayan.

143 *Ibid.*

144 Kitabul Aqdas and other Tablets, printed A.H. 1308, probably in Bombay, p. 335.

145 *Ibid.* p. 341.

146 Ishraqat (printed at Azizi Press, Agra) p.30.

(lit., *a state of wakefulness* and meaning *resurrection*) has become manifest and the world is in fear and perplexity. The earthquakes have come and the tribes cry from fear of God, the Powerful and the Omnipotent. Say, The Saakhkha (lit., *the deafening cry* and meaning *resurrection*) has come, and this day is for God, the One, the Controller. And they say, Has the Taamma (lit., *the Predominating calamity* and meaning *resurrection*) been complete? Say, Yes, by the Lord of lords. And has the Resurrection been established? Even the Sustainer with the kingdom of signs (has come). And do you see the people fallen down? Yes, by my Lord, the most High, the most Glorious. And have the trunks been hollowed? Even the mountains have been swept off, by the Master of the attributes.

He says where are heaven and hell? Say, The first is seeing me and the other thy own self, O thou doubter, polytheist. He says, We do not see the Balance. Say, Yes by my Lord the Beneficent, none sees it but those having eyes. He says, Have the stars fallen down? Say, Yea, when the Sustainer was in Adrianople. So take a lesson, O you who have sight, all the signs appeared when we took out the hand of power from the pocket of majesty and glory; the crier cried when the appointed time came...He says, Has the Trumpet been blown? Say, Yes, by the King of Manifestation, when he was firmly seated on the Throne of his name, the Beneficent...and the souls leaped in the graves of bodies...Those who disbelieve say, When was the heaven rent asunder? Say, When you were in the graves of negligence and error...Of them is he who says, Have the souls been gathered together, Say, Yes, by my Lord, when thou wast in the cradle of doubts.¹⁴⁷

It will be seen that the words in which questions are put in the above quotation are almost all taken from the Holy Quran where they occur concerning the Resurrection of the dead at the day of judgement. The *Haaqqa*, the *Saakhkha*, the *Taamma*, the *Sa'a* are various names for the Resurrection day, while in one question even the *Qiyama* is spoken of. And so also the blowing of the trumpet, the falling down of the stars, the rending asunder of

the sky, the passing away of the mountains, are all spoken of in the Holy Quran as the signs of the Day of Judgement when the dead shall rise. Now if all things relating to Qiyama or Resurrection are thus explained away as simply allegorical expression, the rising of the dead or the life after death and the judgement become simply a myth; and the Babi scriptures thus deal a death-blow to one of the two basic principles of religion, *i.e.*, a belief in a life after death, which alone can generate in man a sense of responsibility for all his actions. And by preaching that God is absolutely incomprehensible, the only sanction which makes religion a force is entirely destroyed. If God is absolutely incomprehensible, only manifesting Himself once in a thousand years in a human body, and if a life after death is denied, or thrown entirely into the background, the foundations of religion are almost pulled off, and this is what Babism has consciously or unconsciously done.

Throwing the doctrine of Resurrection or a life after death into the background, Babism has laid stress on the doctrine of *raj'a* or returning to the present state of existence after death. In the teachings of the Bab, the doctrine of *raj'a* was very prominent. All the leaders of Babism were believed to be the return to present life of one or other of the great men in Islamic history, though, it must be added, like all other Babi doctrines, it was loose and was not formulated definitely. For instance, we find Mirza Jani saying that Muhammad Ali Barfurushi, called Quddus, claimed to be the return to life of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, while the Bab himself was the *raj'a* of Ali (pp. 152, 153), but elsewhere the Bab is called the *raj'a* of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (p.272). To an ordinary mind the doctrine of *raj'a* is not easily distinguishable from the doctrines of transmigration or reincarnation, and hence it is that we find not only the opponents of Babism blaming it for teaching transmigration and reincarnation, but even the missionaries of Babism taught in America the doctrine of reincarnation. A reference to Browne's "Materials for Study of the Babi Religion" would show that Dr. Khairullah was explicit on this point: "Abraham, Jacob, Moses, Joshua and Daniel are reincarnated and are at Acre"; "Abbas

Effendi who is a reincarnation of Jesus Christ" (p.118). Nay, we are plainly told that the whole world would be reincarnated: "Those who die without hearing of Baha are reincarnated and have another chance." (P.117). But we are also told that Dr. Khairullah had differences with some other Bahai preachers on the question of immortality of the human soul and the doctrine of *raj'a* (p. 102), and Abbas Effendi did not pronounce a judgement on the point when the matter was brought to his notice.

The above, along with the doctrine of Manifestation, are what may be called the peculiar doctrines of the Babi faith which form its fundamentals. The author of the *Ihqaql Haq* also mentions that the Babis hold the doctrine of *Bada* which means that God can change His mind. The doctrine of *Bada* is no doubt held by all the heretical Shia sects called *Ghulat*, and is likely to have been entertained by the Shaikhis and later by the Babis; but as I cannot have access to the Bayan, which the author of the *Ihqaql Haq* had, I am not in a position to say definitely whether the founder of Babism actually preached the doctrine of *Bada*.

A belief in angels was apparently held, for in the Index to Bayan we are told that "Angels are unwilling to approach places where there is no water" (VI, 2) and again that "70,000 angels watch over every letter to preserve it and rejoice when it is well-written." (VI:19). We may pass over the details of the new law, as substantially it was the same as given by Bahauillah subsequently in the Kitab-ul-Aqdas, the abrogations relating only to some insignificant details, such, for instance, as the prohibition of tobacco which was inculcated by the Bab but abrogated by Bahauillah, and I would therefore content myself by giving a brief summary of the law of Bahauillah as given in the Kitab-ul-Aqdas.

The law of Bahauilla is taken almost entirely from the Islamic law with certain variations which appear to have been introduced with the object of affording some facilities to his followers. Thus the four fundamental principles of Islam are retained with some modifications in them. The number of obligatory prayers which is five according to the Islamic law is reduced to three, and the number of *rak'as* in all the prayers is stated to be nine: "Verily prayers have been made obligatory

upon you, nine *rak'as* for God, the sender of signs, (at three different times) when the day declines and in the morning and in the evening, and the rest we have annulled." This modification shows a trace of the Shiite sect of Islam, for the Shias generally combine into one the two afternoon prayers and the two prayers after sunset. As in Islam, the prayers are declared to be obligatory from the time when a person attains to puberty. The different gesticulations of the body are nearly the same as in Islam, and *sajda* or the act of prostration is clearly enjoined. In saying his prayers the Muslim turns his face to the Ka'ba, the holy temple at Mecca, but the Babi is enjoined to turn his face to "the Holy place where the higher beings make a circuit," an expression which must be understood to mean Akka, the place of the imprisonment of Bahauallah. The order relating to the saying of prayers in congregation as given in Islam is declared to have been abrogated except in the prayers which are said for a deceased person. The ablution or the washing of the hands and the face before saying one's prayers is also retained.

Fasting is also made obligatory, but as the Babi month comprises nineteen days, the number of fasts is reduced from thirty to nineteen. Fasting is declared to be obligatory, just as in Islam, upon all the followers except when a person is on journey or when he is sick and except in the case of pregnant women or those who suckle babes. Before the month of fasting sets in, a few days are set apart for enjoyment, while the *Nairoz*, or the Persian new year's day, is declared to be the 'Id of the Babis, the day of feasting and rejoicing which follows immediately the Babi month of fasts. The fast is to be kept from sunrise to sunset.

As regards *Zakat*, the setting apart of a fixed portion of one's property for the poor, which is the third fundamental principle of Islam, we have the following direction in the Kitab-ul-Aqdas: "Verily, it is made obligatory upon you to purify provisions and what is besides them by payment of *Zakat*. This is what the Sender of signs has ordered you in this powerful paper. In future we shall detail to you its *nisab* (the amount of property the possession of which renders payment of *Zakat* necessary) when God wills and intends it." I have not been able to find these

details anywhere in the Kitab-ul-Aqdas.

Polygamy is also sanctioned by Bahauallah. On page 22 of the Kitab-ul-Aqdas we read: "Verily God has enjoined marriage upon you but beware that you do not marry more than two wives, and as for him who contents himself with one woman only, he himself and the woman will both live in peace, and there is no harm if a person keeps a virgin for his service. So has the commandment been written with truth by the pen of revelation. Marry, O people! So that from you may spring up those who should remember Me among My servants."

No marriage is legal without *mahr* (payment of a sum to the bride), different amounts of which are fixed for people living in towns and people living in villages. When the husband goes on a journey, it is obligatory upon him to fix a limit for his return of which he should apprise his wife. If he is unable to return at the end of the time fixed for any good cause, he should inform his wife of it and try his best to return as soon as he can. But if he has either no good cause for lengthening his stay beyond the fixed limit or does not come back at the time agreed upon, the wife should wait for nine months and then she is at liberty to contract a new marriage. *Idda*, or waiting for a prescribed time before contracting a second marriage, is also necessary for the divorced wife and the widow by the law proclaimed by Bahauallah. If there is disagreement or hatred between the husband and the wife, the husband cannot immediately divorce his wife, but he must wait for a full year. If during this period, the disagreement or the hatred is not removed, then the husband is at liberty to divorce his wife. There is no objection to the marriage of the divorced parties to long as the wife does not contract a new marriage.

The law of inheritance follows in principle the Islamic law of distribution of property into parts. The property of the deceased is directed to be divided into seven unequal portions in the following proportions: eighty-one portions for the children, sixty-four for the husband or the wife as the case may be, forty-nine for the father, thirty six for the mother, twenty-five for the brothers, sixteen for the sisters, nine for the teachers.

Immediately after this division we read the remark: "When we heard the crying of children in the backs of their fathers, we doubled their portions, reducing those of others." If a person dies and he has no children, their portion is directed to be paid into the *Bait-ul-Adl*, lit., the *house of justice*, so that the trustees thereof may spend it for the welfare of the widows and the orphans and for the benefit of the public. But if a person has children and there are no inheritors besides them, two-thirds of the whole property is directed to be distributed among the children while one-third goes to the *Bait-ul-Adl*. In case there is none of the inheritors named above, but there are other near relatives such as children of brothers and sisters, two-thirds of the property goes to them. In their absence, the same share is inherited by the paternal and maternal uncles and aunts, or by their children if the uncles and aunts are dead, the remaining third in each case going to the *Bait-ul-Adl*. If none of the persons named is alive to inherit the deceased, the whole of the property goes to the public fund. The house in which a person lives and the clothes which he wears belong as of right to the male among the children, the daughters and all other inheritors being excluded.

Some random directions are given here and there. For instance, there is an injunction requiring the members of the sect to change completely the furniture of their houses after the lapse of nineteen years. Houses should be built and decorated in the best possible manner but there should be no pictures in them. The "rehearsing of the signs of God" or reading one of Bahau'llah's books to others is not permitted in a standing posture. The reciter should sit down on a chair on a raised platform, for, we are told, "God loves yours sitting on chairs and raised platforms." The kissing of hands is forbidden. Gambling and use of opium are also prohibited. The feet should be washed once in every twenty-four hours in the hot season and in every seventy-two hours in the winter. Some other very minute details are given which it would be mere waste of time to describe here. The law given, however, is by no means a complete law, and while directions are given on some very trivial points, many of the most important matters are altogether neglected, and no fundamental principles of the law are given.

Injunctions are also laid down for the punishment of certain offenses. Burn the person who burns a house intentionally. The severity of this punishment is a little softened further on where after stating that culpable homicide should be punished with death, it is added: "And if you order them to be imprisoned for life, there is no sin upon you in the book. Adultery is not looked upon as a criminal offence, nor is the aggrieved party entitled even to damages. "Verily God has ordered for every adulterer and adulteress a payment into the *Bait-ul-Adl* of nine *mithqals* of gold," *mithqal* being equal nearly to sixty grains. This punishment is a little enhanced when the crime is repeated by the same offender, the amount to be paid into the *Bait-ul-Adl* being doubled. For the thief is deportation and imprisonment, but if he commits theft a third time, his forehead should be marked with a mark by which he may be recognized wherever he goes.

Certain rights to the property of his followers Bahauillah claimed for himself. Nearly one-fifth of one's possessions must be made over to him by every follower. The person who owns a hundred *mithqals* of gold, nineteen *mithqals* are for God, the Creator of earth and heavens:

Beware, O people! lest you keep back your souls from this mighty grace. This commandment we have given you though we stand in no need of help from you and from all who are in earth and heavens...Say, by this it is meant to purify your properties and make you attain the stages which are not attained by any except him whom God wills. O people! be not dishonest in paying the dues of God (Bahauillah) and do not in any way handle them except with his permission.

In fact, all properties set apart in the way of alms are the sole property of Bahauillah and after him of his sons:

Verily what is set apart for charity returns to God, the manifest of signs. No one has any right to handle them in any way except with the permission of the rising-place of revelation, and after him the charge of such property shall be solely in the hands of the *Ghusns* (the *Ghusn-i-Azam* and the *Ghusn-i-Akbar*, the two sons of Bahauillah) and after them this right shall vest in the *Bait-ul-Adl*, if it is firmly established in the country.

Thus Bahauallah himself had the charge of all charities and the fifth in his life-time, and after his death all sums were to be paid to his sons. The *Bait-ul-Adl*, which is mentioned here, was really an association of the followers of Bahauallah. Every city where there were Babis was required to have a *Bait-ul-Adl* having eight members or more who should be trustees of the public funds.

These are some of the laws laid down by Bahauallah and the observance of these is obligatory upon all those who follow him. The principle laid down in the very beginning of the *Kitab-ul-Aqdas* is that the acceptance of his claims is useless unless a man acts upon the injunctions given by him, just as the performance of these obligations is useless unless the claims of Bahauallah are accepted. And as every one of the injunctions is mentioned, it is accompanied with the remark that it is a Divine commandment. In one place it is said after relating the forms of prayer:

These are the limits of God which have been written by the great Pen in books and tablets. Hold fast by the injunctions of God and His commandments and be not like those who follow laws laid down by themselves and throw the laws laid down by God behind them because they follow conjectures and whims.

And again:

And the sincere ones find in the limits of God the water of life for people of all sects and the lamp of wisdom and success for those in the earths and the heavens...Beware lest you refrain from acting upon anything which has been plainly laid down in the tablet.

It would be interesting to learn how many of the Western followers of Bahauallah believe in and follow the laws laid down by him. The Babi missionaries in the West never mention that Bahauallah prescribed forms for many of the deeds which should be daily done, and these directions, he asserted, could not be changed, at least not for a thousand years. Misconceptions actually prevail on many of the points taught by Bahauallah as, for instance, in relation to polygamy which it is thought, Bahauallah actually prohibited, while as a matter of fact he plainly taught that a man could have two wives at one and the same time.

CHAPTER III

The Sources of Babism

THE ISMAILIYYA

Babism, as we have already seen, took its birth among the Shaikhiyya, one of the Shia sects which are known under the common name of *Ghulat* or religious extremists. Among these heretical sects Babism comes nearest, both in its doctrines and its ideals, to the Ismailiyya, and old Shia sect. The Ismailiyya take their name from Ismail, eldest son of Imam Jafar Sadiq, who is the sixth Imam recognized by all Shias. Imam Jafar first nominated Ismail as his successor, but afterwards learning of some indiscretion on his part nominated his second son Musa as his successor. The Ismailiyya do not admit this alteration, and though Ismail died before his father, he is still looked upon by them as the rightful Imam. They are called *Batiniyya* on account of their esoteric doctrine and allegorical exposition of the Holy Quran. The sect afterwards became notorious on account of Hasan ibn Sabah who secretly took possession of the fortress of Alamut and caused terror by his raids all round. The *fidais* (lit. those undertaking to sacrifice their lives), as the initiates into the movement were called assassinated secretly every person whom they thought an obstacle in their way, and for a time the name of the Ismailiyya became a terror in the Muslim world. When Sultan Malik Shah tried to seize the fortress, the followers of Hasan ibn Sabah made a night attack and routed the royal forces. And the Vizier Nizamul Mulk was murdered by a *fidai*.

As I have already said, the cardinal doctrine of the Ghulat relating to the person of the Divine Being is a belief in hulul, or God manifesting himself in human form, which is nearly the same as the doctrine of Incarnation in Christianity. Now the Ismailiyya and the Babis are both one in holding that God is incomprehensible and cannot be known, and it is only through the Prophet or the

Imam according to the former, and through the "Manifestation" according to the latter, that God can be approached or addressed. According to the Ismailiyya, God made manifest Universal Reason in which are all the Divine attributes, and which is God in his implied outward manifestation.

As prayer cannot be addressed to an inaccessible Being, it is turned towards His exterior Manifestation, Reason, which thus becomes the real Divinity of the Ismailiyya.¹⁴⁸ Further the Prophet with his successors, the Imams, is only an earthly incarnation of Reason, so that in fact the Imam is the real Divinity, and though in theory he may not be acknowledged as such, his command is the command of God and must be blindly obeyed. Exactly the same is the position of the "Manifestation", or the "Point", in the Babi movement, as has already been shown. The knowledge of God is the knowledge of the Manifestation; refuge with God is refuge with him; and meeting with God is equivalent to meeting with him, for none can meet the most High Essence. The Divine Volition by which all things are created is the *Nuqta* or the *Point*, so that the *Point* or the *Manifestation* in the Babi doctrine takes the place of the Prophet or the Imam in the Ismailiyya. The slight difference in terminology in the two movements disappears altogether in practice. Just as in the Ismailiyya the word of the Imam is final, being the word of God, and must be accepted blindly, the same is the case with the Manifestation in the Babi movement. Bahauallah has laid even greater stress on this point than the Bab. Writing under the heading of *Isma-Kubra* or the Greatest Sinlessness, he says:

Isma-Kubra (the Greatest Sinlessness) is special for him whose rank is above commandments and prohibitions, for he is the light after which there is no darkness, and the very correctness which is not affected by the least error. If he should call the water wine, and judge the heaven to be earth and the paradise to be hell, he is perfectly right and no one has the right to object to him or to say, why and wherefore. And he who objects is of those who turn back

in the book of God, the Lord of worlds. Surely he is not questioned as to what he does, and all others are questioned about everything. Surely he has come from the heaven of the Unseen, and with him is the banner of 'he does what he pleases' and the hosts of power and control, and for every one beside him it is compulsory that he should hold fast the laws and orders with which he is commanded: and if he should depart from them by so much as a hair's breadth, his deeds shall become null.¹⁴⁹

It is not only in the basic doctrine of the faith that Babism so closely resembles the Ismailiyya. There is a marked resemblance in most of the other principal doctrines. For instance, the Babi doctrine relating to paradise and hell may be clearly traced to the Ismailiyya who taught that "paradise allegorically signified the state of the soul which had reached perfect knowledge while hell was ignorance.¹⁵⁰ Bab and Bahauallah both recognized no other heaven than belief in themselves and no other hell than their own denial. The doctrine of *raj'a* (return to present life) was also one of the important doctrines of the Ismailiyya. They recognized that "no soul was condemned to hell eternally; it returned to earth by metempsychosis until it had recognized the Imam of the epoch and had learned theological knowledge from him.¹⁵¹ Exactly the same doctrine was taught by Dr. Khairullah, the Bahai missionary in America: "Those who die without hearing of Bab are reincarnated and have another chance.¹⁵²

A most striking point of resemblance between the two cults is the importance attached to the numerical value of letters. Just as calculations made from the numerical value of letters played an important part in the Ismailiyya, so do they do in Babism. We have seen how Mirza Ali Muhammad puts down his own name as Ali Nabil in his will in favor of Subh-i-Azal, simply because the numerical value of *Nabil* is equal to the numerical value of

149 Ashraquat, pp. 21,22.

150 Encyclopedia of Islam.

151 *Ibid.*

152 Materials for Study of the Babi Religion, p. 117.

Muhammad according to the *abjad* system, and in the same document he calls his successor *Al-Wahid* (the One), because the numerical value of *Wahid* is the same as that of *Yahya*. In fact, for the proofs of the claims of the founder of Babism we have either allegorical explanations of plain words of the Holy Quran or arguments deduced from the numerical value of certain words. For instance, in the chapter entitled *al-Qiyama* we read: "He asks, when is the day of Resurrection? When the sight becomes confused and the moon becomes dark and the sun and the moon are brought together; man shall say on that day whither to fly to? By no means! there shall be no place of refuge; with thy Lord alone shall on that day be the place of rest." (75:6-11). Now Bab and Bahauallah both claim to be the Resurrection spoken of in the Holy Quran, and the author of the *Bahrul Irfan* reads the name of Ali Muhammad in these words, for the sun signifies Muhammad and the moon Ali and their bringing together is the appearance of a person of the name of Ali Muhammad. Add to this the numerical consideration: "With thy Lord alone shall on that day be the place of rest." Now the Arabic for Lord is *Rabb*, and on the basis of a numerical calculation *Ali Muhammad* and *Rabb* are the equivalents of each other, each having 202 as its numerical value. Hence Ali Muhammad is meant when the Lord is spoken of Again where the Holy Prophet is commanded to say prayers: "Keep up prayer from the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night" (17:78), the *Bahr ul Irfan* finds a clear prophecy of the advent of another Law, for the words for the *darkness of the night* are *ghasaq illail*, and their numerical value is 1231, but according to the author of the *Bahr ul Irfan* it is 1261, and the meaning is, not that prayers should be said beginning with the declining of the sun till the darkness of the night which is the time for the last prayer of the day before going to bed, but that a new Law would be revealed in the year 1261 A. H! The Bayan itself contains strange instances of a resort to the numerical value of letters. For instance, the Bab himself makes out the year of his appearance 1270 by the following calculation. The attribute *Aghfar* of the Divine Being (meaning, very forgiving) has its numerical value

1281; deduct from it the numerical value of *huwa* (meaning he) which is 11, and you get 1270 as the year of the appearance of the Bab. Again he calls *Kirman* the land of fire, because the numerical value of *Kirman* is the same as that of *niran* (pl. of *nar* meaning, *fire*). The time of the appearance of the new Manifestation after the Bab — he whom God shall manifest — was to be met with either in the numerical value of *Ghiath* (meaning, one coming for succour) or that of *mustaghath* (meaning, one from whom succour is sought) being 1511 in the case of the former and 2001 in the case of the latter, though actually Bahauallah did not wait for more than seventeen years to lay claim to that high office.

Even the name Bab seems to have been taken by Mirza Ali Muhammad from the Ismailiyya. It is true that the orthodox Shias recognized four Babs after the disappearance of the Imam Mahdi, but in orthodox view the death of the last of them brought the period of Babhood to a close. It was among the Ismailiyya that the Bab was identified with the spiritual leader, and the Shaikh or the head of the sect who initiated into the mysteries of religion received the title of the Bab, and it was from them that Mirza Ali Muhammad borrowed the term, attaching the same *quasi*-divine character to the holder of the title as the Ismailiyya did.

It is not only in doctrine and name that Babism bears such a strong resemblance to the Ismailiyya. It is in the nature of teachings that the fact comes out clearly that Babism was only a more modern form of the Ismailiyya. It is well-known that on account of their esoteric doctrines, the Ismailiyya are called the *Batiniyya*, and though some other extremists sects also sought esoteric meaning in plain words, yet the name *Batiniyya* has been particularly applied to the Ismailiyya. And we find the Babi leaders plainly teaching that their master, the Bab, was a teacher of the *Batiniyya* doctrine. The later Babis, or Bahais, while practically adhering to the *Batiniyya* methods of propagation, do not in theory cherish the idea, but Mirza Jani, the earliest historian of Babism and the early Babi leaders are very outspoken on this point. A law regulating the actions of men and meant to keep

them within the bounds was no more needed according to Muhammad Ali of Barfurush whom Mirza Jani quotes approvingly: "Commandments relate to those who are still on their way to reach a goal. When the traveler reaches the goal, the commandments relating to the journey are cancelled in his case." In still more clear terms, Babism and Batiniyya are declared to be one: "The commandments of His Holiness are the commandments of *Batin* (i.e., relating to the hidden) and necessarily when that which is hidden comes, the outward commandments go".¹⁵³

Thus the principle on which the Ismailiyya and Babism are based is one and the same, the seeking of hidden meaning in plain words and discarding the outward commandments. This coincidence cannot be accidental and affords the clearest proof that Babism drinks deep at the fountain of the Ismailiyya. The practical side of the two movements discloses a similar resemblance. The history of Babism as narrated in the foregone pages brings out two facts in all clearness; viz., the adoption of secret methods of propagation and keeping the masses in ignorance as to what the movement really taught. Even those who were initiated into the movement had not the whole mystery revealed to them at once. Prof. Browne tells us how on one occasion when he was trying to understand the doctrine of Divinity in Babism, one Babi warned another not to reveal the whole truth because he was not yet ripe to receive it. The masses had never access to the Babi books, and only the chosen few could get copies of them. And though there were not marked degrees of initiation, as in the Ismailiyya, yet there is not the least doubt that the Babi masses resembled the *fidais* of the Ismailiyya, and were required to obey blindly the orders of their superiors.

If both movements worked up a high degree of fanaticism among their followers, they both aimed at the same thing. The horrors of Alamut as connected with the Ismailiyya have their counterpart in the secret murders with which Babism started and which culminated in the open insurrections against the Persian Government and the attempt on the Shah's life. In both cases

153 Nuqtatul Qaf, pp. 150, 151.

there was an attempt to bring about a revolution, and to establish a new order of things. It is true that both the Ismailiyya and Babism are religious movements, and just as the risings of the Babis against the government do not entitle us to place it among the purely anarchical movements, so the assassinations connected with the name of Hasan Ibn Sabah and his *fidais* do not exclude the Ismailiyya from the category of religious movements. But both tried to bring about a religious reform through a political change. The only difference, if any, is that the Bab and his lieutenants were even more impatient and less prudent than Hasan Ibn Sabah, and they started on an insurrectionary course without gaining sufficient strength. The claim to Mahdiyyism, coupled with the weakness of the existing Government, was the great temptation which led them to precipitate things, and the result was that the attempt to bring about a change of rule and establish a kingdom of the Babi saints was a gigantic failure which almost crushed the Babi movement, and it found a new lease of life only in the message of Bahauallah. But let it not be assumed that Bahauallah's message with all its claims to establish love and peace was free from the tinge of secret murders which tarnished the name of the Ismailiyya. As I have already shown Bahauallah and his followers found themselves too weak to start on a career of assassinating against either the Persian Government, or their new masters, the Turks, but the spirit of the Ismailiyya showed itself unmistakably in the cold blooded secret murders of the adherents of Mirza Yahya, the rival leader. Thus Babism, along with its offshoot, Bahatism, is clearly a repetition not only of the doctrines of Ismailiyya but also of the horrible deeds of murder and the attempt to bring about a revolution.

——THE END ——