OTTOMAN REFORM MOVEMENTS AND THE BAHĀ'Ī FAITH, 1860s–1920s

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This paper examines the relationship between the Young Ottoman and Young Turk reform movements and the Bahā'īs that was established probably from the time of Bahā'u'llāh's exile to Istanbul and Edirne and certainly from 1868 with Bahā'u'llāh's banishment to Palestine. The emphasis of this article is not the convergence of ideas but the nature of the contacts and the impressions of the Young Ottomans and Young Turks of the Bābīs and Bahā'īs. Regarding the convergence of ideas, suffice it to say that Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā', his successor and authorised interpreter of his writings, have referred to topics such as 'consultation,' 'liberty,' 'constitutional monarchy,' and 'democracy' which were also discussed among reformist intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire as well as in Persia (Momen 1983; Buck 1991; Cole 1992 and 1998; Alkan 1998).

1. *Reform and Opposition in the Ottoman Empire*

The years 1839–1876 are known as the *Tanzimat* ('reordering') period in the history of the Ottoman Empire. Successive sultans and their high-ranking ministers aimed to reform the Ottoman state as to compete with the European Powers and to prevent their infringement upon the internal Ottoman matters. The reforms were proclaimed basically through three imperial edicts: the *Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerîfi* (Noble Edict of Gülhane/Istanbul) of 1839, the *Islahât Fermanı* (Reform Edict) of 1856 and the *Kânûn-i Esâsî* (Substantial Law) of 1876 (Berkes 1998; Lewis, 1968; Shaw/Shaw 1977 (2); Uzunçarşılı/Karal, 1961–83 (7, 8)). The central theme of the last was the introduction of the first constitution (*meşrutiyet*) that was drafted under the auspices of Midhat Pasha. The period starting from 1876 is known as the "First Constitution" (*Birinci Meşrutiyet*). Its main aim was to restrict to some extent the exercise of the powers of the sultan, and for the first time it accepted a parliamentary system. The terms of this constitution

covered basic rights and privileges, the independence of courts and the safety of judges, among other aspects. The reform decrees were partially directed toward winning the support of European powers and emphasised the equality of all subjects under the law. It allowed civil and political rights to Christian subjects. These decrees were formulated after European models and moved away from the Islamic holy *sharīʿa*. However, the main goal of the reforms was to preserve the Ottoman state (Davison 1963; Devereux 1963). After Sultan Abdülaziz was deposed by some reformist intellectuals called "Young Ottomans" (1876) and the short ineffective interregnum of Sultan Murad V, Abdülhamid II reigned until 1909. Though he initially accepted the constitution and a parliament, in 1878 he closed it down and strengthened his position as an absolute ruler for 33 years until he was overthrown by the Young Turks revolution, and the constitution and parliament were again put into effect (*İkinci Meşrutiyet*, "Second Constitution").

During the Tanzimat many Ottoman students were sent to Europe for education in various fields. They came into contact with different European ideologies such as liberalism, nationalism and constitutionalism that deeply influenced them. Gradually these young intellectuals who later worked as low-level government officials, moved away from Ottoman traditionalism and expressed their ideas on the political, social and religious problems of the Empire and offered their remedies in their writings, journals and other literature made possible by the emerging press. This group known as the "Young Ottomans" (*Yeni Osmanlılar*) organised itself in the secret 'Patriotic Alliance' (*İttifâk-i Hamiyyet*) in 1865 that became the "Young Ottoman Committee" (*Yeni Osmanlı Cemiyeti*) two years later. They demanded more democratic conditions and favoured a constitutional government; they aimed for Turkey to participate in both at the Western and Islamic cultures and to stop the disintegration of the Empire; they criticised the superficial reforms being carried out. Their enemy was not the sultan but mainly Âli Pasha and Fuad Pasha. In the eyes of the Young Ottomans, whose perspectives were rooted in orthodox Islamic belief, these secularising pashas were serving European imperialism and blindly imitating Western culture. Reforms were not enough, their emphasis was on a liberal regime that would ensure freedom (*hürriyet*) so as to halt the decline of the state and stop the intervention of the Western Powers. The pashas rejected the idea of constitutional rule by saying that the establishment of a national

assembly would lead to the representation of those nationalistic groups who wanted to separate themselves from the Empire and that Ottoman society was not prepared for it. The Young Ottomans deemed the participation of Muslim and non-Muslim groups in a parliamentary system as a good means to arouse in all the feeling of the same "fatherland" (*vatan*) and thus weaken the various nationalistic movements (Mardin 1962).

Because of their radical ideas for which they fought hard many Young Ottomans were forced to flee to Europe from 1865 but returned from France and England to Istanbul after the death of their chief-enemy Âli Pasha in 1871. In 1873 the performance of the patriotic play *Vatan yahud Silistre* ('Fatherland or Silistria') of Namık Kemal (1840–1888), an eminent poet and writer and one of the founders of the "Patriotic Alliance," caused an uproar. Mainly because of their sympathies towards the heir apparent Murad Pasha, Kemal and other four of his colleagues were exiled by Sultan Abdülaziz to different places: he himself to Famagusta in Cyprus; the journalist and publisher Ebüzziya Tevfik (1848–1913) and the novelist Ahmed Midhat (1844–1912) to Rhodes; and Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı (1850–1918), who was then a young theology student, and Menapirzade Nuri Bey (1844–1906), co-founder of the Young Ottoman Committee, to ʿAkkā in Palestine (Tevfik 1974; Bereketzade 1915/1997; Kuntay 1944–56 (2/I): 151–80; Tansel 1967 (1)). During their exile, Namık Kemal, Ebüzziya Tevfik and Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı either communicated or came into personal contact with the Bahā'īs.

2. *Young Ottomans and Bahā'īs*

Ebüzziya Tevfik talks in his account of the history of the Young Ottomans about the "Bābīs" who were exiled to ʿAkkā via Rhodes. He considers their banishment as the result of Iran's interference in Ottoman politics and rejects that they are engaged in religious propaganda in the Empire. At the same time he regards "Bābism" as a religious belief disguised as a political doctrine intending to start a revolution in Iran. Tevfik also mentions that "thanks to the kind help of an individual named Bahaeddin among them [the Bābīs], who probably is still alive, we received news about Nuri Bey and Hakkı Efendi and eventually a response to our letter" (Tevfik 1974 (3): 64). With regard to the name "Bahaeddin" it is said that Tevfik

here obviously is confusing it with "Bahā'u'llāh" (Cole 1998: 69). However, it seems that Bahā'u'llāh was generally known in the Haifa-'Akkā area as Bahā'u'd-Dīn. The following report supports this: "Lately the prophet of the Baabis, Beha-eddin, died at his country house in Acca. He was towards 80 years old. There is a large community of Persians, Baabis, in Acca, some of whom have much influence" (cited in Momen 1981: 233). Supposedly, this name was also less theologically problematic than Bahā'u'llāh.

Namık Kemal, apparently, had more contacts with Bahā'u'llāh's half-brother, and opponent, Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal and his Azalī followers in Famagusta, than with Bahā'īs. In one of his letters written in Famagusta and dated 1873 in which he describes the city and its people, he refers to the 'Bābīs' with these words:

> The Bābīs who sometimes claim prophethood and sometimes divinity, and some of whom even God forbid! maintain that they have created God, are here . . . The Bābīs receive more money under the pretext of daily salaries than the government officers. They eat and drink, and under the shadow of His Majesty try to divide the Ottoman country; they constantly do pray for the total disintegration of the Sublime Empire (Kuntay 1944–56 (2/I): 44; Tansel 1967: 240–41).

And in another letter from 1874 and probably addressed to Midhat Pasha he calls them "the most wicked creatures" (*eşerr-i mevcûdât*) (Tansel, 1967 (1): 309). Süleyman Nazif, a Turkish writer, refers to this in his book *Nasıruddin Şah ve Babiler*:

> That Kemal Bey accepts the Bābīs as 'the most wicked creatures' does not discredit 'Abbās Efendi ['Abdu'l-Bahā'], because, first of all, 'Abbās Efendi withdrew from Bābism and even was praying to God to guard him from it . . . It is also true that Ṣubḥ-i Azal was surrounded by a company of wicked and degenerate Bābīs. The power and grandeur was on Bahā'u'llāh's side, as it is only Bahā'u'llāh's still well established creed and order that is esteemed and influential in Europe and America (Nazif 1923: 53–54).

Elsewhere Nazif says: 'Abbās Efendi had told me clearly and emphatically that he was not a Bābī" (Ibid.: 53). This statement is supported by 'Abdu'l-Bahā' himself who makes a clear distinction between the Bābīs and Bahā'īs ('Abdu'l-Bahā' 1330/1912: 206), and with reference to the Azalīs: ". . . in Iran at present there is a sect made up of a few individuals who are called 'Bābīs'; they claim allegiance to the Bāb but are utterly uninformed of him. They possess secret teachings, which are utterly opposed to those of Bahā'u'llāh. Now, in

Iran, the people know this, but, when they come to Europe, they conceal their own teachings and utter the teachings of Bahā'u'llāh . . . you will see the true fact that the teachings of Bahā'u'llāh are completely at odds with those of this sect" (cited by MacEoin 1983: 228–29).

Saying "Abbās Efendi withdrew from Bābism" hints to the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' had dissociated himself from the Bābism his uncle Mīrzā Yaḥyā was propagating. Nazif's conclusion seems to indicate that Namık Kemal was referring to the Azalīs. On the other hand Kemal himself remarks that he dictated a theatre play (*Gülnihal*) to Ahmed Ezel, a son of Mīrzā Yaḥyā (Tansel 1967 (1): 335). Thus, Kemal's relationship to the 'Bābīs' remains ambiguous. In his same work Süleyman Nazif mentions that Namık Kemal had communicated with 'Abdu'l-Bahā':

> When I met 'Abbās Efendi . . . two years ago [1917] in the town of Haifa he told me with complete sorrow that he had an extensive correspondence with Kemal Bey but that out of worry about investigation and persecution in the time of Sultan Abdülhamid II he had burnt those letters (Nazif 1923: 52–53).

Juan Cole mentions that Namık Kemal, sent to Cyprus, had more contact with Azalīs than with Bahā'īs, though he developed a friendship with the Bahā'ī Mishkīn Qalam, whom the Ottomans had perversely sent to the island with the Azalīs. One of his closest companions in exile was Şeyh Ahmed Effendi, hero of the Kuleli uprising, who had adopted Babism or the Bahā'ī faith in his Cyprus exile. By 1876, the year of his release, Namık Kemal was constrained to deny rumours circulating in Istanbul that he had become a 'Bābī'. It is not obvious from the letters of Kemal to which Cole refers that the above-mentioned Ahmed Efendi became a Bābī or Bahā'ī (Cole 1992: 11; idem 1998: 69). Due to difficult Ottoman syntax in these letters this issue remains vague. There is no satisfactory information on Ahmed Efendi who was a leader of the Kuleli Revolt in 1856 against the government (İğdemir 1937; Kuntay 1944–53 (2/I): 689–93).

As to Mishkīn Qalam, Cole possibly assumes that "Bahâ'î-i bihi'l-ahlâk" ("a Bahā'ī of high ethical standards") (Tansel, 1967 (1): 454) refers to Mishkīn Qalam; in fact, according to the editor of Namık Kemal's letters (index in Tansel 1967 (1)) it is a reference to Bahā'u'llāh. If so, Kemal furthermore was in contact with him. However, first of all, a "Bahā'ī" is a "follower of Bahā'." Secondly, we have examples

of other Ottomans referring to him, and they call him a şeyh and acknowledge his leadership position. There is some question as to whether Tansel's identification in this case is correct. Thus Mishkīn Qalam may be considered as an alternative.

Süleyman Nazif also remarks that the poet-statesman Ziya Pasha, another important Young Ottoman figure, as maintained by some Western historians, had met Ṣubḥ-i Azal when he was governor of Cyprus and laid the foundations of the contacts between the Bābīs and the Young Ottomans. Yet there is nothing to support this information (Nazif 1923: 52) nor that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' was acquainted with Ziya Pasha, and was in contact with him (Ibid.: 18, 53).

In a study of Ziya Pasha, the author (Bilgegil 1970) refers to the French historian León Cahun who was personally in contact with the Young Ottoman expatriates in Paris, and according to him some of them had established contacts with the "Bābīs" towards 1868: "à cette date quelques «Jeune Turcs» sont entrés en rapport avec les Bektachis, et les *Babis*" (Cahun 1924: 545). He also remarks that the revolutionary spirit that has been developed by the Young Turks (in Europe both the Young Ottomans and the Young Turks were labelled as "Young Turks") through contact with Europe and the revolutionary spirit that has its roots in Islam, "either in republican and collectivist or pantheist and anarchist mysticism," existed side by side and came in contact around 1868 (Cahun, 1924: 545). He states that whereas in Istanbul this opposition started among young people who were captivated by reading Western literature, it took a different Oriental shape in the provinces; the mystical sects, and most likely the Bektaşis and the Bābīs, preached religious reform in Anatolia, namely in Konya and Üsküdar (Istanbul) (Cahun 1924: 546).

The Bektaşis, a heterodox Shī'ī sect who are said to have been revolutionary in essence, were the spiritual leaders of the Janissary troops who rebelled against the military reform by Sultan Mahmud II. He eliminated the corps in 1826, and abolished the Bektaşi order.

It is interesting to note in this regard Namık Kemal's attachment to this order and even his Bektaşi background (Melikoff 1988: 337–39; idem 1997: 25–33). Known for their liberal and tolerant ideas and their support of the oppressed, the Bektaşis influenced intellectual life in the Ottoman Empire. This community of the oppressed was mystical and religious in character; the Bektaşis claim that their creed originated in the time of the Karbalā' martyrs and later acquired a socio-religious colour; its martyrs became a symbol for all facing

injustice and coercion. Kemal was inclined to this kind of thought since his childhood, and the ideals of liberalism, tolerance and the equality of different races and social classes he learned of in Europe found favour in his eyes.

Pushed to secrecy from 1826, the Bektaşis found the support of the Freemasons. Both groups shared liberalism, tolerance, non-conformism and anti-clericalism. In addition, the Bektaşi conventions in the cities attracted many intellectuals because of the rich Bektaşi culture of literature, poetry and music. These educated liberal-minded people played a similar role in the Ottoman reform movement, as did the Masons in the European Enlightenment.

Namık Kemal, like other Ottoman statesmen and intellectuals (Gün/Çeliker, 1968: 19; Düzdağı 1977 (1): 53), joined a Masonic lodge. The ideal that Freemasonry aimed at was a society the members of which have equal rights with respect to freedom and laws, regardless of race and religion. Thus it is not surprising that Kemal joined a movement whose features were close to his hopes and ideals he fought for all his life (Melikoff 1999: 302–5). This inclination of Namık Kemal makes his aforesaid alleged interest in the Bābī-Bahā'ī religion, whose teachings are based on equality, tolerance and unity of mankind, more possible.

León Cahun adds in his account: 'Le parti actif des Babistes réfugiés dans l'empire ottoman, sous l'influence de Yahia, à la suite de ses relations avec Zia Pacha, et plus tard avec Mehemed Bey, a peu à peu perdu son caractère religieux et s'est fondu, comme parti socialiste et révolutionaire, dans le groups les avancés de la "Jeune Turcs" ' (Cahun, 1924: 559). Nazif, too, refers to the loss of the religious character of the Bābī movement: 'The more the Bābīs retreated towards the West, the goals and fundamentals they pursued also changed. The religious movement in Iran gradually took a social form' (Nazif, 1923: 53). The aforementioned 'Mehemed Bey' is Mehmed Bey, one of the founding members of the Young Ottoman society. He was the grandson of the same Necib Pasha (Mardin 1962: 10, fn 1) who as governor of Baghdad interrogated Mullā 'Alī Bastāmī, an early follower of the Bāb, and exiled him to Istanbul (Momen 1982: 113–43).

To sum up Nazif's account of the Bābīs and Bahā'īs: he lengthily dwells on the personality of 'Abdu'l-Bahā', and conveys to the reader his encounter with him in 1917 in Haifa. 'Abbās Efendi, 'son and successor of the famous Bahā'u'llāh', who had withdrawn from Bābism

and established an independent mezheb/*madhhab* and, as stated by himself, a tarikat/*ṭarīqa*, moved from ʿAkkā to Haifa after the Second Constitution (Young Turk *coup d'etat* 1908). Because his words and statements were for the most part distorted, ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ initially received visitors with suspicion. But then he was assured of Nazif's sincerity, and talked about all the events since his childhood (Nazif 1923: 18).

A few months after the publication of *Beyrut Vilayeti* (yearbook of the Beirut district; Temimi/Yazar, 1335/1917), in the first volume of which twelve pages deal with the authors' three meetings with ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ, Nazif met him in Haifa; the Bahāʾī leader complained that his statements and ideas were misrepresented there or not properly understood. Nazif confirms that some statements in those pages are not congruent with the "manifest intelligence" of ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ, and adds: "I do not know how real ʿAbbās Efendi's sincerity towards me was. I have not witnessed anything that made me think that he was insincere" (Nazif 1923: 87). Süleyman Nazif ends the story of his encounter with ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ with the latter's words that "We have no belief that is contrary to true Islam. Our judgment (*ijtihād*) is in accord with the spirit of Islam" (Ibid.: 88).

In a letter (dated 17 Shaʿbān 1338) written to Nazif in Turkish and appended to the book, ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ complains about some articles on him, published in the newspaper *Tasvir-i Efkâr*; he says that the information was received second hand by Westerners from certain persons in Istanbul who outwardly appear as Bābīs. Nazif, ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ states, who is a lover of truth and has studied the writings of Bahāʾu'llāh, should scrutinise his replies to European and American newspapers that contain the fundamentals of the Bahāʾī movement, and thus free himself from various kinds of prejudices. Nazif assures the reader that he wrote down what he read about ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ and had witnessed himself without alteration, and that, after studying the letter and newspapers ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ had sent to him, it is not his to write in favour or against his *madhhab* or *ṭarīqa*.

ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ, furthermore, "by the express invitation" of Midhat Pasha, patron of the Young Ottomans in the late 1870s, had met him in Beirut sometime in 1879–80 (Shoghi Effendi 1944: 193). Hassan Balyuzi remarks: "According to British consular records, Midḥat Pāshā was Governor-General in Damascus from November 1878 to August 1880. He visited Haifa and ʿAkkā in May 1880."

(Balyuzi 1980: 378). As we have this information only from Bahā'ī sources, an account of this meeting from Ottoman sources would be interesting.

Nuri Bey and Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı Efendi who were exiled to ʿAkkā had a warm and close contact with the Bahā'īs there. In his autobiography *Yâd-ı Mâzî* (1332/1915: 105–20) Bereketzade İsmail Hakkı gives a vivid and positive picture of the Bahā'ī community in ʿAkkā. He regards "Mirza Abbas Efendi" (ʿAbdu'l-Bahā') as "an erudite and noble figure who is cognisant of the conditions of the age" (*âlim ve fâzıl ve ahvâl-ı asıra vâkıf bir necâbet-simât*) and goes on saying that:

> During our stay in ʿAkkā Bahā'u'llāh Efendi left the administration of community affairs to ʿAbbās Efendi because he had retired to his rented house and only appeared to his followers. If ʿAbbās Efendi's character and attitude is carefully examined it appears that his behaviour and manner remind of being rather political than sheikh-like. If an article on Iran in the foreign press came across his attentive eyes he would, devoting himself to it, explain his thoughts for hours and enjoy this so much that he sacrificed his sleep and comfort. Sometimes, having written articles in Arabic and Persian, he sent them with their French translations to the European press . . . Because he had won the hearts of the people of ʿAkkā by his friendly association, the beauty of his getting along with them, his generosity and goodness, visitors rich and poor, Muslim and non-Muslim, would come and go all the time to the place used as *selamlık* [male part of the house] . . . Delicious teas and the finest tobaccos of Shiraz were served with water-pipes to the guests. A great many time it happened that ʿAbbās Efendi gave banquets in the garden he had bought outside the city walls. After going out together for a walk and having eaten, we again used to return together to the Fortress.

İsmail Hakkı Efendi further describes the Bahā'ī children who were taught the Qur'ān with its Persian meaning, were introduced to different areas of study and instructed in European languages like French and German, and that some members of the community were occupied with crafts and trade.

Bereketzade's observations of the Bahā'īs in ʿAkkā concluding with the words "both the good conduct of the community and the children are indeed worth of appreciation" (Ibid.: 108) challenges the statement of the Turkish historian Şerif Mardin that İsmail Hakkı Efendi did not take the Bābīs, whom he regarded as "primitive," seriously; moreover, the aforementioned contacts and the possible

Bahā'ī influence on Young Ottoman thought could question Mardin's assertion that there was no such "Bābī" influence in the time of the Young Ottomans (Mardin 1964: 65).

Another possible link between Young Ottomans and Bahā'īs, as suggested by Juan Cole, is provided through a certain Hoca Sadık Efendi who belonged to the ulema and was a progressive Muslim reformer. He was attacking the unjust conditions and oppression in the Empire and "preached in Istanbul [the merits of] democracy, liberty, equality, brotherhood between all men, be they Christian or Moslem, Greek or Ottoman" (Mardin 1962: 252–53); because of his propaganda Sadık Efendi was exiled to ʿAkkā and imprisoned in the fortress in 1868. Cole points out that the call by both Young Ottomans like Namık Kemal in London and Bahā'u'llāh for British-style parliament in the Ottoman Empire converged (1868–69), and ascribes this to the possible interaction between Sadık Efendi and the Bahā'īs and the former's secret communication with Kemal (Cole 1997).

3. *Young Turks and "Bābis"*

In the second part of the 19th century Iran increasingly became the arena for European diplomats, traders, travelers and the like. Western ideas and activities had a profound influence on Iran, while in the country there were clear signs of displeasure with the declining Qājār dynasty that gave concessions and monopolies to foreigners undermining Iran's own sovereignty. The desire for change manifested itself in events, which led to unrest and clashes with those in charge of the old order. Like in other social conflicts where minorities suffered, the Bahā'ī community of Iran also was being affected. Note that even in the 1890's the Bahā'īs were known to Westerners as well as to Iranians as "Bābīs," although the followers of Bahā'u'llāh had been already calling themselves 'Bahā'īs' for thirty years. This explanation is important in that the followers of Bahā'u'llāh's half-brother Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal, the Azalīs, were known as Bābīs. Whereas the latter actively opposed Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shah's government, the Bahā'īs, although expressing their ideas on political issues, were on the whole politically inactive. They at least, were not conceiving activities against the shah (Momen 1981: 358).

In the 1890s we come across links between certain "Bābī militants" (Hanioğlu 1995: 57) and early Young Turks. The Iranian

reformer Jamālu'd-Dīn 'al-Afghānī' (Keddie 1972) was regarded as one of the leaders of the Bābīs. One source states that Afghānī, not being a Sunni from Afghanistan but an Iranian Shī'ī who was a adherent to the Bahā'ī school, was expelled from Iran because of his relationship with the Bahā'īs (*Tarih ve Medeniyet* 1998). It is true that Afghānī was in contact with the Bahā'īs in 'Akkā until the end of the 1880s for utilising their ideas for expressing his own ideas. However, his cooperation with politically active Azalī-Bābīs in his pan-islamist circle in Istanbul would appear more favourable in his eyes, since he saw the Bābīs "as potentially breaking up the unity of the Islamic world therefore his continued contacts may well have been because he found the ideas emanating from this source useful to him in formulating his own views" (Momen 1983: 48–50).

In Istanbul Afghānī had established a circle for promoting Pan-Islamist ideas (Keddie 1970: 380 ff.). Among the members were the two Persian expatriates Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī (Bayat 1974) and Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī (Keddie 1962: 284 ff.). Both were Ṣubḥ-i Azal's sons-in-law and his followers, although they later distanced themselves from Azalism and subsequently discarded formal religious belief. Yet their involvement in political propaganda in the Ottoman capital gives the impression that they provided the Ottoman officials' suspicion of the collaboration between Young Turks and Bābīs.

The Qājār prince Abu'l-ḥasan Mīrzā, 'Shaykhu'r-Ra'īs', a secret Bahā'ī, had contacts with al-Afghānī and Mīrzā Malkum Khan (Algar 1973), another Persian reformer, in Istanbul. Shaykhu'r-Ra'īs' was a leading intellectual who openly advocated liberal reforms in Persia. During his second sojourn in Istanbul (1892–93) he was in touch with Persian expatriates. It is possible that through the ecumenical spirit in the Bahā'ī faith he was attracted to the ideology of Pan-Islamism and wrote in favour of Sultan Abdülhamid II who utilised it for his own goals. Together with the two Azalīs Shaykhu'r-Ra'īs was a member of al-Afghānī's pan-Islamist circle, and conversed with Ottoman politicians and published his ideas in his book *Ittiḥād-i Islām* ("The Unity of Islam"). Again, his motives to bring together the Shī'ites and Sunnīs might have stemmed from the Bahā'ī principle of the unity of religions (Cole 1998a; idem, 2001).

We come across links between Bahā'īs and Freemasonry in connection with Malkum Khān, one of the most important western-educated and reform-minded Iranian figures of the 19th century. He promoted his ideas in his Masonic lodge, the *farāmūshkhāna* ('house of oblivion').

Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shah closed it down in 1861, fearing that it could be centre of revolt and thus lead to the establishment of a republic in Iran (Algar 1969: 185; idem 1970: 276–96). The Bābīs were part of his fears, and Malkum like other enemies was associated with them. It is worth noting that he tried to promote his goals shortly after the suppression of the Bābīs, and not by chance they were suspected to be involved in his activities (Keddie 1966: 278). He spoke in favour of the Bābīs; Malkum believed that

> The root of all these sects, Babis, Shaykhīs and others, is a passionate desire for change, reform, innovation, an abiding disgust with the order or disorder of things as they are. It is a constant protest against the narrow orthodoxy of Islam combined with a revolt of the human conscience against the excesses of a barbarous despotism, an irresistible but uncertain and unorganised aspiration for a national deliverance. (Algar 1973: 221 ff., fn 80).

Algar points out that Malkum had few reasons not to cooperate with the Bābīs since he was in the same situation as they were in and "Malkum's plan, like Bābism, entailed the use of Islamic terminology for purposes fundamentally alien to the Islamic faith" (Algar 1973: 58 f.). Malkum, exiled to Baghdad in 1862, had previously contacts to the Bābīs in Iran, and he asked Bahā'u'llāh in Baghdad for refuge which the latter declined, probably not to be involved with his *farāmūshkhāna* (Balyuzi 1980: 151–52).

The Young Turks regarded Jamālu'd-Dīn al-Afghānī as "an important pillar and the perfect spiritual teacher for the CUP [Committee of Union and Progress]" who had influenced the Young Turk movement (Hanioğlu 1995: 57; idem, 1986: 121–24; Mardin 1964: 65–66). Although Sultan Abdülhamid initially had invited al-Afghānī to Istanbul and favoured his political activities, later he was accused of "being a leader of the Babî society and an agitator and of having relations and secret correspondence with Freemasons, Armenian committees, and Young Turks" (BOA, 2; Hanioğlu 1995: 56; idem 1986: 122). It is also said that al-Afghānī had organised the Bābīs in Istanbul to a society of "Young Iran" and secretly send some of them to Iran for his propaganda, and that other "Young Iranians" helped the Young Turks by distributing their publications (Mardin 1964: 66; Hanioğlu 1995: 255, fn 328).

Niyazi Berkes refutes the idea that al-Afghānī had inspired the Young Turk movement and the 1908 Revolution was prepared by his agitation. He indicates that these are "inventions of writers" to

justify his having been in the company of the sultan and asks why he, on the one hand, opposed Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shah's despotism and his granting the tobacco monopoly to foreigners, and on the other hand did not criticise Abdülhamid's autocracy and the granting of monopolies and railway concessions. Moreover, Berkes notes that the Young Turks for the first time organised themselves three years before al-Afghānī's second visit to Istanbul, and that al-Afghānī would have labelled figures such as Abdullah Cevdet and Ahmed Rıza as materialists and atheists in line with his arguments in his refutation of "materialists" and "naturalists" that he wrote to denounce traitors of religion and society (Berkes 1964: 266, fn 14; 265 ff.).

Historian Şükrü Hanioğlu remarks that "although the Ottoman authorities had repeatedly complained about the role played by the servants of the Persian embassy in Istanbul, they never gave any information indicating the religious sects and orders to which these servants belonged" (Hanioğlu 1995: 255, fn 334), meaning that there is no substantial information that those were "Bābīs." Some early Young Turks praised Mīrzā Riḍā Kirmānī, a follower of al-Afghānī and assassin of Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shah (1896), whom they regarded as a Bābī, for accomplishing this deed. Even though the assassination was condemned in their publications, they expressed their hopes regarding the death of Sultan Abdülhamid in the same manner. İbrahim Temo wrote an eulogy for Kirmānī (who allegedly supplied him with secret Young Turk publications) titled "May Abdülhamid's turn come next" (*Darısı Abdülhamid'in Başına*) and let it be made public (Hanioğlu 1986: 123). The Young Turk Ahmed Rıza remarked: "The vengeance of the Babîs, who were oppressed forty-eight years ago, opened a door of rejuvenation and progress in Iran. We do hope that the sighs and wails of the victimized [members] of the CUP will not be in vain" (Hanioğlu 1995: 57; idem, 1986: 123, fn 240). Although Riḍā Kirmānī was seen as a "Bābī," one Persian source (Dawlatabādī 1983) affirms that in times of political problems, as in that period, the government would try to divert the feelings directed against it and would label opposition movements as a "Babî [heresy]" (Hanioğlu 1995: 255, fn 335). From its early days the Bābīs were in conflict with the civil powers in Persia, and from the first attempt upon the life of Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shah it was mistakenly concluded that Bābism was a political and anarchist or nihilist movement (Earl Curzon 1892 (1): 496–594). Following the assassination, Riḍā Kirmānī and his colleagues were not only identified as

nihilists and socialists but also as enemies of the shah and other Muslim rulers (BOA, 3: 354/13). A Young Turk publication wrote that upon the shah's death, the Persian government requested the handing over of al-Afghānī and three other "Bābīs," and that Abdülhamid was confused and complied with this, adding that he feared the revenge of the Bābīs in Istanbul (BOA, 3: 352/12, 13, 23 and 28).

Given the fact that the Azalīs Kirmānī and Rūḥī were executed in 1896, and that al-Afghānī died in 1897, it is unclear which Bābīs were still involved in the Young Turk publication in 1899 (Hanioğlu 1995: 255, fn 334).

Amīn Arslān, a Lebanese (Druze) member of the CUP, interviewed 'Abdu'l-Bahā' in 1891 in 'Akkā (Momen 1981: 224–25; Hanioğlu 1995: 56). Arslan had intended to meet Bahā'u'llāh, he could but "catch a glimpse of him who is the incarnation of 'the Word of God' in the eyes of the Persians." He concludes with the following tribute to 'Abdu'l-Bahā': "He is a man of rare intelligence, and although Persian, he has a deep knowledge of our Arabic language, and I possess some Arabic letters from him which are masterpieces ["chefs-d'oeuvre"] in style and thought and above all in oriental calligraphy."

Another founding member of the CUP, İshak Sükuti, "had a deep interest in the Bahaî philosophy and studied its works" (Hanioğlu 1995: 56).

With reference to 'Abdu'l-Bahā''s release from prison after the Young Turk *coup d'état* in 1908, Hanioğlu says that though Bahā'ī sources see this as a result of the revolution, "there is however, no clear evidence crediting the Young Turks for this, and amnesties were commonplace at the time" (Ibid.: 57). Yet there is some evidence for this in some of 'Abdu'l-Bahā''s talks in the West ('Abdu'l-Baha' 1982[2]: 36):

> I too was in the prison of 'Abdu'l-Hamīd until the Committee of Union and Progress hoisted the standard of liberty and my fetters were removed. They exhibited great kindness and love toward me. I was made free and thereby enabled to come to this country. Were it not for the action of this Committee, I should not be with you here tonight. Therefore, you must all ask assistance and confirmation in behalf of this Committee through which the liberty of Turkey was proclaimed.

We can say that he was stating his appreciation for his liberation in 1908, and before it was clear that the military wing of the CUP

had taken over or what that would mean. It would seem that his ties were to the civilian, parliamentarian wing. It would be interesting to know to whom, exactly; perhaps some of the officials posted to Palestine were Young Turks, with whom he made contact.

Hanioğlu moreover says that "Babî groups throughout the Ottoman Empire were under close scrutiny by police" as late as 1908 (Hanioğlu 1995: 256, fn 335). Here the Bābīs are again confused with the Bahā'īs; both the Bābīs and Bahā'īs were labelled as "Bābīs" by the Ottoman government. The document taken into consideration here deals with Sultan Abdülhamid II's policy towards 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. The 'Bābīs' intend to build a hospital on Mt. Carmel in Haifa; this should be prevented because 'Abbās Efendi is a "mischief-maker" (*erbab-ı fesad'den olub*) and the Bābīs a "subversive group" (*cemiyet-i fesadiyye*) (BOA, 1).

Hanioğlu sees 'the Babî and Bahaî movements and ideologies' as insignificant (*quantité négligeable*), despite the established contacts in the 1860s with Young Ottomans and the deep interest of early Young Turks in the Bahā'ī ideas (Hanioğlu 1995: 58).

4. *Abdullah Cevdet and the Bahā'ī Faith*

In the last days of the Ottoman Empire, during the armistice period, Abdullah Cevdet, one of the first four members of the Young Turk *Osmanî İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti* ("Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress"), caused a considerable public commotion in 1922 after publishing an article in his journal *İctihad* on the Bahā'ī faith. Just some month earlier, in November 1921, January/February 1922, three articles on the Bahā'ī faith by Emin Âli titled "An academic study of the Bahā'ī movement" were published in the same periodical, where the author Emin Âli spoke in a very positive and emphatic way about the history and tenets of "Bahā'ism," based, in his own words, on the voluminous writings of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. The author was later identified with the Bahā'ī faith and the group of suspected Bahā'īs who were put on trial in 1928 in Istanbul and Izmir (Shoghi Effendi 1974: 168).

With reference to those articles, Abdullah Cevdet issued on 1 March 1922, in no. 144 of *İctihad*, his article "Mezheb-i Bahaullah Din-i Ümem" (The doctrine of Bahā'u'llāh as a world religion). Soon the religious authorities and the Turkish press responded to it, accusing

him attacking the Prophet Muḥammad and Islam. Consequently, Cevdet was sentenced to two years prison.

Abdullah Cevdet (1869–1932), a medical doctor by profession, was a poet, translator, radical freethinker and an ideologist of the Young Turks who between 1908–18 led the Westernisation movement (Süssheim 1938; Mardin 1964: 221–50; Creel 1978; Hanioğlu 1981). After his first education in Southeastern Turkey he joined the Military Medical Academy in Istanbul in 1889. The atmosphere of French and German scientific materialism, social Darwinism and Positivism of that time prevailing in this school soon influenced Cevdet, who came as a deeply religious student to Istanbul. İbrahim Temo contributed much to this change, as he gave Cevdet several works of European materialists on chemistry, biology, and physiology, many of which Cevdet translated later into Turkish. In the eyes of the Ottoman administration of Sultan Abdülhamid II, whom the Young Turks wanted to overthrow, they were a group of atheists (Hanioğlu 1995: 17–23).

Due to his political activities Cevdet was arrested several times and had to leave the country. Among other places, he was in Geneva, Paris and Cairo, and wrote against the despotic Abdülhamid and his repressive regime. Cevdet published articles on political, social, economic and literary issues in *İctihad*, which he had founded in 1904 in Geneva promoting his modernist thoughts to enlighten the Muslim masses. As a positivist, Cevdet was suspicious towards religion and particularly towards Islam. However, he believed that Islam was a source from which progressive ideas could be drawn in order to infuse fresh blood into the Muslim veins, make them believe in modernisation and westernisation as Islamic concepts and later convert them to Positivism. Naturally, his unrestrained beliefs were considered at his time and later as anarchical (Hanioğlu 1995:ch. 9).

Probably in 1902 when he was in Paris, Abdullah Cevdet came in contact with the Bahā'ī faith (Hanioğlu 1981: 300) but perhaps even as early as in the 1890's when "Bābī" ideas were discussed among the Young Turk leaders, as mentioned above. In his 1922 article Cevdet discusses the true nature of Christianity and Islam, which came to be perverted in the course of history and compares them with the Bahā'ī faith. In his own words:

> Bahā'ism is a religion of compassion and love (*Bahailik bir din-i merhamet ve muhabbetdir*). But one could ask, which religion is a religion of oppression and enmity. Has not Jesus said, 'Love ye each other' and

> preached love and peace to the world? Has not Muḥammad came as a mercy to the peoples and said 'Do not hate each other, do not be the cause of misfortune for each other and do not envy each other, o servants of God, be all brothers'? Again, has not our glorious Prophet said, 'A Muslim is the one who guards the people from [the wickedness of] his hand and his tongue'? . . . Though this being so, it is constantly demonstrated in a sharp and shameful way that the historical events in Christianity and Muḥammadanism do not follow these divine principles. Their 'ghazwas' [military expeditions on behalf of Islam], their 'St. Bartholomews' [Massacre of Huguenots in France on 24 August 1572] and Crusades etc. are in no wise deeds of compassion and peace.

Following these explanations he refers to an incident in the time of Muḥammad, namely the killing of the Jewish Qurayẓa tribe (because of their violation of the agreement with the Prophet concerning their help against his enemies). The heads of 800 men or so were cut off, their wives and daughters were sold as concubines and slaves, and one of the young girls was chosen by Muḥammad for himself. These, in Cevdet's opinion, "cannot be seen as compatible with the true spirit of compassion and peace" (*hiç de şîme-i merhamet ve selâmet eserleri değildir*). He goes on saying,

> Every religion was founded to establish compassion and fellowship (*merhamet ve uhuvvet*). However, whichever religion a man is born into, no religion has been accepted that in its essence has been able to procure its acceptance of him. That religion is only the religion of compassion and love, preached and founded by Bahā'u'llāh and his son 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. Bahā'u'llāh says: 'Beware lest ye sow tares of dissension among men or plant thorns of doubt in pure and radiant hearts . . . Commit not that which defileth the limpid stream of love or destroyeth the sweet fragrance of friendship. By the righteousness of the Lord! Ye were created to show love one to another and not perversity and rancour.' [Bahā'u'llāh 1988: 138] These truly divine words are indispensable in that they have to be uttered and repeated and allowed to penetrate the souls profoundly in every age, especially in this age of humanity . . . A spiritual teacher who set universal love, compassion and peace as a belief and who provided the necessary light and heat has not existed before Bahā'u'llāh . . . Bahā'ism, founded by Bahā'u'llāh and organised and spread abroad by 'Abdu'l-Bahā', has no idea, no law which is not compatible to reason, i.e. Bahā'ism is light-shedding heat. It is not a dark movement. This feature leads it to be a world-embracing and universal religion of peace and love. A true prophet who teaches compassion and brotherhood performs conquests in the regions of the heart completely without terror and weapons and can, though he does not claim to be a prophet, say . . .: 'We were

> wounded, we have conquered but our field of battle never was coloured by anyone's blood'.
>
> Never does it befit the station of those who were sent as a mercy to the people to kill but to be killed!
>
> 'Abdu'l-Bahā', who said 'the candle gives its life: drop-by-drop it sheds its very essence in order to diffuse those tears. This shall be an example, a model for you', indeed burned like a torch, and after kindling thousands of torches he left to be alight in other worlds . . .
>
> But how much heat and light can spread from this spark? In order to heat the world the fire in Bahā'u'llāh's soul is necessary, a spiritual and divine fire to illuminate and heat at the same time.

Owing to these words particularly criticising Islam and favouring the Bahā'ī faith, he was denounced publicly, even by the sultan. One newspaper described the sentence as "an effective lesson for those attacking our religion" (*Tevhid-i Efkâr* 21 April 1922: 3). Yet, the decision to imprison Cevdet was never put into action and the trial continued until December 1926, during the first years of the Turkish Republic, and was one of the most interesting proceedings in the history of the Turkish press. Thanks to this episode, the Bahā'ī faith was extensively discussed in Turkey. The trial was dismissed because of the abolition of the law regarding the punishment for attacking sacred matters (*enbiyâya ta'n fezâhat-i lisâniyye*) (Hanioğlu 1981: 300; idem 1988: 92).

Abdullah Cevdet turned his trial into a matter of freedom of conscience (*hürriyet-i vicdan*), and benefited from the public discussion which enabled him to promote his pacifist ideas: the general idea of the Bahā'ī faith that resembled pacifism had probably attracted him to this "doctrine" (*mezheb*) and encouraged him to create a new "ethics" for the Turkish society (Hanioğlu 1981: 300, 338). His contacts in Europe with intellectuals, especially in Austria, resulted in his interest in "pacifism," "women's rights" and "feminism." In 1922 Cevdet founded the "Union de Pacifistes" (*Ehl-i Sulh Birliği*) in Istanbul that would fight war and promote universal peace (Hanioğlu 1976–77). He believed that "World peace may remain an abstract concept, a dream that never materializes. But for this to be so does not prevent a person from seeing world peace as an ideal, worthy, and in the pursuit of which lives may be sacrificed. There is no prospect that tuberculosis will ever be completely eradicated from the face of the earth; it will go on forever. Does this being so render vain and worthless the formation and activity of anti-tuberculosis societies?" (Creel 1978: 153).

On the basis of these beliefs, as Şükrü Hanioğlu states, "Abdullah Cevdet later asked the Muslims to convert to Bahaîsm, which he regarded as an intermediary step between Islam and Materialism, and the Young Turks' efforts to create a very liberal and progressive Islam reflected a core endeavour" (Hanioğlu 1995: 202; idem 1981: 338–39). For Cevdet, "Bahā'ism" was similar to early uncorrupted Islam; he wanted to achieve his goal by means of the approaches of the Egyptian reformer Muḥammad ʿAbduh. It seems that Cevdet listened to a lecture of ʿAbduh in Geneva (Horten 1916).

Muḥammad ʿAbduh had met ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ in Beirut and was impressed by him (Shoghi Effendi 1944: 193). A recent study on ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ and ʿAbduh shows further evidence: "Balyuzi further asserts that ʿAbduh met ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ during the latter's visit to Beirut [1879]. However, ʿAbduh at this time was in Egypt, probably living in exile in his village. There is little doubt, however, that the two actually met, as attested by both Arslān and later by ʿAbduh in a conversation with Riḍā, who asserted that ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ visited frequently during his sojourn in Beirut. We must assume, therefore, that ʿAbdu'l-Bahāʾ visited Beirut at least a second time, between the years 1884–1888" (McCants 2001 2001: 16; Scharbrodt 2000).

Abdullah Cevdet did not succeed with reforming society by utilising Islam and the Bahā'ı faith, and seems to never have turned his attention to such topics (Hanioğlu 1981: 339). This is attested by the following comment of Cevdet in a newspaper in connection with the Bahā'īs who were put on trial in October 1928 in Izmir and Istanbul: "Don't involve me in such matters. I am not interested in this! They can do whatever they want, it is none of my business!" (*Son Saat* 10 October 1928: 2)

A Turkish society, in which religion was secondary, was one of the main features of Cevdet's "utopia," and his concept of "westernisation" similar to the official ideology of the Turkish Republic that gave him the opportunity to promote his ideas (Ibid.: 341; Creel 1978).

Conclusion

Contrary to Iranian reformers who would never have admitted the influence of the Bahā'i faith on their own ideas, as such an association being would have been regarded as heretical, Ottoman reformers

openly and even in a positive way talked about the Bābīs and Bahā'īs who were officially regarded as agitators involved in subversive activities. Ottoman sources from the 1910s and 1920s on the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions are positive and unbiased, something that modern Turkish academic literature fails to achieve. Western and, to a much greater extent, current Turkish scholars have so far neglected or minimised the sympathetic relationships and the facts of the contacts between Ottoman reformers and the Bahā'īs, and the contribution and possible impact of the Bahā'ī leaders to the reform debate of the 1860s, as discussed elsewhere. These aspects are only in the process of being worked out and revised.

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