

THE PERSIAN RIVAL TO JESUS, AND HIS AMERICAN DISCIPLES.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

MICELLANEOUS.

MISS FARMER AND GREENPEACE

[*The Open Court*, Vol. XXIX (No. 9), September 1915, No. 712, p. 572.]

To the Editor of The Open Court:

May I be pardoned if I seek to supplement the article of Mr. Richardson on Bahaism with a few words on Miss Farmer and her life-work, her beloved Greenacre?

No more thrilling chapter in the lives of leaders of thought has ever been written than the facts concerning Miss Farmer and her Greenacre. Her ideal was "a universal platform" upon which with malice toward none, with charity toward all, each might be permitted to voice his own particular creed, to the end that the various religions might learn to compare sympathetically their points of agreement and forget somewhat their points of difference. She believed that if this could be done, religious hatreds and wars would cease.

With a marvelous magnetism, a winning personality and supreme love for all humanity, which drew men and women alike to her side, all eager to assist in the great work for the uplift of the world. Miss Farmer, while health and money lasted, worked with the unflinching ardor of the idealist, giving unstintingly of herself and her means to promote the cause of universality.

Now, her health broken, her little remaining fortune in Maine tied up by distant relatives so that she has to depend absolutely upon the generosity of devoted friends; not daring for fear of personal violence to cross the boundary lines of New Hampshire whose courts having pronounced her sane, she knows that there her last remaining possession, personal liberty, is secure, —she has been compelled to submit to being swept contemptuously aside while her universal platform at Greenacre was seized by a sect known as "Bahaism" and converted into a "Bahai Center."

When the *true* history of Miss Farmer's work at Greenacre is written, as it must be some day, the history of the untold good to the untold numbers that it has accomplished and still might be accomplishing if that fatal, mentally unbalancing disease, Bahaism, had not crept in, the world will wonder with regret at the magnitude and beauty of that which it permitted to be destroyed.

Yours truly,
A friend of Miss Farmer and Greenacre.

BEHAISM:

IN REPLY TO THE ATTACK OF ROBERT P. RICHARDSON

BY IBRAHIM GEORGE KHEIRALLA

[*The Open Court*, Vol. XXIX (No. 10), October 1915, No. 713, pp. 633-640.]

THE evils, deceptions, wars and murders, which the followers of Christ committed against each other and against people of different faiths since the birth of Christianity' until the present day, and all the shameful accusations against the personality of Jesus Christ himself and against his claims by Pharisees and Scribes, and the misdoings ascribed to his faithful disciples and early followers, were all naught but vague and untrue evidences as we all know, and failed to prove that Christ was a pretender and Christianity was a false religion. How much more unfair it is to state that Huseyn Ali was not Beha Ullah, the Manifestation of the Everlasting Father and that the Behai religion is false and insane, because Mr. Robert P. Richardson read some records against Beha Ullah and against his Forerunner the Bab, which were certainly attributed to both of them by adversaries; also because Mr. Richardson visited some Bostonians claiming to be followers of Beha, and found them deceitful as they had cheated Miss Farmer out of her property known as "Greenacre." Indeed, "History repeats itself."

It is waste of time to say more on such a useless subject, and now, I like to draw the attention of the reader to the following proofs, which should convince him of the fact that Huseyn Ali was the Appearance of the Everlasting Father, and that his knowledge, teachings, life as well as his personality were superior to those of Jesus Christ as he himself declared in the New Testament.

I am of the opinion that the Prophets and Manifestations of God must prove to the people of the earth the truth of their divine missions by producing the following four evidences in order that the people may believe and acknowledge them. Should they present

such evidences and yet should we reject them it would be our own fault and not theirs.

First: To utter verses which contain striking truths and principles, whereby the human race is uplifted and elevated, and the extremely wicked become upright and good.

Second: Their appearance is foretold by the prophets of yore.

Third: To display a divine knowledge, which is beyond that of man.

Fourth: To show a superiority in their lives and in their personalities.

These evidences were fully established in the person of Huseyn Ali, so as to leave no doubt that He was the Glory of God, and the Manifestation of the Father. In brief all the prophecies were fulfilled in him as you will see by some of them which shall here be mentioned.

By comparison we find Beha Ullah more excellent and uplifting than all the other prophets. For his teachings are not visionary nor prophetic, but practical, final, and useful to the high and the low, to the civilized and the uncivilized. At the same time they are in accord with reason and science and in harmony with the laws governing the world.

For instance, history proves that neither through Christianity nor Mohammedanism could peace be established upon earth, for the first shed blood, if not more, not less than the other, and the present horrible war bears witness. But in the Tablets which Beha Ullah, the Prince of Peace, sent to the rulers of the world, He prohibited them from warring with each other, and commanded them to settle their differences by arbitration. He also strictly forbade the waging of war for differences in faith or otherwise. By His teachings, He established the foundation of peace and enlightened the world with the light of union, concord, and love. He urged His followers to rise up by the help of God, and deliver the world from religious hatred and enmity, which are a consuming fire devouring the human race. He came to unite all those who are upon earth and save the world from the fetters of ignorance. He said, "Let justice be your army, and your weapon reason."

Jesus said: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

Beha said: "Come that I make you vivifiers of the world."

Jesus said: "Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also." Beha said: "To be murdered is better for you than to commit murder, were ye seeking the pleasure of God."

Jesus said to preach the gospel to the people, and whosoever believeth shall attain everlasting life, but whosoever rejecteth shall have everlasting fire.

Beha said: "If ye follow Me I will make you the heirs of My Kingdom, but if ye rebel against Me I will kindly be patient; I am the Forgiver, the Merciful."

Also Beha said: "Communicate to all people what ye know, with the language of love and kindness." "Consort with people of all faiths, with fragrance and spirituality." "Allow not the zeal of bigotry to display itself in you, for everyone cometh from God, and unto God shall he return. He is the Causer of their being, and the Center of their final attainment."

The verses written by the Supreme Pen of Beha Ullah contain an ocean of sublime spiritual teachings, thrilling precepts and admonitions, excellent bases of religious principles, just and equitable laws and edicts. When the time comes, wherein those teachings shall be diffused and read in the civilized countries, the people of understanding shall find therein the remedy for healing the sick body of this world. Through His teachings and commandments, the great peace shall come, capital and labor shall be conciliated, the wolf and the lamb shall live together, the unity of race shall be established, a universal language shall be adopted, and the people of the earth shall live as brothers, as one kindred, one family, loving not only their country, but the whole world.

All the prophets of yore foretold the coming of the Father and the establishment of His Kingdom on earth. They gave the signs of His coming, and that Elijah shall come as a forerunner. They located the city of Akka as the new Jerusalem. They predicted the year of His Manifestation, and described the condition at His day. Every prophecy in regard to the Manifestation of the Deity upon earth was fulfilled in Huseyn Ali, and proved that He was the Glory of God.

Jewish rabbis, Christian theologians, Mohammedan doctors, and priests of other faiths, all expected the coming of the Kingdom of God on earth in the nineteenth century. They were not mistaken, for their scriptures foretold His appearance. Jesus said: "The Lord of the vineyard cometh"; "The Comforter will come"; "When the Spirit of Truth is come he will guide you into all truth." He prayed: "Thy Kingdom come."

In the twenty-first chapter of Luke, Jesus, after giving the signs of the Kingdom, taught that our salvation is in God at the

time of His coming: "And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (verse 28). "When the Lord of Hosts shall reign in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem and before His ancients gloriously" (Is. xxiv. 23). "For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and His Name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Is. ix. 6-7). "This was the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the Lord" (Ezekiel i. 28).

Huseyn Ali was born Nov. 12, 1817, and manifested Himself as Beha Ullah, the Glory of God, 1867, and departed May 28th, 1892.

All the signs of His coming which were mentioned in the scriptures of different religions were fulfilled in the nineteenth century. Jesus Christ said: "This Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and then shall the end come." In the last century, the Christian missionaries preached the Gospel to all nations. Mohammed said: "When ye behold the ships sailing upon the land, then He shall come." The trains sailed upon the land a few years before He manifested Himself. Nahum said: "The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall jostle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like lightning." In this sign the material atoms declared the coming of the Glory of God. It is an accurate prediction of electric cars and modern vehicles which throng our streets. "Behold I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord" (Malachi iv. 5). In 1844 Elijah the prophet came, for there appeared in Persia a young man who possessed great powers of wisdom and spiritual inspiration. He is known in history as Ali Mohammed. He called himself "The Bab," meaning the "Gate" or "Door." He was also termed "Nokteh," the "Point," signifying the center of religious truth. He was Elijah, the forerunner, and gave the glad tidings of the coming of the Kingdom of God and the appearance of "Him whom God shall manifest," the Glory of God.

Akka is the new Jerusalem, the City of the Lord, unto which He was exiled as a prisoner of the Turkish government, and from whence He departed. It is upon the Syrian Coast nine miles from the foot of Mount Carmel, and during the Crusades it was the headquarters of the Knights Templars, who called it Saint Jean d'Acre. It is a fortified city and celebrated for its unhealthy climate

and filthiness. It is the Turkish city of exile and the place of confinement for the prisoners of the Government.

Isaiah (ix. 1) accurately located the new Jerusalem at Akka (literal translation of the prophecies of Isaiah by Professor Cheyne of Oxford, England): "Surely there is (now) no (more) gloom to her whose lot was affliction. At the former time he brought shame on the land of Zebulun and on the land of Naphtali, but in the latter, he hath brought honor on the 'Way by the Sea' (Akka), the other side of Jordon, the district of the nations. The people that walk in darkness see a great light; they that dwell in the land of deadly shade, light shineth brilliantly upon them. Thou hast multiplied exultation, thou hast increased joy; they rejoice before thee as with joy in the harvest, as men exult when they divide spoil. For the yoke of his burden, and the staff of his back, the rod of his taskmaster, thou hast broken, as in the days of Midian. Yea, every boot of him that stamped with noise, and the cloak rolled in blood—they are to be burned up as fuel of fire. For a child is born unto us, a son is given unto us, and the government resteth upon his back, and his name is called Wonder-Counsellor, God-Mighty-One, Everlasting-Father, Prince of Peace; increased is the government and to peace there is no end; upon the throne of David and throughout His Kingdom, in establishing and supporting it by justice and by righteousness from henceforth and forever. The jealousy of Jehovah Sabbaoth will perform this." The spot described by the prophet between the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali is *Akka*; and to appoint the exact situation, he said, "But in the later time, he hath brought honor on the 'Way by the Sea'" (*Akka*).

From ancient times the highway to Damascus from the sea commenced at Akka. In *Prophecies of Isaiah* we read in a note on page 59: "Via Maris, M. Renan observes, was the name of the high-road from Akka to Damascus, as late as the Crusades." "Way," however, means "region." Thus literally, the Manifestation of Jehovah, Beha Ullah, appeared in the latter days and brought honor upon the "Way by the Sea" (*Akka*).

Huseyn Ali manifested himself as The Glory of God to all the people in the year 1867 A.D., at the exact time announced by Jesus in the twelfth chapter of Revelation, and by Daniel in the twelfth chapter. It was three times and a half after the appearance of the two wonders, the Papacy and Mohammedanism. Three times and a half are 1260 years.

The Papacy and Mohammedanism appeared about the same

time in the year 607 A.D. Therefore, the basis of chronology is the Christian era. By adding 607 years to 1260 years, we find that the year 1867 A.D. is the appointed year of His Manifestation.

The vision of the image and that of the tree mentioned in the second and the fourth chapters of Daniel have the same significance concerning the appearance of the Kingdom of God, the time of its coming, as shown in the latter chapter, to be after “seven times” had passed over the head of Nebuchadnezzar. Seven times (360 years) make 2520. From the date of Nebuchadnezzar’s birth, 628 B.C. seven times or 2520 years forward, will bring us to 1892 A.D., the year of the departure of the Manifestation and the completion of His organization of the Kingdom of God.

The prophets described the day of God as a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, and said that He would come in clouds. Indeed, the nineteenth century was the day of God, for the spiritual ignorance shrouded humanity like unto thick clouds. Humanity became more civilized, but less sanctified; men gained material knowledge, but they were losers in grace. The prophecy of the appearance of scoffers was fulfilled, and a great number of our fellow creatures based their theories of life and religion upon materialism and pantheistic doctrines. Hundreds of false Christs and prophets appeared. Celibacy and vegetarianism were advocated. Accumulation of wealth and estate came to pass. “Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth.” “Wars and rumors of war and no peace to him that went out or came in.”

The Divine knowledge and wisdom which Huseyn Ali displayed in thousands of Epistles and Tablets to his followers, in the just and beautiful laws He gave the world in the Most Sacred Book (Kitabul-Ackdas), in the tablets which He sent to the rulers of the earth, inviting them to come to His Kingdom and partake of the Spiritual Banquet, eat and drink with the elect, in knowing the past and the future as was stated in His numerous predictions, proved conclusively that He was the Glory of God, as such knowledge is beyond that of man.

For instance, in the second tablet sent to Napoleon HI He informed the Emperor concerning his past secrets, and judged him, because he cast aside the first tablet which Beha sent to him. The prediction was that the Empire shall depart from the hands of Napoleon, and humiliation shall come upon him, and commotion shall seize the people of France, and his glory shall pass away. A

few months later Napoleon declared war on Germany and was defeated, dethroned, humiliated as a prisoner of war, and finally died an exile in England. Also the commotion seized the French people at the revolution of the Commune.

Beha Ullah proclaimed the downfall of the Sultan Abdu'l Azez, the death of Ali Pasha in a foreign country, and the judgment of Turkey. The downfall of Zill-i-Sultan was foreshadowed in the epistle to Sheik Bakir. He foretold the exile of some of his followers, and Ismail Pasha of Egypt exiled them to Khartoun. Then He sent them an epistle wherein He announced that their oppressor, Ismail Pasha, would fall from power, and soon they should stand again in His presence. After a while Gordon Pasha came to Khartoun as the governor of Soudan and liberated them, and Ismail Pasha was exiled to Naples in Italy; and some of them visited Akka and stood in the presence of Beha. The numerous written and verbal warnings of impending events which took place, and which shall come to pass, are plain evidences of His Divine Knowledge.

The life and personality of Huseyn Ali are convincing proofs that He was the Manifestation and the Glory of God. For forty years he suffered in jails and in exile, oppressed and afflicted, was threatened with death by Mohammedan doctors and rulers, yet under the sword of the enemy He summoned all the people of the earth and their rulers, even those who imprisoned and exiled Him, to come to God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth. At the same time He uttered volumes of wonderful teachings and precepts, vigorous in style, clear in argument, powerful in proof, displaying perfect acquaintance with the scriptures of different faiths. He spent His life for the salvation of our race, and suffered humiliation for our elevation. He was imprisoned to free us from the fetters of ignorance. If more proofs are desired, read my work entitled *Beha Ullah*.

The wonderful and heavenly atmosphere of spirituality which shrouded the place of His presence, proved His divinity. Professor Browne of Cambridge, England, the greatest historian of this faith, who recorded what the friends and the adversaries said in favor or against Beha Ullah, went himself and met Beha Ulla in person, that he might be able to write his own experience and knowledge independently from what the others said. But he was attacked and blamed by Christian theologians and missionaries because he recorded his experience truthfully. While visiting Beha, he wrote as follows:

“I might, indeed, strive to describe in greater detail the faces and forms which surrounded me, the conversations to which I was privileged to listen, the solemn melodious reading of the Sacred Books, the general sense of harmony and content which pervaded the place, and the fragrant shady gardens whither in the afternoons we sometimes repaired; but all this was naught in comparison with the spiritual atmosphere with which I was encompassed. ... Let those who have not seen disbelieve me if the will; but should that Spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an emotion which they are not likely to forget.”

The followers of Beha were more loving and devoted to the personality of their Master than those of Jesus. When Jesus was arrested His disciples left Him and fled, and the most courageous of them, while following Him secretly, denied Him when asked if he were one of His followers. But those of Beha followed their Master to prison and exile. No hardships, no persecution, no calamity and no death could separate them from Him, and to this profane history bears witness. Indeed, what Jesus said was true, that the Father was greater than He. Professor Browne also said: “In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure. ... The face of Him on Whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one’s very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist, seemed to belie.”

“No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before One who is the Object of a devotion and love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain.”

The appearance of the Father is distinguished. It is more excellent and more sublime than all other Manifestations. When the fragrance of His teachings shall be diffused among the people of understanding, they will realize that Behaism is the only competent religion which has the capacity of receiving into her bosom all other religions, unifying them into one. Indeed, a day shall come when the banners of all religions shall be lowered under her Glorified Flag, and the melodious air shall universally be sung: “The Kingdom, the Glory and the Power belong to the Father.”

A BAHAIST PROTEST.

[*The Open Court*, Vol. XXIX (No. 11), November 1915, No. 714, pp. 702-703.]

Believers in the religion of Baha Ullah are naturally disappointed in Mr. Robert P. Richardson's presentation of it in the August *Open Court*. In the October number appeared a protest by Mr. I. G. Kheiralla, and we have received another objection to Mr. Richardson's article from Mrs. Albert Kirchner, of Chicago, who has been a student of the Baha cause for twelve years. The following extracts characterize her attitude:

"From this it will be seen that we do not substitute Baha 'Ollah for Jesus, for each have their own identity or station, one cannot take the place of the other; but each represents His own station in the evolution of Truth according to the unfoldment of the capacity of humanity. ...

"I would advise any one who would care to read a better account of the historical facts of the Bahai Movement to get *Everybody's Magazine* of December 1911, also the *Fortnightly Review* of June 1911. I will quote the note of the editor of *Everybody's* to the writer of these articles. Miss E. S. Stevens: 'For seventy years a religion without church, priest, creed or fixed form of worship has been spreading through the Orient, claiming converts and martyrs by the thousands. Love and Unity are its sole principles; and on this broad program believers in various faiths can unite. This Movement, called Bahatism, has also extended to Europe, Hawaii and the United States. Her acquaintance with Abdul Baha in his oriental home makes her story authoritative—a first-hand, intimate study.'

"These magazines can be read at the Bahai Inquirers Room, 1407 Auditorium Building, if any one is unable to obtain them.

"There has been no great movement born without the tongue of scandal and calumny attacking it, so we do not hope to be able to escape it either. As to some of the ambitious people who attach themselves to this cause, these are the ones who make it possible to be misunderstood. As Baha 'Ollah has said: 'These are they who attach themselves to my name but are not of me.' And as Abdul Baha says: 'If we are true Bahais (Real Christians or Glorious Christians) speech is not needed. Our actions will help on the world, will spread civilization, will help the progress of science, and cause the arts to develop. Without action nothing in the material world can be accomplished, neither can words unaided advance a man in the Spiritual Kingdom. It is not through lip service only that the Elect of God have attained to holiness, but by patient lives of active service they have brought Light into the world. Therefore strive that your actions day by day may be beautiful prayers. Turn toward God, and seek always to do that which is right and noble. Enrich the poor, raise the fallen, comfort the sorrowful, bring healing to the sick, reassure the fearful, rescue the oppressed, bring hope to the hopeless, shelter the destitute! This is the work of a true Bahai, and this is what is expected of him. If we strive to do all this, then are we true Bahais, but if we neglect it we are not followers of the Light, and we have no right to the name. God, who knows all hearts, knows how far our lives are the fulfilment of our words.'

“Is this not the essence of the Sermon on the Mount? So let this be our criterion for judging a Bahai.

“As to the Greenacre difficulties, I do not know of the happenings; but if such be the case, those committing such acts and doings have never been touched with the true spirit of the Bahai cause.”

AMERICAN BAHAIISM AND PERSIA.

[*The Open Court*, Vol. XXX (No. 2), February 1916, No. 717, p. 126.]

The following letter from a physician in Resht, Persia, was received by Mr. Robert P. Richardson of Philadelphia, in comment on his article published in *The Open Court* of August last:

“Resht, Persia, Oct. 10, 1915.

“Robert P. Richardson, Esq., 5010 Parkside Avenue, Philadelphia, Pa.

“Dear Sir: I have read with a great deal of interest the article in *The Open Court* which you so kindly had sent to me. I am especially glad to get a clear statement of the present position of Bahaiism in America. You may be aware that one of the strongest arguments to lead Persians to accept Bahaiism at the present time is the assertion that America is rapidly becoming Bahai, in proof of which *The Star of the West* is produced.

“Thanking you again for your clear and fair presentation of the matter, I am, most sincerely,

“J. Davidson Frame (M.D.)”