

THE BAHAI CAUSE TODAY

One hot summer day in the year 1921 I was crossing a vacant lot in one of the villages of Sistan in Eastern Iran. Turning about, I saw an old man following me, and when he caught up to me he came close and whispered in my ear, "Aren't you a Bahai?" "Why do you ask that question?" I asked. "You are an American, aren't you?" he said. "Yes", I replied, "I am an American". "Then you *must* be a Bahai", he answered, "for are not all Americans Bahais?" "No", I said, "most Americans are not Bahais. I have heard that there are Bahais in America, but as yet I have never seen one". The old man looked at me in surprise and disappointment, and walked away.

How many times that question has been asked me in Iran! Somehow the impression has been left in the minds of Iranian Bahais that the number of their co-religionists in America is very great, and I fear that more than once my veracity has been doubted when I have explained that most people in America have never even heard the name of Baha'ullah.

However, there are a number of centers in America where Bahais have been conducting meetings and working for their cause for a number of years, and it sometimes happens that people who come in touch with them wish to know more about the movement. The Bahais have done considerable writing, and their literature is available and should be studied by all who are interested. But the books and articles written on the subject by non-Bahais are for the most part out of print. It is to meet the need of those who wish to consider the movement from a different point of view that this article is being written, at the request of the editors of *THE MOSLEM WORLD*.

I. Summary of the History of the Movement.

It is impossible to understand the Bahai Movement, or to evaluate it, without a clear understanding of its history. Unfortunately, numerous conflicting accounts have been given of its origin, and it is not always easy to distinguish history from fiction or forgery. However, two distinguished European scholars visited Persia not long after the movement began, and published the results of their

careful investigations in this field. Their works provide the material for a true understanding of the origins of Baháism. Conte de Gobineau, the brilliant secretary of the French Legation in Persia, was in Teheran from 1855 to 1858, arriving only five years after the death of the Bab, and his book, *Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale*, which is largely devoted to a study of the religion of the Bab, is a source of primary importance. It was through reading this book that Dr. E. G. Browne of Cambridge University became interested in the Babi movement. As a result, he came to Persia in 1887, and spent a year in travel and in intimate association with the Baháis of that land. In 1893 he published his large book, *A Year Amongst the Persians*, and at about the same time he published a number of scholarly articles on Baháism in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*. He later translated and published several important books on the same subject. For everyone who wishes to understand Baháism, a careful study of the writings of these two impartial scholars is indispensable.

The outline of the history of Baháism, as I give it in this article, is largely drawn from these sources. A fuller account will be found in my book *Bahá'ism* (Revell, 1931) and in *The Religion of the Bahá'is*, by J. R. Richards (S.P.C.K., London, 1932).

The Appearance of the Bab.

The people of Persia, for the most part, belong to the Shiite sect of Islam. They believe that Mohammed, the Prophet of Islam, (died A.D. 632) was succeeded not by the Caliphs, as the majority of Moslems believe, but by his own descendants. The generally accepted Shiite belief is that the Prophet was followed by a line of twelve men called Imams, the first of whom was Ali, the son-in-law of Mohammed, and the last another Mohammed, who disappeared from the view of men in A.D. 837. This twelfth Imam did not die, but is still alive somewhere, and will return at the end of the world to fight against all unbelievers and make the whole world Mohammedan. When he comes, every true Moslem will take his sword and go forth after him to battle. As the end of the thousand years which followed his disappearance drew near, there was a strong expectation in Persia that the Hidden Imam was soon to appear. So when a young man of Shiraz, named Ali Mohammed, himself a descendant of Mohammed, on May 23, 1844, made the claim that he was the Gate (Bab) to the Knowledge of the Hidden Imam, there were many ready to acclaim him; and when his apostles began to proclaim him as the Hidden Imam himself, eager disciples took up their swords and assembled for the long-expected battle. Now at last the Imam would be seated on the throne of Persia and

would establish a church-state which would finally embrace the whole world, over which the Divine King would rule!

Naturally, the government of Persia was much disturbed by these developments, and when the Babis (as the followers of Ali Mohammed were called) gathered in force in Mazanderan, the armies of the Shah went out against them and defeated them. Much blood was shed, not only in Mazanderan, but also in Zenjan and other places in Persia. Most of the "twenty thousand martyrs", of whom the Bahais speak, lost their lives in this war, and they were not really Bahais but Babis. Many thousands of Moslems also were slain. In order to put an end to these uprisings the government decided to execute the Bab, who had been kept a prisoner for some time, and so, on July 8, 1850, he was shot in the city of Tabriz. By his patience and gentleness he won friends for himself, and although it was his claims which caused the Babi uprisings, it is not fair to hold him personally responsible for all that his followers did in his name. It was the opinion of Dr. Cormick, the English physician who attended him, and of other doctors also that his mind was unbalanced.

The Teachings of the Bab

The distinctive teaching of the Bab was that God, who is unknowable, has sent into the world a series of Manifestations, or Prophets, each one of whom brought a law for the government of mankind which took the place of the law that preceded it, and predicted the coming of another Manifestation who would be more perfect than those who came before. These Prophets were more than men, for they possessed the divine attributes, and rightly called themselves God. Only through them could God be known.

The first Manifestation was Adam; later Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Mohammed appeared, and now the Bab has come, the greatest Manifestation of all. The Bab thought Adam had lived 12,210 years before him, and suggested that Manifestations appeared once in a thousand years. He likens them to a boy, who as Adam was a mere embryo, as Jesus was ten years old, as Mohammed was eleven, and as himself was twelve. He predicted the coming of the next Manifestation, "He whom God shall manifest", likening him to a boy of fourteen, thus hinting that he would appear after two thousand years. The Bab considered himself the "forerunner" of the next Manifestation only as Mohammed had been his forerunner. He anticipated the time when his laws, both civil and religious, would be supreme in Persia, and no one who refused to accept him would be permitted to remain in that land. His *Bayan* (the name given to the voluminous writings of the Bab) was the Bible of mankind for this age, as the Gospel and the

Koran had been before it, and the Babi religion would become the dominant religion of the world.

The Rule of Subh-i-Azal

When the Bab was executed, the headship of the Babi movement passed to Mirza Yahya, known as Subh-i-Azal, who had been nominated by the Bab as his successor (*Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, p. 250; *New History*, p. 413) and for ten years he was the undisputed leader of the Babis. So highly was he regarded by the Babis that some of them thought Mirza Yahya was "He whom God shall manifest", of whom the Bab had spoken. For two years after the Bab's death Mirza Yahya remained in Persia with his followers, but in 1852, as the result of an attempt on the life of the Shah by several Babis, persecution broke out in Teheran. Twenty-eight Babis were executed, and Mirza Yahya fled with a number of Babis to Baghdad, which was outside Persia, in Turkish territory, and this became the headquarters of the sect.

A few months after Mirza Yahya's arrival, he was joined by his half-brother Baha (Baha'ullah), who also had been a zealous follower of the Bab, and had been imprisoned in Teheran for four months after the attempt on the Shah's life. From 1852 till 1863 Subh-i-Azal was looked upon by all Babis as their Supreme Head, but being a peace-loving soul, caring little for authority, he retired into almost complete seclusion, "leaving the direction of affairs in the hands of his half-brother Baha, a man of much more resolute and ambitious character, who thus gradually became the most prominent figure and the moving spirit of the sect." Outwardly Baha was subordinate to his brother, as is clearly seen in the *Iqan*, which was written by him during this period, but he was secretly preparing to advance the claim to be "He whom God shall manifest".

The Babis in Baghdad became so active that the Persian government, fearing a repetition of what had happened in Mazanderan and Zenjan, asked the Turkish government to send them back to Persia, where they could be controlled, or else remove them to a more distant spot. The Turkish government was glad to comply, for the quarrels and fightings of Babis and Moslems in Baghdad had caused great trouble, and so it came to pass that Baha'ullah and Subh-i-Azal and their families and followers were deported, first to Constantinople and then to Adrianople, where they remained from 1863 to 1868.

The Appearance of Baha'ullah

It was during this period that Baha definitely put forward his claim to be the new Manifestation predicted by the Bab. There was nothing to prevent Baha from claiming this exalted station, for the Bab had said that no one could falsely make this claim, and

had commanded Subh-i-Azal to acknowledge the new Manifestation, should he appear in his time, and to abrogate the Bayan to make way for the new law.

And what did the Babis do about this claim of Baha's? "Amongst the Babis", writes Dr. Browne, "the effect of this announcement [of Baha's] was little short of stupendous. From Constantinople to Kirman and from Cairo to Khurasan the communities of the faithful were rent asunder by a schism which every subsequent year but rendered wider and more permanent. . . . At Adrianople itself the struggle was short and the triumph of Baha complete. . . . Elsewhere, though active and astute emissaries were at once dispatched in all directions by Baha, the conflict. . . . was longer maintained. For the question at issue was . . . whether the doctrine and writings of the beloved Master [the Bab], for which his followers had been willing to suffer death or exile, were to be regarded as abrogated and cancelled in favor of a new revelation; whether his chosen viceregent [Subh-i-Azal], whom they had so long regarded as their Supreme Pontiff and as the incarnation of all purity, virtue and heavenly wisdom, was to be cast down from this high position. . . . Babis who remember that time cannot easily be induced to speak of it."

Though the majority of the Babis finally accepted Baha, Subh-i-Azal steadily refused to do so, saying that it was unreasonable that God should have sent a major Manifestation, such as the Bab, for only twenty-two years. The refusal of Subh-i-Azal to accept his brother Baha'ullah was very embarrassing to the followers of the latter, who were called Bahais. For Subh-i-Azal, having been appointed by the Bab himself, should have been the first to recognize the new Manifestation. What was to be done about it? The Bahais, with or without the approval of their new leader, did two things. First, they got rid of a number of the chief disciples of Subh-i-Azal, at least twenty of whom, according to Dr. Browne, were murdered by the followers of Baha'ullah. (*Traveller's Narrative*, pp. 370-372), and an attempt was made on the life of Subh-i-Azal himself. Second, the Bahais destroyed as far as possible the books which might be used to disprove the claims of Baha'ullah, such as the history of the Babi movement written by Mirza Jani, a devoted disciple of the Bab, who died as a martyr to the Babi cause in Teheran in 1852. This book, known as *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf*, disappeared from Persia, but was discovered in Paris by Dr. Browne, and was translated in part and published by him. The Bahais today do not include the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* in their bibliographies, though it is one of the most important sources for a study of Babi history. Thus, by getting rid of the people who opposed and the books which

disproved the claims of Baha'ullah, the Bahais were able to rewrite the history of their cause to suit their own purpose, as Dr. Browne has so clearly demonstrated, and in modern Bahai histories, such as *The Dawn-Breakers*, Subh-i-Azal is entirely ignored, and Baha'ullah is represented as the immediate successor to the Bab.

As a result of this bitter quarrel which occurred among the Babis in Adrianople the Turkish government found it necessary to separate the two rival factions. Hence in 1868 Subh-i-Azal and his followers were sent to the Island of Cyprus, and Baha'ullah and his party to Acre on the coast of Syria. The Azalis were in the minority, and have almost disappeared, though a few are still to be found in Persia. The Bahais carried on an active propaganda in Persia and won over most of the Babis to their party. Baha'ullah and his followers were kept in prison for a time, and suffered much from hunger and sickness, but after two years they were allowed to move to a house in the town of Acre, and there they lived for nine years in comparative comfort.

During this period Baha'ullah was busily engaged in developing his new religion. "His chief aim", writes Dr. Browne, "seems to have been to introduce a more settled order, to discourage speculation, to direct the attention of his followers to practical reforms . . . , to exalt ethics at the expense of metaphysics, to check mysticism, to conciliate existing authorities, including even the Shah of Persia . . . , to abolish useless, unpractical and irksome regulations and restrictions, and, in general, to adapt the religion at the head of which he now found himself to the ordinary exigencies of life, and to render it more capable of becoming, what he intended to make it, a universal system suitable to all mankind." He wrote epistles to various rulers, including the Czar of Russia, the Pope, Queen Victoria, and others, bidding them acknowledge him and obey his laws. And he received many pilgrims who came from Persia to visit him and bring him gifts.

In 1877 Baha'ullah rented a palace outside Acre, and from that time until his death in 1892 he lived peacefully in the midst of his family and friends. Here Dr. Browne saw him in 1890.

The Teachings of Baha'ullah

Baha'ullah, like the Bab, was a prolific writer. Many of his writings have been translated into English and French and can be found in *Bahai Scriptures* and other Bahai publications. Baha'ullah's teachings resemble in some respects those of the Bab. God is unknowable, except in his Manifestations. As Mohammed succeeded Jesus, and the Bab Mohammed, so Baha'ullah has come to succeed the Bab and perfect his work. He will found a Church-State which will become dominant in the world, and this will be

done, not by the sword, as in the Babi fashion, but by peaceful means. The laws for the government of this Empire were written in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* ("Most Holy Book"), a summary of which is found in my book *Bahaism* (pp. 110-121). Some of the most important of these laws are the following:

Private worship is to be performed three times a day, while the worshipper faces Acre. Worship is to consist of nine prostrations, but on a journey one is sufficient. One month of the year (nineteen days) is to be devoted to fasting, and from sunrise to sunset food and drink and sexual intercourse are prohibited. Each day every believer should wash his hands, then his face, and having seated himself facing Allah [Acre?] should say ninety-five times, "Allah is the Most Splendid!" All male believers who are able must make the pilgrimage to the House [of the Bab in Shiraz], but women are excused. All Bahais must be engaged in some useful occupation. Austerities and ascetic practices are forbidden. Shaving the head [as the Mohammedans did] is forbidden. Men's hair must not fall below the ears.

The thief is to be imprisoned for the first and second offence, and for the third he is to be branded on the forehead. "Do not let pity restrain you." If a man and woman commit adultery they must each pay nine *misqals* of gold [about \$20] to the House of Justice, and for a second offense the fine is to be doubled.

The use of gold and silver plate and ornaments is not forbidden [as in Islam], and knives and forks are to be used in eating instead of the fingers. Every father must educate his sons and daughters. Listening to music is lawful.

If a man purposely burns down a house, he must be burned to death. Marriage is obligatory for all. "Beware of taking more than two women, and he who is satisfied with one handmaid will enjoy peace himself, and so will she." Traffic in slaves is forbidden. Cleanliness is enjoined. The prayers of people with dirty clothes will not ascend to God. The nails must be cut, and a weekly bath must be taken. The feet must be washed daily in summer, and every three days in winter. The use of perfumes is enjoined, for God likes this. The books of people of other religions may be read. Believers who possess more than a hundred *misqals* of gold [\$225] must give nineteen per cent. of their property [to Baha], that the remainder may become lawful to them.

Believers must speak kindly to those who speak roughly to them. Gambling and opium are forbidden. Beasts are not to be overloaded. If one kills a man accidentally he must pay one hundred *misqals* of gold as compensation to the relatives of the deceased.

Such is the character of the perfect law by which the world

is to be ruled for a thousand years, and in obeying which man will be saved.

Shortly before his death Baha'ullah sent to Dr. Browne a little manuscript which contained a compendium of his principal teachings. These were in brief as follows :

1. The abolition of religious war as practiced by the Moslems and Babis.
2. Permission to all sects and peoples to unite in friendly intercourse.
3. Permission to study foreign languages, and the choice of one language and one character for all mankind.
4. Bahais are to give loyal support to any King who protects them.
5. Bahais are to submit to the laws and customs of the land in which they live.
6. Promise of the "Most Great Peace".
7. All men may follow their own taste in dress and wearing of the hair.
8. Christian priests must abandon their seclusion and engage in useful service. They are permitted to marry.
9. Sins are not to be confessed to men, but to God.
10. The Bab's command to destroy all books of science and philosophy is abrogated.
11. The study of useful arts and sciences is encouraged.
12. All men must learn and practise some craft, trade or profession.
13. The settlement of differences, the apportionment of alms, and the ordering of the affairs of the commonwealth generally, are entrusted to the "House of Justice".
14. Pilgrimages to the tombs of saints and martyrs as commanded by the Bab are no longer obligatory.
15. The best form of government is a combination of a republic and a monarchy.

Through his reading of books and newspapers published in Syria, and his intercourse with men, Baha'ullah kept in close touch with the movements of his day, and was a keen observer of events. His outlook was far broader and more modern than was that of the Bab. Yet there is little in his teachings that is original, most of the Bahai doctrines being derived from the Moslem sects in Persia; from the Bible, or from contemporary Western thought.

The Rule and Teachings of Abdul-Baha

In spite of the fact that Baha'ullah in his last Will and Testament besought his followers not to quarrel over the succession after

his death, no sooner had the Manifestation died than bitter strife broke out among his sons. Abdul-Baha, who had been appointed by his father the leader of the movement, began to make claims for himself, which to many Bahais seemed blasphemous. Baha'ullah had said that no new Manifestation would appear for a thousand years, thus preventing anyone from doing to his Rule what he had done to that of the Bab. So Abdul-Baha never made that claim. But he so associated himself with his father that he led the Bahais to give him the same honor which they gave the Manifestation, and today the words of Abdul-Baha are included in the Bahai Scriptures on perfect equality with the words of Baha'ullah. Moreover, Abdul-Baha claimed to be the sole interpreter of his father's teachings.

The opposition to these claims was fierce, and the strife lasted for several years, but at length the party of Abdul-Baha won the day. Not content with having the allegiance of the Bahais of the East, Abdul-Baha in 1893 sent a missionary, Dr. Khayrullah, to America, and converts were won in Chicago. Later, Dr. Khayrullah broke with Abdul-Baha, and led away with him several hundred of the American Bahais, and the quarrel begun in Acre was repeated in this country. Strife in the Bahai community led the Turkish government once more to confine Abdul-Baha to Acre, after he had been free for twenty years to travel about Syria. This confinement lasted for seven years, and was terminated by the Turkish Revolution in 1908. During this time he received many visitors, both from the East and from the West.

In 1911, Abdul-Baha left Syria for a tour of Europe and America. He spent seven months in America, giving many addresses and talking with inquirers. While in Chicago he dedicated the grounds for the Temple now nearing completion at Wilmette. In his teaching he continued to carry out the liberalizing tendencies which we have noted in the teachings of Baha'ullah. In an address given in England in 1913 he enumerated ten of the principles of Baha'ullah, and it is instructive to compare this list with that given by Baha'ullah himself to Dr. Browne (see above). The list is as follows:

1. The independent investigation of truth.
2. The oneness of the human race.
3. International Peace.
4. The conformity of religion to science and reason.
5. Religious, racial, political, and patriotic prejudices must be banished.
6. The equality of men and women.
7. All classes of society are to work together in love and harmony.

8. "The Parliament of Man" as a court of last appeal in international questions.
9. Universal education.
10. A universal language.

Abdul-Baha told the Christians of the West that the Bahai movement includes *all*, and said that all differences must be put aside, and all mankind are to realize their oneness in Baha'ullah. He did not ask that Christians give up their Christian faith or church membership, but said, "Whoever acts completely in accordance with the teachings of Christ is a Bahai". Yet he demanded full obedience to himself. "All must obey Him [Abdul-Baha]; All must turn to Him Whatsoever he says is true". "Beware! Beware!" he said to the Bahais of Chicago, "lest anyone declare his own ideas". World unity is to be achieved by complete submission on the part of all men to the word and will of this one man.

The Rule of Shoghi Efendi

When Abdul-Baha died in 1921 he was succeeded by his grandson Shoghi Efendi, who is called the Guardian of the Cause. Abdul-Baha named him in his Will as his successor, and charged all the Bahais to accept and obey him. "All must be under his shadow and obey his command. Should any disobey and seek division, the wrath of God and His vengeance will be upon him." "To none is given the right to put forth his own opinion or express his particular convictions. All must seek guidance and turn unto the Center of the Cause and the House of Justice." The universal House of Justice has not been established, but when it is established it will be entirely under the control of the Guardian, for Abdul-Baha provided that "should any of the members [of the House of Justice] commit a sin, injurious to the common weal, the Guardian of the Cause hath at his own discretion the right to expel him". Hence, whenever the Bahai cause prevails and this system is established throughout the world, as its followers ardently desire, Shoghi Efendi (or his successor) will "find himself in possession of an authority which the popes and emperors have never aspired to, even in their wildest dreams. For the authority of the Guardian of the Cause is not confined to spiritual matters. He is to be the King of kings and the Lord of lords and the President of presidents, as well as the Pope of the popes of the earth. 'All must be under his shadow and obey his command'. In politics, in economics, in international problems, in religion, in *everything* he is the final authority, and his word is absolute law." Here is totalitarianism in its perfection! We can be thankful that the Babis laid aside their swords, and that now the Bahai campaign for world conquest is a peaceful one.

For the last two decades Shoghi Efendi has been directing the affairs of his Cause from his home on Mount Carmel in Palestine. Zealous missionaries of the cause have been going around the world proclaiming the Bahai message. In Iran, the cause has met with considerable opposition from the government, which closed the Bahai schools, forbade the holding of public meetings, and prohibited the bringing of Bahai literature into the country. In spite of these difficulties, the Bahais have been active in their propaganda, but as far as one can see, their numbers are not increasing. In other lands progress is reported, but, in the words of the Guardian himself, the Bahai Cause is still in its infancy. Nearly a hundred years have passed since the Bab appeared, and one cannot help wondering *when* the Cause is going to grow up!

II. *Bahatism in America Today*

Having given a resume of Bahai history, we will now consider the status of Bahatism in America at the present time.

The United States Census of Religious Bodies (1936) gives the following figures for Bahatism:

	1936	1926	1916	1906
Number of Assemblies	88	44	57	24
Number of Members	2,584	1,247	2,884	1,280

Contributions

Temple in Chicago (present value) \$1,040,000.

Gifts to local Relief, Charity, etc., in 1936 .. \$ 281.

Location of Members in 1936

In New York State 354

In Illinois 427

In California 353

The reader will note that the number of Spiritual Assemblies (local congregations) has doubled in the last decade, and the number of voting members has also doubled, bringing the figure almost up to that for 1916. The property of the Temple in Wilmette, Illinois, is now worth over a million dollars, just twice what it was in 1926. And almost half of the American members reside in the three states of Illinois, New York and California.

Principles of the Bahai Faith

The Bahai teachings have been summarized as follows in the official magazine of the movement:

The Bahai Faith recognizes the unity of God and of His Prophets, upholds the principle of an unfettered search after truth, condemns all forms of superstition and prejudice, teaches that the

fundamental purpose of religion is to promote concord and harmony, that it must go hand in hand with science, and that it constitutes the sole and ultimate basis of a peaceful, ordered and progressive society. It inculcates the principle of equal opportunity, rights and privileges for both sexes, advocates compulsory education, abolishes extremes of wealth and poverty, exalts work performed in the spirit of service to the rank of worship, recommends the adoption of an auxiliary international language, and provides the necessary agencies for the establishment and safeguarding of a permanent and universal peace."

Literature

The Bahai teachings are set forth in a well-edited little monthly magazine, called *World Order*; and in the *Bahai World*, the large year-book of the movement, which appears every two years, a great deal of interesting information is found. Also several books have recently been published which are worthy of notice. I would call especial attention to "Security for a Failing World", by Stanwood Cobb, who is one of the editors of *World Order*; "The World Order of Baha'ullah", by Shoghi Efendi, the present head of the movement; "The Dawn-Breakers", a history of the movement translated by Shoghi Efendi; and "The Bible of Mankind", compiled by Mirza Ahmed Sohrab. All these publications may be secured from the Bahai Center, 119 West 57th Street, New York City. As I have read these more recent publications of the Bahais, I have been favorably impressed both by the spirit and by the quality of their literature. Many of the articles have dealt with the vital problems of the day, and were written by authors of real ability. Some of the titles found in *World Order* during the past five years are: Turkey Takes the New Road; Religion, Race and Unity; Race Prejudice; A World Community; Social Trends in American Life; Is War Incurable?; Meaning of Prayer; Education in World Friendship; Psychology and Criminal Control; Spiritual and Material Healing; Islam (a series of articles); Cooperative Movement; International Language; History of the Christian Church (a series); Marriage; Immortality; Divine Consciousness (the bearing of Jung's work on Bahaism); St. Catherine of Siena; Overcoming Worry; Child Guidance; Negro in America; Why I Am a Bahai.

From these titles it is apparent that American Bahais are abreast of the times, and are wrestling with the same problems that are confronting all of us today. Some of the articles were written by Christians, but most of them are from the pens of American Bahai authors who had a Christian background, and who have been more deeply influenced by Christ than by Baha'ullah, though they have

substituted his name for that of our Lord. In every issue of the magazine there are pages of quotations from the words of Baha'ullah and Abdul-Baha, some of which are impressive, but most of which make extremely dull reading. In my humble opinion, the disciples are more interesting than their masters!

Security for a Failing World

The most attractive interpretation of American Bahaiism which I have seen is "Security for a Failing World", a book published by Stanwood Cobb in 1934, and in attempting to portray the spirit and message of the Bahai movement I cannot do better than give a summary of this challenging volume. In a most interesting and impressive manner the author describes the new age of plenty and of power which has dawned on earth. He shows that man is unable to use for good the power which is his, because while the intellect is trained and controlled, the *emotions* are not. "What can govern the emotions? Only a master emotion." And "the greatest of all master emotions is religion". There is no "cure for the world except a spiritual renaissance. We face the need of a great spiritual message capable of sweeping men off their feet and carrying them on broad streams of enthusiasm to the ocean of universal love, harmony and peace."

"But has the institution founded upon the message of Christ—the present Christian Church—sufficient spiritual power to eliminate the organic evils of the world? To ban war, to suppress economic exploitation, and to establish universal peace and brotherhood? Has it the capacity and vitality to inaugurate a world-wide ideal civilization?

"Or must we await a new spiritual dynamic—more potent, more universal, more capable of winning the allegiance of all races, creeds and nations?" The answer of the author is that Christianity, like all the other religions, has lost its power, and will die and pass away.

He says, "The history of every great world religion, carefully studied, will reveal this same fundamental law: namely, that religion, as it tends to crystallize into form and ritual, correspondingly declines in spiritual power and in ethical effectiveness."

"Humanity, like a battery which has to be recharged, is under the necessity of fresh spiritual impulse at stated intervals. Fortunately for the spiritual evolution of humanity, at every epoch when one religion has been outgrown, a new religion has magically arisen—a religion full of vital hope and promise, and charged with the power to remold and remake the lives of its communicants."

The coming of a new religion is an act of God. It is He who

sends the Prophet. "These founders of religions not only proclaim anew the everlasting truths and universal moral laws which must guide humanity, but they bring a subtle and tremendous force to bear upon the life of humanity. They are human dynamos, generating from the world of the Unseen an electric spiritual force which they communicate to their disciples. The disciples, charged with this force, are able in turn to communicate it to others."

And what is the religion which today has sufficient vitality and power to overcome man's selfishness and greed and make possible the establishment of a world order of peace and justice? The answer of the author is *Bahatism*. It claims to be a divine revelation. It has inspired amazing devotion and self-sacrifice. It has definite spiritual and ethical teachings. Its great miracle is "the transformation of human character, especially in the way of abolishing prejudices and emotional barriers. It is bringing together Jews, Zoroastrians, Mohammedans, Christians, Buddhists, Confucianists—welding them into an organic whole, a living, breathing body of brotherhood and love." It transforms human nature and has produced many saints.

The reason for the success of Bahai missionary work is that "no one is asked to abandon his own religion in order to become a Bahai." The Bahai missionary does not have to attack other religions, draw comparisons, hurt people's feelings. All religions are in essence one: love to God, love to man. Hence the Bahai movement is "the great keystone to the arch of human progress, the fulfilment of the dreams of all the prophets; the Utopia which philosophers have visioned; the Golden Age, the Millennium, the Kingdom of God upon earth."

"Imagine a world bound together by one language, one religion, one code of morals, and one government, into a great common culture. *Such is the Bahai World State*. Universal education, a universal curriculum, international exchange of commodities, without tariff barriers, peaceful and friendly national rivalry. A world parliament to form international laws and a world court to enforce them, and the maintenance of universal peace by means of an international police force."

The Need of the World for God

Many of the words of Mr. Cobb and other earnest Bahai writers strike a responsive chord in Christian hearts. We sympathize deeply with the Bahais in their concern about the state of the world, and we too are moved by the words of Baha'ullah which they quote so effectively. "How long will humanity persist in its waywardness?" he asked. "How long will injustice continue? How long are chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate

the face of society? The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divides and afflicts the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appears to be lamentably defective."

For the "convulsions and chaos" which Baha'ullah and all discerning men foresaw are now, in April, 1940, on the front page of every newspaper, and the end is not yet.

We also agree that mankind, unaided by God, is impotent to right these wrongs and remake our world. "Humanity", writes Shoghi Efendi, the Guardian of the Cause, in *World Order* (April, 1935) "whether viewed in the light of man's individual conduct or in the existing relationships between organized communities and nations, has, alas, strayed too far and suffered too great a decline to be redeemed through the unaided efforts of the best among its recognized rulers and statesmen—however disinterested their motives, however concerted their action, however unsparing in their zeal and devotion to its cause. No scheme which the calculations of the highest statesmanship may yet devise; no doctrines which the most distinguished exponents of economic theory may hope to advance; no principle which the most ardent of moralists may strive to inculcate, can provide in the last resort, adequate foundation upon which the future of a distracted world can be built."

Yes, the world is unable to save itself, and our only hope is in God. And what has God done to save the world? It is here that Bahais part company with followers of Christ. The Christian believes that "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself", that Christ is the only Saviour of the world, that He, by His spirit, is always with His disciples, and is able to meet all their needs and the needs of the whole world. The Christian remembers Christ's word, "It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away the Comforter will not come unto you, but if I go I will send Him unto you", and believes that Christ's spiritual presence everywhere is better for the Church today than would be His physical presence in Palestine or in America. The Christian, therefore, expects no repetition of the Incarnation, with its birth and death and resurrection, but awaits Christ's return in glory, when Time shall become Eternity, and Death shall be swallowed up of Life. Meanwhile, the Christian exerts himself to the utmost to persuade men to accept Christ as their Saviour and Lord and to follow His teachings in private and community life, as well as in national and international affairs, believing that whenever life is dominated by His spirit, a righteous and harmonious world order

will be established. The Christian is convinced that God Himself can do no more for the salvation of the world than He has done and is doing in Jesus Christ, and that through Christ God will finally save the world.

But the Bahai position is different. As we saw above, Baha'ullah following the doctrine of some of the mystics of Iran, taught that God had manifested Himself, not once but many times, and would continue to do so forever. Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Zoroaster, Christ, Mohammed, the Bab, and now Baha'ullah have all been divine Manifestations, but since the religions founded by the other prophets are now out of date, the only hope of the world today is the Bahai Cause, founded by Baha'ullah, furthered by his son Abdul-Baha, and guided by his great-grandson Shoghi Efendi—this is the God-chosen instrument for the salvation of the world in our age.

The coming of a new Prophet, or Manifestation, brings a new day for the earth, a new spring-time for a world dead in ignorance and unbelief. The Prophets belong to a higher order of existence than that of man. "Baha'ullah establishes the existence of three worlds", writes Ruhi Afnan in *World Order*, "(1) the World of God, or Divine Existence, (2) the World of the Prophets . . . ; (3) and the World of Creation. The World of the Prophets is the bridge over the chasm existing between the other two worlds, and forms the basis of our moral and spiritual life."

The Prophets are mirrors which reflect the light of the sun. One mirror is broken, another takes its place. One Prophet dies (the Bahais say "ascends"), another follows him, and the sun shines in all. "Just as the sun reflected in the mirror can assert with full justification that it is the same sun, so can the Prophet say that he is God." Jesus said, "I and my Father are one". Mohammed is quoted as saying, "He is I and I am He" [not in the Koran]. The Bab said, "I am the Primal Point from which have been generated all created things". And Baha'ullah said, "Naught is seen in My beauty but His beauty, and in My being but His being, and in My self but His self." And so, Bahaism has no real Incarnation, for the illustration of the mirror indicates not a true union of God and man in the Manifestation, but merely a temporary and formal relationship. The sun does not in any sense unite with the mirror, and its contact may therefore cease at any time. A thousand mirrors may follow one another in rapid succession, and the beholder is not aware of any difference between them, for he sees only the reflected light of the sun, and the mirror means but little to him.

The Succession

As one reads the Bahai literature he frequently meets the statement that one of the weaknesses of Christianity and Islam is that the founders of these religions did not give any definite directions regarding the organization and government of their followers after their death. As a result, Christians and Mohammedans are split into many sects, and no one is acknowledged by all believers as their divinely appointed head. But this fault has been corrected in the latest Manifestation, for Baha'ullah gave clear directions regarding his successor, and the Bahais will not split up as others have done. Whether Bahatism in the years to come will be spared the controversy and strife which have weakened other religions remains to be seen. Certainly the first seventy-five years of Babi-Bahai history had their full share of internal as well as external strife! And though the leadership of Shoghi Efendi was not seriously opposed, there were some Bahais who refused to follow him in spite of Abdul-Baha's Will. Man being as he is, no plan and no command, even though it be from God, will prevent schisms from occurring unless the community is full of the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of Love and Unity.

The Bahai leaders maintain that the spiritual principles of Bahatism cannot be accepted without the Administrative Order, for they are inseparable. The Guardianship is indispensable to the movement, for there must always be someone to give infallible interpretation and guidance to men. Thus in an article in *World Order* (April, 1936) Ruhi Afnan defends the necessity of "Institutionalism" in religion. He says a religion without an organization will not survive. Christianity and Islam have both had organization and owe their strength to this. Likewise the Bahai cause must have its Guardian and its legislative body. In order to avoid the confusion and divisions which result from freedom of interpretation of the Scriptures, "Baha'ullah gave the exclusive right of interpretation to Abdul-Baha. How could he have safeguarded His faith from the disruptive influences that clove asunder the older Faiths if not through the institution of Guardianship, through an institution the distinguishing prerogative of which would be to interpret the scripture?" There *must* be a Guardian, say the Bahais, appointed by God, not elected by men, who shall have the sole right to interpret the scriptures, and to whom men must give absolute obedience. For only thus can the unity which is desired be attained.

The Guardian is to be the Head, not only of a religious organization, but also of a World State, which will have supreme authority in every phase of human life. "Some form of a world super-state

must needs be evolved, in whose favor all the nations of the world will have willingly ceded every claim to make war, certain rights to impose taxation and all rights to maintain armaments, except for purposes of maintaining internal order within their respective dominions. Such a state will have to include within its orbit an International Executive adequate to enforce supreme and unchallengeable authority on every recalcitrant member of the commonwealth."

There will also be a World Parliament and a Supreme Tribunal. Thus a World Community will be created in which economic barriers, religious fanaticism, racial animosity will not exist, which will be governed by a single code of international law.

Mr. Stanwood Cobb, writing in *World Order* in April, 1937, takes us to the year 2001 A.D., and shows us the world as it has been reconstructed according to the Bahai plan—a wonderful Utopia, in which there is no war, no poverty, no illiteracy, and no religious division. He says, "This new and miraculous spiritual unity of the human race is the most important single factor in the creation of an effective, working unity of thought and action among the two billion people that inhabit the globe.

"The apex and keystone of this world structure is the institution of the Guardianship established by Baha'ullah as the focal point around which the world's thought and action revolve, creating a functional unity unassailable by the dispersive quality.

"This sane spiritual force of divine guidance and protection permeates to greater or less degree the functioning of the various legislative and administrative bodies—local, national, and international. In fact, a new type of government has sprung into being, combining the important elements of democracy, aristocracy, autocracy, and theocracy. . . . Permeating universally the ordering and functioning of this new government is the practice of collective turning to the Divine Ruler of the universe for guidance in the solution of all the difficult legislative and administrative problems." The Bahais feel the need of a Divine Ruler who sits on Caesar's throne, and that Ruler they believe to be Shoghi Efendi.

Is Bahatism an Independent Religion?

In his book, "Security for a Failing World", Mr. Cobb has a chapter on "Christianity and the New World Order", in which he discusses the relation of Bahatism to Christianity. "Does Bahatism supersede Christianity?" he asks. He replies that it does not. Its purpose is the same as that of Christianity, to establish the will of God upon earth. If the church can accomplish this end, Bahatism will rejoice. Becoming a Bahai does not necessitate separation from one's church. To a woman who asked, "What shall I do to

become a good Bahai?" Abdul-Baha replied, "Work in your church, be the best Christian you can be, and thus you will become a good Bahai".

The point of view expressed by Mr. Cobb in the above paragraph is not in accord with the pronouncement of the Guardian Shoghi Efendi, as published in the "Bahai World" (1934-1936, p. 200), which clearly indicates that Bahaism is a distinct religion, and that a Bahai should not retain his membership in his former church, synagogue or mosque. He says that formerly when the Bahai cause was just beginning to emerge, it was permitted for Bahais to keep their old religious connections. But now the situation has changed. Bahaism has become a separate world religion. "No Bahai", writes the Guardian, "who wishes to be a whole-hearted and sincere upholder of the distinguishing principles of the Cause can accept full membership in any non-Bahai ecclesiastical organization. . . . For it is only too obvious that in most of its fundamental assumptions the cause of Baha'ullah is completely at variance with outworn creeds, ceremonies and institutions".

Though we cannot agree that there is nothing in Christianity but "outworn creeds, ceremonies and institutions", we do heartily agree with Shoghi Efendi that it is impossible for one to be a Christian and a Bahai at the same time. As the Persians say, "two watermelons cannot be carried in one hand"! Anyone who understands what is involved in membership in the church of Christ, and who is informed regarding the teachings and organization of Bahaism, will recognize that the two systems are contradictory and that a Christian who wishes to accept Baha'ullah and his laws must give up his allegiance to Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord.

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of the United States and Canada, acting on this principle, sent a petition in the year 1934 to the United States Government requesting that Bahaism be recognized, and Bahais be exempted from military service. They said: "Our petition involves the claim that the Bahai Faith is an independent religion, not an off-shoot or mere creedal or ritualistic variation of any former religion. It stands upon the same spiritual foundation as Christianity, Judaism and all other recognized independent religions of history" (Bahai World, 1932-1934).

We hope, therefore, that in the future Bahais will desist from proclaiming their cause as the union of all religions, and will maintain their stand as "an independent religion", one of the numerous religions claiming the allegiance of mankind. And we also hope that they will realize that by forming a new independent religion today they have added to the religious confusion of the world, and have increased the religious strife which they so much deplore.

The Most Great Peace

One of the most important points in the Bahai program has been Peace. When in 1890 Professor Edward G. Browne went to Acre, Baha'ullah said to him, "These fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the 'Most Great Peace' shall come". For many years the followers of Baha'ullah in Iran have asked Christians to explain the meaning of the prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Isaiah. When Christians replied that this is a prophecy of Christ, the Prince of Peace, the Bahais would say, "But Christ did *not* bring peace on earth. Look at the wars which have occurred during the past two thousand years! No, this is a prophecy of Baha'ullah, who will actually bring wars to an end".

A half-century has passed since Baha'ullah uttered these words, and during this period two world wars have been fought. Where is the Most Great Peace that Baha'ullah was to have brought? He has not brought peace on earth any more than Christ did, and the Bahais find it necessary to change their interpretation.

"As we look at the world today," writes Shamaz Waite in *World Order* (April, 1936), "nation rising against nation, the great monster of war again appearing upon the horizon . . . these majestic and prophetic words of Baha'ullah, 'The Most Great Peace shall come', seem but a far-off dream and not a present reality. But, 'So it shall be', for . . . when a Prophet speaks the creative word, it is instantly accomplished in the inner plane, and no opposing power in the universe can obliterate it. Just how long it will be before it becomes apparent in the phenomenal world lies in the Will of God." And that is just what the Christian says about Christ's final triumph over sin and hatred. If Baha'ullah has been unable to accomplish any more toward World Peace than Christ accomplished, what has been gained by his coming?

Miss Waite says in the same article that the reason why all the elaborate machinery which men have set up for bringing about Peace has failed to produce any results is that the power that moves the universe is lacking—"the power of the love of God". "In all our great Peace Conferences and Peace Parleys, is it not strange", she asks, "that all mention of God is eliminated? All reference to the power of prayer ignored?" And then she says that it is to call men back to the love of God that Baha'ullah has been sent into the world. "He has left a plan so perfect, so all-inclusive, so adaptable to the solution of every need of man . . . that would men but stop all human effort, and study and apply the divine Plan for a New World Order, the 'Most Great Peace' would be an established and blessed fact."

But why will they not accept this? Because, says Miss Waite, "humanity needs new hearts". Yes, a spiritual renewal is necessary. The Bahai says that Baha'ullah is giving men new hearts. If he is, let us thank God. But we know that for the past nineteen hundred years Jesus Christ has been doing just that, and is still doing it in almost all lands today. And He, by His cross and resurrection, is able to exercise a life-giving power which no other prophet has ever possessed. What is needed is not a change of doctors, but a more faithful and earnest following out of the instructions of our Good Physician, Jesus Christ.

III. *Is Bahaiism Adequate to Meet the World's Need?*

As I have already indicated, there are elements in the Bahai teaching with which the Christian finds himself in full sympathy, and one cannot but admire the zeal and earnestness which some of the Bahais show in their service of the Cause. But admiration for certain aspects of the teaching or for certain devoted missionaries should not blind us to the nature of the system as a whole; and honesty requires us to state our conviction that the Bahai Faith is altogether inadequate to meet the deepest needs of men today. It is impossible in this article to do more than mention a few of the points at which Bahaiism fails to justify its claim to be the religion of all mankind for the coming one thousand years.

Bahaiism Fails to Take Sin Seriously.

In the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments sin is taken seriously. "Woe is me, for I am undone!" cries the Prophet, "because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips." "Have mercy upon me, O God!" prays the Psalmist. "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned. . . . Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity and cleanse me from my sin." "All have sinned", writes the Apostle, "and come short of the glory of God. There is none righteous, no, not one." And Jesus taught men to pray the prayer of the publican, "God be merciful to me, a sinner!" But in the Bahai teaching sin is seldom mentioned. The evils of war, ignorance, poverty, prejudice, etc., are discussed, but Bahaiism has contented itself with an attack on the symptoms, and has failed to realize the seriousness of the disease. Occasionally, in the writings of Bahais who had a Christian background, one finds the statement that man needs a new heart, which is a distinctly Christian idea. But Baha'ullah, because of his pantheistic conceptions inherited from the Shaykhis in Persia, was unable to think of sin as being anything more than the absence of good, and he and Abdul-Baha largely ignored it in their writings. Nowhere in the Bahai literature have I found a statement regarding sin so penetrat-

ing as the following, which I discovered in a recent article in *The Muslim Review* of India:

"Sin is a tremendous fact. There is no excuse for sin. Sin is a transgression of God's commandments. Sin involves a degradation of the whole being, a debasement of the inner life, a prostitution of the moral powers. Sin is the expression of a perverted nature in whatever form it may reveal itself. A sinner is one who fails to manifest the character of God. In other words, whatever in our lives is not the result of the active exercise of faith in God, a faith which accepts Him as the Lord of our lives, is sin. Self is sin personified. Self-seeking is the all-inclusive sin. Selfishness is the very essence of sin. Self-idolatry lies at the foundation of all sin."

Bahatism Fails to Provide a Saviour

Failing to realize the seriousness of the disease, Bahatism has provided no adequate remedy. Baha'ullah and Abdul-Baha propose to reform men with laws and admonitions, but Paul discovered long ago that "by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified". Bahatism says that man needs an Educator (Morabbi), but fails to realize that before he can be trained, man needs to be *saved*. Isaiah foretold the coming of One who would be wounded for our transgressions and would take our sins upon Himself. John the Baptist introduced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world". "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree", said the Apostle. And many another sinner during the past nineteen hundred years has found in Jesus forgiveness and cleansing and freedom from the power of sin. But in Bahatism there is no Gospel of salvation. What would a Bahai preacher say in a downtown Mission? The "Principles" which he proclaims would offer little help to a crowd of drunkards and outcasts. So far as I know, Bahais have never opened a Mission for the down-and-outs, and the reason is clear—they have no Saviour to offer to the slaves of sin. The rose-water of beautiful teachings will not wash out the stain—only the blood of the Lamb of God can do that. Nor will Bahatism ever be able to meet the deepest needs of great souls like Augustine, Bunyan, Wesley, and Alexander Whyte, who are close enough to the Holy God to be aware of their utter sinfulness, and long for reconciliation and complete sanctification.

Bahatism Keeps Men in Bondage to the Law.

The popular religion at the time of Christ was a religion of works, and devout men like the Pharisees tried to save themselves by keeping the Law. Christianity rejected legalism as a way of salvation, and set men free from bondage to the Law, offering them salvation through faith in the Saviour. And though the doctrine of salvation by works has appeared again and again in the Church,

it is contrary to the Gospel, and cannot be tolerated by a Christian. For the Christian keeps God's laws, not in order to save himself, but because he has been saved! Islam, however, reverted to legalism, demanding that men once more take on their necks the yoke of the law, from which Christ had set them free, and promising the joys of Paradise to those who kept the laws of Mohammed.

Bahaism, which is historically an off-shoot from Islam, retained the Islamic attitude toward Law. According to this teaching, every Prophet must have a code of laws, each more perfect than that which preceded it, and salvation is to be won by observing these precepts. As Moses gave a law to the people of his age, so Baha'ullah has given us the law for the modern world. This law, which is found in the various writings of Baha'ullah, particularly in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* (Most Holy Book), is the most perfect standard of conduct ever revealed by God to man, and it is only through keeping these commandments that salvation can be attained. Baha'ullah and his followers fail to realize that the more perfect the law, the more impossible it is for sinful man to keep it, and the more hopeless man's situation becomes. If the Bahai law is the most perfect law (a claim which we do not admit), then Bahais are indeed "of all men most miserable", for like the Jews of old, they are condemned by the law in which they trusted, and they have no other way of salvation.

Bahaism Lacks the Power to Produce Fruit

A religion which sets forth the claim to be the universal religion for the world, must have more to commend it than beautiful phrases and noble principles. The tree must have not only leaves but fruit. I admit that all too often Christianity has resembled the tree which Christ destroyed because it had luxuriant foliage but no figs, yet every honest student of the history of society must admit that Christianity has many times demonstrated the truth of its claim to produce the fruit of noble living and loving service, and it is by our fruit that we would be known. I do not assert that no good fruit can be found on the tree of Bahaism, but I would suggest that the best fruit of which Bahaism boasts is not the natural product of its own roots, but what has been brought from elsewhere and artificially attached to the Bahai branches. To speak clearly, I find that the best things in Bahaism are taken directly from Christianity, or are brought into the new faith by Christian converts. Should Bahai missionaries go to Central Africa and work among pagans, I fear they would find their branches sadly lacking in fruit! But they do not go to Africa as doctors or teachers. Nor do they go to the needy people in America's slums

and neglected areas. The American Bahais report no hospitals or schools for the poor, except in Iran, where the Faith originated a century ago, and where the Persian Bahais are amply able to look after their own people. It is startling to read in the census statistics as given by the Bahais of America that whereas the property of the Bahai Temple in Chicago is worth more than a million dollars, the amount given in 1936 by the members of the Cause to charity was only \$281. Even if this figure is incorrect, we wish that the Bahais would show their "love" more in deed than in word, if they would win our confidence. How much more convincing a great medical mission in India or Tibet than a million-dollar Temple in Chicago, beautiful as the Mashriq-ul-Azkar may be!

Bahatism Permits but Prevents Investigation of Truth

One of the boasts of Bahatism is that it encourages the independent investigation of truth. Abdul-Baha, endeavoring to commend his teaching to people in the West who were worshipping at the shrine of Science, used terminology which would attract and make his religion seem up-to-date. Hence he spoke of freedom of religious investigation, as opposed to the blind following of tradition. But where is that freedom today? The Bahai leaders have made it impossible for their followers freely to investigate truth. First, they have made inaccessible some of the chief sources for a study of the Babi-Bahai religion. They have permitted their followers to go freely about the library, but before they entered they have removed from the shelves all the dangerous books! I have already described how the *Nuqtatu'l-Kaf* was destroyed, and the early history of the movement re-written, so as to minimize the position of the Bab, and to eliminate Subh-i-Azal from the picture, in order to exalt Baha'ullah. The statement of Dr. Browne is unfortunately true, when he said, "Of this much I am certain, that the more the Bahai doctrine spreads, especially outside Persia, and most of all in Europe and America, the more the true history and nature of the original Bahai movement is obscured and distorted." If Bahatism stands for investigation of truth, this should not be.

A no less serious failure to make possible a knowledge of the truth is the refusal of the Bahai leaders to translate the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* into English. It is the very heart of the Bahai scriptures, it is for Bahatism what the Koran is for Islam, and yet a half-century has passed since Baha'ullah's death, and it has not yet been translated from the original Arabic, which is almost as unintelligible in Iran as it is in America. How can American Bahais "investigate" their own religion if they cannot even read their principal Scripture? In his Will and Testament, Abdul-Baha commanded that the *Kitab-*

i-Aqdas be the rule of faith and practice for all Bahais. "Unto the Most Holy Book", he said, "everyone must turn." Has not the time come for some liberty-loving Bahai to publish this book in English?

But no loyal Bahai will do so, for there is no freedom of interpretation in this religion. Shoghi Efendi is the sole authoritative Interpreter of Scripture, and his followers have no right to interpret for themselves. They are content to believe the version of Bahai history which Shoghi Efendi teaches them, and they will patiently wait to read the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* till Shoghi Efendi sees fit to make an authorized version for them. But why does he delay?

Thus Bahatism makes impossible not only investigation of truth but all true freedom. The Bahai dream is of a totalitarian world order, in which the successor of Baha'ullah rules supreme. His will is law, and all thoughts and actions must conform to his desires. The individual can do nothing but submit in slavish obedience to the Guardian. Now the Christian holds that only God has the right to demand such obedience of men. If Shoghi Efendi claims to be divine, as did Baha'ullah, he might be justified in requiring such submission, and in that case, he would be a new Manifestation. But if he is man, and not God, how can he rightly demand absolute obedience and submission from other men?

Bahatism Dishonors Jesus Christ

The most serious charge which can be brought against Bahatism is that it has dishonored Him whom Bahais profess to love, the Lord Jesus Christ. Now when I say this I am well aware that there are many Bahais who have no desire to dishonor our Lord, and who are unaware of the fact that they are doing so. But the clear teaching of this Faith is that Jesus was *not* what the Bible represents Him to be—the only-begotten Son of God, the one Saviour of men—for it declares that Jesus was succeeded by a greater Prophet, namely, Mohammed, who brought a new spring-time to the world, and was for a period of twelve hundred years the Manifestation of God for all men. And Mohammed was succeeded by the Bab, and the Bab by Baha'ullah, the greatest Prophet of all, so that Bahatism bids its adherents give to others that glory and honor which belong to Christ alone. The Bahai interpretation of the Christian Scriptures is a misinterpretation, and while Bahais are at liberty to reject the Scriptures if they so desire they cannot honestly accept them only to distort their teaching beyond recognition. In Christian doctrine, Christ is the Head of all things, and in Him all things hold together, and He is the Beginning and the End. But Bahatism has attempted to push Him off the throne of the universe, and to put in His place in succession three others, all of whom, it is said, are greater than He. The Christian cannot for a

moment tolerate this disloyalty, and while steadfastly confessing the supremacy of Jesus Christ will earnestly and lovingly pray that the followers of Baha'ullah (Glory of God) may see more clearly the Light of the Knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of our Saviour, and may find in Him all that their hearts desire. For we are persuaded that when they know Him as He is they too will sing with us,

"Thou, O Christ, art all I want,
More than all in Thee I find."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Written by Bahais

Baha'u'llah and the New Era—Esslemont.
 The Dawn Breakers—Translated by Shoghi Efendi.
 A Traveller's Narrative—Translated by E. G. Browne.
 Bahai Scriptures—Edited by Horace Holley.
 Security for a Failing World—Stanwood Cobb.
World Order Magazine.
The Bahai World.

Written by Non-Bahais

Les Religions et les Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale—Conte de Gobineau.
 A Year amongst the Persians—E. G. Browne.
Nuqtatu'l-Kaf—Edited by E. G. Browne
 Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion—E. G. Browne.
 * Bahaism and Its Claims—S. G. Wilson.
 * Baha'ism—W. M. Miller.
 * The Religion of the Baha'is—J. R. Richards.

Teheran, Iran

WILLIAM MCE. MILLER.

* These books are available at the Foreign Missions Library, 156 Fifth Avenue, New York, N. Y.