

# Studies in Modern Religions, Religious Movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths

*Edited by*  
Moshe Sharon



BRILL

STUDIES IN MODERN RELIGIONS, RELIGIOUS  
MOVEMENTS AND THE BĀBĪ-BAHĀ'Ī FAITHS

# NUMEN BOOK SERIES

## STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS

EDITED BY

W.J. HANEGRAAFF  
P. PRATAP KUMAR

ADVISORY BOARD

P. ANTES, M. DESPLAND, R.I.J. HACKETT, M. ABUMALHAM MAS, A.W. GEERTZ,  
G. TER HAAR, G.L. LEASE, M.N. GETUI, I.S. GILHUS, P. MORRIS, J.K. OLUPONA,  
E. THOMASSEN, A. TSUKIMOTO, A.T. WASIM

VOLUME CIV



# STUDIES IN MODERN RELIGIONS, RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS AND THE BĀBĪ-BAHĀ'Ī FAITHS

EDITED BY

MOSHE SHARON



BRILL  
LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2004

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Studies in modern religions, religious movements and the Bābī-Bahā'ī faiths / edited by  
Moshe Sharon.

p. cm. — (Numen book series. Studies in the history of religions, ISSN 0169-8834 ; v. 104)  
Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 90-04-13904-4 (alk. paper)

1. Sects—History—Congresses. 2. Babism—History—Congresses. 3. Bahai  
Faith—History—Congresses. I. Sharon, Moshe. II. Studies in the history of religions ; 104.

BP603.S78 2004

297.9—dc22

2004045603

ISSN 0169-8834

ISBN 90 04 13904 4

© Copyright 2004 by Koninklijke Brill nv, Leiden, The Netherlands

*All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, translated, stored in  
a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic,  
mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without prior written  
permission from the publisher.*

*Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal  
use is granted by Brill provided that  
the appropriate fees are paid directly to The Copyright  
Clearance Center, 222 Rosewood Drive, Suite 910  
Danvers, MA 01923, USA.  
Fees are subject to change.*

PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

*The sun also arises, and the sun goeth down . . .*

*The thing that hath been, is that which shall be;  
and that which is done is that which shall be done:  
and there is no new thing under the sun.*

Ecclesiastes 1:5,9

*This page intentionally left blank*

# CONTENTS

Preface and Acknowledgements .....	ix
------------------------------------	----

## INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

### THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND MODERN RELIGIONS

New Religions and Religious Movements—The Common Heritage .....	3
MOSHE SHARON	

## PART ONE

### PROPHECY, MESSIANISM, AND THE MILLENNIUM

On Prophecy and Early Hasidism .....	41
MOSHE IDEL	
Rabbi Kook and His Sources: From Kabbalistic Historiosophy to National Mysticism .....	77
YONI GARB	
Millennialist Dreams and Apocalyptic Nightmares .....	97
MOOJAN MOMEN	
Millenarianism and Nineteenth-Century New Religions: The Mormon Example .....	117
GRANT UNDERWOOD	
Critique of Pure Gematry .....	127
MEIR BUZAGLO	

## PART TWO

### THE BĀBĪ-BAHĀ'Ī VENTURE

The Eschatology of Globalization: The Multiple-Messiahship of Bahā'u'llāh Revisited .....	143
CHRISTOPHER BUCK	



The Bābī-State Conflict in Māzandarān: Background, Analysis and Review of Sources .....	179
SIYAMAK ZABIHI-MOGHADDAM	
The Azālī-Bahā'ī Crisis of September 1867 .....	227
JUAN R.I. COLE	
Ottoman Reform Movements and the Bahā'ī Faith, 1860s–1920s .....	253
NECATI ALKAN	
“I Never Understood Any of this From ‘Abbās Effendi”: Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s Knowledge of the Bahā'ī Teachings and His Friendship with ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ ‘Abbās .....	275
WILLIAM McCANTS	
Bahā'ī and the Holy Land: Religiogenesis and Shoghi Effendi’s <i>The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh: A World Religion</i> .....	299
ZAID LUNDBERG	
Index .....	319

## PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The summaries of the majority of the articles included in this book were presented at the International Conference on Modern Religions and Religious Movements in Judaism, Christianity and Islam and the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths, convened at the campus of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem in December 2000. The selection is dominated by studies on the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths, mainly because the scholars representing this field of research offered the largest number of studies to be considered for inclusion in this volume. This disproportion in the representation of other modern religions and religious movements may be somewhat justified if one takes into consideration that the Bābī-Bahā'ī venture was one of the major developments in the field of religion in modern times, especially because it was born out of the heart of Shī'ite Islam in the East, and succeeded in crossing the ocean, treading new paths into the heart of western civilization and the bosom of Christianity. As such, it is unique among other modern religious movements.

None of the other modern religions and religious movements succeeded in crossing the lines in such a way, and attracting at the same time believers across the board of civilization. The Hasidut movement was born in Judaism and remained there. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (the Mormons) departed from institutionalized Christianity but remained within the borders of Western Christian civilization. The same can be said about the Ahmadiyyah that remained within Islam, and all the Christian Adventist movements that did not break away from their Christian roots.

Mysticism, millennialism and messianic ideas are present in all the modern religions and religious movements, and they are predominant subjects in these studies. Because of the great importance attached in mystical thought in Judaism, Christianity, Islam and the Bābī-Bahā'ī faiths to the power of the letters of the alphabet and their numerical values, a special contribution deals with the study of Gematriy—the “science” of the letters, and their mystical significance.

In editing the material I tried to interfere as little as possible with the original form of the articles, but made an effort to give the whole book a certain degree of uniformity. In spite of that, there is a slight

diversity between the bibliographical lists at the end of each contribution, since some of the authors insisted on using internet publications extensively, and others, on quoting unpublished works (including conference papers). One author expressed the particular wish to accompany his contribution with endnotes.

The method of transliteration from Arabic and Persian, which has been standardized in Bahā'ī writing, uses accents over the vowels *á*, *í*, and *ú*, instead of an elongating line (*ā*, *ī*, *ū*). Wherever possible the Arabic and Persian were transliterated according to the latter method, preferring the elongating lines to the accents.

In my contribution to the volume, which I wrote in place of a formal introduction, I attempted to show the common thread, which goes through all the chapters of the book. I identified it as a common monotheistic or Biblical tradition, which is present in all the religions and religious movements either in a direct way or via a mediating scripture or agent. I deliberately did not indulge in either historical or sociological discussions, which I felt would confuse the main thrust of my remarks.

It is my delightful duty to acknowledge the contribution of the following institutions and individuals to this publication. Firstly I would like to thank the Hebrew University of Jerusalem and its Authority for Research and Development that supported the conference and put at its disposal, its administrative and maintenance resources.

Particular thanks are due to Mrs. Linda Egger, the coordinator of the conference, whose contribution to its success, and to the preparation of this book for print was immeasurable, and to Mrs. Sivan Lerer and Mr. Shahin Izadi who contributed their time and talents in fitting the various articles into the unified pattern of this volume. This proved to be a particularly intricate task because of having to deal with so many different styles. Such a task could not be achieved, however, without the good will and cooperation of each one of the authors.

With deep gratitude I acknowledge the assistance of my wife Judy, and my students Iris Ronen-Forer, Netanel Toobian, Naghmeh Sobhani, and Sarah Clarke during the weeklong conference.

May they all be blessed!

M. Sharon  
The Hebrew University of Jerusalem  
December 2003

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS  
THE NINETEENTH CENTURY AND  
MODERN RELIGIONS

*This page intentionally left blank*

## NEW RELIGIONS AND RELIGIOUS MOVEMENTS THE COMMON HERITAGE

Moshe Sharon

### *The Nineteenth Century*

The student of modern religions and religious movements is confronted with an outstanding phenomenon; the occurrence of intensive religious activity in the late eighteenth century and during the nineteenth century, which was particularly prolific in this regard. Almost throughout the century, one witnesses the birth of one spiritual venture or another, radiating into the subsequent century. This was not limited only to religion, but religion was one of the major features of this spiritual and intellectual eruption, which was not restricted to one country, or one continent, or one school of thought. The Ḥasidut movement in Eastern Europe revolutionized the Jewish world, and brought mystical thought and practice into the midst of everyday life and religious practice. In Sunnī Islam an intellectual movement of revivalism and renewal swept from India and South-east Asia to North Africa, creating such interesting extremes by meeting the challenge of modernity with Western tools on the one hand, and digging deep into piety in the style of the Wahnābis on the other. As the thirteenth Islamic (*hijrah*) century drew to an end and the fourteenth century began (toward the end of 1882), messianic expectations exploded in the form of messianic-*mahdist* movements, the most famous of which was the appearance of the Mahdī in the Sudan, Muḥammad Aḥmad b. ʿAbdallāh (1843–1885). (*EI*<sup>2</sup> s.v. cf. Holt 1958: 90–92)

In Shīʿī Islam, the messianic expectations assumed an even more millennial character. In the year 1260 of the Hijrah (1844), one thousand years after the disappearance of the Hidden Imām, (260/873–74) these expectations seemed to have reached an intensive phase, following which we witness the birth of two new religions: the Bābī and then the Bahāʾī Faiths.

On the other side of the ocean, in America, in a different world of thought, the messianic expectations of the eschatological Adventist

movement of William Miller (1782–1849) coincided, to the year, with the beginning of the Bāb’s activity; and at just about the same time the Mormon religion was born with the prophecy of Joseph Smith (1805–1844). One can go on with this amazing list, adding the various Adventist movements that followed upon the disappointment with Millerism, the birth of the Aḥmadiyyah religious movement in India and the unusual development of the ḤaBaD (Lubavitch) Hasidic movement in Eastern Europe (established by Shneur Zalman of Ladi, 1747–1812). Moreover, one cannot ignore the substantial, far-reaching intellectual contribution of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to the social and political thought and practice of the time and thereafter. Despite the fact that these two positioned themselves as far away as possible from religion, their secular materialism resulted in the strange naissance of movements that may aptly be defined as religions without a god.

The historian is justified in attributing to chance the fact that all these spiritual and intellectual developments happened in the nineteenth century, except, however, for the rise of the messianic expectations in the Shī‘ah, which coincided in that century with the millennium of the Twelfth Imām’s occultation. Granted that the “nineteenth century”, as such, is only a technical designation of time, we can still attempt to consider this period in the light of the events that shaped it. There are clear momentous events, which define the beginning and the end of this period. The French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century with the upheavals of the Napoleonic experience marks the beginning, and the First World War indicates its end. Other historians might define the period by other dates, but one can hardly disregard the fact that Western civilization, after 1789, began its march on a new path, just as it did in other momentous periods in history.

### *Croce’s Religion of Liberty*

It was Benedetto Croce (1866–1952) who singled out this century as the one that gave birth to an idea, which he defined as no less than a religion. This was the “Religion of Liberty,” which emerged “when the Napoleonic adventure was at an end.” It was then, about two decades after the turn of the century, that “among all peoples hopes

flared and demands were being made for independence and liberty." These demands could not be suppressed. "They grew louder . . . the more they met repulse and repression." Hopes sprang up in disappointment and defeat. (Croce 1934: 3)

Examining the meaning of the concept "liberty," Croce emphasizes that it had a long history and appeared on the historical scene in diverse circumstances and a variety of conditions, and after joining "fraternity" and "equality," it set out to demolish the old order. However, in the nineteenth century it appeared alone "and men gave it their admiration as a star of incomparable splendour" (Ibid. 6). For Croce, the content of liberty belongs to the history of thought or the history of philosophy. It was not necessarily the object of professional philosophers, but was "on the lips of every one, appearing in the stanzas of poetry and in the words of men of action no less than in the formulas of those who were philosophers by profession" (Ibid. 9). Although the concept was not new, there was much novelty in the appearance of this concept in the nineteenth century:

Men had not attained that concept by chance or had not suddenly, reached the entrance to that road in one leap or one flight; they had been brought there by all the experiences and solutions of philosophy as it laboured for centuries, experiences and solutions that were always lessening the distance and calming the dissension between heaven and earth, God and the world, the ideal and the real. By giving ideality to reality and reality to ideality, philosophy had recognized and understood their indivisible unity, which is identity. (Ibid. 7)

This unity, to the point of identity, means that the history of thought or philosophy is history in general, no matter if we call it political, economic, or moral since these feed on philosophy and are fed by it. Philosophy, therefore, is not only that of great thinkers in the ancient times, the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, such as Plato, Aristotle, Galileo, Descartes, and Kant, but it is also expressed through the major events that accompanied the crystallization of Western civilization. We can speak about the philosophy of the Greek world resisting the Barbarians, and of Rome in civilizing them.

We include the philosophy of the Christian redemption, that of the Church which fought against the Empire, that of the Italian and Flemish communes in the Middle Ages, and above all the Renaissance and the Reformation, which vindicated individuality once more in its double value for action and for morality. We mean the philosophy of the



religious wars, that of the English Long Parliament, that of the liberty of conscience proclaimed by the religious sects of England and Holland and the American colonies, that of the declaration of the right of man made in these countries as well as the one to which the French revolution gave special efficacy. We include also the philosophy of technical discoveries, the revolutionary consequences of these discoveries in industry, and all the events and creations that helped to form that conception, and to put law and order into all things, and God back into the world. (Ibid. 8)

I have brought these references to Croce's idealistic perspective of history in general, and that of the nineteenth century in particular, in order to point out an attitude that regards the said century as a historical landmark in which the long experience of the past expressed itself in the new concept of liberty, even the religion of liberty. It seemed to Croce that things were falling into place when great ideas shaped themselves into events, and the long chain of events into ideas. Symbolically this amounted to the conscious placing of God into the world. This is the meaning of the notion that, far from being two realms of being, ideality and reality emerged as a unity, and that philosophy belonged to historical events as much as it belonged to pure thought. If new ideas were to be born, the century was prepared for them.

The religion of liberty surely had a place for other religions as well. Strangely enough, however, Europe did not particularly witness the birth of any clear-cut religious movement. These appeared either across the ocean, or beyond the deserts of Arabia. It is possible that Europe was so involved with the ideas of freedom and the intense political activity accompanying them that it had no time for pure religious action outside the broad borders of the Christian heritage. Europe proper was too involved with its present to allow room for a new concept of eternity.

The Hasidic movement, though physically taking place in Europe, was an internal Jewish affair. It grew out of particular conditions pertaining only to Jewish history and representing a line of socio-historical development completely divorced from the general European atmosphere of the time. Yet, in spite of witnessing many conflicting spiritual trends and variety of ideas, it contained the spirit of liberty in a very special way—the liberty to worship God unhampered by the bonds of the exclusiveness of institutionalized and socially sanctioned learning. (cf. Pieckarz 1997: 37f.; Etkes 2000: 9ff.)

*Modern Religious Activity: Similarity and Differences*

Whether the nineteenth century religious and the intellectual surge, which happened in the East and West and in the New World, are truly accidental or the result of the “spirit of history” depends on the conviction of the historian. One thing is clear: there is no underlying connection between the spiritual developments in the East and those in Europe and America. One can find a causal connection between Millerism and the Adventist movements; but one can hardly find a similar relation between the Mormon religion and Millerism. Even more pronounced is the completely independent character of the Ḥasidic movement, the Bābī and Bahā’ī Faiths, and other movements within Islam that were active during the century in various parts of the East.

One point should be made clear: some of these movements became new religions. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (incorrectly called the Mormon Church) and the Bahā’ī Faith are the most striking examples. Others, such as the Aḥmadiyyah, remained only partly within the grounds of the mother religion, while still others remained completely within the folds of their religious origins, such as the Wahhābiyyah on the one hand, and the Ḥasidut on the other.

What is more interesting is that one encounters many points of similarity between most of the new religions and the religious movements despite the absence of any contact between their builders and active figures. For the sake of comparison let us consider the Mormons and the Bābī-Bahā’ī Faiths. The idea of revelation, prophecy, a new Holy Writ revealed to the prophet-founder (even the usage of the term “plates” and “Tablets” for the revealed texts), the maintaining of the doctrine of God-given freedom of man, the absence of professional clergy, the emphasis on education and work, and the adherence to laws of health that prohibit the consumption of alcohol and drugs, (and in the case of the Mormons even tea or coffee) are some of the subjects in which one finds similarities between the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and the Bābī religion, the furthest possible of all the new religions from each other both in their physical location and their origin.

Moreover, there is a curious similarity in some details of their history too. Joseph Smith preceded the Bāb by only a few years, and like the Bāb he met a violent death in the afternoon of June 27, 1844, at the hands of a rioting mob in the jail of Carthage. It was

one month and five days after Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī announced himself as the Bāb. The Bāb himself was shot in the Jail of Tabrīz six years and eleven days later. The Mormon community suffered persecution, and was exiled from place to place in North America, always pushed *westward* until finally it settled in Utah under the leadership of Brigham Young. It was he who organized its institutions and finally put it on the religious, social, and political map of America and the world.

The same can be said about the Bābī and later the Bahā’ī religions. They also sustained persecution and exile and also experienced the movement of the centres of their religion *westward* from the Iranian domains to the Ottoman Empire, and then to Europe and America. The consolidation of the religion, not so much by the prophet-founder but rather by his successor, is also a point of similarity. In the case of Bahā’u’llāh, it was his son ‘Abbās Effendī (‘Abdu’l-Bahā’) and the later grandson Shawqī Effendī Rabbānī (Shoghi Effendi), who established the infrastructure of the Bahā’ī administration, and systematically brought the voice of the new religion and its scriptures to the world. In the case of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, it was Brigham Young who led the movement in its crucial period of development as an independent religion.

### *The Common Heritage*

Nevertheless, one would be justified in arguing that these are superficial similarities, even curiosities. However, with deeper inspection it becomes clear that there is nothing odd or incomprehensible in these similarities, suggested here only by way of illustration. They are deep-rooted in a common heritage, and in common cultural roots; they are the latest expression of philosophy sustained by a long chain of history. They are born out of the sum-total of the monotheistic culture resting far back on the heritage imparted by the Old Testament.

This heritage, though passing through many routes, unfolding its many appearances in diverse paths, rested on one sound foundation: the conviction, beyond any shadow of doubt, in the existence of one God, Omnipotent, Omniscient, the Architect of the world, and the Controller of its destiny. However, this divine being, hiding in the mystery of Himself, was also the major object of human curiosity inasmuch as He was the pivot of every aspect of human life. God

became the object of the unending search, because as much as He was intellectually defined as the Ultimate Unknowable, God was at the same time described in every way that the human mind could envisage, always in the image of humankind, always in human terms. In a word, through the monotheistic heritage which these religions share, either directly or indirectly, they recognize that God is nowhere yet everywhere; and that, above all, He is a personal god—the object of human love, attraction, hope and fear.

No matter how far these modern religions and religious movements are from one another, they all bear the same hereditary genes. Whether these genes came via the Christian path or via the Islamic path, they join, over the bridge of the millennia, one route, that of ancient Biblical monotheism. Looking into the dark depths of the well of history (to borrow the imagery of Thomas Mann), one may be able to detect the fading images of other routes of the monotheism of the great religions of Mesopotamia joining in to merge with the steady, assured, wide road of the Biblical religion. (Hämeen-Anttila 2001: 48–49 following Simo Perpolä. Details see bibliography, *ibid.* 66)

Even when the Holy Writ of a new religion is totally independent, conveying a perfectly new message as encountered in the Book of Mormon or the Bāb's Bayān and Bahā'u'llāh's *Īqān*, *al-Kitāb al-Aqdas*, and other writings, the ancient Biblical spirit can be detected either directly or through the Qur'ānic tradition. Thus in the Book of Mormon one encounters Biblical scenery and Biblical history immediately in the opening verses of the First Book of Nephi:

For it came to pass in the commencement of the year of the reign of Zedekiah King of Judah (my father, Lehi, having dwelt at Jerusalem in all his days); and in that same year there came many prophets prophesying unto the people that they must repent or the great city of Jerusalem must be destroyed. (Nephi 1:4).

Here in the Book of Nephi as well as in other writings in the Book of Mormon the reference to Biblical material is direct. But where there is no such direct reference to the Biblical text, the Biblical spirit is always present in the Writings even when they refer to events that were supposed to have taken place beyond the Ocean. Moreover, the Church and Christ are always present at the heart of the writings as well as at the basis of the new religion. Other Biblical figures inspire the writings on the one hand, and are incorporated into the new tapestry of the events reported by the Book of Mormon on the other.

Thus, for example, the story of Adam and Eve, and their fall resulting (according to the Christian doctrine) in the fall of all mankind, plays quite an important part in the Book of Alma (12:22); and his story is said to have been recorded in the Jeredite plates, which, according to reports in the Book of Ether, Moroni refrained from mentioning, beginning his story from the time of the “great tower” (namely the Tower of Babel. (Gen. 11:7–9). Another Biblical figure is Joseph who is described as the one “who was carried captive into Egypt” and who was the object of the “covenants of the Lord” which were made unto him; this Joseph was also the forefather of Lehi (2 Nephi 3:4), whose posterity are the remnants of Joseph’s seed. Joseph’s garment, which plays an important part in the Biblical and Qur’ānic story, is not overlooked in the Mormon tradition. “Behold (says Moroni), we are a remnant of the seed of Jacob; yea we are a remnant of the seed of Joseph, whose coat was rent by his brethren into many pieces, yea, and now behold, let us remember to keep the commandments of God, or our garments shall be rent by our brethren and we be cast into prison, or be sold, or be slain.” (Alma 46:23). This is a clear example of the way in which Biblical features are not only mentioned as they are, but inspire new ideas and new interpretations. The Book of Mormon is full of such similar references to the Old and New Testament’s people, places, prophecies, and events supporting the thesis of the Biblical spirit behind the new religion.

In the case of the Mormons, as well as in the case of the Adventist movements (though we speak about two different religious activities), the Biblical background is evident. After all, they are the children of Christianity, reclining on the tradition of the New Testament and the Hebrew Bible, and being nourished by its redemptive Christology. In other words, the Biblical tradition reached all new religions and religious movements in the West directly, mainly through the scriptures and via the direct teachings and mission of the Church. No religious leader in the West, no prophet, no dreamer of instant redemption could think in terms other than those of the Bible. No new religious history could be envisaged outside the Biblical example, and no universal redemption could be thought of without Jesus of Nazareth. No Holy Land could be described without the example of The Holy Land, and no Holy City without the image of Jerusalem.

In the case of the religions and religious movements, which were born in Islam, the source for their inspiration was naturally the Qur’ān and the Islamic tradition. In the case of Shi‘ī Islam, where

the most significant contribution was made to modern religious thought and practice, the tradition attributed to the Imāms should also be added.

### *The Qur'ānic and Classical Heritage*

In order to avoid any misconception, I wish to be clear on this point. The Qur'ānic heritage does not represent direct Biblical influence, in spite of the fact that Biblical history and Biblical theology form the principal themes of the Holy Book of Islam. Scholarship since the time of the Jewish theologian Abraham Geiger (1810–1874), exhausted the subject of the similarities and differences in the Biblical text and the Qur'ānic text, and there can be hardly any question as to the common heritage underlying both similarities and differences. However, I have no doubt in my mind that these similarities and differences are not the outcome of the influence of the *Biblical text* on Muḥammad. Like many people in the Middle East, Muḥammad was exposed to Biblical as well as to extra-Biblical and ancient material, which were on the tongues of travellers, storytellers, and religious figures, members of various religious groups who shared their traditions with others. Otherwise, how can one explain the many differences in details between the Biblical text and the Qur'ānic text? How can one explain the existence of material, which is found in the Qur'ān as well as in the Midrash? One has to read *sūrah* 12 in the Qur'ān (*sūrat yūsuf*) where the story of Joseph is told in great detail, and pay attention to the differences, and to the additions, which clearly indicate that the story came to Muḥammad from an independent source, or even from more than one source—a few story-tellers who had this fascinating story as part of their repertoire in public performances. The Bible is surely there, for whoever is acquainted with the Biblical story. However, it is impossible to miss the added legends, which accumulated around it, as well as the omissions that completely changed the nature of the human drama and its function. Whereas in the Bible the story of Joseph is a necessary link in the chain of the divine covenantal plan, the Qur'ānic report, concentrating on the personal fate of the hero, detached from the idea of God's Covenant with Joseph's ancestors, serves the purpose of emphasizing the universal principle of divine justice. The same can be said about almost every Biblical story that appears in the Qur'ān.

The underlying common Biblical heritage is present, but it is filtered through independent oral devices.

The Biblical heritage was an important common ground in modern religions and religious movements, but there is another heritage that constitutes another side of this common ground. This is the Greek heritage—especially classical (mainly Greek) philosophy. Side by side with Christianity, the classical Greco-Roman world forms the sound foundation of Western civilization. Greek philosophy is also the origin for the methods and contents of the philosophical thought and theological investigation in Islam and Judaism. The fact that Greek philosophy was regarded as a legitimate, and even superior, source of knowledge for investigating the meaning of the religious source of knowledge in Islam as well as in Judaism, and the fact that the products of this investigation found their way back to the west, created a situation whereby the gap between east and west, was narrowed and the common basis for religious interaction—consciously or not—widened. Muslim and Jewish philosophers, scholars and theologians, men of logic and mystics alike, shared the same Greek sources for asking questions about God, creation, the destiny of man and the nature of salvation, just as their colleagues in the west did, from the Middle Ages right through to modern times. This is the reason that Muslim theologians and philosophers were easily understood, studied, and interpreted by western thinkers. This is also the source for the rather easy acceptance of the Bahā'ī religion in the west, in spite of the fact that it originated in Shī'ite Islam. The mélange of the Qur'ānic and Biblical heritage, Christian eschatology, and Greek-Islamic philosophical thought, cloaked in the English language by Shoghī Effendi, proved very palatable to westerners.

The Bābī and the Bahā'ī Faiths, although representing the activity of two religious leaders, regarded by their adherents as prophets and manifestations of God, are by nature very similar. For the Bahā'īs the Bāb was Bahā'u'llāh's herald, who prophesied the coming of "Him whom God Shall Make Manifest." For the Bābīs the Bāb was the one and only Prophet of the Age, the Point, the Centre of Creation and its source. For the Bahā'īs he was only the *First Point* (*nuqṭah-i-ūlā*), inferior to Bahā'u'llāh who was the true reason for his (the Bāb's) mission. This historical-theological controversy is highly important in the Bābī and Bahā'ī debate. It has caused dissent and illfeeling, attracted emotional reactions, and marred, in one way or the other, the early history of the faiths, and it is still alive as a con-

troversial topic among Bahā'ī, and non-Bahā'ī, scholars. This controversy, however, bears no influence on the point which I have been developing, namely that no matter which new religion, religious movement or school, or religious thought we consider, whether in the East or in the West, they share the same traditions. The Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh are both the products of the monotheistic tradition of Islam. They grew out of the Qur'ānic world, and they both speak the language belonging to the monotheistic civilization that developed around the Islamic tradition. Indirectly, they too are the product of the ancient Biblical world of ideas.

In other words, if an imaginary meeting could be arranged, say between the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh, Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādyānī, William Miller, Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, Rabbi Israel Ba'al-Shem-Tov, and Ellen G. White, to mention only a few of the major figures who, in the time under discussion, created, or deeply influenced, religious activity among Jews, Christians and Muslims, they would have no problem in conducting a meaningful discussion with each other. They share the same vocabulary and the same world of concepts regarding all the main aspects of the religious phenomena. They would have no problem understanding each other when talking about God, creation, revelation and prophecy; about holy writ, about redemption and messianism, about divine reward and punishment and so on. They would not differ from their medieval predecessors—Muslim, Christian and Jewish scholars—who disagreed on major issues concerning the religions of each other, but had no problem fighting the battles of their disagreements with identical weapons, and engaging in constructive discussions of religious issues, because they shared the same lexicon and could form their ideas within the same conceptual framework. Sharing vocabulary and the world of concepts does not mean agreement. On the contrary, the similarity of vocabulary and the usage of the same family of concepts enabled the thinkers, theologians, philosophers, and mystics to define their differences in a meaningful way.

### *God and the Universe*

I mentioned above the monotheistic and Biblical heritage, which was the source shared by the major religious movements in the nineteenth century, but as I have just mentioned, there is more than the Biblical



heritage. Throughout the ages, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam were constantly enriched by intellectual activity, and attempted to understand the relation between the divine being and the universe, using methods of argumentation which lay outside the immediate Biblical world of ideas. They searched for a satisfactory solution to the seeming contradiction between the philosophical concept of the unattainable, unperceivable, inconceivable God, hiding in the mystery of His absence, and the teachings of the scriptures of all three monotheistic religions that spoke about revelation and prophecy, personal divine attention, divine law, divine reward and punishment, and religious practice (that is to say the *ritual*) based on the direct interaction between the believer and God. In other words, the believer prays, and God “hears,” and may change His mind, so to speak, depending on the source and the potency of the prayer. As one Jewish teaching declares: (God says): “I issue a decree and the righteous (*tzadīq*) rules it out;” (*BT, Mo’ed Qaṭān*, 16b) or: “The righteous (*tzadīqīm*) decree and God fulfils their words.” (*MR, Numbers (Bamidbār)* section 14 para. 4)

To this, one should add the concept of the revealed God, which forms the heart of all three religions, and the basically pantheistic notion of the immanent divine presence. As mentioned above, the relation between God and the universe has always been a source for the speculation of philosophers and theologians, as well as for the inspired messages of prophets. In one-way or another, an answer was necessary to account both for the existence of reality, and for its rectification. More precisely, a meaningful and satisfactory answer had to be offered for creation and redemption. In spite of deep differences in essence, the answers given by all the religions were somewhat similar. For both creation and redemption there was a need for the revealed side of the Divine Being.

To be sure, for believers who are not bothered by the philosophical debates about the nature of God, these questions are immaterial. For them, the scriptures give clear answers to both creation and redemption, as well as to the relations with God, by defining what pleases Him, and what causes His wrath and punishment. In spite of His omnipotence, the scriptures of all the monotheistic religions insist on His proximity and availability without questioning how this is possible. For the Psalmist:

The Lord is nigh unto all that call upon him, to all that call upon him in Truth. (Ps. 145:18)

Muḥammad emphasizes that Allah says:

We created man, and We know what his soul whispers within him, for We are nearer to him than his jugular vein. (Q. 50:16. Bell's Translation).

The method of communication between God and His creation, more particularly with humans, is also well defined: God reveals Himself to man either directly, as He did on Mount Sinai to the people of Israel, or via His chosen messengers, the prophets. Christianity, which emphasizes the idea of divine love as the most characteristic feature of the relations between God and man, has God revealing Himself in history in the double function of the leader of humanity and its saviour. Christianity thus carries the idea of the divine revelation to its maximum by actually placing God physically into human history.

But this simple, and admittedly workable, system of relations between God and man represented by the scriptures, and applied by ritual, caused major problems for the more sophisticated thinkers. Aristotelian philosophy, regarded sometimes as valid as the scriptures themselves, could not accept creation out of nothing, and had no place for involvement of "Pure Thought," the "Unmoved Prime Mover," in the affairs of the measurable reality. Regarding the problems from the moral point of view it seemed impossible to involve the pure divine entity, the ideal good, with the creation of crude matter—the source of evil.

### *The Mystery of the Nature of the Divine*

Without going into detail about the various systems of thought, which applied themselves to the problem, it is safe to say that they all tried to find ways of understanding revelation, and the nature of God. At the same time they searched for a proper definition and theories of reality, naturally re-interpreting the scriptures in such a way that would support such definitions and theories. Here the diversity between the religions became obvious, and the route was opened for new, varied, and sometimes bold religious creations, and for the appearance of new religions and religious movements.

The combination of the intellectual investigation of the nature of the divine, and the redemptive, or messianic, expectations is the most powerful combination in this development. It should be added that this is an ancient combination which found expression in Gnosticism,

and appeared later in various forms in Jewish and Islamic mysticism, and in all the modern religions and religious movements.

The Jewish Qabbalah (Kabbalah, Cabbalah) is probably the boldest representative of the mystical answer to the problem of the divine revelation and the process of the perpetual redemption of the world, or its constant "repair." The divine being, the essence of God, remains hidden in the Mystery of His eternal Self, but there is another side of God, the revealed and active God. This is a complicated combination, an intricate structure of active parts working in harmony, paired into male and female sides, and busy affecting the perpetual act of creation that never stops. Man is party to this mysterious and fascinating system of the revealed God. Man is not only the object of the divine grace flowing through the tree of the *sephirot*, namely the representation of the revealed divinity, but he is also the partner of God in the perpetual act of redemption. Through his actions in the world of reality, man can create the conditions for a successful and fruitful union on high of the two sides of the revealed God. This union is usually defined as the union between "The Holy One Blessed Be He" and His Presence (the *Shekhinah*). Man's prayer and other ritual activities, if done in a proper way with the right intention and correct method, are no less than tools to assist with the successful impregnation of the revealed divine powers of creative, or in a bolder language, to assist with the successful unification of the male and female sides of the *sephirot*, causing the divine entity to return to its original integrity. (Idel. 1993: 71ff.; Scholem 1993: 173ff.; Tishby (1) 1971: 98ff.; 131ff.)

In this way the Qabbalah, whose sources are found in the oldest Jewish texts, crystallized in a very clear way the idea of the existence of a revealed divine world, or layer of existence, between, created world and the eternal realm of the unattainable divine essence, the "*ein sof*" (literally, "The Endless"). The Qabbalah thus offered an answer to both the creation, and the perpetual involvement of God in its continual existence and renovation. But more than that, the Qabbalah offered a purpose for the creation of man and his existence, and made him full partner of God in the eternal process of creation.

It also put prophecy and godliness into place in this system. Prophets and men of God were fully incorporated into the system as integral and necessary parts of it. They became the channels of grace, that is to say, the pipeline for the flow of the divine seed to the world, the chariot that carries the revealed divine presence. The man of God, the Righteous or the *Tzadīq*, is necessary for the proper

action of the complicated combination of all the parts of the divine being or the *sephiroṭ*. Thus it is understandable why he should be regarded as the “foundation of the world”—*tzadīq yesod ‘olām*. In Hasidic thought, as well as in Qabbalah, he is also needed to show the way of the correct worship of God in order to save the sparks (*nitzotzōt*) of the divine light and return them to their “lofty source.” (Scholem 1973: 213ff.)

I mention the Qabbalah, because in its elaborate system of the revealed God, there are two elements that we see in the Bābī and Bahā’ī religions. The two elements are the existence of an intermediate world between the divine essence and the physical world, where the divine creative powers are active, and the presence of a figure in human form that serves as a channel of grace connecting the divine domain and the realm of physical existence.

In Christianity, Jesus as the Son in the mystery of the Trinity represents the creative power of God, occupying alone the intermediate station between Father and creation, and at the same time embodying divine love, and thus also fulfilling the function of the channel for divine grace.

The Adventist movements, especially the Seventh-Day Adventists, emphasized the divine side of Christ and his creative power. At the same time, Jesus’ messianic function, to be revealed in his second and final Advent, was also emphasized. The combination of the two would result in the establishment of the Divine Kingdom in the world of creation. In other words, the revealed side of the divine entity, represented in Jesus as the manifestation and incarnation of God, having once entered into history for a limited period of three and a half years, would be repeated successfully and universally, forever. Meanwhile, Jesus serves as the High Priest in the heavenly Temple as the final stage before his final messianic function. This heavenly temple is, to my mind, just another, probably less defined, representation of the “intermediate” world which we find very developed in the writings of the Shaykhīs, the Bāb and Bahā’u’llāh.

### *Revealed God and Perfect Man*

We can see without much difficulty that all three religions and their modern offshoots developed the idea of the intermediate realm of the divine entity, which represents the revealed side of God, and the idea of the perfect man—the manifestation of God, the Prophet, the

Messenger, the *Tzadīq*, or similar appellations who serves as a channel of grace between the spiritual realm and the physical one. The term “the Perfect Man” (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is central in Ibn al-‘Arabī’s (1165–1240) mystical thought which influenced all later thinkers who used this and similar terms. “The perfect man as the image of God and the archetype of nature, is at once the mediator of divine grace, and the cosmic principle by which the world is animated and sustained.” (Nicholson in *The Legacy of Islam*. 1931: 225) This definition is good for the *Tzadīq* in Ḥasidut, for the Manifestation of God in the Bābī-Bahā’ī faiths, and it can pass also as the definition of Jesus, the Christ, the Saviour, the High Priest in the Heavenly Sanctuary (*Seven-Day Adventists Believe*. . . . 1988: 313–315)

This is not an attempt to avoid the deep and fundamental differences between religions. On the contrary, the differences in details are many and acute, but in principal we encounter here the same elements present in the ideal structure of existence. It is always three layers, which seems to be the best answer for the relation between the totally unknown and the completely sensed and cognitive.

I refrained from mentioning the Christian Qabbalah, where the similarities are even greater, because Christian Qabbalah (Scholem 1993: 62; Idel 1993: 267f.; Tishby (1) 1971: 47ff.) played, as far as I know, almost no part in the development of the Adventist movements. On the other hand, the Jewish Qabbalah had much to do with the development of the Hasidic Movement, which, in addition to its crucial social impact, popularized, in a way, many Cabbalistic ideas. As Ḥasidut emerged from its early and crude form at the end of the eighteenth century, two fundamental features appeared in it. The first was that the divine essence is unattainable, unreachable and beyond the grasp of the human mind. Man was nothing but “dust and ash” before Him, and man’s thought could never attain to His hidden mystery. Only through the keeping of the divine commandments (*mitzvōt*) is it possible to reach the various kinds of holiness. In other words, the divine commands are an aspect of the revealed God, the only possible way for man to arise from his insignificance (Piekarz 1997: 60–61, and quotation there). The second was that the attributes of God, His Names, the revealed part of His Being, which produced creation and made itself known to the prophets, could be grasped and attained. The *Tzadīq*, the Ḥasidic Rabbi, is the chosen perfect man, and he is capable not only of

being the channel to this realm of the revealed Divine Names, but also, if need be, of making use of them. (See below)

The secrets of the divine creative power are found in the scriptures. The words of the *Torah* have a revealed side, *nigleh*, and a hidden side, *nistar*. It is in the alphabet that the real divine power is hiding. The *Tzadīq* has the knowledge to decipher the code, which holds the secrets of the Holy Writ. The *Torah* is regarded as a blueprint for creation, and therefore it existed before creation. The Divine Architect, so to speak, observed the *Torah* and created the world. The *Tzadīq*, therefore, can tap the creative powers of the words of the *Torah*, of the Tetragrammaton, of the name of God and even of each letter of the alphabet. If he wants, he can use them to influence creation and even engage in a new creation including the creation of man, emulating the divine action (Idel, 1996 *passim*). It is important to remember the remark of one of the most famous Ḥasidic Rabbis in the 19th century, Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin, (Friedmann 1796–1850) who said:

The whole *Torah* is (concentrated) in the Book of Genesis (*Bereshūt*) and the Book of Genesis in its first verse, and the first verse in the first word of Genesis “*bereshūt*,” (“In the beginning”) and the word “*bereshūt*” is concentrated in the first letter “*beth*” (ב) and the letter “*beth*” is concentrated in the point inside this letter and I am this point, because the *Tzadik* is the point of the *Torah*.” (Assaf 1997: 346.)

The saying is attributed to R. Israel Ba‘al Shem Tov (known by his acronym The Besht) the founder of Ḥasidut. (See note tracing the saying to *Keter Shem Tov*, Brooklyn 1987: 18–45—a collection of sayings attributed to the Besht).

Incidentally, R. Israel of Ruzhin, died in the same year as the Bāb, who, as we shall soon see, spoke about the same concept in almost in the same words, referring, naturally, to the *Qur’ān*. R. Israel’s observation is connected not only with searching the words of the scriptures for the secrets of God and creation, but also with the attitude to the *Tzadīk*, and the meaning or nature of his existence. As it is represented here, the *Tzadīk* does not belong to the usual order of creation. In form he is human, but he is not a creature belonging to the hierarchical order of physical reality existing in the organisms of the created world (animal, vegetable or mineral). He is, in other words, a particular manifestation of the divine will to serve (among other functions) as a channel of divine grace. (Piekarz 1997: 44–47)

The searching of the scriptures for hidden meaning, which is regarded to be the true meaning, has existed in Judaism from ancient times. The *Midrash*, namely the field of Jewish Rabbinic literature, which developed the reading of the hidden meaning behind the text, had many aims: judicial, moral, educational, political, and mystical. The Qabbalah carried the mystical reading of the scriptures to great lengths, and Ḥasidut, in general, followed suit, developing the search of scriptures for mystical meaning, as well as studying them in the traditional way. (cf. Scholem 1993: 36–85)

However, side by side with the strong Cabbalistic element in Ḥasidic thinking, the prevailing idea in it is that of the divine immanence. This was the basic concept taught by the Hasidic leaders: God is found in everything; God is in every deed and in every thought. In other words, Ḥasidūt, by emphasizing the idea of divine immanence, revolutionized the whole concept of the divine presence, causing the irrelevance of the Cabbalistic hierarchy represented by the “tree of the *sephiroth*,” the emanations of the revealed god. (R. Elior quoted by Etkes 2000: 146).

What is, therefore, the relationship between the two representations of God the immanent one and the transcendental one, which necessitates the dualistic representation by the introduction of the revealed god in a system of emanations? The answer, which Ḥasidut gave, was that God is present and there is no need for the angels to deliver man’s supplications to him from “one shrine to the other.” God, however, created the *impression* that a process of deliverance of prayers through a hierarchical ladder was necessary to teach man that he has to make an effort to come nearer to God. (Ibid. 147 quoting *Keter Shem Tov*, 30:5(b)). The idea of divine immanence can create the mistaken notion that the attainment of God is simple or easily achieved, that the “clinging” to God is within reach, without effort. For this reason the Besht, the creator of Ḥasidut, emphasized the need for great spiritual investment to achieve the mystical experience of the attachment to God (*debeqūt*) (Ibid. 146; cf. Idel 1993: 67ff.). Moreover, the divine commands and precepts are not regarded only as landmarks or beacons enabling the individual to free himself from this “world of lies,” and reach the presence of God. The divine command as it is crystallized in the normative precepts (*mitzvōt*) is seen as the vital divine power, which sustains all existence. The “command” is thus identical with “vitality” from which flows the divine grace to preserve all the worlds. The debate between the earlier

teachers of Ḥasidut and some of the later ones was whether the individual should feel enjoyment when keeping God's commands, or whether his enjoyment is a sign of weakness because this means that he remains attached to feelings pertaining to this world. Now, since this is a "world of lies," it follows that by the mere enjoyment of keeping the divine commands, this devotion is not free from the vanity of the world and its falsity. Among the later Hasidic leaders the predominant view was that nothing belonging to this world should come between the true seeker of *debeqūt*, attachment to God, and the keeping of the commands, which help him attain this attachment. (Pickarz 1997: 54ff.)

### *Detachment*

This internal tension between the two views of the Divine Presence in the Ḥasidut is found in the Bahā'ī writings as well, to which I shall come later. Side by side with the idea that the Divine essence is unreachable and inconceivable, we find the idea that man must clear his mind, and detach himself from all that is in this world in preparation for attaining the true knowledge of God and becoming the pure vessel for the eternal mystical divine effulgence. (*maḥall-i zuhurāt-i-füyūḍāt-i-ghayb nāmutanāhī*. Bahā'u'llāh, *Iqān*, 1998: 1–2).

Bahā'u'llāh never heard about the Ḥasidut, nor has any Ḥasidic thinker ever heard about Bahā'u'llāh, yet one is amazed to find so many similar ideas in the writings of the two movements. Ḥasidut preceded the advent of the Bāb by some 80 years, but in this case chronological facts mean nothing. These similar ideas, which should be the subject for further, detailed investigation, represent independent spiritual life in two remote corners of the earth. But are they really so far away? If we continue the line of thought which I have been trying to develop, it is not difficult to detect the ancient monotheistic heritage tested against Greek philosophy of the Middle Ages, in all three religions, particularly in Judaism and in Islam. It is not difficult to see the residues of the various sides of *ṣūfī* mystical thought in Islam and Judaism growing independently but also influencing each other and finding a natural vent in the later developments of both religions.

In an interim summary way, it is possible to conclude that two major sources of heritage form in part the common background for



the new religions and religious movements: the monotheistic Biblical source and the meeting with Greek philosophy. The reaction to the latter and the need to find solutions to the theological problems that it posed resulted in perpetual activity and productivity directly connected with these problems. Even when the issue of the relations between philosophy and the evidence of the scriptures was long forgotten, the search after a proper understanding of the mystery of God continued under the already imbedded influence of this old clash of two sources of knowledge.

### *Hidden Meaning and Magic*

We mentioned the fact that allegorical interpretation of the scriptures was one of the ways by which the scriptural text was given new life. The hidden meanings that could be found behind the straightforward text of the Biblical and Qur'ānic verses were endless. Here again we find a similarity in the attitude to the scriptures in all three religions. This is not new and not typical of modern religious developments. On the contrary, homiletic and allegorical interpretation of the scriptural texts is abundant in Judaism, Christianity and Islam from the early stages of the development of exegetical literature.

The hidden meanings of the texts involved not only the *contents* but also the *form*. The letters of the scriptures acquired a life of their own: their form and their numerical values were searched for meaning. Letters were seen as living bodies and sometimes as building blocks in the act of creation. (Idel 1996: 53; 205f.) Gematria, the science of numerical values of letters used in the field of theology and mysticism, was employed in the process of the esoteric interpretation of the scriptural texts too. (See Buzaglo, below pp. 127–139). On the one hand this method of studying the texts represented a genuine attempt to uncover the mystical messages hiding in them; but on the other hand it developed into magic. (See Buzaglo below pp. 127f.) The usage of holy texts for magical purposes, which we find in all religions, existed long before modern times. (Idel 1993: 128ff.; Būnī, 1985: 3ff.; Ibn al-Ḥājj (4) 1972: 129ff.; ad-Damīnī 1993 passim on magical usages of Qur'ānic verses)

In spite of the differences between the magical materials in the three religions, they all shared the idea of the presence of demonic powers in the world. These demonic powers constitute constant dan-

gers to the health of body and mind. All three religions shared the fear of these dangers, and the need for protection against them. Demonic powers, like any other powerful element, could also be harnessed and used in the service of humans, if the appropriate tool, correct spells and formulae of incantations for harnessing them could be found. The holy texts were searched for such tools both for defense against the harm of demons, and for their positive employment. In Islam the usage of special texts for magical purpose is found already in the Qur'ān. The Prophet was very apprehensive of the presence of demons and of their danger. He was particularly obsessed with the powerful Satan (*shayṭān*) whose aim was to lead man astray from the path of God. It is not surprising, therefore, to find magical verses in the Qur'ān, dedicated to fighting away the demons and their supreme Head. The words employed in these verses sound like a spell. Some have an onomatopoeic sound, which gives the impression that they were chosen to be read aloud in the process of combating the devil. Here is an example of such a spell:

1. Say! I take refuge with the Lord of the people (*bi-rabb an-nās*)
2. The King of the people,
3. The God of the people.
4. From the evil of the whispering, the lurking.
5. Which whispers in the breasts of the people.
6. Of Jinn and men.

In Arabic the prevalent sound of the text is the hissing sound of the letters “s” and “sh” (*sīn* and *shīn*). When reciting these verses loudly, it is impossible to miss their incantation nature. The same type of text, representing similar magical function, is Sūrah 113.

1. Say I take refuge with the Lord of daybreak
2. From the evil of what He hath created,
3. And from the evil of the darkening when it comes on
4. And from the evil of the blowers among knots
5. And from the evil of an envious one when he envies.

Here again the prevailing sound is similar to Sūrah 114, and the magical protective incantation is also very clear. These two sūrahs, which close the Qur'ān, are called by all Muslim scholars *al-mu'awwi-dhatān* the two “protective” (sūrahs), and the commentators make it clear that they were both recited as a protection against evil spirits and evil doers, including counteracting witchcraft such as the one mentioned above, produced by witches who cast their spell by blowing

over knots (probably of a rope on a branch or a piece of wood). It seems that because of their clear magical nature some of the early collectors and readers of the Qur'ānic text refused to include them in their text of the Qur'ān. (Ibn Kathīr *Tafsīr* (4), 1987: 610ff.)

However, the two last sūrahs are not the only Qur'ānic texts, which have a magical nature, and were intended for magical purposes. Sūrah 2 verse 255, known as the "Verse of the Throne," is not only revered as one of the most important sūrahs of the Qur'ān but also as possessing magical qualities. *Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā*, the famous book of magic and related subjects, by Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Būnī (d. 622/1225), speaks in great detail about the magical qualities of this verse and gives instructions on how to use it in an amulet, and when is the best time to wear this amulet to achieve the maximum benefit from it.

And you should know that this noble verse possesses a wonderful meaning and unusual secret for the preservation of wealth and the children and the wives . . . and for the attraction of the customer and the prosperity to the shop, and for (easing the condition) of the madman and the insane (or epileptic), and the mentally disturbed. It (the verse) should be written on paper and hung on him (who is in need of such an amulet). (Būnī 1985: 114–116. Quotation from p. 116)

It is instructive that in a modern book about magic (*siḥr*) a contemporary Muslim scholar seriously maintains that these verses, when used properly, are a sure protection against the evil effects of magic. (Damīnī 1993: 63f.)

### *Names of God and Magic*

The names of God naturally play the most important part in magic practice, and their usage necessitated knowledge and expertise. The names of God were regarded to be not only the representation of the revealed God, but of the creative powers of God as well. As such, if used properly, they could bring great benefit, and cause, at the same time, much harm depending on the purpose of their usage. *Shams al-Ma'ārif al-Kubrā* is full of instructions for the treatment of divine names (e.g. ult. loc. cit.). In addition, many *ḥadīths* instructing pursuit of magical practice, using the divine names, and verses of the Qur'ān, were collected and put into circulation. These *ḥadīths* have always been highly popular and to this day they are published in booklets for common use. One of the favorite booklets is *ad-Du'ā'*

*al-Mustajāb min al-Ḥadīth wa-al-Kitāb* compiled by Aḥmad ‘Abd al-Jawād and ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd (published in Medinah n.d.). Another work (quoted above) is a small book by Dr. Musfir ad-Damīnī, professor in the department of the *sunnaḥ* at the University of Riyāḍ, who collected and classified the material from the Qur’ān and the *sunnaḥ* in order to prove the truth of magic, and the ways to treat it. This book was published in Riyāḍ in 1993.

The magical power of letters, numbers and divine names is common in the mystical literature in Judaism and Christianity as well as in Islam. In Judaism it is very ancient and has continued down to the present time. From Cabbalistic and pre-Cabbalistic sources it flows into the modern movement of the Ḥasidut. The popular appellation *Ba’al Shem*, he who possesses the Name, reflects one side of this magical practice, which could be carried as far as actually participating in an act of creation. The proper knowledge of the true secrets of the divine names meant acquisition of the same creative power of God Himself, the creative power imbued in these divine names. It should be emphasized, however, that in Jewish mysticism it is mainly the proper name of God, which Jews are not allowed to pronounce, the *Tetragrammaton*, that has this power. The conviction that the *Tetragrammaton* was a very powerful name of God was so dominant that we find already in *Tannaic* literature the emphatic declaration that whoever uses the “Explicit Name” (*shem ha-meforāsh*) has no share in the world to come. Such a warning was needed because the usage of the *Tetragrammaton* had, no doubt, been used for magical purposes since ancient times. (*Sepher Taghīn*, Hebrew Introduction 1866: 30ff.) The power of the “Explicit Name” does not diminish the fact that all the 22 letters of the alphabet possess magical and mystical powers and their proper knowledge opens the gates to the secrets of creation. For, after all, the Torah was written with these 22 letters “that are engraved in a pen of fire on the terrifying and awesome crown of the Holy One Blessed be He.” (*Otiyyōt derabbī ‘Aqībāh* vol. 1, quoted in *ibid.* 28) Naturally from these 22 letters of the alphabet all the other names of God were composed (*Ibid.* 29; cf. Scholem, 1993: 164f.; Idel, *Golem*, 1996, 37ff. and *passim* Liebes 2000: 67ff.; Etkes, 2000: 15ff. For Christianity see Dornseiff 1925 *passim*, and for the Christian mystical attitude to the Hebrew alphabet see Lipiner 1989: 43 n. 49).

Before the creation of the world, *The Book of Splendour* (the *Zohar*) says, God amused Himself with the 22 letters of the alphabet, and therefore the secrets of creation are in these letters (Nahmanides

Rabbi Moshe ben Nahman (Acronym: RaMBaN) in the introduction to his commentary on the Book of Genesis. Lipiner 1989: 57). All the Jewish mystical sources repeat various versions of this idea, which is found in a different version in the Talmudic legend, and says that when Moses went up to heaven he met God who was decorating the letters with “crowns” (*BT Shabbat*, 89a. *Sepher Taghin. Liber Coronularum*, Latin introduction 1866: vii). In a less anthropomorphic way, the relation between creation and the letters can be presented as the eternal movements of the metaphysical light of the *ein sof* (“endless”), for the purpose of building worlds, that assume the geometrical forms of the letters of the alphabet (Lipiner 1989: 3–9). The mystics clarified that although we know letters in their physical forms, arranged into words, they have a sublime source, and therefore they have also a magic nature that enables them to ascend to their metaphysical source (Ibid. 26). It is worth mentioning that the Babylonian Talmud, reflecting an old tradition, recognized the ritualistic sacredness of letters (*BT, Shabbat*, 116a).

Of all the combination of letters, those representing the divine attributes are the most important, and among these divine attributes the most important is the attribute of One (*ehād*) the heart of Jewish monotheism, reiterated morning and evening in the most important declaration incumbent upon every Jew “Hear O Israel the Lord is our God the Lord is One.” This sublime unequivocal declaration of the Divine unity centres on the word *ehād*, One, which naturally became the symbol of true Jewish devotion to God, and an unequivocal requirement for faithfulness to him. In Qabbalah and Ḥasidut, the attribute of One has many applications. The most important is probably the one emphasizing the need to cause the institution of the active unity of God, and the so-called “repair” (*tiqqūn*) of the Divine Name through religious practice, mainly prayer. (Scholem 1993:120ff.) This is “the secret of unification,” (*sod ha-Yīḥūd*) which is, therefore, the main purpose of mystical devotion. In the actual act, when performed with undivided intention (*kavvanah*), man takes an active part in the “renewal” of the unity of the divine powers. The “secret of unity” has two sides: “the establishment of the harmonious in the structure of the *sephirot* (divine emanations) and the unification of the source of emanation, namely returning the *sephirot* to their divine source.” (Tishby (1) 1971: 105)

It is interesting that the same attitude to the letters of the alpha-

bet as the building blocks of existence is found in the works of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥṣā'ī. For him too, the 28 letters of the Arabic alphabet, being divine Names and Attributes (composed of these letters), govern each thing in the world. They have the power to bestow meaningfulness upon the world “and therefore Being.” (Cole 1994: 5ff.)

*Names and Letters, The Bāb*

We hear the same language, and encounter similar ideas, in the works of the Bāb. ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the Bāb (1819–1850), was well aware of the mystical meaning and the magical power of letters, their numerical equivalencies, and of the names of God. (MacEoin 1994: 14ff.) An important part of his work is dedicated to the investigation of the mystical meanings in the Qur’ān. He was fascinated by the idea, which was by his time common knowledge, in Shī‘ite as well as non-Shī‘ite circles, about the creative power of the names of God, the ninety-nine “Beautiful Names.” He knew very well that the *Imāms* were identical with these names, being themselves the tools of creation as well as the cause for creation. But most of all he was fascinated by the connection between the word *One* (*wāḥid*) representing the Divine absolute unity and the word *Living* (*ḥayy*) which represents the supreme quality of the Divine Being, Divine Existence and Divine Presence. The numerical value of *wāḥid* (One) is nineteen, that is to say the number eighteen, being the numerical value of *ḥayy* (Living), to which one must be added since oneness is always present in all the letters. Practically and symbolically he pictured the mystical union between the Living and His Oneness as a Holy completion and Divine perfection: the establishment of the secret of the ultimate One. The symbol of this union also placed him, as the Manifestation of God, as the supreme point in the centre of this union, as the cause of this mysterious, yet clear completeness. The mystery was cast in the form of letters, and the letters were chosen individuals, the first disciples or the first believers, who like planets revolved around the one sun of unity, the Bāb himself, the one who gave them life, the one who through his light, and life-giving energy, they existed. Thus he created a living system, in which the multiplicity was only the apparent manifestation of the union: the eighteen, which together with the Manifestation of God become the One (*wāḥid*), the powerful number of the nineteen.

This mystical One has long been identified in the first verse of the Qurʾān, this otherwise simple and clear invocation: “In the Name of Allah the Compassionate the Merciful.” Overtly, the verse contains the proper name of God (Allah) with two of His Attributes the synonyms: “Compassionate,” and “Merciful;” but already Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsāʾī (1753–1826), and probably others before him, paid careful attention to the fact that this innocent verse was composed of four words and that the number of the letters of “*bism allāh ar-rahmān ar-rahīm*” is nineteen in all. The fact that the *Basmalah* is composed of four words is also very significant. The Muslim scholars taught that the number four is the foundation of the divine order. The first four numbers (1–4) are the source of all exiting numbers. Four is the number of the elements, the substances, the natural condition, the humours, the seasons of the year, and the points of the compass. (*Rasāʾil* 1928 (1): 23–28.) It is difficult to avoid the facts, that just as the Jewish mystics emphasized the four-lettered Divine Name (the *Tetragrammaton*), the eyes of the Muslim mystics were attracted also to the number four as the Divine number. The latter did not regard it coincidental that the Divine name, *Allāh*, is composed of four letters (very similar to the *Tetragrammaton*) nor that Muḥammad’s name, and Ḥusayn’s name (for the Shīʿites) was also composed of four letters. The Bāb’s name Muḥammad and Bahāʾu’llāh’s name Ḥusayn fall, of course, into this category. There is hardly any question that the explanation of ‘Abbās Effendī (‘Abdu ’l-Bahā’) concerning the meaning of the “Greatest Name” draws on the tradition about the mystical power of the number four, in the thinking of the Ismāʿīliyyah. Referring to the “Greatest name” that is engraved on the ring stone on which the letter *hāʾ* appears four times on the four corners of the design, he says: “As for the four *hāʾ*’s these are the pillars of the Temple of Unity, and together add *up to ten* (italics added), for one and two make three, three and three six, six and four ten; this station is referred to in the verse of the Qurʾān ‘We completed them with ten’ (Q, 7:142).” (*Lawḥ-i-Ism-i-Aʿzam* quoted in MacEoin 1994: 143).

There is nothing incidental in mystical thought. The nineteen letters of the first verse of the Qurʾān, and of every *sūrah* of the Qurʾān, just could not be ignored. They represented no less than the supreme unity of the divine being, and as such, the essence of the creative power of God, especially since, in addition to consisting of nineteen letters, the *Basmalah* begins with the letter *bāʾ*, just as the *Torah* begins with the letter *beth*.

*The Letter Bā'*

The letter *bā'* is not just a simple letter; it has qualities which are connected with its position in the order of both the Hebrew and Arabic alphabet, and with its orthographic shape, namely, the way in which it is written. In the order of the Arabic as well as Hebrew, Greek and Latin alphabets, the *bā'*, (or *beth*, *betta*, *B*) comes after the *alef*, that has the numerical value of One. That is to say the *bā'* represents the first existence after the One, the divine entity or, undivided essence which is beyond comprehension. In other words, the *bā'* is the *revealed* side of the unknown *alef*. Therefore, the *bā'* is nothing less than the representation of the manifestation of God, the prophet, who embodies the creative power of the divine Word. It should be made clear that in all mystical systems the letters are not symbols but actually the building blocks used by God to create the universe. It thus follows that the world was created in *bā'*, or with a *bā'*, which is good reason for the Qur'ān (and the Torah, a fact which the Bāb did not know) to begin with this letter. For this reason too, the greatest Name of God, *Bahā'* meaning Splendour, begins with the letter *bā'* which, in the Bahā'ī Faith, became the identifying letter and the divine symbol of all the worlds of existence: the divine realm, the world of physical reality and the realm of the Manifestation of God. The latter is the middle world of the divine names, the abode of the Imāms and the prophets and the kingdom of the divine, creative Word or Order. (One should bear in mind that the *alef* and the number one, which is its numerical value, also share the same orthographic shape |, a vertical line). By assuming the word *Bahā'* as his name, either separately or compounded with Allāh, Bahā'u'llāh emphasized the great value of this most Supreme name of God that begins with the letter *bā'*. The Bāb too, following earlier Shī'ī and Shaykhī tradition, had also made the most of its orthographic shape.

When written, the *bā'* is a combination of a horizontal line and a dot beneath it. Without the dot it can easily be regarded as a lying, or horizontal *alef*. It does not require much imagination to see how this simple orthographical fact could assume mystical significance. The vertical *alef* which stands like a wall preventing the penetration of sight or thought either way, the One secret divine essence, which does not allow any apprehension of anything that is "before" or "after," becomes a flat basis, an open route, a straight line which leads backwards and forwards. In other words, the vertical *alef*, which



points to the unfathomable *Up* and unfathomable *Down*, when turned horizontally, becomes the revealed *bā'*: not reality in a physical sense but the reality of the otherwise unknown, divine essence.

But still the horizontal line is not enough to communicate the true value of the *bā'*; there are others, two or even four letters in the Arabic alphabet which are written as horizontal lines. What makes the *bā'* an independent letter is the dot or the point, underneath it. Only with the point does the *bā'* becomes complete, representing the revealed God. This idea was clearly expressed by Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī:

The *bā'* is the form of the divinity which is the representation of (the revealed) Allah, may he be exalted, and it combines the attributes of holiness like: the Exalted, the Holy, the Mighty, the Sublime and so forth, with His attributes of accompaniment like, the All-Knowing, the All-Hearing, the All-Seeing, the All-Able, the All-Commanding, and the similar, with the attributes of creation such as, the Creator, the Provider, the Bestower, and so on. (*Rasā'il*, p. 136, quoted by Saeidi 1999: 161)

It follows that Shaykh Aḥmad agreed that the letter *bā'* was, in itself, the greatest divine name, as well as the letter opening the name *Bahā'* which is the greatest name of God (*ism allāh al-a'zam*). In specifying the part played by each letter of the alphabet in the world of existence al-Aḥsā'ī identifies the letter *bā'* with the Universal Soul, usually the second emanation in the Neoplatonic system, and the universal, life-giving power (*bā'ith*). (Cole 1994: 4ff.) In other words, in the hierarchy of the existential text that forms, by its letters, the divine attributes representing the revealed God, the letter *bā'* follows the Universal Intellect, the very first emanation from the mystery of the hidden eternity of the divine essence. (cf. *ibid.*)

Since the point under the horizontal line is the deciding factor, giving the letter its true identity, this point is regarded as the point of creation. Without it, the letter, which represents the sublime divine name and thus the sum total of the powers of the revealed God, is incomplete. In other words, everything which is symbolized by the *bā'* concentrates in the point of this letter, and since the prophets and the Imāms, especially the latter, are identical with the creative powers of God, that is to say, identical with his *Names*, then it follows that they too are the Supreme Name of God. For all the names of God, although they are many, are in fact only one, similar to a

reflection of the same image in many mirrors, (a simile which the Bāb as well as ‘Abbās Effendi (‘Abdu’l-Bahā’) liked to use. ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ 1964: 113–115).

The point signifying the undefined essence of creation received much attention in Shī‘ī as well as Šūfī literature. The saying that all knowledge is “a point (*nuqṭah*), which those who are ignorant multiplied many times”, is attributed to Alī (*kaththarahā al-jāhilūn*). This saying is quoted by Sa‘d ad-Dīn Ḥamawayh (d. 650/1252) at the opening of *Risālat al-Miṣbāḥ*. He goes on to develop the idea of the connection of the point and the Divine Being.

Thou shouldest know that the point consists of three colours, one is black, one is white and one is red. The black indicates the (divine) Essence, the white indicates the Attributes and the red indicates the Creation. (ibid.)

The identification of the Imāms with the divine attributes, is best represented in the following saying attributed to no less than ‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib: “The secret of the *Basmalah* is in the (letter) *bā’* and the secret of the *bā’* is in the point and I am the point of the *bā’*,” (quoted by Saeidi 1999: 167). Here the Shī‘ite tradition, which was followed by Shaykh Aḥmad and the Bāb, meets the tradition that ascribes the same words: “I am the point of the Beth,” to the Hasidic Rabbi R. Israel of Ruzhin of the early 19th century. The reader can be sure that R. Israel had no knowledge of this Shī‘ī tradition. (I am sure that had ‘Alī been alive when this tradition was ascribed to him he too would not have recognized it). However, mystical minds must sometimes think alike. The question of the letter *bā’* and the point under it can be a subject of very extensive research, which is not my intention to undertake at this point. However, the following quotation from *Jamī‘ al-Asrār wa-Manābi‘ al-Anwār* by Shaykh Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī may serve as a summary and elucidation of the above arguments:

The *bā’* is the representation of the apparent reality . . . just as the *alef* is the representation of the hidden eternal reality . . . The point under the *bā’*, is the representation of that which is possible (*al-mumkin*) . . . The saying of Ibn al-‘Arabī: in the *bā’* the (physical) reality appeared in the point, and the difference between the *created* from the *creator* was established (Āmulī, 700–701).

*Tafsīr Basmalah*

I have gone into some detail on the subject of the point of the *bāʾ*, not only because of the importance attached to this letter in the Bābī and Bahāʾī Faiths, but also because it is a clear example in the chain of ideas relating to the mystical interpretations of letters leading from medieval Islamic literature to the schools of thought in the Shīʿah in modern times, via the Shaykhīs to the Bāb, Bahāʾuʾllāh and his successors.

In his interpretation of the *Basmalah*, the Bāb searched for the meaning of each one of its letters (but especially the first word “*bism*”) and following the earlier material (whether he read it or not is not clear) found the connection between the letters and the names of God. He also found references to the secrets connected with the names of the Imāms ‘Alī, Ḥasan and especially Ḥusayn, who represents the revelation of the Greatest Name of God, Bahāʾ. The natural continuation of this line of thought must lead to the identification of the reappearance of Ḥusayn, the third Imām, in the form of the Bahāʾ, namely Bahāʾuʾllāh, whose name is both Ḥusayn and ‘Alī. (See quotations from the Bāb’s interpretation of the *Basmalah* in Saʿīdī 1999: 167ff.)

As mentioned above on a few occasions, the Medieval Muslim scholars with mystical tendencies, though not necessarily mystics, occupied themselves with searching for the meanings of the alphabet and the numerical values of letters. The interesting thing about this preoccupation is that they examined the Arabic alphabet according to the *abjad* order, namely according to the order of the Hebrew and Aramaic alphabets, on which the numerical values of the letters are based. It is clear, that by using the *a-b-j-d* system, they could deal with each letter as it was written, as the symbol for a divine name, and as a number. (*ET*<sup>2</sup> s.v. “Ḥurūfiya,” *Rasāʾil* 1928, *ibid.*)

In order to legitimize this attitude to the Arabic alphabet, they searched for symbolic meanings for the word “*abjad*” and for a verb *bajad* (B-J-D) from which it is derived. It was not difficult to find the verb that denotes certain knowledge and even secret inner knowledge. (cf. *Lisān al-ʿArab*, s.v. *B-J-D*). Even a *ḥadīth* ascribed to the Prophet was put into circulation, which made the study of the interpretation of *abjad* incumbent upon every true scholar “Study the *tafsīr* (interpretation) of *abjad* because in it, there are all the wonders, and woe to a scholar (*ʿālim*) who is ignorant of its interpretation.” The

tradition goes on to say that when the Prophet was asked about the *tafsīr* of *abjad*, he proceeded to explain the meaning of each letter in connection with Allah (*alef* is the benefits, or blessings of Allah-*ālā' allāh*, and the *bā'* is the splendour of Allah-*bahā' allāh*, and the *jīm* is the glory of Allah and the beauty of Allah-*jalāl allāh wa-jamāl allāh*, the *dāl* is the religion of Allah-*dīn allāh*, and so on).

It is impossible to ignore the fact that these terms, which were copied in the 17th century by Fakhr ad-Dīn aṭ-Ṭirihī (d. 1085/1674) in his dictionary of rare words, *Majma' al-Bahrayn* (ed. Ḥusaynī 1381/1961) (3):10 *s.v.* B-Ḥ-D) together with relevant traditions occupy a central place in the Bābī and Bahā'ī writings in the nineteenth century. Even without having access to the libraries of the Bāb or Bahā'u'llāh it is safe to conclude that this old medieval Islamic knowledge was commonplace among learned people who had been exposed to the study of the Qur'ān and some Shī'ī traditions. The Bāb, who spent, at least some time with Sayyid Kāẓim Rashtī was, no doubt, exposed to this type of material too.

The Bāb's occupation with the "science of letters" brought him, like the Hasidic Rabbis and Muslim religious figures, to practice magic using the same material: Qur'ānic verses, Names of God, letters of the Alphabet, and the five pointed *star*, which represented, in his system, the human body (*haykal*). The amulets which he wrote, and which he ordered people to wear, demonstrated his fascination with the power of letters and words. (MacEoin, loc. cit., 21.)

The similarity between Jewish, Islamic and Bābī-Bahā'ī methods of search after the symbolic, esoteric and mystical interpretation of the letters of the alphabet (usually in relation to the scriptures), should not surprise us. When Islam began developing as a sophisticated religion and culture in the Middle East, it came into contact with the well-established system of studying the letters, their numerical values and hidden meanings. This well-established interest in the subject came independently from two sources: Jewish and Pythagorean. (Dornseiff 1925: 11–14, 20f., 39ff.) There already existed detailed discussions of the subject, the best representative of which is *Sepher Yetzirah*, The Book of Creation, where the mystical meaning of the letters of the alphabet is well established. There is hardly any question as to the antiquity of this book that already in the 10th century was the object of study and interpretation by the Jewish scholar Sa'adiah (Sa'adyah) Gaon in Iraq. (Liebes 2000: 94ff.)

*Adventism*

In Christianity the subject of the meaning of letters was also developed (Dornseiff 1925 *passim*). But, as I have already remarked it does not occupy an important place in modern religious movements. On the other hand, calculation based on scriptures relating to the second advent of Jesus is essential in the thinking of all Adventist movements. The disappointment in the date calculated by Miller led to another type of interpretation of the prophecies concerning messianic expectations. The Seventh-Day Adventists remained with the basic calculations based on Daniel 7–8, according to which 1844 was a year of great significance, though not exactly the year of the Second Advent. Intensive study of the cryptic prophecies in Daniel, and the calculations based on them, resulted in very concrete expectations and predicted events. Naturally, when unfulfilled, the expectations based on the prediction of Christ coming in 1844, resulted in the most severe disappointment. The Seventh-Day Adventists avoided this disappointment by advancing the idea that while the calculation of the date 1844 is correct, the *meaning* of the prophecy concerning this date was missed. In 1844, Christ was not supposed to begin his millennial ministry on earth.

In 1844, at the end of the prophetic period of 2300 days, He entered the second and last phase of His atoning ministry. It is a work of investigative judgment, which is part of the ultimate disposition of all sin . . . (*Seventh-Day Adventists Believe*. . . 1988: 312ff.)

The year 1844 is the year of the Bāb's announcement of his *Bābīyyat*, in the midst of messianic expectation based on calculations, which counted the thousand years, which elapsed since the occultation of the Twelfth Imām. One must admit that *it is an unusual co-incidence*. But let us say immediately that it is nothing more than co-incidence. However, since we are looking for common principals, we can see it here as well, in two religious movements, far away from each other from every point of view. The principle, which brings them together, is that of messianic expectation, the idea of a second coming, of a hidden Messiah (whether it is the Imām or Jesus).

Jesus is also a Qur'ānic figure; and Muslims as well as Christians expected his (second) coming. This fact was enough to mould any Messianic expectation in Islam on the model of 'Īsā (Jesus) (Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr*, on Q, 43:61.1987 (4):143 quoting early authorities;

*SEI* 1974: 173). Without Jesus' model, and the influence of this model on the early Muslims, one can hardly imagine the birth of the idea of the hidden Imām.

Moreover, the Bāb, and even more so Bahā'u'llāh, with their theory of the Prophet equaling the Manifestation of God, attributed the position of the Divine Manifestation to themselves, as well as to the prophets, the Imāms, and Jesus, and placed them all, following the Shaykhīs, in the intermediate world the *Barzakh* or *Hūrqalyah*. Now, since the Manifestation of God is nothing less than the reappearance of the former manifestations in just a new stage of the development of humanity, the appearance, of Bahā'u'llāh, is nothing less than the re-appearance of Jesus. (cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahā', 1964: 113f., 171–174)

The Adventists in the West are still awaiting the end of the last stage of Jesus' ministry in the heavenly sanctuary. However, for many Christians, not necessarily Adventists, who are eager to witness the end of their long wait, Bahā'u'llāh offered the ultimate answer: the end of waiting, the fulfillment of the messianic expectations, the final advent of Jesus which was announced in 1844, and reached its climax with the open claim of Bahā'u'llāh in 1863 that *he* was the Expected One. Without the original Biblical basis, and without the existence of the Christian fundamental belief in the second coming, such a claim could never have succeeded beyond the ocean. (See the method, which 'Abdu'l-Bahā' uses to explain the Second Coming of Christ. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' 1964: 110–112)

### *Summary*

I have tried to seek a common ground for understanding the unusual appearance of several religions and religious movements towards the Middle of the 19th century, especially the appearance of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faiths out of Shī'ite Islam in the East and the appearance of Mormonism and Adventism in the Christian world, and Ḥasidut in the Jewish world in Eastern Europe (the last being the earliest). We found that, although the appearance of these religions and religious movements together is co-incidental, yet ultimately they all enjoy a common and ancient cultural basis: Biblical Monotheistic tradition, and a deep-rooted classical (mainly Greek) cultural heritage.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ (‘Abbās Effendī). 1964. *Some Answered Questions* collected and translated from the Persian by Laura Clifford Barney. Wilmette, Illinois. Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.
- ‘Abd al-Jawād, Aḥmad and Maḥmūd, ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm. n.d. *Ad-Du‘ā’ al-Mustajāb min al-Ḥadīth wa-al-Kūṭab*, Madīnah.
- al-Āmulī, Sayyid Ḥaydar. 1968. *Jāmi‘ al-Asrār wa-Manba‘ al-Anwār*. Ed. H. Corbin and ‘Uthmān Ismā‘īl Yahyā. Tehran.
- Asaf, D. 1997. *The Regnal Way. The Life and Times of Rabbi Israel of Ruzhin*. (Hebrew). Jerusalem, The Zalman Shazar Centre For Jewish History.
- Book of Mormon*. Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Salt Lake City, Utah.
- BT = Babylonian Talmud.
- al-Būnī, Aḥmad b. ‘Alī. 1985. *Shams al-Ma‘ārif al-Kubrā wa-Laṭā’if al-‘Awārif*. Beirut, al-Maktabah ash-Sha‘biyyah.
- Cole, J.R.I. 1994. “The world as text: cosmologies of Shaykh Aḥmad al-Aḥsā’ī.” *Studia Islamica*, 80:1–23.
- . 1998. *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahā’ī Faith in Nineteenth-Century Middle East*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Croce, B. 1934. *History of Europe in the Nineteenth Century*. Translated from the Italian by Henry Furst. London, George Allen and Unwin.
- Ad-Damīnī, Musfir. 1993. *As-Sihr, Haqīqatuhu wa-Hukmuhi wa-al-Ilāj Minhu ma‘a Munāqashat Shubuhāt Munkiri Sihr an-Nabī*. Riyāḍ, Maktabat al-Mughnī.
- Dornseiff, F. 1925. *Das Alphabet in Mystic und Magie*. Zweite Auflage, Leipzig-Berlin, Verlag und Druck von B.G. Teubner.
- Etkes, I. 2000. *The Besht—Magic, Mysticism, Leadership*. (Hebrew). Jerusalem, The Zalman Shazar Centre for Jewish History.
- The Legacy of Islam*. 1931. Eds. Thomas Arnold and Alfred Guillaume. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Ḥamawayh, Sa’d ad-Dīn. 1403/1983. *al-Miṣbāḥ fī at-Taṣawwuf*. Ed. Najāb Māyil Harawī. Tehran.
- Hämeen-Anttila, J. 2001. “Descent and Ascent in Islamic Myth.” In R.M. Whiting (ed.) *Melammu Symposia II*, Helsinki.
- Holt, P.M. 1958. *The Mahdist State in the Sudan (1881–1898)*. Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Ibn al-Ḥājj Muḥammad b. Muḥammad al-‘Abdarī. 1972. *Kitāb al-Madkhal*. Beirut, Dār al-Kitāb al-‘Arabī.
- Ibn Kathīr Abū al-Fidā’ Ismā‘īl. 1987. *Tafsīr al-Qur’ān al-‘Azīm*. Beirut, Dār al-Ma‘rifah.
- Idel, M. 1989. “Jewish Magic from the Renaissance period to early Hasidism.” *Religion, Science, and Magic* (eds. J. Neusner, E.S. Frerichs, P.V.M. Flesher, New York, Oxford).
- . 1993. *Kabbalah. New Perspectives*. (Hebrew) Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House.
- . 1996. *Golem. Jewish Magical and Mystical Traditions on the Artificial Anthropoid*. (Hebrew) Tel Aviv, Schocken Publishing House.
- Israel, ben Eliezer (*Ba’al Shem Tov*), 1985. *Keter Shem Tov*. New York, Beit Hillel. (Hebrew).
- Keter Shem Tov*. See Israel ben Eliezer.
- Lipiner, E. 1989. *The Metaphysics of the Hebrew Alphabet*. (Hebrew). Jerusalem, Magness Press. The Hebrew University.
- MacEoin, D. 1982. “The Bābī concept of Holy War,” *Religion*, 1982:93–129.
- . 1994. *Rituals in Bābism and Bahā’ism*. London, British Academic Press
- MR = *Midrash Rabbah*, (according to book, section, and paragraph).

- Piekarz, M. 1997. *Ideological Trends of Hasidism in Poland During the Interwar Period and the Holocaust*. (Hebrew). Second Printing. Jerusalem, Bialik Institute.
- Rasā'il*, 1928. = *Rasā'il Ikhwān aṣ-Ṣafā wa-Khillān al-Wafā*. Ed. Khayr ad-Dīn az-Ziriklī. Cairo, al-Maṭba'ah al-'Arabiyyah.
- Saeidi, (Sa'īdī), N. 1999. "Tafsīr bism allāh ar-raḥmān ar-raḥīm." *Pazhūheshnāmeḥ, A Persian Journal of Bahā'ī Studies*, 3(2):154–198.
- Scholem, G. 1993. *Elements of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (Hebrew). (Sixth printing) Jerusalem, Bialik Institute.
- SEI 1974 = *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*. H.A.R. Gibb, J.H. Kramers, eds. Leiden, E.J. Brill.
- Seventh-day Adventists Believe. . . . A Biblical Expositions of 27 Fundamental Doctrines*. 1988. Washington D.C. All Africa Publications.
- Sepher Taghin. Liber coronularum* 1866. Edited by D. Goldberg "known also as BG," with Latin introduction by J.J.L. Barges. Paris. (Lutetiae Parisiorum).
- aṭ-Ṭirīḥī, (Ṭurayḥī) Fakhr ad-Dīn 1381/1961. *Majma' al-Baḥrayn*, vol. 3. Najaf. Al-Maktabah al-Murtaḍwiyyah.
- Tishby, I. 1971. *The wisdom of the Zohar*. (Hebrew) *Texts from the Book of Splendour, Systematically Arranged and Translated into Hebrew by F. Lachover and I. Tishby. 3rd edition*. Jerusalem, Bialik Institute.



*This page intentionally left blank*

PART ONE

PROPHECY, MESSIANISM,  
AND THE MILLENNIUM

*This page intentionally left blank*

## ON PROPHECY AND EARLY HASIDISM

Moshe Idel

### 1. *On Continuity and Neutralization in Hasidism*

From many points of view eighteenth century Hasidism is a revivalist movement. Starting with small groups of pious men strongly oriented toward various forms of Jewish mysticism, it became already toward the end of the eighteenth century, a widespread mass-movement, which developed dramatically during the nineteenth century as the most influential spiritual trend in Eastern European Judaism. The factors responsible for the emergence of this movement and its dissemination preoccupied scholarship of Judaica since its inception. We cannot offer here a survey of all the theories attempting to explain the factors that shaped this movement, but to the extent they touch the issue of prophecy. I see the importance of this—rather complex—category for the nascent movement in the authority it offers to new spiritual messages. In fact revivalist movements, more than systems, need charismatic authorities more than authoritative texts, in order to develop. Canonical texts play, however, more important roles in the emergence and validation of new systems, as it is the case of the book of the *Zohar* and its status in both Cordoverian and Lurianic systems.

One of the most important developments characteristics of eighteenth century Hasidism, as understood by Gershom Scholem and some of his students, posited the neutralization of what was called ‘the messianic idea’ in the writings of the first generations of Hasidic masters. According to formulations of those scholars Hasidism indeed neither ignored nor totally liquidated messianic concepts, but rather imposed a treatment of another sort upon these topics, in comparison to the Lurianic and Sabbatean effervescence, and this neutralizing stand has been conceived by these scholars to have been innovative: messianism, in fact apocalypticism, as a vital religious phenomenon has been “neutralized”. Actually, the term ‘neutralization’ designates a process of demythologizing the apocalyptic elements found in messianic thought obliterating the importance of national, historical redemption that takes place in a specific geographical area,

and emphasises the centrality of the spiritual individual redemption.<sup>1</sup> Scholem has posited neutralization of messianism despite the fact that he himself recognizes that also other religious elements have been interpreted spiritually, in Hasidism. Elsewhere he attributed the process of spiritualization to Kabbalistic preachers, apparently writing in the 16th–17th centuries.<sup>2</sup> However, Scholem did not explain what precisely was novel in the Hasidic kinds of spiritualization of these concepts when compared to the spiritual understanding of other concepts like, for example, the land of Israel or the concept of exile. Neither is it clear why messianism was spiritualized by the Hasidic masters in reaction to a heretical messianism, since such a spiritualizing process of this constellation of ideas was already in existence for centuries in other circles, like ecstatic Kabbalah and medieval Jewish philosophy.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, a more personalistic vision of the various forms of sefirotic ontology dominant in the theosophical Kabbalah, explicit already in the 13th century ecstatic Kabbalah, become evident later on in many Hasidic texts.<sup>4</sup> In fact it is possible to discern in Hasidic texts a propensity to transfer a concept of general redemp-

---

<sup>1</sup> Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (The Schocken Books, New York, 1967), pp. 329, 335–336, idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1972), pp. 176–202, 217; Rivka Schatz, “The Messianic Element in Hasidic Thought,” *Molad*, (NS) vol. 1 (1967), pp. 105–111 (Hebrew); idem, *Hasidism as Mysticism, Quietistic Elements in Eighteenth Century Hasidic Thought* tr. J. Chipman, (Magnes Press, Jerusalem, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1993), pp. 326–339; R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, “Mysticism and messianism, the case of Hasidism,” *Man and His Salvation, Essays in Memory of S.G.F. Brandon*, (Manchester 1973), pp. 305–314; Mendel Piekarsz, “The Messianic Idea in the Early Days of Hasidism Through the Lens of Ethical and Homiletic Literature,” *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 250–253 (Hebrew); Abraham Shapira, “Two Ways of Redemption in Hasidism from the Perspective of Martin Buber,” in eds., Michal Oron and Amos Goldreich, *Massu’ot, Studies in Kabbalistic Literature and Jewish Philosophy in Memory of Prof. Ephraim Gottlieb* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1994), pp. 445–446 (Hebrew); Naftali Loewenthal, “The Neutralisation of Messianism and the Apocalypse,” *Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*, eds. R. Elior – J. Dan, (Jerusalem, 1996), pp. 59–73; David Winston, *Logos and Mystical Theology in Philo of Alexandria* (Hebrew Union College, Cincinnati, 1985), p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> See Scholem, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 200.

<sup>3</sup> See Moshe Idel, *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1995), pp. 16–17, idem, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), pp. 100–101; idem, “The Land of Israel in Medieval Kabbalah,” in *The Land of Israel*, ed., L.A. Hoffman (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1986), pp. 178–180; On spiritualization of messianism in the Middle Ages see Dov Schwartz, *Messianism in Medieval Jewish Thought* (Bar Ilan University, Ramat Gan, 1997) (Hebrew).

<sup>4</sup> See M. Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 1988), pp. 146–153; idem, *Hasidism*, pp. 228–232.

tion to the sphere of individual redemption, which is very similar to the spiritual understanding of messianism portrayed in ecstatic Kabbalah.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, what is characteristic of many forms of Hasidic spirituality is the emphasis upon the redemption of the individual, which, accumulatively, becomes a more eschatological event.<sup>6</sup>

However, if Sabbatean messianism was conceived of as being neutralized by Hasidism, another important form of experience, prophecy, was conceived by Scholem as shared by those two movements. He writes that

In the place of these teachers of the Law, the new movements gave birth to a new type of leader, the illuminate, the man whose heart has been touched and changed by God, in a word, the prophet. Both movements have also counted scholars among their ranks, and paradoxically the Sabbatians numbered among their adherents a larger number of outstanding minds than the hasidim . . . But for them it was not scholarship and learning that counted: it was rather the irrational quality, the charisma, the blessed gift of revival . . . Inspired preachers, men of the holy spirit, prophets—pneumatics in a word—. . . led the Sabbatean movement . . . It is this ideal of pneumatic leadership which Hasidism, likewise a movement born from a deep and original religious impulse, adopted from the Sabbateans but as we shall have occasion to see, the conception of the ideal was now to undergo a grandiose change.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, prophetic leadership is understood by Scholem to constitute a common denominator of the two movements, and a linking factor between them. He explicitly assesses that Hasidic masters adopted a pneumatic religiosity from the Sabbateans. This assumption of both continuity and a “grandiose” change is not a simple assumption. Is it indeed necessary to assume such a continuity if the change is so grandiose? Is not more economic to find possible sources for some specific Hasidic values, which are closer phenomenologically, and more plausible historically than Sabbateanism?

However, since the printing of this passage in 1941, it seems that the direction of scholarship took a somewhat different path. Though the nexus between the two movements was conceived to be significant for the emergence of Hasidism, as we learn from a long series of studies, in those studies the linking ring between them are no more

---

<sup>5</sup> See Moshe Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, (Yale University Press, New Haven, 2000), pp. 212–247.

<sup>6</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>7</sup> *Major Trends*, p. 334.

prophets, but other religious figures, like that of the *Tzaddiq*.<sup>8</sup> One of the most recent reverberations of this theory has been formulated simply as follows: "It is not difficult to discover the origin of this idea."<sup>9</sup> It is a transformation of the Sabbatean theology of the messiah."<sup>10</sup> Historically speaking this transformation is certainly not impossible, but no serious attempt to substantiate it after Scholem suggested it, has been made.

In one of the most original contributions to the study of the emergence of Hasidism, Joseph Weiss described a reticence toward the phenomenon of prophecy found, according to an early 19th century hagiographical writing, *Shivḥei ha-Besht*, in the period of the nascent Hasidic movement, in a circle which has been closed, in a certain moment, to the founder of Hasidism. This is the circle of R. Naḥman of Kosov, called *Havura' Qaddisha'*, the holy conventicle, active in Kutov, whose members agreed to stop prophesying; the terms used are *nevi'ut* and *nitnabbe'*. Afterward R. Naḥman apparently broke the agreement and did something that was understood by his companions as prophesying, namely he disclosed the hidden sins of his companions.<sup>11</sup> According to Weiss, prophetic groups in this period were closely associated to Sabbateanism<sup>12</sup> and this is the reason why the decision to cease this spiritual enterprise represents, according to this interpretation, a retreat from a Sabbatean practice, and a transition

---

<sup>8</sup> Gershom Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (The Schocken Books, New York, 1991), pp. 124–126; idem, *The Messianic Idea*, p. 197; idem, *Major Trends*, p. 334; Weiss, in Avraham Rubinstein, ed. *Studies in Hasidism* (Jerusalem, 1977), pp. 128, 132 (Hebrew); Yehuda Liebes, "Zaddiq Yesod 'Olam," in Yehuda Liebes, *On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah, Collected Essays*, (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1995), pp. 53–76 (Hebrew); idem, "The Messiah of the Zohar," in *The Messianic Idea in Israel* (Jerusalem, 1982), pp. 138–151 especially pp. 141–143 note 211.

<sup>9</sup> The view of the *Tzaddiq* as supplying sustenance.

<sup>10</sup> Joseph Dan, *Jewish Mysticism and Jewish Ethics*, (Washington University Press, Seattle and London, 1986), p. 115 and see also ibidem p. 117, and Mor Altschuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, (Haifa University Press, Zemora-Beitan, 2002), p. 170 (Hebrew). The "discovery" of the Sabbatean source of the Hasidic theory of *Tzaddiq*—found in my opinion already in Cordovero—was conceived by scholars to be simple, but such a crucial issue has never been done and remained therefore, a pure hypothesis upon which a fascinating and, in my opinion, fantastic piece of historiography has been built.

<sup>11</sup> See Joseph Weiss, *Studies in Eastern European Jewish Mysticism* ed. D. Goldstein (Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 27–42, idem, "Reshit Tzemihatah shel ha-Derekh ha-Hasidit," *Zion*, vol. 16 (1961), pp. 60–62 (Hebrew); Immanuel Etkes, *Ba'al Hashem, The Besht, Magic, Mysticism, Leadership*, (Zalman Shazar Center, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 171–172 (Hebrew).

<sup>12</sup> *Studies*, pp. 29, 39 note 8. On the great importance of "prophets" in the life-

to new and non-suspect forms of spirituality, Hasidic ones. Though Weiss did not resort to the term 'neutralization' in his analysis<sup>13</sup> it can be assumed that Weiss's methodological approach reflects an application, perhaps unconscious, of Scholem's theory of neutralization of Sabbatean messianism by Hasidic masters, to Sabbatean prophetism. To quote Weiss in a more explicit manner; when describing the attitude to prophets in Hasidism he wrote: "The conspicuous absence of any reference to this term in the Hasidic literature is no doubt due to the bad reputation of the word *navi*' and has to be regarded as apologetical silence."<sup>14</sup> This sharp remark about a "conspicuous absence" is indeed quite questionable, as there are plenty of examples of resorting to the term *navi*' in Hasidism, as we shall see below.

However, this theory is in conflict to the important formulation of Scholem adduced above which was referred also by Weiss.<sup>15</sup> For Scholem there was a nexus between the Sabbatean prophecy and the emphasis of pneumatology in Hasidic literature, and he explicitly resorts to the term 'prophet' in order to point to the affinity between the types of leadership of those two movements. How does this view fit Weiss's claim quoted above about an 'apologetical silence' is not simple to answer.

To return to my opening remarks: Those two forms of explanation of the emergence of Hasidism based upon the principle of neutralization, one of messianism the other of prophecy, dominated modern scholarship of the field, though they did not remain unchallenged. So, for example, Benzion Dinur, a major Israeli historian, entitled his most important study on Hasidism "The Messianic-Prophetic Role of the Baal Shem Tov,"<sup>16</sup> which assumes that both messianism and prophecy should be related to the emerging Hasidism. However, it was basically the messianic factor that attracted the attention of Dinur, as it did to another critique of Scholem's thesis,

---

time of the Besht see Gershom Scholem, "Two First Testimonies on the Confraternities of Hasidim and the Besht," *Tarbiz*, vol. 20 (1950), p. 239 (Hebrew) and the interesting material collected by Isaiah Tishby in his "The Messianic Idea and Messianic Trends in the Growth of Hasidism," *Ẓion* vol. XXXII (1967), p. 40 (Hebrew), and Abraham J. Heschel, *The Circle of the Ba'al Shem Tov-Studies in Hasidism* ed. S.H. Dresner, (Chicago University Press, Chicago, London, 1985), p. 20.

<sup>13</sup> See his *Studies*, p. 30.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 40 note 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Major Trends*, p. 334; Weiss, *ibidem*, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> See M. Saperstein, ed. *Essential Papers on Messianic Movements and Personalities in Jewish History* (New York University Press, New York, 1992), pp. 377–388.



who followed Dinur's path, Isaiah Tishby.<sup>17</sup> More recently additional critiques of the theory of neutralization have been articulated.<sup>18</sup> Here, however, I am concerned basically with Weiss's theory about neutralizing prophecy as one of the explanations for understanding the transition between Sabbateanism and early Hasidism. However, the present claims related to prophecy are linked to my proposal to understand Hasidic messianism in more mystical terms, some of them emanating from Safed and earlier from ecstatic Kabbalah. Thus, Sabbateanism, its types of prophecy and its various forms of messianism, are in my opinion phenomenologically different forms of religious phenomena when compared to Hasidic forms of prophecy and messianism, not because the former were neutralized, pace Scholem, or continued, pace Dinur-Tishby and their respective followers, but because they have different historical sources which are responsible for the phenomenological divergences.

As we shall see immediately below, prophecy, like messianism, is not a monolithic concept, and we should be aware that while one form of prophecy might have, in principle, been suppressed,—though I do not assume that this was the case—other forms of prophecy could have been, at least in principle, not. Like in many other cases, a phenomenological distinction is, therefore, necessary in order to pursue sound and significant historical surveys. A better understanding of the diversity of the phenomena that are included under the umbrella term 'prophecy' and its *derivata*, and the delineation of their historical developments, will benefit from a more nuanced categorization and the tracing of the different histories will avoid confusions of different categories covered by the same term. The homogenous understanding of terms like prophecy and messiah created linear histories, and the understanding of the complex constitution of the constellations of ideas and models related to those, and other concepts, will allow the writings much more complex histories. My assumption is that by questioning the unilinearity of the history of Jewish mysticism I do not reject the possibility of narrative in describing the development of this complex form of mysticism, but on the contrary, I propose several different narratives, that are all pertinent not

---

<sup>17</sup> See his "The Messianic Idea."

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 236–239; Mor Altshuler, "Messianic Strains in Rabbi Israel Ba'al Shem Tov's Holy Epistle," *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 6 (1999), pp. 55–70; idem, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*.

because they are alternatives, but because they address different aspects of Jewish mysticism each having its own history.

I would even assume that a series of spiritual phenomena which were designated by the umbrella term 'prophecy' were more important for the emergence of Sabbateanism than it is assumed in scholarship and I shall attempt to elaborate this argument in some future studies. Nevertheless, I assume that we should be cautious and not attribute all the existent prophetic phenomena to Sabbateanism, even if they occurred after the peak of this messianic movement, as it is implicit in Weiss's approach. In any case, an affinity between Sabbateanism and prophetic phenomena contemporary to it, is not to be envisaged as automatic and any assumption of such a nexus needs at least some documentation in order to ground it in a serious manner. Otherwise, an entire argument may turn to rely on shaky speculations. As in other cases in my studies, I propose to understand Hasidism not as a reaction to, or a neutralization of some elements in Sabbateanism, as part of a linear or proximistic type of history, but primarily as a diversified movement whose creators were aware of and operating with many spiritual models found in Jewish mysticism. This is the case, as I shall attempt to show immediately below, also with the constellation of concepts that are related to prophecy at the beginning of Hasidism.<sup>19</sup>

## 2. *Three Types of Prophecy in Jewish Mysticism: A Succinct Survey*

It is possible to distinguish, for the purpose of our discussion below, three main and phenomenologically different types of spiritual phenomena described in Jewish medieval texts as prophetic. Let me insist that I described as prophetic phenomena that were explicitly referred to by terms related to the Hebrew root *NB'*: *Nevu'ah*, *Nevi'ut* or *Hitnab'ut*, and in some cases also with *Ruah ha-Qodesh*. This is a basic requirement; to analyze texts and concepts which explicitly refer to basic terms and distinguish between the main forms in which those terms have been used. I propose to distinguish between three main categories of prophecy that will help understanding many developments in Jewish mysticism.

---

<sup>19</sup> See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 45–145.

There are ethical prophets and prophecies, which resemble the biblical classical prophecies. They deal basically with problems of what they believed was a genuine religious life, which assumes a pure behavior which is not contaminated by manifest or hidden sins.<sup>20</sup>

The second category too is found in the Bible and its most famous example is the book of Daniel. It is apocalyptic prophecy, and it deals with calculation of the end of time.<sup>21</sup> This category of prophecy is found much more in the Middle Ages. Two main examples for those types are found in the writings of distinguished Kabbalists like Abraham Abulafia and Nathan of Gaza. Abulafia was a mystical and, exoterically, apocalyptic prophet, though only quite marginally an ethical one. In the case of Nathan the two categories are deeply interrelated. Both figures were quintessential mystical prophets in a manner we shall discuss immediately below.

Last, but not least; since the Middle Ages the terms related to prophecy came to refer in Jewish texts to various forms of mystical experiences which concern much more the individual who undergoes those experiences than the social group or structure. This is especially conspicuous in many discussions in Abraham Abulafia's writings and those of his followers. We may discern between between Neoaristotelian views of prophecy, representative of Abulafia's views, and Neoplatonic visions, more conspicuous in the writings of his followers: R. Nathan ben Sa'adya Harar, R. Isaac of Acre and R. Yehudah Albutini. In the former the organon of the experience is human intellect, in the latter it is the human soul.

Different as the first two categories are from each other they share a basic phenomenological feature: both deal with hidden sorts of information, while the variety of mystical understandings of prophecy are much more experiential than informative. This category is reminiscent of Weber's 'exemplary prophets', which he assumes that is characteristic of Hindu religiosity.<sup>22</sup>

It is possible to classify the three categories of prophecy as emphasizing different aspects of the human personality: the apocalyptic pro-

---

<sup>20</sup> See Max Weber, *Sociology of Religion*, (Boston, 1963), pp. 55–59. For a sociological approach to Hasidism see Philip Wexler, "Social Psychology, the Hasidic Ethos and the Spirit of the New Ages," *Kabbalah*, vol. 7 (2002), pp. 11–36.

<sup>21</sup> See Stephen L. Cook, *Prophecy & Apocalypticism, The Postexilic Social Setting* (Fortress Press, Minneapolis, 1995).

<sup>22</sup> *Sociology of Religion*, p. 55. More on Weber see the last section of this study. For Weber, prophecy and Judaism see Stephen Sharot, *Messianism, Mysticism, and*

phesy deal more with changes in the material reality, the ethical one with moral behavior, while the mystical prophecy is concerned with changes in the spiritual processes of a person. These types also differ from the point of view of the audience it address even if only implicitly: the apocalyptic prophecy involves a broader audience, as it deals with historical upheavals; the ethical with smaller groups while the mystical prophecy is more concerned with the individual mystic.

The important divergences between these three phenomenological types notwithstanding, there are many examples of overlapping. It should be mentioned that while apocalyptic and ethical prophecy are more representative of Sabbateanism only the latter type is found in the pneumatic group studied by Joseph Weiss in the above mentioned article. Hasidic literature as a whole was less interested, though it did not reject, those two forms of prophecy but highlighted what I proposed to call forms of 'mystical prophecy' already in existence in ecstatic Kabbalah and its reverberation. Like in many other cases, Hasidic views are less a sharp departure from the already existing theories and practices, than a restructuring or a reorganization which moves some elements from the margin to the centre, and vice-versa.

Indeed, many links between many forms of prophecy and various schools of Kabbalah are well documented long before Sabbateanism. Interesting discussions are found in one of R. Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen's Kabbalistic book. The above-mentioned Abulafia's ecstatic Kabbalah is perhaps the best known Kabbalistic phenomenon in this mystical corpus.<sup>24</sup> Though basically a thirteenth century literature, its influence radiated far beyond the generation of its founder, and left important traces in a series of Kabbalistic writings in the 16th

---

*Magic, A Sociological Analysis of Jewish Religious Movements* (The University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1982). For the mystical interpretations of biblical prophecy in the Middle Ages see the important remarks of Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, tr. R. Manheim, (Schocken Books, New York, 1969), pp. 9–11, 31.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Gershom Scholem, "R. Moses of Burgos, the disciple of R. Isaac," *Tarbiz* vol. 5 (1934), pp. 191–192 (Hebrew). See also idem, *Madda'ei ha-Yahadut* (Jerusalem, 1930), II, p. 92. This passage was copied verbatim by R. Meir ibn Gabbai in his *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, (Jerusalem, 1973), fol. 135d. See also Gerhard G. Scholem, "Eine Kabbalistische Erklärung der Prophetie als Selbstbegegnung," *MGWJ* vol. 74 (1930), pp. 289–290; idem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (The Schocken Books, New York, 1991), pp. 259–260, 314 note 22; R.J. Zwi Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (JPS, Philadelphia, 1977), pp. 39–40.

<sup>24</sup> M. Idel, "The Time of the End': Apocalypticism and Its Spiritualization in Abraham Abulafia's Eschatology," *Apocalyptic Time*, ed. Albert Baumgarten, (Brill,

and 17th centuries. The great number of Abulafia's extant manuscripts demonstrates that its impact should be checked as part of any significant effort to delineate the history of Jewish mysticism in general. So, for example, it should be mentioned that at least one of Abulafia's relatively lengthy discussions on prophecy, his "Secret of Prophecy" from *Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh*, has been copied, with some few interpolations, in the widespread classic of Kabbalah, the anonymous *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.<sup>25</sup> Another discussion dealing with this issue is found in an interesting passage from Abulafia's *Gan Na'ul*, where he describes the way of achieving prophecy or, according to another version, of prophetic comprehension, by means of letters (*'Otiyyot*), attributes of numbers (*Middot ha-Sefirot*) and seals (*Hotamot*), in order to draw down by their means the supernal, divine, forces and cause them to dwell here below on the earth.<sup>26</sup> Also this text was copied rather faithfully in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*.<sup>27</sup> According to an important and widespread epistle of Abulafia's, his special kind of prophetic Kabbalah

consists in the knowledge of God by the means of the twenty-two letters,<sup>28</sup> out of which, and out of whose vowels and cantillation-marks, the divine names and the seals<sup>29</sup> are composed. They<sup>30</sup> are speaking with the prophets in their dreams, in the *'Urim* and *Tummin*, in the Divine Spirit and during prophecy.<sup>31</sup>

Abulafia does not speak about ancient prophecy but rather about the manner in which prophecy is attained in the present: "they are

---

Leiden, 2000), pp. 155–186; idem, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 58–100; idem, *Natan ben Sa'adyah Har'ar, Le Porte della Giustizia*, a cura di Moshe Idel, tr. Maurizio Mottolese, (Adelphi, Milano, 2001), pp. 201–260; idem, "The Kabbalah's 'Window of Opportunities', 1270–1290," *Me'ah She'arim, Studies in Medieval Jewish Spiritual Life in Memory of Isadore Twersky*, eds. E. Fleisher, G. Blidstein, C. Horowitz, B. Septimus, (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 2001), pp. 192–197.

<sup>25</sup> See Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 279 note 79 and p. 328 note 246.

<sup>26</sup> See Ms. Munchen 58, fol. 335b.

<sup>27</sup> (Premislany, 1883), Part I, fol. 80a. See also Gershom Scholem, "The Name of God and the Linguistic of the Kabbala," *Diogenes* vol. 80 (1972), pp. 185–186.

<sup>28</sup> The view that the alphabet is a major technique for reaching a knowledge of God is paramount in ecstatic Kabbalah.

<sup>29</sup> *Hotamot*. The seals consist in combinations of the letters of the Tetragrammaton conceived, according to *Sefer Yetzirah*, as stamping the extremities of the universe.

<sup>30</sup> The names and the seals.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. his epistle, *Ve-Zot li-Yhudah*, printed by Adolf Jellinek, *Auswahl Kabbalistischen Mystik* (Leipzig, 1853) Erstes Heft, p. 15, corrected according to Ms. New York, JTS 1887, fol. 98b. For the context of this quote see M. Idel, "Defining Kabbalah: The Kabbalah of the Divine Names," *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, & Typology*, ed. R.A. Herrera (Peter Lang, New York, 1993), pp. 106–108.

speaking". In my opinion the resort to linguistic techniques generates forms of revelations stemming from those very linguistic elements and this mechanism constitutes the very core of his prophetic Kabbalah. What is cardinal for some of my further discussions, is the fact that Abulafia has seen not only his own type of Kabbalah as prophetic, namely ecstatic, but also the other brand of Kabbalah, the sefirotic one. It too has prophetic elements, though they are of a different nature and are of a lower status. Thus, prophecy and Kabbalah become conjoined earlier in the history of Kabbalah, and the term *Nevu'ah* is explicitly used in innumerable contexts.

I would say that a direct impact of Abulafia's Kabbalah can be discerned in R. Hayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah* and an indirect impact on subsequent forms of Jewish mysticism as we shall see below in this section. It would be reasonable to assume that in one way or another some parts of Abulafia's thought reached Hasidism also directly by paths which are not clear for the time being, though some of his manuscripts have been copied in eighteenth century Poland, an issue that will preoccupy us below.

Other discussions of prophecy, in part influenced by ecstatic Kabbalah, may be found among the followers of Abulafia, like R. Nathan ben Sa'adiah Harar, the author of *Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq*, and his student, R. Isaac ben Shmuel of Acre. So, for example, the latter Kabbalist wrote in one of his books that the reception of the spirit of prophecy is preceded by the practice of *hitbodedut*, namely the concentration of one's thought or intellect, and the divestment of the soul (*hifshit nafsho*) from material things.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere in the same book we learn that

(All this will happen) after the soul has been stripped off and her divestment<sup>33</sup> from every corporeal thing, because of the great immersion of his soul in the divine spiritual world. And this spirit shall at times come to all the prophets, according to the Divine Will. But the master of all the prophets, Moses our Teacher, peace upon him, always received a holy spirit which did not leave him for even one hour, only when his soul was still sunk in corporeal things, to hear the words of the Israelites that he might guide them and instruct them, either in temporary or permanent instructions, for which reason he had to say

<sup>32</sup> *'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Ginzburg 775, fol. 183ab.

<sup>33</sup> *Hitpashlutah*.

'Stay and I shall hear what God commands',<sup>34</sup> he stood and separates from them and isolates himself and divests his soul from those *sensibilia*<sup>35</sup> with which he was involved on their behalf, and there rested upon him the spirit and spoke within him.<sup>36</sup>

As I had shown elsewhere, the divestment of the soul, a concept that is going to play a major role in Hasidic mysticism, might have entered Jewish mysticism from a Plotinian source, and reached R. Isaac of Acre from the type of merger between Kabbalah and Neoplatonism as represented by R. Nathan ben Sa'adya Harar.<sup>37</sup> This confluence between the Abulafian more Aristotelian type of mystical prophecy and Neoplatonic mystical theories is fundamental for the understanding of many of the theories about prophecy afterwards and constitutes an example of the category I call the mystical prophecy.

A similar view is found also, apparently under R. Isaac's influence, in a famous passage from R. Jacob ben Asher's legalistic classic *'Arba'ah Turim*, where the sequel *hitbodedut*, *hitpashetut* and prophecy occurs in the context of prayer:

Let him think as if the *Shekhinah* stands before him, as it is said<sup>38</sup> "I set always God before me" and he should arise the *kavannah* and delete all the annoying thoughts so that his thought and intention will remain pure during his prayer... It is incumbent to direct one's thought because for Him thought is tantamount to speech... and the pious ones and the men of (good) deeds were concentrating their thought and directing their prayer to such an extent that they reached a (state of) divestment of their corporeality and the strengthening of their intellectual spirit so that they reach (a state) close to prophecy.<sup>39</sup>

To be sure: the very nexus between prayer and an experience of ecstasy which possesses some form of prophetic element is not totally new with this passage. It is found in ancient Jewish sources.<sup>40</sup> What is quite crucial for the understanding of the passage is the reluctance of admitting a full fledged prophetic experience in the present either

<sup>34</sup> Numbers 9:8.

<sup>35</sup> *Mafshit 'et nafsho me-ha-murgash*.

<sup>36</sup> *'Otzar Hayyim*, Ms. Moscow-Ginsburg 775, fol. 163a; Efraim Gottlieb, *Studies in the Kabbalah Literature* ed. J. Hacker, (Tel Aviv, 1976), p. 247 (Hebrew).

<sup>37</sup> See Idel, *Natan ben Sa'adya*, pp. 287–307.

<sup>38</sup> Psalm 16:8.

<sup>39</sup> *Tür*, *'Orah Hayyim*, par. 98.

<sup>40</sup> See Shlomo Na'eh, "Bore Niv Sefatayyim," *Tarbiz*, vol. 63 (1994), pp. 185–121; A. Wolfish, "Ha-Tefillah ha-Shogeret," *ibidem*, vol. 65 (1996), pp. 301–314.

because the Ashkenazi author speaks about an attainment close to but not identical with prophecy, and because of the perfect experience to the ancient *perfecti*. This reticence toward prophecy in the present is evident in the writings of the followers of Abulafia, R. Nathan and R. Isaac of Acre.<sup>41</sup> The passage of the *Tur* has been quoted, with some small changes, in R. Joseph Karo's 16th famous version of this codex known as *Shulḥan 'Arukh, ad locum* and had a wide influence which deserves a special treatment.<sup>42</sup> Let me emphasize the importance of the existence of this passage in two of the most influential Halakhic codexes: it demonstrates the acceptance of the ideal of prophecy as attainable, at least in principle, by means of the most nomian of the Jewish practices: prayer. Thus, we learn that representatives of Halakhic Judaism since the Middle Ages were ready to accept a mystical type of prophecy in their legalistic writings. Moreover, these legalistic codexes contributed much to the dissemination of this view even in circles of Kabbalists and Hasidic masters.

According to a major Safedian Kabbalist, R. Moses ben Jacob Cordovero

The sons of the prophets, when they used to prepare themselves for prophecy, brought themselves (to a state of) happiness as in the verse, "Take me a musician, and when the musician plays . . ." <sup>43</sup> And they would concentrate in accordance with their ability to do so, in attaining the wondrous levels and divesting the material, and strengthening the mind within the body, until they abandoned matter and did not perceive it at all, but their mind was entirely in the supernal orders and subjects. And they concentrate, and divest (themselves) from the physical, and go away, and this matter is man's preparation on his own part.<sup>44</sup>

Thus, following the role attributed to the ideal of divestment of corporeality as part of the mystical-prophetic path in ecstatic Kabbalah, Cordovero is speaking both about the ancient sons of prophets but, at least implicitly, it become a possibility inherent in man's capacity,

<sup>41</sup> Idel, *Natan ben Sa'adya*, pp. 240–245.

<sup>42</sup> See Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 61–62; Aryeh Kaplan, *Meditation and Kabbalah* (York Beach, 1985), pp. 283–284, who pointed out some sources and influences of this passage. See especially a text printed in *Talmidei Rabbenu Yonah*, on *Berakhot* ch. 5 quoted by Abraham J. Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets, Maimonides and Other Medieval Authorities*, ed. M.M. Faierstein, (Ktav Publishing House, Hoboken, NJ, 1996), pp. 26–27; Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 163–164 note 136.

<sup>43</sup> II Kings 3:15.

<sup>44</sup> *Shi'ur Qomah*, (Warsaw, 1885), fol. 30d; on this passage see Joseph Ben-Shlomo, *The Mystical Theology of Moses Cordovero* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1965), p. 40 (Hebrew).



if he prepares himself. Elsewhere Cordovero describes prophecy as follows: "The prophets comprehended the spiritual force which enters the letters, through the letters themselves, by great concentration and the merit of the pure soul."<sup>45</sup> Though speaking about the biblical prophets, the technique Cordovero attributed to them opens the way to present experiences; after all concentration and pure soul, not to speak about letters were still available. These factors as components of the path of prophecy recur also in Hasidic treatments of prophecy.

According to a widely read book, R. Hayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah*, a form of mystical prophecy indebted to both Abulafia, his followers and perhaps also to Cordovero, has been described in those terms:

Behold, when someone prepares himself to cleave to the supernal root, he will be able to cleave to it. However, despite the fact that he is worthy to this (achievement) he should divest his soul in a complete manner, and separate it from all matters of matter, and then you should be able to cleave to her spiritual root. And behold, the issue of divestment that is found written in all the books dealing with issues of prophecy and divine spirit, a real divestment that the soul exits from his body really, as it happens in sleep, because if it is so this is not a prophecy but a dream like all the dreams. However, the dwelling of the Holy Spirit upon man takes place while his soul is within him, in a state of awareness, and she will not exit from him. But the matter of divestment is that he should remove all his thoughts whatsoever, and the imaginative power . . . will cease to imagine and think and ruminate about any matters of this world as if his soul exited from it.<sup>46</sup> Then the imaginative power transforms his thought so as to imagine and conceptualize as if he ascends to the supernal worlds, to the roots of his soul which are there, from one to another, until the concept of his imagination<sup>47</sup> arrives to his supernal source . . . All this is the divestment of the power of imagination from all the thoughts of matter in a complete manner.<sup>48</sup>

Prophecy is described here as almost identical to the process of divestment, in the vein of both R. Nathan ben Sa'adyah and R. Isaac of Acre. R. Hayyim Vital combines some of the elements already dis-

<sup>45</sup> *Pardes Rimmonim*, XXI, ch. 1; I, fol. 96d.

<sup>46</sup> I read it as if it deals with the world, though it is possible to understand also that the soul exited from the body of man.

<sup>47</sup> *Tziyyur dimyono*.

<sup>48</sup> *Sha'arei Qedushah*, (Benei Beraq, 1973), pp. 102–103. For an analysis of this passage see Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo*, pp. 66–70 and, in more general terms, Ronit Meroz, *Aspects of Lurianic Doctrine of Prophecy*, (M.A. Thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1980) (Hebrew).

cussed above with a theory of imagination as constituting the path for an ascent on high.<sup>49</sup> This positive stand toward imagination reverberated later on in R. Naḥman of Bratslav's Hasidic thought.<sup>50</sup>

So far the existence of pre-Sabbatean treatments of prophecy. They are, in my opinion, closer phenomenologically speaking, to the views of the early Hasidic masters. However, we should not forget for a moment that Judaism, including Jewish mysticism, was only quite rarely a world apart.<sup>51</sup> In Christian circles prophecies were widespread in the Middle Ages and premodern Europe.<sup>52</sup> Needless to say that concepts of prophecy in Judaism had been shaped, since the Middle Ages also by views found in Islamic writings, which mediated and contributed to the emergence of medieval Jewish prophetologies, especially in the case of Maimonides.<sup>53</sup> Also contributions of Islamic forms of mystical prophetology on some forms of prophecy in Kabbalah are possible thought still waiting for some more substantial proof.<sup>54</sup> If the

<sup>49</sup> Elliot R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum that Shines, Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994), pp. 320–323.

<sup>50</sup> Arthur Green, *Tormented Master A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Bratslav* (University, Alabama, 1979), pp. 341–343; Ron P. Margolin, *The Interiorization of Religious Life and Thought at the Beginning of Hasidism: Its Sources and Epistemological Basis* (Ph.D. Thesis, The Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 77–134; (Hebrew); Tzvi Mark, *Madness and Knowledge in the Works of R. Nahman of Bratslav* (Ph.D. thesis, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, 2000), pp. 62–84 (Hebrew). In this chapter Mark deals also with questions related to prophecy in R. Nahman which are beyond the framework of this study.

<sup>51</sup> See Silvia Berti, “A World Apart? Gershom Scholem and Contemporary Readings of 17th century Christian Relations,” *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 3 (1996), pp. 212–214; M. Idel, “Saturn and Sabbatai Tzevi: A New Approach to Sabbateanism,” in eds. Peter Schaefer & Mark Cohen, *Toward the Millennium, Messianic Expectations from the Bible to Waco* (Brill, Leiden, 1998), pp. 173–202.

<sup>52</sup> See, e.g., Marjorie Reeves, *The Influence of Prophecy in the Late Middle Ages, A Study in Joachimism*, (University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame and London, 1993); Olivier Pot, “Prophetic et Melancholie: La querelle entre Ronsard et les Protestants (1562–1565),” in *Prophetes et propheties au XVI<sup>e</sup> siecle*, Cahiers V. ed. L. Saulnier, vol. 15 (Paris, 1998), pp. 189–229; Robin Bruce Barnes, *Prophecy and Gnosis, Apocalypticism in the Wake of the Lutheran Reformation* (Stanford University Press, Stanford 1988); *Il profetismo gioachimita tra Quattrocento e cinquecento*, a cura di Gian Luca Potesta, (Marietti, Genova, 1991); Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets, The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth-Century England*, (University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles, London, 1980); *Prophecy: The Power of Inspired Language in History 1300–2000* eds. B. Taith – T. Thornton (Sutton Publishing, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> See Falzur Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, (London, 1958), and for Jewish medieval prophetologies the authoritative and comprehensive study of Howard Kreisel, *Prophecy, the History of an Idea in Medieval Jewish Philosophy*, (Kluwer, Dordrecht, 2001).

<sup>54</sup> See Ḥavivah Pedayah, “Aḥuzim be-Dibbur: For the Clarification of a Prophetic-Ecstatic Type in Early Kabbalah,” *Tarbiz*, vol. 65 (1996), pp. 565–636 (Hebrew).

social background of revivalist movements is in many cases Christian, many of the conceptual structures which define the inner mechanisms in Jewish mysticism were mediated by Muslim sources.

### 3. *Apocalyptic Prophecy in the Besht's Epistle to R. Gershon of Kutov*

I shall try to survey first the occurrence in Hasidism of the two forms of prophecy I delineated above. It was already Benzion Dinur who described the vision of the Besht as a messianic prophet according to the account found in *'Iggeret 'Aliyat ha-Neshamah*, the 1757 epistle to his brother-in-law, R. Gershon of Kutov.<sup>55</sup> Let me attempt to substantiate this description of the Besht. The Besht claims that he experienced a vision, *mare'h*, a term which recurs twice in the epistle. Moreover, he resorts to the term *'anppin be-'anppin*, face to face, a phrase that is reminiscent of Moses' special prophetic experience.<sup>56</sup>

The apocalyptic aspect is well-represented by the question the Besht puts to the Messiah: "*matai iatei mar?*"—When will the lord come? a formula found already earlier in Jewish apocalypticism.<sup>57</sup> For the time being, I see no reason to relate these elements to anything specific in Sabbatean thought where the Messiah was conceived of as already arrived. Thus, the Besht acted, according to the famous epistle, as a prophet, whose face-to-face encounter with the Messiah is strongly connected to the question of his imminent coming, and acts that may ensue from this type of information.

### 4. *On a Case of Ethical Prophecy in Early Hasidism*

Joseph Weiss's single passage dealing with what he thought was an extinction of prophecy in the generation of the Besht is found, as mentioned above, in an early 19th century hagiographic book. This testimony was committed to writing at least two generations after the events it claimed to portray and, without entering the thorny and basic question about the historicity of the events related in this

<sup>55</sup> See above, note 18.

<sup>56</sup> See Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 34:10. See also Genesis 32:30.

<sup>57</sup> See the occurrence of precisely this formula in Nahmanides' debate with Paulus Christiani, *Kūvei ha-Ramban*, ed. Ch. Chavel, (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1963), I, p. 307.

book, we may assume, for the sake of the further discussions, that the story is accurate. However, the authors of *Shivhei ha-Besht* never claimed that the story concerning the circle of R. Naḥman of Kosov is indeed an emblematic passage. Such an assumption is, in fact, underlying Weiss's view, but is corroborated solely by the proof-text he relies on and it is his conclusion that the text represents a broader phenomenon.

However, before surveying them let me adduce a detail that is relevant for the discussion of the Kutov mystical group, is found in Weiss's study. In *Shivhei ha-Besht*, R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov reveals that R. Yudel, a relative of R. Naḥman of Kosov is the transmigration of the biblical prophet Samuel.<sup>58</sup> I see this piece of information as quite revealing for our topic: the Besht, according to the legendary tradition, did not hesitate to identify a living person, somehow related to the Kutov group of "ethical prophets", as the metempsychosis of a biblical prophet. The ethical prophecy is not only a matter of a phenomenological distinction between different understandings of a certain term. It points, in my opinion, also to a certain social layer, the preachers, which were concerned with ethical issues, and some of whom produced ethical treatises.<sup>59</sup>

Understanding the essentially ethical nature of the prophetic ethos of the Kutov group means to understand that from the very beginning the type of prophecy found in this group differs from the more widespread apocalyptic prophecies dominant in Sabbateanism. There, the revelation of sins had to do with the belief in the messianic role of a certain living person, Sabbatai Tzevi. Without this belief, or a belief in the messianic role of another person, divulging of hidden sins has nothing specifically Sabbatean, and it preexisted Sabbateanism, as it has been correctly pointed out by I. Etkes.<sup>60</sup> Therefore, irrelevant of the reasons of the suppression of ethical prophecy by the Kutov group, it does not constitute a neutralization of a Sabbatean type of experience by the pre-Hasidic pneumatic circle. Moreover, as pointed out recently by Tzvi Mark, in *Shivhei ha-Besht* there is an additional case of revealing hidden sins by a woman conceived of as being mad,

<sup>58</sup> Ed. Joshua Mondshein, (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 181; Cp., Etkes, *Ba'al Hashem*, p. 59.

<sup>59</sup> See Mendel Pickarz, *The Beginning of Hasidism—Ideological Trends in Derush and Musar Literature* (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1978) (Hebrew).

<sup>60</sup> "The Study of Hasidism: Past Trends and New Directions," *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert, (The Littman Library, London, Portland, 1996), p. 459.

and there is no reason to attribute to her a Sabbateanian belief.<sup>61</sup>

Moreover, my assumption is that the context in which the story about the Kutov pneumatic is adduced should be understood as part of the main intention of the book in which it is embedded. The praises of the Besht are not stories attempting to faithfully portray the historical situation of early Hasidic groups, but legends that strove to highlight the superiority of the founder of Hasidism, by 1814 when the book was printed already a mass movement. The Besht's extraordinary deeds were put in relief by comparing his mystical and magical achievements to those of his contemporaries. By 'supressing' the ethical prophecy in the Kutov group, and reducing R. Nahman of Kosov's knowledge of hidden sins to a lower type of revelation received from a dead spirit from Kutov, the Besht stands even more prominent. This seems to be also the role of the story about the woman: she serves as a foil for the Besht's accomplished activity in the same field.

But even if the specific story about the Kutov group is historically reliable, it would not be warrant to generalize about the larger process of neutralization of prophetic phenomena in general. In fact, the perusal of earlier Hasidic material, committed to writing and printed before 1800, may point in a rather different direction, as we shall in the next section.

### 5. *Mystical Prophecy in Early Hasidism*

The most common understanding of prophecy in early Hasidism is the mystical one. It is attributed to the Besht according to some texts to be discussed immediately below, and it recurs also in the writings of his immediate disciples. Moreover, it can be claimed—as I did elsewhere—that the Hasidic vision of mystical cognition is open to a view that sees Hasidism as clairvoyant—understood as prophecy—and such a quality has been attributed to the Besht.<sup>62</sup> R. Aharon

---

<sup>61</sup> "Dibbuk and Devekut in *In the Praise of the Baal-Shem Tov: Notes on the Phenomenology of Madness in Early Hasidism*," *Within Hasidic Circles, Studies in Hasidism in Memory of Mordecai Wilensky*, eds. I. Etkes, D. Assaf, I. Bartal, E. Reiner, (The Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 252–254 (Hebrew).

<sup>62</sup> See Moshe Idel, "The Besht as Prophet and Talismanic Magician," in *Yoav Elstein Festschrift* (forthcoming) (Hebrew). Some of the discussions below overlap discussions in the first part of this study where additional Hasidic material has been analyzed. See also idem, "From "Or Ganuz" to "Or Torah": A Chapter in the

Kohen of Apta, a late eighteenth century collector of Beshtian traditions, quotes a passage which he attributes explicitly to the founder of Hasidism in which the possibility to listen to the supernal voice and have revelations which are envisioned as prophecy. This passage describes a mantic practice that in other texts is attributed to the Besht himself.<sup>63</sup> The preparation required to attain this prophetic revelation is close to the Neoplatonic *via purgativa* as it assumes that the “light of the soul” is naturally endowed with the propensity to hear and see in a spiritual manner. Thus, what the Besht described as an achievement of prophets, was indeed the attainment attributed to him by his disciples.

There can be no doubt that one of the main characteristics of Hasidism as a mystical movement is the great emphasis it laid upon the centrality of mystical prayer as the central avenue to a spiritual experience. This issue has been addressed by several scholars<sup>64</sup> but it seems that the impact of the passage of the *Tur* about the intention during prayer dealt with above has, to my best knowledge, been rather overlooked. Let me start with a passage adduced in the name of the Besht in various sources:

The Besht said that the supernal things he merited to receive as a revelation (come) not as the result of his intense study of the Talmud but only because of the prayer he always was praying with a great *kavanah*, and this is the reason why he merited the high degree.<sup>65</sup>

The Besht, to believe the authenticity of this passage, recognizes that the main manner of obtaining revelations and his high spiritual status is an intense form of prayer. Though prophecy is not mentioned explicitly, revelations are, and I wonder whether the best understanding of this passage should not turn to the passage from the *Tur*

---

Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Migvan De’ot be-Yisrael*, vol. 11 (2002), (forthcoming) (Hebrew). See also the passage from *Liqqutim Yeqarim*, a collection of statements from the circle of R. Meshulam Phoebus of Zbaraz, where the divestment of the vital power of man from the body, enables him to see the spirituality, an experience that is described as one of the degrees of prophecy. See ed. Miezirrov, 1794, fol. 18b. This passage has been kindly drawn to my attention by Dr. Mor Altshuler.

<sup>63</sup> *’Or ha-Ganuz la-Tzaddiqim*, (Lemberg, 1850), col. IV, fol. 4ab. For a detailed analysis of this passage see Idel, “The Besht as Prophet.”

<sup>64</sup> See Weiss, *Studies*, pp. 95–130; Schatz, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 168–188; 215–241; Etkes, *Ba’al Hashem*, pp. 100–105, 158–159; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 149–170.

<sup>65</sup> The Maggid of Mezeritch, cited in *’Or ha-’Emmet*, (Zhitomir, rpr. Benei Beraq, 1967), fol. 83a, R. Menahem Mendel of Rimanoṽ’s book *’Ilana’ de-Hayyei*, (Pietrkov, 1908), fol. 56b.

and *Shulhan 'Arukh*, analyzed above, and identify the high degree with a state 'close to prophecy'. Important for a proper understanding of the status of prayer in the history of Hasidism is the role of intense prayer which functions here as a technique to reach a higher state: The Besht's attainment of what he thought to be the high degree is the result of resorting to intense prayer. Thus, not a quietistic experience is described by the Besht as crucial for his development, but one achieved by using a specific technical path. Moreover, it should be emphasized that the founder of Hasidism resorted to prayer, a quintessential nomian technique, in order to reach his uncommon attainment. Thus, unlike prophetic Kabbalah, which often times resorted to recitations of divine names in order to reach prophecy, the Besht did explicit resort to another technique, already canonized in classical halakhic writings. The resort to an intensified sort of activity is reminiscent of the adoption by the Besht of the legend of Enoch the cobbler, a figure who was believed to have devoted each and every of his anomian occupation to God.<sup>66</sup>

According to a text of R. Ze'ev Wolf of Zhitomir, who died sometime between 1795 to 1798, there are men

who perform ascetic deeds and baths and enhance the study of the Torah and pray, and their main intention and aim was to reach the divine spirit and the revelation of Elijah, and similar (attainments). And I heard that in the days of Besht, blessed be his memory, there was someone like this that made ascetic deeds and went to (ritual) baths in order to attain the divine spirit. And the Besht . . . said as follows 'In the world of the impure powers<sup>67</sup> they are laughing at him and this is the truth. Why should someone pursue this while his heart is vacuous of the adherence to God, which is the purpose of worship? The purpose of worship is to adhere to His attributes in truth and in a wholesome manner. But after the perfect adherence he will be able to attain all the wishes of his heart, and the attainment of the divine spirit, and similar sublime degrees . . . are borne (organically) from this. But he should not pay attention to this (attainment) while he is worshipping'.<sup>68</sup>

Though the passage is based on a deep tension between the old and the new form of religious paths, both the anonymous person and

<sup>66</sup> See M. Idel, "Enoch—The Mystical Cobbler," *Kabbalah*, vol. 5 (2000), pp. 265–286 (Hebrew).

<sup>67</sup> *'Olam ha-temurot*.

<sup>68</sup> *'Or ha-Me'ir*, (Parichi 1815), fol. 43d; Schatz, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 200, note 38.

the Besht agreed upon the possibility to attain divine spirit in the present. For the Besht, his mystical path, culminating in *devequt*, ensures automatically the subsequent attainment of divine spirit, especially if someone does not strive intensely to attain it. The disinterested and enthusiastic approach to worship is understood as conducive to *devequt*, which precedes the attainment of the divine spirit.<sup>69</sup>

Indeed, in several instances found in an early nineteenth century Hasidic writing from the circle of the Lubavitch Hasidism, the Besht was described as indeed acting under the aegis of the divine spirit.

Last but not least in this context: In a collection of the teachings important spiritual R. Yeḥiel Mikhal of Zlotchov, the Besht is quoted in the context of attaining the divine spirit and of resorting to combinations of letters:

if he is strongly united to holiness, he is able to elevate profane things to (the level of) holiness by means of the lore of combinations of letters which is known to the holy and divine Besht, blessed be his memory, and to his disciples, who possess the *divine spirit* . . . we must recognize that there is such a lore, because there are some topics in legends of the *Gemara* which seem to be futile things. But the Tannaim were in the possession of the *divine spirit* and they possessed this lore in a perfect manner, (namely) the combinations of the letters, and they spoke in accordance to the *divine spirit*, and they (the topics) are secrets of the Torah, and everything stems from their cleaving to the supernal holiness, because of their righteousness.<sup>70</sup>

The pneumatic experience is related to manipulating language in an anomian manner: combinations of letters, and I see here quite a plausible impact of Abulafia's mysticism, alike to what we are going to discuss below in the case of R. Aharon Kohen of Apta. Like in the case of the passage about the Besht in *'Or ha-Me'ir*, also here there is an affinity between the experience of the divine spirit and the prior attainment of *devequt*.

The Great Maggid compares the experience of praying in a unitive mode, to prophecy, in a manner reminiscent of the above-quoted passage from the *Tur*. He indicates that:

<sup>69</sup> See the material collected by Tishby, "The Messianic Idea," p. 40.

<sup>70</sup> *Mayyim Rabbim*, (Brooklyn, 1979), fol. 21b, emphases added. On this Hasidic master see Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*. More on this passage see Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 56–57. Compare also to the discussion of Weiss, *Studies*, pp. 129–135.



when he speaks, (being) in (a state of) cleaving to the supernal world, and having no alien thoughts and (then) a thought reaches him, like in the state of prophecy. It is certainly so. And this thought comes (to him), because of the celestial herald on that thing. And sometimes, he will hear as if a voice speaking, because of the cleaving of the supernal voice to his prayer and the voice of his (study of) Torah (and) he will hear a voice foretelling the future.<sup>71</sup>

This passage is conspicuously influenced by the Cordoverian and Lurianic concepts of revelation by means of the supernal voice which enters the material voice during prayer or study of the Torah.<sup>72</sup> However, what seems to define the mystical status of the prophet is the experience of cleaving, *devequt*, presumably the cleaving of the human thought to the divine one. Prophecy as telling the future is, therefore, an experience which follows the attainment of a mystical cleaving, perhaps even an experience of mystical union. Thus, some form of apocalyptic prophecy is combined with the mystical one.

The passage of the Great Maggid has nothing to do with ancient figures neither does he interpret a biblical verse; it describes a possible experience in the present, one attained while praying in an accomplished manner, in a manner reminiscent of the connection between prayer and prophecy as found in the *Tur*. Thus, we may well assume that this Hasidic master merged the ancient ideal of prophecy with a mystical path, as part of the more common experience of perfect prayer. It should be also pointed out that though the *Tur* passage describes the experience of ecstatic prayer as a phenomenon that is close to prophecy, the Great Maggid speaks instead about prophecy without any qualification. Such a shift is also evident in a later Hasidic book, R. Menaḥem Mendel of Rimanov's '*Ilana*' *de-Hayyei*, where the *Tur* passage is mentioned this time explicitly.<sup>73</sup> This shift toward a more explicit mentioning of a prophetic attainment as part of the Hasidic mystical path, does not support the theory of a neutralization of prophecy by Hasidic masters but rather its intensification.

A contemporary of the Great Maggid, a Hasidic author named

<sup>71</sup> *Or ha-ʿEmmet*, fols. 84d–85a; see also *ibidem*, fol. 83b and compare to the material adduced and discussed by Schatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 200–201.

<sup>72</sup> See e.g. R. Hayyim Vital's *Sefer ha-Gilgulim* (Vilna, 1886), fol. 60a, and R. Abraham Azulai's *Hesed le-ʿAvraham*, (Lemberg, 1863), fol. 11b. The latter is most probably the direct source of the Great Maggid. See also Moshe Idel, *The Mystical Experience in Abraham Abulafia*, tr. J. Chipman, (SUNY Press, Albany, 1988), pp. 85–86 and compare to R. Shmuel Shmelke of Nikelsburg, *Divrei Shemuel*, (Jerusalem, 1976), p. 143.

<sup>73</sup> Fol. 54c.

R. Barukh of Kosov who was well-acquainted with many Kabbalistic writings, resorted also to the same source. He writes that

the prophets divested the corporeal forces from themselves and enhanced the spiritual forces over them, and when those (latter) stands up the other (namely the corporeal) falls to earth, and the soul is adhering to the supernal realm, to (its) root and sees whatever it sees, and this is the issue of prophecy . . . and when the prophet is lying on earth even if someone would stick a needle in him he would not feel any pain at all.<sup>74</sup>

Here, the spiritual element of the divestment of the spiritual powers from their bodily immersion is conceived of as essential for the phenomenon of prophecy. In a similar manner we read in another younger contemporary of the Besht, R. Moshe Shoham ben Dan of Dolina. In his *Divrei Moshe*, the Hasidic author describes the prophets as divesting themselves from corporeality and purifying themselves. Such an attainment, which is described as culminating in a speech within the mouth of the prophets, is available only to the few one, described as a perfect and great *tzaddiq*.<sup>75</sup> Elsewhere this Hasidic master claims that the greatness of the prophet in a certain generation depends upon the greatness of the *tzaddiqim* of that generation.<sup>76</sup> This formulation may be understood as assuming the possibility of the existence of a prophet in each generation, one which represents the spiritual status of its elite. In fact, prophecy is not denied here, but understood as a barometer for the spiritual attainments of a certain generation, though according to the continuation of this discussion he argues that prophecy ceased in his generation.

In a special version of a parable of the Great Maggid as adduced by his student, R. Elimelekh of Lisansk, the attainment of prophecy in ancient times was attributed to *hashba'ot* and *hitbodedut*.<sup>77</sup> The two topics are quite reminiscent of the Besht's practices: the founder of Hasidism was indeed practicing solitude and resorting to incantations. I propose to understand the term *hashba'ot* as dealing with recitations of divine names.<sup>78</sup> The sequel of *hitbodedut* and *hitpashetut* which culminates in prophecy, is found also in many Hasidic sources,

<sup>74</sup> *Sefer 'Amud ha-'Avodah*, (Chernovitz, 1863), fol. 210b. A similar stand occurs also elsewhere in the same book; *ibidem*, fol. 206d.

<sup>75</sup> (Zolkowe, 1863), fol. 14b.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibidem*, fol. 3c. On prophecy see also *ibidem*, fol. 38cd.

<sup>77</sup> *Sefer No'am 'Elimelekh*, (Jerusalem, 1960), fol. 21a.

<sup>78</sup> Louis Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, (Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1972), p. 131.

like a discussion of R. Nathan Neta' of Helm,<sup>79</sup> and that of R. Abraham of Pohrebusht, the brother of R. Israel of Ryzhin,<sup>80</sup> where the reception of prophecy is conditioned by becoming nought.

### 6. *Prophecy in Some Critiques of Hasidism*

As pointed out by several scholars, the opponents to Hasidism resorted to the term prophet in order to describe, contemptuously, the self-perception of the Hasidic masters.<sup>81</sup> In one of the most fierce attack on Hasidism, authored by R. David of Makow, the R. Israel Ba'al Shem Tov is described as the prophet of the Ba'al, a clear pun on the way he has been designated.<sup>82</sup>

Elsewhere the followers of this path are described as drunken and crazy, and in this state they prophesy.<sup>83</sup> According to another discussion of his, found in his testimony he describes Hasidim as "prophesying"—*mitnabbē'im*, after the spirit descended upon them.<sup>84</sup> In the most famous of the attacks on Hasidism, the same R. David claims that the Hasidim attempt at imitating David by having the divine spirit.<sup>85</sup> The *Tzaddiq* is described as a 'false prophet' also elsewhere in the same book.<sup>86</sup>

Recently Shmuel Werses printed an inedited critique of Hasidism from early 19th century Enlightenment, where the vision of Hasidism as a false form of prophecy recurs, as it is the case in Solomon Maimon's portrayal of some Hasidic masters.<sup>87</sup>

Though those opponents may hardly be considered as objective witnesses as to the claims of Hasidic masters, I would nevertheless allow some degree of credibility to those attacks which recur on the claim of prophecy.

<sup>79</sup> Idel, *Hasidism*, p. 320 note 145.

<sup>80</sup> *Trin Qaddishin*, (Jerusalem, 1983), fols. 44d–45a.

<sup>81</sup> See the references adduced by Dinur, "The Role of Baal Shem Tov," pp. 384–385; Weiss, *Studies*, pp. 39–40 note 9.

<sup>82</sup> *Zemir 'Aritzim*, ed. Mordecai Wilensky, *Hasidism and Mitnagedim*, (Mossad Bialik, Jerusalem, 1970), II p. 211.

<sup>83</sup> *Shever Poshē'im*, in Wilensky, *ibidem*, II, p. 105.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibidem*, II, p. 249.

<sup>85</sup> *Shever Poshē'im*, *ibidem*, II, p. 166.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibidem*, II, pp. 66–67; Jacobs, *Hasidic Prayer*, pp. 133–134.

<sup>87</sup> See his "An Unknown Maskilic Polemical Tractate Against the Hasidism," *Studies in Hasidism*, eds. D. Assaf, J. Dan, I. Etkes, (Jerusalem, 1999), pp. 76, 81, 88 (Hebrew); Solomon Maimon's *Autobiography*, tr. Y.L. Barukh, (Massadah, Tel Aviv, 1953), p. 145 (Hebrew).

7. *Abraham Abulafia's Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*:  
*A Handbook for Prophecy in Eighteenth Century Poland*

The special interest in prophecy in mid-eighteenth century may be discerned also by another fact: Abraham Abulafia's book *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* the most important and detailed handbook for attaining prophecy, has attracted the interest of several eighteenth century persons in Poland. In general this is quite a widespread book in manuscripts, and recently it has been printed for the first time. Out of more than thirty extant manuscripts, four were copied in Poland eighteenth century and one more in 1804 as we shall see below.

Let me first translate one of Abulafia's passages where the perception of the importance of prophecy and the dedication of his book to this topic. The very first line of the opening poem deals with prophecy: "Send your hand to a vision,<sup>88</sup> to achieve prophecy!"<sup>89</sup> Elsewhere in the same book Abulafia formulates an intellectual-mystical understanding of prophecy:

Know that no prophet had ever prophesied without an intellectual thought. And the path of prophecy<sup>90</sup> is an excellent path . . . and from this book you should understand all the paths of prophecy and their connection and essence and the truth of their existence.<sup>91</sup>

At the beginning of the book, the prophet was described as someone who asks questions and is answered by the same voice, namely his own voice, by means of which he is asking the question.<sup>92</sup> Consistent to the general theory and praxis of ecstatic Kabbalah, prophecy as a linguistic revelation is described as the culmination of a technique, conceived to be superior to all other religious paths, that is based on combinations of letters,<sup>93</sup> in a manner reminiscent of the above passage of the *Maggid of Zlotchov*.

A small quote from this book had been printed anonymously in *Sefer Raziel ha-Ma'alah*, a late version of much earlier magical treatises

<sup>88</sup> *Be-mar'eh*. However, according to other manuscripts, like Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 2b, it is written *be-nu'ah*, namely a created hand. Provided the uncritical printings of Abulafia's writings, especially *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, I rely on its manuscripts.

<sup>89</sup> Ms. Paris BN 777, fol. 105a.

<sup>90</sup> On this phrase, which is found already in Maimonides, see below, note 104.

<sup>91</sup> Ms. Paris BN 777, fol. 111a.

<sup>92</sup> Ibidem, fol. 105b–106a.

<sup>93</sup> Ibidem, fol. 111a.

having the same name. This book, printed for the first time in Amsterdam in 1705,<sup>94</sup> has been taught, according to the testimony of R. Shlomo of Lutzk, by the Besht to the Great Maggid, 'letter by letter'.<sup>95</sup>

Let us turn to the manuscript evidence concerning this book of Abulafia's. I identified five manuscripts of it copied in the second part of eighteenth century in the geographical area in which Hasidism flourished, or its immediate vicinity. Let me succinctly describe them.

(a) Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582. It was copied, according to the front page, by a certain Shalom, the son of Jacob Luria of Brody. The way in which I decoded the date points to 1789. The precise identity of the Kabbalistic author was not known to the copyist, but he nevertheless writes on the front page:

*The Secrets of the Life of the World to Come* that was written by the accomplished and comprehensive sage, the great luminary and the genius, the famous Hasid and humble divine Kabbalist, the honorable Rabbi, our master R. Abraham the Visionary, let his memory be blessed, who was called by all R. Abraham the Visionary, who lived in the year 1280.

The copyist added a short introduction where he wrote, *inter alia*, that "whoever knows this book in a proper manner, according to its depth, is loved on high and is nice below and inherits two worlds, this world and the next one."<sup>96</sup> This is an application of a Talmudic passage dealing with the transmission of the divine name to the proper students.<sup>97</sup>

(b) A second manuscript, Ms. Jerusalem NUL, Heb. 8 2128 was copied, according to the colophon, in 1757 by a certain Benjamin Bedit, the son of Zeev, in the village of Tarnigrad,<sup>98</sup> a small place beside Lublin in Eastern Poland. Thus we have a possible evidence of an interest in Abulafia's book in eastern Poland in the lifetime of the Besht.

<sup>94</sup> See fol. 25b, and compare Abulafia, *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*, Ms. Paris BN 777, fol. 108a. The affinity between these two texts has been pointed out long ago by the mid-nineteenth century scholar Elyakim Milzhagi, in a study which remained in manuscript, where he reached the conclusion that Abulafia was the author of *Sefer Razi'el ha-Ma'pak*.

<sup>95</sup> R. Dov Baer of Miedzyrec, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*, ed. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, (The Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1976), p. 2.

<sup>96</sup> Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 2a.

<sup>97</sup> See *BT*, *Qiddushin*, fol. 71a.

<sup>98</sup> Fol. 76b.

(c) Very close in time and structure to manuscript (a) is the version of this book found in Ms. Jerusalem NUL, Nehorai Collection, 8 5496, copied by a certain Shmeril ben Pinḥas Zelig. It was copied in 1804, in a Polish handwriting. Here the ecstatic handbook has been interpreted in many round notes in terms stemming from the book of the *Ẓohar* and its interpreters.

(d) Last, but no least: R. Pinḥas Elijah Horovitz of Vilna, the author of the famous *Sefer ha-Berit*, basically a commentary on R. Ḥayyim Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah*, (a book influenced by Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*) studied Abulafia's book in his youth and wrote a short commentary to it, still inedited and found in Ms. Jerusalem NUL Heb. 8 5403. A similar manuscript is found also in Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1584, fols. 1–60. The two manuscripts mentioned that were copied in 1775 in the city of Altona.

Those five codexes are dated manuscripts, to which we may add some undated Ashkenazi manuscripts of the same book, and of other books of Abulafia's.

Last but not least: there are four additional pieces of evidence as to the relationship between this book of Abulafia's and Hasidic authors. It is quoted explicitly in a Hasidic and Kabbalistic 19th century encyclopedia of R. Jacob Tzvi Yalish, *Qehilat Ya'aqov*.<sup>99</sup> A nineteenth century Hasidic printer in Koretz, R. Yehudah Leibush Rappoport, an inhabitant of Brody, in 1855, mentioned this book as one of the manuscripts that he intended to print.<sup>100</sup> Moreover, a quite specific passage that occurs in this book of Abulafia recurs in a Hasidic text: it deals with the acronym of the word *Tz'on*, standing for *Tzeruf*, *'Otiyot*, *Nequddot*.<sup>101</sup>

It should also be mentioned that access to Abulafia's thought has been also more indirect, by quotes from his writings in *Sefer ha-Peliy'ah*, as mentioned above. Moreover, a long passage from Abulafia's *Ḥayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* was copied, anonymously, in the introduction to R. Isaac Shani, *Me'ah She'arim*, a sixteenth century book that has been reprinted twice at the end of the eighteenth century in Poland,

<sup>99</sup> (Rpr. Jerusalem, 1971), part III, fol. 19b.

<sup>100</sup> See R. Ḥayyim Vital, *Sefer Sha'ar ha-Yihudim* (Lvov, 1855), the verso of the first, unnumbered page. The plan of printing was done under the aegis of R. Israel of Ryzhin.

<sup>101</sup> Compare Ms. Oxford-Bodleiana 1582, fol. 45b to R. Joseph Moshe of Zalovich, *Berit 'Abram* (Brody, 1875, rpr. Jerusalem, 1972), fol. 114b. More on this acronym see Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 137–138.

at Koretz in 1786 and at Zolkiev in 1797. Last but not least: Abulafia's book was found in the library of R. Isaac Meir Alter, the Rabbi of Gur, as we learn from a list of the content of his manuscripts.<sup>102</sup>

In any case, Abulafia's books focused on paths to attain prophecy close to Hasidism much more than any extant Sabbatean book; they were, historically speaking, available and close in their phenomenological configuration to Hasidic mystical prophecy. Let me exemplify this affinity by an example. In a book compiled shortly before the end of the eighteenth-century by R. Aharon Kohen of Apta, presumably in the entourage of the Lubavitch school of Hasidism, I found a passage which seems to be an unmistakable example of Abulafia's influence, perhaps mediated by Vital's *Sha'arei Qedushah*, in early Hasidism. In his commentary on the Pentateuch, *'Or ha-Ganuz le-Tzaddiqim*—a compilation of many earlier Hasidic passages—we read about what I called above 'mystical prophecy':

The issue of prophecy is (as follows): it is impossible, by and large, to prophesy suddenly,<sup>103</sup> without a certain preparation and holiness. But if the person who wants to prepare himself to prophecy sanctifies and purifies himself and he concentrates mentally and utterly separates himself from the delights of this world, and he serves the sages, (including) his Rabbi, the prophet,—and the disciples that follow the path of prophecy<sup>104</sup> are called the sons of the prophets—and when his Rabbi, (who is) the prophet, understands that this disciple is already prepared to (the state of) prophecy then his Rabbi gives him the topic of the recitations of the holy names, which are keys for the supernal gate . . . the account of the chariot is by the recitation of the names of purity . . . prophecy is like the lightning that is seen when the heavens have been opened . . . and when Moses came before God he removed the mask, i.e., he had (the experience of) the divestment of corporeality.<sup>105</sup>

This passage is, no doubt, quite a crucial evidence for the reverberation of Abulafia's mystical prophecy in Hasidism, in a relatively early period. It deals with a possibly present situation, not with an interpretation of ancient prophetic phenomena. Moreover, it is a rare piece of evidence for a rather detailed mystical path which includes a crucial factor in Abulafia's prophetology: the knowledge

<sup>102</sup> See the list of manuscripts on sale in the possession of the Rabbi of Gur, compiled in 1913, on p. 10 no. 111, found in the Gershom Scholem archive.

<sup>103</sup> This is a Maimonidean stand, found also in Abraham Abulafia's writings.

<sup>104</sup> This term occurs also in Abulafia's *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'*. See above note 90.

<sup>105</sup> *'Or ha-Ganuz le-Tzaddiqim*, col. X fol. 4b.

and use of divine names. Indeed, according to Abulafia's *Hayyei ha-'Olam ha-Ba'* he transmitted the "keys concerning the knowledge of the (divine) name."<sup>106</sup> I would say that the entire situation described in the passage, namely the initiation of the disciple by his master, is reminiscent of a lengthy and similar passage in the same book.<sup>107</sup>

It should be mentioned that this passage is not unique; another, partial, version of it is found in the same author's book *Keter Nehora'*.<sup>108</sup> Interestingly enough the topic of prophecy recurs in *'Or ha-Ganuz le-Tzaddiqim* two times more<sup>109</sup> and in the latest reference the degree of prophecy is described as the divestment of corporeality, apparently under the impact of the *Tur's* version of mystical prophecy. A concern with the divine spirit as a level that can be reached nowadays characterizes the introduction and the whole discussion in *Keter Nehora'* in the context of the passage about reaching the level of prophecy.<sup>110</sup> This Hasidic author exemplifies the convergence of two types of mystical prophecy: the Abulafian one, probably mediated by Vital, and the Neoplatonic one.

Like Abulafia's Kabbalistic approach, also the above passage is dealing much more with personal perfection than with a concrete historical or ethical message, characteristic of the two types of prophecy mentioned above. I assume that like in case of ecstatic Kabbalah, the description found in R. Aharon of Apta relates to a very small group. However, we may assume that the personal mystical achievement could empower the mystics to operate also in broader social structures. Abulafia, his strong mystical propensities, conceived himself as both a prophet and messiah and acted intensely in order to disseminate his views, preaching to both Jews and Christians. I would guess, and this is indeed a conjecture, that the more private nature of the Hasidic passage notwithstanding, it could empower the mystic to transcend the personal attainment and incite him to act in wider groups, which eventually created the Hasidic movement, which has the mystic at its center.

<sup>106</sup> Ms. Paris BN 777, fol. 113a. See also *ibidem*, fol. 122a etc.

<sup>107</sup> See *ibidem*, fol. 116ab.

<sup>108</sup> See the unpaginated introduction, *haqdamah sheniyah*, par. 7 of the edition of Jerusalem, 1975.

<sup>109</sup> See *ibidem*, col. III fol. 3b and col. IV, fol. 1a. More on this Hasidic master's views of prophecy and mystical union see Idel, "The Besht as Prophet."

<sup>110</sup> See also R. Aharon Kohen of Apta, *Sefer Ner Mitzvah*, (Pietrkov, 1881), fol. 19a.



I assume that the case of R. Aharon Kohen of Apta is not the single case of the impact of an Abulafian vision of prophecy on eighteenth century Hasidism. Another book of the medieval Kabbalist, *Imrei Shefer*, might have influenced a passage found in a book by the founder of the Lubavitch Hasidism, R. Shneur Zalman of Liady, as it has been proposed by Bezalel Na'or.<sup>111</sup>

Needless to say that the description of the possibility to attain prophecy in the present, namely in the eighteenth century, is not an automatic affinity to Sabbateanism but reflects forms of links that do not follow the linear vision of the unilinear type of history which I called "proximism".<sup>112</sup> My stand emphasizes much more the importance of moments of intensification of the role played by certain pre-existing mystical concepts and paths, than the possible neutralization of allegedly perilous elements.

### 8. On Prophecy and Hasidism in 19th Century

The various forms of prophecy discussed above reverberated also in the 19th century Hasidic writings. The mystical type of prophecy is discussed several times but it is not the single prophetic model that survived. In a passage of an influential 19th century master, R. Qalonimus Qalman Epstein of Cracow, we read as follows:

It is known, and I have indeed seen some great *Tzaddiqim* who had attached themselves to the supernal worlds, and they divested themselves of the garment of their corporeality, so that the *Shekhinah* dwelled upon them and spoke from within their throats, and their mouths spoke prophecy and future things. And these *tzaddiqim* themselves did not know afterwards what they spoke, for they were attached to the supernal worlds while the *Shekhinah* spoke from within their throats.<sup>113</sup>

<sup>111</sup> See his "The Song of Songs, Abulafia and the Alter Rebbe," *Jewish Review*, April-May, 1990, pp. 10–11; idem, "Hotam Bolet Hotam Shog'ea, in the Teaching of Abraham Abulafia and the Doctrine of Habad," *Sinai* vol. 107 (1991), pp. 54–57 (Hebrew); Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 137–140. The same book of Abulafia's did have an influence on a somewhat younger contemporary of the founder of Lubavitch movement, belonging to the other camp, the mitnaggedim, the well-known R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov. See Moshe Idel, "Between Prophetic Kabbalah and the Kabbalah of R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov," in eds. M. Hallamish, J. Rivlin, R. Shuchet, *The Gaon of Vilna and His Circle*, (Bar Ilan University Press, Ramat Gan, 2003) (Forthcoming) (Hebrew).

<sup>112</sup> See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 6–9.

<sup>113</sup> *Ma'or va-Shemesh*, (Jerusalem, 1992), p. 127; Shatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, pp. 200–201 and the English translation in Louis Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, (Schocken Books, New York, 1987), pp. 217–218.

R. Qalonimus Qalman testifies that he describes a phenomenon he has seen with his own eyes. Indeed, living in the generation of the R. Jacob Isaac Horowitz, known as the Seer of Lublin, it is not difficult to understand the possibility of prophetic phenomena. This testimony notwithstanding the above quote is reminiscent of earlier discussions by R. Zeev Wolf of Zhitomir concerning R. Yehiel Michal of Zlotchov and the Maggid of Mezerich, though the latter masters did not mention prophecy.<sup>114</sup> Another interesting comparison of the ecstatic experience of the *Tzaddiqim* to that of the prophets is found in the contemporary circle of R. Naḥman of Braslav.<sup>115</sup>

An interesting parallel to the ecstatic state of consciousness, where the mystic is possessed by the *Shekhinah* that speaks from his mouth, is found already in ecstatic Kabbalah and in Jewish mystical sources that might have been influenced by it.<sup>116</sup>

In the mid-19th century, there is an outstanding example of extreme messianic and prophetic consciousness. R. Isaac Aiziq Yehudah Safran of Komarno, a master who was immersed in an intense mystical life, testifies that he studied with masters who were

*Tzaddiqim*, the disciples of our master R. Elimelekh . . . and the disciples of R. Yehiel,<sup>117</sup> and the disciples of the Besht; (those disciples are those) who performed miracles, who possessed the divine spirit, who enjoyed the revelation of supernal lights and worlds, who peered to the *Merkavah* like R. 'Aqiva and his companions.<sup>118</sup>

According to another testimony, the same author confessed that he too received both “wonderful visions and holy spirit” and “spoke words of prophecy”—all this between the age of two and five.<sup>119</sup> In his *Commentary on 'Avot*, R. Eleazar Tzevi of Komarno, the son of the above master, offers a typology that diverges from that of his father's. According to it, R. Shimeon bar Yoḥai, Luria and the Besht

<sup>114</sup> See *ʔOr ha-Me'ir*, fol. 95c, discussed in Shatz-Uffenheimer, *Hasidism as Mysticism*, p. 203; Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, pp. 87–88.

<sup>115</sup> See Ze'ev Gries, *Conduct Literature (Regimen Vitae), Its History and Place in the Life of the Beshtian Hasidism* (The Bialik Institute, Jerusalem, 1989), p. 240 (Hebrew).

<sup>116</sup> See Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 84–88; Weiss, *Studies*, p. 93 note 38; Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, p. 89; Mark, *Madness and Knowledge*, pp. 26–27, 202.

<sup>117</sup> The Maggid of Zlotchov, who was already quoted above.

<sup>118</sup> *Zohar Hai*, (Lemberg, repr. Israel, 1971), II, fol. 449c; See also his *Netiv Mitzvotekha*, (Jerusalem, 1983), pp. 56–58.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. *Megillat Setarim*, ed. Naftali ben Menahem, (Mossad ha-Rav Kook, Jerusalem, 1944), p. 9; *Jewish Mystical Autobiographies, Book of Visions and Book of Secrets*, tr. Morris Faierstein, (Paulist Press, New York, Mahwah, 1999), p. 276.

had the extraordinary power to see the higher worlds, while the disciples of the Besht were able only to hear supernal voices.<sup>120</sup> This emphasis on the superiority of hearing in paranormal experiences of the Besht has reliable sources in the first generation of Hasidism.<sup>121</sup>

### 9. *Some Broader Conclusions*

It should be pointed out that all the three major forms of prophecy described above have been attributed to the Besht by various kinds of Hasidic sources; the apocalyptic one by the *Epistle* to R. Gershon of Kutov, a private document which was not intended to be made public. The ethical forms of prophecy are found in *Shivhei ha-Besht* a late collection of tales, which reflects to a certain extent the mood of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century. Though the mystical interpretation of prophecy is the most preponderant one, and developed in the writings of many of the Besht's followers, he himself apparently acted in manners that are consonant also to the ethical and apocalyptic prophets.

The above observations demonstrate that it is much easier to point to Hasidic types of prophecy that have some earlier, non-Sabbatean sources, than to find significant correspondences between Hasidic and Sabbatean forms of prophecy. Though there is no special reason to deny the possibility of a Sabbatean impact on Hasidism in principle, such a nexus is still a possible theory which has, for the time being, not been corroborated by scholarly manner insofar as prophecy is concerned. On the other hand, some of the apocalyptic and the mystical forms of prophecy in Hasidism can be traced, in my opinion quite convincingly, to earlier thirteenth and fourteenth centuries sources.

The existence in Judaism of those so significantly distinct understandings of prophecy and, what seems to be no less significant, their eventual kinds of overlapping, problematize the rather simplistic, but quite influential statement of Max Weber dealing with "ethical prophecy":

The prophet never knew himself emancipated from suffering, be it only from the bondage of sin. There was no room for a *unio mystica*,

---

<sup>120</sup> *Zegan Beiti* (Jerusalem, 1973), pp. 83–84.

<sup>121</sup> See Idel, "The Besht as Prophet."

not to mention the inner oceanic tranquility of the Buddhistic *arhat* . . . Likewise his personal majesty as a ruler precluded all thought of mystic communion with God as a quality of man's relation to him. No true Yahve prophet and no creature at all could even have dared to claim anything of the sort, much less the deification of self . . . The prophet could never arrive at a permanent inner peace with God. Yahwe's nature precluded it . . . There is no reason to assume the apathetic-mystic states of Indian stamp have not also been experienced on Palestinian soil.<sup>122</sup>

Weber speaks, to be sure, about biblical prophets alone and had perhaps no substantial knowledge about later developments in post-biblical forms of Judaism. He attempted to distinguish between the prophetic phenomenon on the one hand, and the Indian type of mysticism on the other, as two dramatically different though not totally irreconcilable spiritual configurations. In fact, this phenomenological separation is part of a vision of the emergence of Christianity as a synthesis between the two diverging spiritual phenomena. Weber's Hegelian move invests the nascent religion with a unique status, one that surpasses the two so different preceding religious phenomena, a thesis adopted and developed by the renowned scholar of mysticism Robert Ch. Zaehner.<sup>123</sup> Similar distinctions occur in the subsequent phenomenology of religion, for example that proposed by Friedrich Heiler, who too sharply distinguishes between the mystical and the prophetic forms of religiosity.<sup>124</sup> Weber's vision of Judaism as based upon a strong theistic theology, had a lasting influence also on Gershom Scholem's phenomenology of Judaism and Jewish mysticism and that of his followers, a topic that waits a more detailed analysis. In any case, Scholem, like Weber, differentiates between mysticism and prophecy in quite a significant manner<sup>125</sup> and both

<sup>122</sup> Max Weber, *Ancient Judaism*, trs. H.H. Gerth and D. Martindale, (The Free Press, Illinois, 1952), p. 314. See also *ibidem*, p. 315.

<sup>123</sup> Zaehner is substantially dependent on Weber, without however mentioning him. See, especially, his study *At Sundry Times*, (Farber and Farber, London, 1958), and an analysis of his synthetic stand in Moshe Idel, "‘Unio Mystica’ as a Criterion: ‘Hegelian’ Phenomenologies of Jewish Mysticism," in ed. Steven Chase, *Doors of Understanding. Conversations in Global Spirituality in Honor of Ewert Cousins*, (Franciscan Press, Quincy, 1997), pp. 310–312.

<sup>124</sup> *Prayer, A Study in the History and Psychology of Religion* tr. Samuel McComb (Oxford University Press, London-New York, 1933).

<sup>125</sup> Cf. his *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 19–20, 88. Compare however to what he wrote *ibidem*, pp. 9–10, 31.

deny the importance of the *unio mystica* experiences in Jewish mysticism.<sup>126</sup> To be sure: Scholem has been well aware of the mystical types of prophecy in the Middle Ages.<sup>127</sup> However he did not connect them to Hasidism, because of his strong unilinear understanding of the history of Jewish mysticism, which assumed that earlier Jewish mystical schools become, by and large, obsolete with the emergence of later and more developed forms of Kabbalah. It seems that this Hegelian move, combined with an exaggerated role attributed to Sabbatean influence, prevented the possibility to address a more panoramic approach to the development of Jewish mysticism.

For the understanding of Judaism as an historically developing phenomenon with strong conservative impulses which tend to preserve much of the earlier literary strata, such a Hegelian view complicates a proper understanding, as much as the Weber/Zachner Christian emphasis on the biblical Judaism which relegates Judaism to one of its earliest phases. As any living religion, Judaism did not freeze but enriched and diversified itself considerably in the subsequent centuries. Consequently, the terms 'prophet' and 'prophecy' become charged with new meanings, especially mystical ones, which should be seen more than just interpretations of a stable, ancient and unchanging essence. To be sure: I do not surmise that we must subscribe to a total indeterminacy of language in order to agree to the very substantial expansion of the semantic field of this term like of that of Messiah or *Ge'ulah*. On the contrary: my assumption is that rather distinct meanings can be determined, which are informed by a variety of models that are essential part of the phenomenology of Jewish mysticism since the Middle Ages. My categorization of the three types of prophecy here is related to this semiotic assumption, as is my proposal to survey the different paths in history that they travelled. Thus, the growing semantic field of prophecy is the result of a ray of semiotic processes. I work therefore with a double assumption that a phenomenological approach should inspire research that is based on close textual and terminological analyses, which take in consideration the historical developments and the cultural interactions.

To be sure, those meanings were not only the result of new interpretations which enriched the semantic field of the term, as it is

---

<sup>126</sup> See the passages from Scholem's writings mentioned in Idel, "Unio Mystica," pp. 307–309.

<sup>127</sup> See above note 22.

indubitably also the case of the theories of Jewish philosophers and Kabbalists. Also the specific personalities of figures who were described as prophets or described themselves as such, contributed something to the expanded semantic field. I assume that most, if not the entire medieval panorama of prophetic phenomena, was available to the eighteenth century Hasidic masters and they could choose between alternatives, or adopt some of them.<sup>128</sup> My contention is that Hasidic masters could draw their views of prophecy, and they indeed did so as we have seen above, from a variety of pre-Sabbatean discussions of prophecy. What is still difficult to prove, though it may not be an impossible task, is the existence of a viable nexus between Sabbatean apocalyptic and ethical forms of prophecy, and the Hasidic ones.

In any case, Hasidism as a social factor constitutes an important example of the emergence within a religion informed in one of its important stages by ethical prophetism, of an extended group which was deeply informed by mystical prophecy.<sup>129</sup> At this stage of the research of Hasidism it is premature to determine the precise role played by mystical prophetism in the general economy of this movement. In the last decades, this topic has been rather neglected.<sup>130</sup> I would nevertheless opt for a complex explanation, which would take in consideration also the substantial role of mystical prophetism for both convincing the masters of Hasidism about the importance of their message and establishing their authority in the eyes of their followers.

---

<sup>128</sup> A survey of the rather lengthy list of manuscript of the rabbi of Gur mentioned in note 102 above, may detect not only the more expected type of literature: Halakhic, Midrashic, exegetical and Kabbalistic, but also several philosophical writings authored by both Arab and Jewish thinkers.

<sup>129</sup> See Philip Wexler, *Mystical Society: an Emerging Social Vision* (Westview Press, 2000), pp. 43–46.

<sup>130</sup> An exception is the recent view of R. Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov as portrayed by Altshuler, *The Messianic Secret of Hasidism*, p. 96. My assumption is that the concern with prophetic experiences was wider in nascent Hasidism and that it is less related to Lurianism and its forms of messianism.

*This page intentionally left blank*

# RABBI KOOK AND HIS SOURCES: FROM KABBALISTIC HISTORIOSOPHY TO NATIONAL MYSTICISM

Yoni Garb

## *Introduction*

This article shall explore the inter-relationship between mystical experience and mass movements, or between the personal and the collective. My contention shall be that modernization and especially nationalism had a profound impact on religious movements, as well as on the personal experiences of the leaders of these movements. We shall explore both the transformation of mystical theory into political and social agendas, as well as the enlistment of personal experience in the service of both movement and nation.

In modern Jewish history there have been three mass movements whose founders were mystics, and whose motivating force was mystical. These were the Sabbatean movement founded by the would-be-Messiah Shabtai Tzvi, the Hassidic movement founded by the Ba'al Shem Tov, and the faction of the Religious Zionist movement, which follows the path of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Hacoen Kook.

An important difference between the first movement and the later two movements is that the Sabbatean movement is practically demised (Although currently there is a certain revival of the movement mainly on the Internet). On the other hand, Hassidism and Religious Zionism are very much with us. There is also a significant distinction to be drawn between the first two movements and the third: Whilst the first two were mainly concerned with the spiritual realm and with the internal structure of Jewish society, the third movement was concerned with external history, and thus with processes which transcend the limits of Jewish society. Thus (to paraphrase the terms developed in Margolin 1999), the first two movements express a vector of internalization, whilst the third movement represents an opposite vector that of externalization.

From the point of view of the history of research, my last claim is not self-evident, however it is also not unsubstantiated. Yehudah



Liebes (1995: 10–14) has shown that Sabbatean Messianism was more concerned with internal spiritual processes, than with external historical change. In a similar vein, Moshe Idel has demonstrated (1998: 223–241) that Hassidic Messianism is geared towards internal perfection rather than historical change. These recent scholarly developments are part of a revisionary move, which critiques the earlier approach of Scholem and his students, which attempted to identify Messianism mainly with outward historical activism (Idel 1998: 18–21, 250–254). A final general comment with regard to the three movements is that they are not necessarily related. Idel and others have decoupled Hassidism from the link to Sabbateanism proposed by Scholem (See Idel 1988: 266). At the same time, as I will show soon, Rabbi Kook and his school have little relation to the Hassidic movement.

However, before going into the precise roots of the Kookian school, we should first clarify its place within the immediate context of Religious Zionism. It has been already noted that Religious Zionism can be divided into two factions: One is the rationalistic strand, represented by thinkers such as Rabbi Reines, whilst the other, which I shall focus on here, is the mystical school founded by Rabbi Kook (Nehorai 1991; Schwartz 1999: 131 (n. 73)).

One can again discern two discrete phases in the history of Rabbi Kook's school: Until 1967, it was mainly an auxiliary and supportive branch of mainstream secular Zionism, though this role in and of itself marks a significant shift towards historical activism. However, since 1967, the Kookian school developed into a widespread social, educational, religious and political movement, which has come to play a leading role in the history of Israel. This shift, whose mechanism I shall discuss elsewhere, was initiated by Rabbi Kook's son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Hachohen Kook, and led to an attenuation of the internal, mystical elements of the Kookian vision, in favor of national, historical and external aspects. We shall examine the exact relationship between these two dimensions the historical and the mystical towards the end of the article. However, at this point, it is important to stress that this shift was possible only because the vision of Rabbi Kook the father was both mystical and national, both internal and historical. In other words, Rabbi Kook channeled his personal mystical energy into concrete activity on behalf of the nation. At the same time, he drew on his visions to construct an elaborate theory of the nature and destiny of the nation. We shall now explore

this nexus of nationalism and mysticism, through tracing its roots in earlier developments, which reach back to the 18th century. Thus, we can appreciate the Kookian movement as the contemporary unfolding of a deeper process in the history of Jewish mysticism.

### *Historical Kabbalah Versus Hassidism*

There is an extensive and growing body of writing on Rabbi Kook's thought. This literature was created both by the adherents of the Kookian school (e.g. Kalcheim 1987), as well as by academic scholarship (See e.g. Kaplan 1995). However, there are several significant gaps in the existing discussion of the school. Firstly, the mystical aspects of Rabbi Kook's life and thought have largely been downplayed in favor of the more philosophical facets of his writing (Avivi 1992; Avivi 2000), as well as his national and historical concerns (The philosophical agenda is mostly that of the academy, while the national agenda is that of the school itself). Due to these agendas, little attention has been given to the Kabbalistic sources of Rabbi Kook's vision, and especially to the more recent sources to which he was directly indebted.

This lacuna in scholarly description was partly due to the censorship of the more mystical passages in Rabbi Kook's writings a process maintained by the efforts of Rabbi Kook's own followers, such as his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah. However, recently, many censored texts have become available mostly in the collection known as "Shemonah Kevatsim" (On this collection, see Rosnak 2000). Thanks to this change, we are now in the position to commence a more accurate reconstruction of the nature and sources of this extensive corpus.

My contention upon perusing these texts, is that Rabbi Kook's mystical-national vision whilst undoubtedly indebted to his own psychology and spiritual development is rooted in an historical and national interpretation of Kabbalah, which developed in the 18th to 20th centuries. This approach, which can be described as "Kabbalistic historiosophy", originated in the works of Moshe Haim Luzatto (Ramhal) during the first part of the 18th century, and reached its zenith in the writings of the Vilna Gaon and his students and followers in the late 18th, 19th and early 20th centuries. This understanding of Kabbalah as referring to the fate of the Jewish nation, and the process of redemption, did not remain an abstract theory. Rather,

it was the impetus for a Messianic wave of emigration to the Land of Israel/Palestine in the 19th century, which predated and preceded the Zionist movement. It is my contention that Rabbi Kook's work continued, expanded and enhanced this historiosophical interpretation and concomitant Messianic endeavor. One of the main triggers for this re-construction of the historiosophical system was the historical and cultural situation created by the Zionist movement.

Until now, it is mainly through the works of Yoseph Avivi (1992) that we have learnt of the Kabbalistic underpinnings of Rabbi Kook's work, and its connections to the Kabbalistic historiosophy of Luzatto. Avivi has recently (2000) buttressed his claims with quotations from the recently printed censored works. However, Avivi's argument omits the "missing link" between Luzatto and Rabbi Kook: the circle of the Vilna Gaon (See Etkes 1998) and his students. Avivi's work has been challenged by the academic establishment (Ish-Shalom 1996. For a summary of this debate, see Fechter 1991: 70), and has certainly not reached the English-speaking public. Furthermore, Avivi's approach remains on the theoretical level, and he has omitted to deal with the *historical* connections between Rabbi Kook's thought and the proto-Zionist movement of the students of the Vilna Gaon. Avivi has therefore missed the opportunity to contextualize Rabbi Kook's vision as part of a social and national religious movement which lead both to a new understanding of Kabbalah, as well as to national/messianic activism. This historical insight may afford a new understanding of the nature of the shift which occurred in 1967: When the Kookian school shifted the position of Religious Zionism from that of following Secular Zionism to that of leading it, it was in effect restoring the leading role of mystical vision and activism, which actually preceded secular Zionism (However, paradoxically, the Kookian school could not have modernized and otherwise developed historiosophical Kabbalah without the impetus provided by Secular Zionism's success in restoring the Jewish national structure in Israel).

More recently, Raphael Suchat (1998) has shown that the historiosophical approach of the Ramḥal heavily influenced the similar historiosophical interpretation of Kabbalah developed by the Vilna Gaon. Suchat (1998) has also extensively discussed the connections between this theoretical approach, and the views of the Messianic Emigrants who reached the Land of Israel in the 19th century. However, neither Avivi nor Suchat have sufficiently stressed the nature of the development that lead from the Ramḥal through the Vilna

Gaon to Rabbi Kook. In other words, these scholars have focused on the continuity between three phases of Kabbalistic historiosophy, but have not pinpointed the nature of the processes of innovation, development and discontinuity over the last three centuries. They have neglected to show how the ongoing process of modernization informed and shaped the development of Kabbalistic historiosophy. That is to say, they have treated Kabbalah as a self-contained world, without contextualizing it in a broader historical frame of reference. Here, I wish to conjoin and develop the material published in Hebrew by Avivi and Suchat, and offer a more detailed and nuanced suggestion as to the nature of Rabbi Kook's Kabbalistic understanding of Zionism, as well as its relation to modernity. This reading will be mostly based on a close analysis of several previously censored texts penned by Rabbi Kook.

First, however, we should examine the kernel of the historiosophical interpretation of Kabbalah, and demonstrate the manner in which it differs from the Hassidic interpretation. This excursion is aimed at enabling us to form a picture of Hassidism and historiosophical Kabbalah as two competing religious movements.

In general, there are two major differences between the Hassidic interpretation of Kabbalah and that proposed by the Ramhal and the Vilna Gaon. In order to decipher the nature of these differences, we should first consider their shared interpretative assumptions. Both the Hassidim (Liebes 1997; Liebes 2000) as well as the historiosophical Kabbalists (Avivi 1997: 126–197; Suchat 1998a: 128–133, 140; Suchat 1998b: 124–125) accepted the thesis that the tenets of the Lurianic Kabbalah developed in 16th century Safed should be regarded as a parable or metaphor rather than taking them literally. This view can be found in some forms of Lurianic Kabbalah, such as the ideas developed by Rabbi Yisrael Sarug (Maroz 1996: 319; Garb 1999: 277; Sarug 2001: 9–10. See also Maroz 2001). It was further embellished by the reception of Lurianic Kabbalah in Italy in the 17th and 18th centuries (Yosha 1994: 188–193, 351–360).

This interpretation applies especially to the doctrine of the contraction of the divine presence in the world. According to this doctrine (Scholem 1941: 260–265), God withdrew his presence in order to make room for the world. Both the Hassidim and the opposing school agree that this process should not be taken literally. However, the difference lies in that the Hassidim proposed a psychological and cosmological interpretation of the contraction (Suchat 1998a: 128–129;

Suchat 1998b: 229; Idel 1988: 150–153; Idel 1995: 227–238), whilst the Ramḥal and the Vilna Gaon rendered a political and historical interpretation. The Hassidim claimed that the *tzimtzūm* or contraction is only a psychological illusion as it were, and that in reality God's presence remains in the world. In doing so, they developed an acosmic theology (Elior 1996: 170–173), which assumes that in reality the cosmos has no existence separate from God. In this scheme, the task of humanity is to overcome the psychological illusion maintaining the semblance of material reality, and thus reestablish the absolute oneness of God as the sole entity existent in the cosmos. The Ramḥal and the Vilna Gaon, on the other hand, stated that the world does have separate existence on the ontological and cosmological level. God's withdrawal is a metaphor for his allowing the seeming existence of a separate political entity as it were: the establishment of a power, authority, control or kingdom which is other than the divine governance, to use some of the keywords deployed in these texts (Avivi 1992: 109–117, 134–143; Avivi 1993: 93, 102–103; Suchat 1998c; Garb 1997: 269. For a different interpretation, see Wolfson 1996: 158–160, 173, n. 59). According to this interpretation, the entire course of history is designed to enable the formation of a power seemingly opposing God, and then to annul this semblance. This annulment will then reveal and reassert that God is the sole power, so that it will transpire that even the forces that seemingly opposed his will, were actually part of the divine plan. The oneness of God is here interpreted as the manifestation of his absolute and singular power and dominion. This later process is designated as the Messianic redemption. It is readily apparent that this second, historiosophical approach lends itself to a political and collectivist interpretation, whilst the first Hassidic theology lends itself to a psychological and individualistic orientation. While for the Hassidim the task is to remove the *psychological* barriers to realizing God's oneness, for the Ramḥal and Vilna Gaon, the task is to remove the *historical* obstacle to the manifestation of God's supreme power. This divergence is the source of the second difference between the two schools.

As we have seen above, The Hassidic movement stressed personal mystical experience, and thus personalized the national/Messianic dimensions of Jewish mysticism. This is due to their psychological interpretation of Kabbalah. The Hassidic movement was opposed by the Vilna Gaon and his students, who advanced a collective interpretation of Kabbalah. In doing so, the Vilna Gaon took the historiosophical approach of the Ramḥal one step further: While the

Ramḥal spoke in more general terms of humanity, the Vilna Gaon placed a special emphasis on the Jewish people (Avivi 1993: 90–93; Suchat 1998a: 134, 149). This point has not sufficiently been stressed in existing studies. One application of this emphasis, which one can describe as the nationalization of Kabbalah, pertains to mystical practice. According to this school, intention in prayer, or *kavvanah*, should be directed only towards the nation and not towards any private need. This is because the fate of the nation has a theurgical impact on the well-being of divinity. Accordingly, the Vilna Gaon states that when reciting the Shema prayer, one must first unify the people of Israel, and only then can divine unity be established (see *Avney Eliyahu*: 101; *Nefesh Haḥayim*: 59–60; Tao 2000: 3, 158–159, 284). This idea follows from the claim that God's oneness and power are manifested on the collective, historical arena, rather than in the realm of private experience. This approach is diametrically opposed to that of the Hassidic leaders, who used their magical power to cater to the personal, even material needs of their followers, as shown by Moshe Idel (Idel 1995: 203–207, 214). In other words, while Hassidism is focused on the needs of the present, the historiosophical tradition focuses on the past and future.

However, the nationalization of Kabbalah did not remain in the interior mystical realm of mythic or sacral history alone. For the Gaon and his students, redemption was not a matter of theory. They saw their era as the first stage of an imminent redemption. However, according to their essentially historical and political understanding of Kabbalah, redemption was not a matter of miraculous divine intervention, but a naturalistic historical process, which involved mass emigration to the Land of Israel and the rebuilding of the Jewish settlement there. This activism was perceived as possessing theurgical importance and affecting the state of divine power (Morgenstein 1985: 109–111, 158; Suchat 1998a: 64; *Derech Hakodesh*: 37–38). As Aryeh Moregenstein (Morgenstein 1985; Morgenstein 1999: 263–327. See also Barnai 1995: 169; Suchat 1998a: 75–77) and Raphael Suchat (1998a: 140, 164–166) have shown, this activist and naturalistic approach to history lead to concrete community building in the Land of Israel, which predated and perhaps paved way for the later Zionist efforts, which in turn enabled the formation of Religious Zionism and the Kookian school.

It is instructive to view Hassidism on the one hand, and the movement leading from the Vilna Gaon to Rabbi Kook and his students on the other, as two opposing religious movements. One sought to

construct mystical communities centred on the personal experience of a chosen individual the Tzaddik. The other opted for national redemption and activism on the stage of history. This difference is exemplified by two important comments by Rabbi Kook (who continued the historiosophical path, as we have seen above). The first is adduced by his student, Rabbi David Hachohen “Hanazir”:

These were the words of the Rav, when differentiating his path from that of the new Hassidism [As opposed to the much earlier phenomenon of Ashkenazi Hassidism], which is close to him: I am the builder of the nation (Introduction to Kook 1985a: 21. These and subsequent translations are my own).

It is worth noting that despite the collectivist thrust of this statement, Rabbi Kook reserves for himself the role of builder of the nation.

The second comment appears in the collection “Orot” as edited by his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook:

The clinging [*Dvekut*] to the Tzadikim. Is a very honored matter in the process of psychic development. However, one needs great care, for if one mistakes one specific Tzaddik and clings to him with an internal and existential connection, and thus also adheres to his faults, these will sometimes have a much worse psychic effect on the person adhering as on the first person. Happy are Israel who adhere to the soul of the nation, which is absolute good, in order to draw the good light of God through this soul (Kook 1985b: 146. Compare 147: 149).

Rabbi Kook clearly distinguishes between his national Kabbalah, and the Hassidic theory of the Tzaddik. For him, the psychological realm is fraught with dangers, while only the national path has the desired theurgical effect of drawing down divine light. One should regard these texts as indicative of a conscious move: however important personal mystical experience may be, it is directed towards the nation, which is conceived of as the source of light for the individual.

### *The National Mysticism of Rabbi Kook and His Circle*

I wish to devote the remainder of the article to the last phase of this nationalistic branch of Kabbalah. As Morgenstein has shown (1985: 197–240), after 1840 when a projected Messianic target date failed to materialize there was a certain decline in the activism of the students of the Gaon in the Land of Israel. The project of rebuilding the land was eventually reclaimed by a secular national move-

ment Zionism. However, after this period of latency, the Messianic vision of rebuilding the land was restored by the circle of the Rav Kook. As we have seen, in the first stage this school was mostly content with supporting the secular endeavor, which was seen as part of the Messianic process and divine plan. However, in recent years this school has attempted to hasten the process of redemption through political activism, which now seeks to lead the secular Zionists on the redemptive path (Ravitski 1996). Thus, they effectively seek to restore the religious and mystical nature of the project of rebuilding the Land (At the same time, Religious Zionism remains embedded in and dependent on the political, military and cultural structures created by the Secular Zionists).

The continuity between the Kookian school and historiosophical Kabbalah is far from self-evident. Despite the claims of some scholars (e.g. Fine 1995: 23–40), Rabbi Kook was far closer to the historiosophical tradition of the Ramhal and Vilna Gaon than to Hassidism (Kook 1984: 6–7). Thus, as we shall see, his interpretation of Kabbalah is historical and political, although he was of course involved in personal mystical practice and experience. Rabbi Kook was a student of Shalom Elyashiv (Neria 1988: 159–166. Compare Kook 1985c: 2, 463), a 20th century Kabbalist who continued the historiosophical tradition of the Vilna Gaon (On this figure see Wax 1995). This non-Hassidic orientation was also shared by the Rabbi's close students: his son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah (On this figure see Schwartz 2001), saw himself as a student of the tradition of the Vilna Gaon, and explicitly opposed Hassidism (Kook 2000). Another major student, Rabbi David Hachohen (On this figure, see Schwartz 1999), developed the tradition of the Ramhal (Hachohen 1970: 306–318; Introduction to Kook 1985a: 31–38). It is apparent that the Kookian school can be firmly placed within this collectivist and national Kabbalistic context. However, this school, situated as it was in the 20th century, also modernized and re-interpreted Kabbalistic historiosophy transforming it into a fully nationalistic and political agenda. Galvanized and provoked by the activities of Secular Zionists, what was erstwhile mainly a theoretical structure, was now translated into concrete political, educational and even military frameworks (One can even go so far as to say that these frameworks created ideology and theory just as much as they were established by the latter (See Rapoport, Garb and Penso 1995)). Again, one must observe not only patterns of continuity but also discontinuous moves. The transformation



and re-interpretation effected by the modernization of historiosophical Kabbalah by the Kookian school was so intense, that the continuity between them is no longer immediately apparent and requires some scholarly re-construction.

In order to follow this re-interpretation, we shall now examine several texts from the censored writings of Rabbi Kook, which will clearly demonstrate his national, historical and modern interpretation of Kabbalah. The history of the publishing of the censored texts is rather interesting in terms of sociology of knowledge: the publication of “Arpilei Tohar” (Kook 1983), or the second of Rabbi Kook’s eight notebooks with significant changes from the original was designed to forestall the publication of this radical collection by the late Professor Rivka Shatz-Uffenheimer, who received the texts from Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook (see Segal 1987). Likewise it seems that the recent publication of the full notebooks, in their original form (Kook 1999), was designed to forestall academic publication, after these texts became generally available to scholars once the Gershom Scholem Library for Kabbalah in Jerusalem acquired the texts from Shatz-Uffenheimer’s estate.

In the first text (Kook 1983: 51; Kook 1999: 2, 140. I have cited the references by volume and paragraph number), Rabbi Kook writes as follows:

When a general impulse awakens in the world, detached from personal value, it effects a weakening of spiritual power in the world (See Idel 1988: 157–166, 180; Mopsik 1993: 53; Garb 2000: 34, 42–46), and the great ones of the world are called upon to influence the collective so as to uplift it through their personality. Sometimes, the collective is taken over precisely by its lower side, by those who possess narrow feelings, and dark and limited views, and the souls who have not been purified, who have no holy concepts of pure light, and the general soul of the nation contracts itself to the feet of the nation as a whole, and then brazen attitudes are prevalent (This refers to the Talmudic description of the “footsteps of the Messiah,” to be discussed below) And the chosen individuals connect themselves in their exalted light to the collective in its low state, and sweeten it (For this technical Kabbalistic term, see Giller 2001: 128, 134) to a marked extent through their love for it, and connection to it. And the lower side of the collective, by this connection to these individuals, is very painful for their internal aspect, and this painful connection, which is literally as a dragons bite (See the Talmudic myth in Bavli, Baba Bathra 16B and the Kabbalistic embellishment in Liebes 1992), opens the path for the influence of the great ones from their higher sourcefulness (*Mekoriut*),

and a great and very new salvation, of a new light (This refers both to the Evening prayer for a “new light” on Zion, as well as the numerous Lurianic developments of this concept), known as the new name mouthed by the mouth of God (Isaiah 62:2), comes to the world.

Here, Rabbi Kook discusses collectivism and nationalism from a Kabbalistic perspective. He writes that when a collectivist impulse, which is detached from personal value, awakens in the world, it creates a theurgical belmish, described as weakening of spiritual power. This leads to the collective been taken over by the lowest common denominator, by those who possess “narrow feelings and dark and limited views”. He goes on to say that due to this process the general soul of the nation restricts itself, and withdraws from the lowest parts of the divine structure or its feet (Compare Kook 1999: 1, 409), as he puts it in the anthropomorphic language of Kabbalah. We find that Rabbi Kook enlists an anthropomorphic theosophical structure in order to critique secular nationalism which is described as lessening of divine stature. Here, as in other places, he is utilizing the classical trope of the “footsteps” or literally “heels of the Messiah.” (This image is first found in the Babylonian Talmud, *Sotah*, 49B.) The concept of the souls stemming from the heels of the supernal man is prevalent in Lurianic Kabbalah (e.g. *Sha’ar Hagilgulim*: 54. On the descent of the heels in the period of the footsteps of the Messiah, see Wolfson 1992: 170–171). The roots of this description lie in the Kabbalah of the Vilna Gaon, who foretold the takeover of the Jewish collective by the “Mixed multitude” (e.g. *Even Shlema*: 99–106). This view was emphasized by ultra-Orthodox opponents of Zionism (However, I cannot go into this issue at length here). Rabbi Kook chooses to modernize this description by applying it to secular Zionism. The solution he offered is that exalted individuals should uplift and rectify the collective through their connection to and love for the nation. For reasons which I have discussed elsewhere (Garb 2002), I believe that these individuals are none but Rabbi Kook and his students. Rabbi Kook sees his circle as a Kabbalistic elite, charged with the theurgical mission of uplifting the fallen nation. Thus, though Rabbi Kook supported secular Zionism, this support was part of a theurgical transformative project. The support was designed to uplift secular nationalism, though Rabbi Kook deferred this process for the future. Rabbi Kook testified (Kook 1983: 86–87; Kook 1999: 2, 247), that he possessed a Kabbalistic tradition probably from the school of the Vilna Gaon and that a spiritual rebellion would follow after the

material rebuilding of the nation (In this seminal text, he describes this process as the pain of the “birthpangs of the Messiah”). The quasi-divine nature of the spiritualized nation-state, which would follow this transformation, is clearly described in the following passage (Kook 1985b: 140; Kook 1999: 1, 186):

The State is not man’s highest joy. This can be said of a normal state, which is of no greater value than a large insurance company . . . This is not the case for a state whose foundations are ideal . . . such a state is indeed the most exalted in the scale of joy, and this state is our state, the state of Israel, the foundation of God’s seat in the world.

It is fascinating that although the name of the Jewish State was decided on only in 1948, it is used here in a text written between 1904 and 1914. Thus it is not surprising that texts such as these were regarded as prophetic (On Rav Kook’s claim to prophetic status, see Garb 2002). This theocratic vision of the state of Israel was adopted by the “Gush Emunim” movement founded in the 1970’s, who saw themselves as a religious vanguard who could lead the nation out of its moral as well as political decline (Aran 1987; Sprinzak 1991). Through these complex and dialectical moves, the Kookian school could maintain and even embellish its dual and contradictory identity: Heirs of the theosophical Kabbalists and partners of the Secular Zionists.

A clear parallel to the text quoted earlier appears in a self-consciously prophetic censored passage (Kook 1999: 8, 83):

The natural soul of the nation, which collapsed in the Exile, must return to its well-being. This is the content of the life of the footsteps of the Messiah . . . Precisely when the lower portions of the soul, its *Nefesh* (See Scholem 1974: 155–158), are restored to life, then many lowly and desolate forces awaken and manifest and appear in the world. In this very time, the remnants whom are called by God (Joel 3:5. Already in the Talmud (*Bavli* (Babylonian) *Sanhedrin* 92A) this refers to the Scholarly elite), who possess divine courage, must enlighten the higher light of the soul, in such a manner that the lower elements will continue to grant great power (Power in his thought will be discussed elsewhere. For Kabbalistic sources, see Garb 2000: 42–47, 146–152) and might to the higher elements, and the structure will be complete. We must explain that by the prevailing of the lower forces alone, they will lose their own value, and the nation will not find itself nor its life-purpose. Only then will all the forces return to be enlightened by the full light of their life, when they will be well connected to each other, without each one saying “I will rule alone” (See Kings

1, 1:5. In Lurianic Kabbalah this verse refers to the imperfect state of the *Sephirot*, which lead to the “breaking of the vessels”). The blemish of the souls (*Pegimat haneshamot titmaleh*: This is an allusion to the Rabbinic and Kabbalistic myth of the blemish (*pegimah*) and filling of the moon, which also symbolizes the people of Israel (see Pedaya 1996: 157–158)) will be filled from one another, so that they will all comprise a firm structure, a unity of great holiness and fierceness, full of life, manifesting Nezach and Hod. If our tongue is too short to express all of the firmness hidden in the exaltedness (*Tmiriut*: Rabbi Kook’s poetic and rather opaque writing is notoriously difficult to translate, and I have opted for preserving the flavor of his discourse at the risk of bending the English language!) of this perfect and supernal aspiration, we will stammer and express bit by bit our great desire, and our words will be as purifying fire and as a hammer which shatters rocks (Jeremiah 23, 29), for they are the word of God, and from the source of holy light, which gives life to all, it flows and flows. Happy is the man who listens to me” (Proverbs 8, 34).

The reference to “holy light” echoes the name of Rabbi Kook’s mystical opus “Lights of Holiness” (Kook 1985a). The prevalence of light imagery in Rabbi Kook’s work is discussed elsewhere (Garb 2002). Since the speaker in the last verse quoted is none other than God, there also seems to be an element of self-deification here. Furthermore, the reference to stammering indicates that Rabbi Kook seems to be comparing himself not only to the prophets but also to Moses the master of prophets! This is not the only instance of this radical claim, which will be addressed in a study which I hope to publish shortly.

The text combines vitalistic philosophy and Kabbalistic technical terms (such as the names of specific *Sephirot* Nezach and Hod) to reinforce the duty of select individuals to uplift the lower parts of the national structure in the time of the “footsteps of the Messiah.” Elsewhere (Kook 1999: 8, 140), he critiques those whose souls are void of personal joy and value, and have opted to emphasize collectivist ideals (This could refer to either nationalism or socialism). Due to the brazen nature of the “footsteps of the Messiah,” they become the leaders of the community. Here too it is incumbent on the “masters of personality, Hassidim of the world,” who possess a “brave personality,” and are the “pillars (*Yesodei*) of purity and holiness in the world” to uplift the collectivist ideal and link it to personal value. Here too, Rabbi Kook relates this process to the emendation of the *Sephirah* Hod. It seems that the elite who, as Rabbi Kook himself hints, represent the *Sephirah* of Yesod are charged with rectifying the neighboring *Sephirot* Nezach and Hod, who represent

the lower aspects or “feet” of the divine structure. The clearly prophetic language of this passage shows that these individuals, such as Rabbi Kook himself, are none but the new prophets, whose words are the word of God. Thus they have been designated for the theurgical task of rectifying the divine structure qua national soul. There is a cyclical relationship between prophecy and national renewal: the return to the Land enables the restoration of prophecy, and the topic of much of this prophecy is the rebuilding of the nation and its effect on the divine structure.

It would be instructive to compare the previous statement on nationalism to another formerly censored text (Kook 1999: 1, 147):

In the period of the footsteps of the Messiah (Compare Kook 1999: 1, 643), the souls are low in the external value of the divine measure of form (Anthropomorphic form. See Scholem 1991: 15–35), but the inner life (Compare Kook 1983: 15; Kook 1999: 2, 30) is strong in them. For since the destruction of the Temple, God mourns its destruction (See Babylonian Talmud, *Berakhot* 3A), and his feet are covered by a cloud of dust (Compare Kook 1999: 1, 475), and the souls in the heels are not clothed (On the clothing of the souls, see Scholem 1955: Wolfson 1990), except by the light of inner vitality. But the generations prior to the footsteps of the Messiah, were enclothed souls, in which the inner dimension is not revealed, and seemingly, they stood at a higher position than the heel, but they are as clothing, which is but the glory of man.

The last sentence appears to be indebted to the radical antinomian teachings of Mordechai Liener of Izbica. The work “*Mei Hashiloah*”, by this mid-19th century Hassidic writer, differentiates between “glory from man” and “glory to its doer”, or adaptation to socio-religious norms, and the internal value of one’s action (See e.g. Leiner 1995: 1, 50–51. On this thinker see Fairstein 1989). It has already been established (Hadari 1966) that there is an affinity between the thought of Rabbi Kook and that of a student of Leiner’s Rabbi Tazdok Hacohen of Lublin.

The opposition between the low external level and high internal status of the souls of Rav Kook’s generation which is seen as a pre-Messianic one is a constant preoccupation in the censored passages. Elsewhere (Kook 1999: 1, 669; 6, 161), he writes in a similar vein, on the opposition between the external decline during the period of the “footsteps of the Messiah,” which he opposes to its internal development (Compare this collective reading to the individualistic Hassidic

reading adduced in Idel 2000: 121). It is important to note that Rabbi Kook shares the description of our time as the difficult “footsteps of the Messiah” with his non-Zionist, ultra-Orthodox contemporaries. He uses this term much more frequently than the phrase *Athalta de-Geula* ‘beginning of the redemption’ used by his followers to describe our period. According to Rabbi Kook, the positive internal development will eventually bring about the “Light of the Messiah” as it is easy to rectify the external once the internal is uplifted. Here too, this task is assigned to the “masters of the secrets” or Kabbalists who are also “The Righteous of the generation” (For the unfolding of this theme in the second and third generation of Rabbi Kook’s circle, see Schwartz 2001: 78–83, 92–98, 192). This vision of rectification of the collective through exalted individuals echoes the previous texts. Furthermore, the belief in an eventual spiritual revolution appears in both passages. The opposition between external decline and internal development, which is the core of this text, is probably drawn from the writings of Ramḥal and the school of the Vilna Gaon, where it is developed at length (Suchat 1998b: 138, 145–7, 168). The discussion of the cloud of dust and the souls of the “footsteps of the Messiah” seems to be likewise indebted to these sources (Suchat 1998b: 153, 169).

In yet another important text (Kook 1983: 103–104; Kook 1999: 2, 285), Rav Kook writes as follows:

The fire of natural love for the nation and its renewal, which is growing in the Land of Israel and through the Land of Israel, will burst into its power together with the divine flame, the holy fire, of all of the purity of faith in its essential strength and power. The scattered elements of the divine faith, and all of its consolations, and numerous calls to morality and righteousness, to might and hope, to peace and eternal consolation, which have already spread amongst numerous and great nations through our dispersal amongst the nations, through the spread of faiths which derive from the source of the holy writings (Compare *Hilkhot Melachim*: 289), all these are returning to us, gathering in our treasures, being re-collated in the Congregation of Israel (In Kabbalistic sources, the term “Knesset Israel” refers both to the Jewish collective as well as the divine aspect of Kingdom), and are revitalized by many new souls (Compare *Sha’ar Hapsukim*: 165: *Sha’ar Hagilgulim*: 25–27, and to the previous image of “new light”) of a reborn nation. God forbid that we should block the way for the light of life. We should not be startled if the streams seem externally divergent. The light of God shines in them, the spirit of God pervades them.

The secular nationalism is tainted with the filth of the hatred of God's creatures, which hides many evil spirits, but we shall not succeed by casting it forth from the soul of the generation, but rather by means of eager attempts to bring it to its higher source, to unite it with the sourceful holy dimension from which it flows.

Here, Rabbi Kook offers a historiosophical Kabbalistic interpretation of secular Jewish nationalism, its origin, weaknesses and cure (Compare Kook 1983: 51; Kook 1999: 1, 650: 2, 139). Creatively interpreting Lurianic Kabbalah (Scholem 1941: 268–280), he sees the return to the Land of Israel as fulfillment of the theurgical task of collecting the divine sparks scattered throughout the world (Compare Kook 1983: 90; Kook 1999: 2, 259). For the Hassidim, this task is performed by the individual in his relation to the world (See the discussion of scholarly positions on this issue in Gellman 2000). However, Rabbi Kook viewed this process from a collective perspective (Compare: Kook 1983: 99; Kook 1999: 1, 512: 2, 279: 6, 141, 148). As part of the process of recollection, various ideas and ideals, which represent fragments of the divine faith, are recollected from the nations and rejoined in the new Jewish collective (Compare Kook 1983: 100; Kook 1999: 2, 183). Elsewhere (Kook 1999: 1, 652) he explains that this is the task of “high souls.” As in the other texts adduced here, these theurgical projects comprise his self-definition as spiritual leader.

One of these collated ideals is nationalism. Rabbi Kook is aware that nationalism is to some extent a foreign import, but he sees its ultimate source as divine. Thus, though, as he writes, secular nationalism is “tainted by the filth of hatred of God's creatures,” **שנאת הבריות**, it should not be cast aside from the “soul of the generation.” Rather, it should be uplifted to its holy source (Compare Kook 1985b: 70–73; Kook 1999: 3, 1–2).

In all of these texts, Rabbi Kook describes and locates secular nationalism through means of Kabbalistic historiosophy (See also Lubitz 1996). He is aware of the faults entailed in this idea, but sees the task of the Kabbalist as engagement with secular collective processes in order to redeem them. This modernized theurgy left room both for the kind of intense mystical personal odyssey that Rav Kook was engaged in, as well as for political and public involvement.

### *Conclusion*

By way of conclusion, we should explore the wider ideational and historical context in which Kabbalistic historiosophy operated. Firstly, one should note that Kabbalistic Historiosophical schemes persist to this day. To cite one example, the writing of Tzvi Ribek (See Wolfson 2000: 133, n. 11) includes a Kabbalistic exegesis on the fall of the Soviet Empire (Ribek 2000: 450, 460, 498). Secondly, It is instructive to compare the historiosophical and national mysticism of the Vilna Gaon and his students and the similar historiosophical forms of thought created by Idealist philosophers such as Hegel and Fichte. It is my claim that this similarity continued in the writings of Rabbi Kook's son, Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook. As I hope to show elsewhere, the members of the Kookian school, and especially Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah were influenced by 19th and early 20th century nationalistic writing, such as the theory of Volk-Psychologie or national psychology (Rabbi Tzvi Yehudah (Kook 1979: 8) approvingly cites the works of founders of the school of Volk-Psychologiesuch as Hermann Steinthal, who founded a journal devoted to this doctrine (See also Schwartz 2001: 34, 46, 56, 81, 202, 253–254)). It seems that this is a rather natural turn for a school comprised of mystics, who were certainly concerned with personal experience, but were essentially focused on wider national processes. Thus, one can further contextualize the historiosophical interpretation of Kabbalah and its national outgrowths as part of the history of nationalistic thought in Europe as well as of Zionist history. It was nationalism, which transformed historiosophical theory into a full-fledged political movement. It was also nationalism, which ensured the enlistment of a powerful mystical quest in service of the “building of the nation.”

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### *A. Source Texts*

- Avney Eliyahu*. 1977. Commentary by the Vilna Gaon on the prayer book. Jerusalem.  
*Derech Hakodesh*. 1999. Kabbalistic commentary from the school of the Vilna Gaon. Jerusalem, Yeshivat Torat Hakham Press.  
*Even Shlema*. 1874. Collection from the Vilna Gaon's teachings. Warsaw.  
*Hilchot Melachim*. 1999. Law Code of Maimonides. Shabbtai Frankel Edition, New York and Bnei Brak, Bnei Yoseph.  
*Nefesh HaHayim*. 1973. Rabbi Hayim of Volozin (Of the Vilna Gaon's school). Jerusalem.



*Shā'ar Hagilgulīm*. 1963. Lurianic treatise on reincarnation. Tel Aviv, Eshel.  
*Shā'ar Hapsukīm*. 1962. Lurianic exegesis. Tel Aviv, Eshel.

### B. Studies and Contemporary Sources

- Aran G. 1987. *From Religious Zionism to Zionist Religion: The Origins and Culture of Gush Emunim*. Jerusalem, Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University.
- Avivi Y. 1992. "History as a Divine Prescription", in: Bar Asher M. ed., *Rabbi Mordechai Breuer Festschrift*. Jerusalem, Akademem, Hebrew University: 709–771.
- 1993. *Kabbalat Hagra*. Jerusalem, Institute for the Publication of the Works of the Vilna Gaon.
- 1997. *Zohar Ramhal*. Jerusalem, Private edition.
- 2000. "On the 'Shemonah Kevatsim' of Rabbi Kook." *Tsohar 1*, Tsohar Foundation: 93–111.
- Barnai J. 1995. *Historiography and Nationalism: Trends in the Research of Palestine and Its Jewish Yishuv (639–1881)*, Jerusalem, Magnes.
- Elior R. 1996. "The Paradigms of Yesh and Ayin in Hasidic Thought." in: Rapoport-Alpert A. ed., *Hasidism Reappraised*. London, Littman Library: 168–179.
- Etkes I. 1998. *The Gaon of Vilna – the Man and his Image*. Jerusalem, Shazar Institute Press.
- Fine 1995. "Abraham Isaac Kook and the Jewish Mystical Tradition", in Kaplan L. ed., *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*. New York and London, New York University Press: 23–40.
- Hacohen D. 1970. *Kol Hanevuah*. Jerusalem, Mossad Harav Kook.
- Faierstein M. 1989. *All is in the Hands of Heaven: The Teachings of Rabbi Mordecai Joseph Leiner of Izbica*. New York, Yeshiva University Press.
- Fechter M. 1991. "The Kabbalistic Foundations of the Faith-Heresy Issue in Rav Kook's Thought." *D'aat*, Bar Ilan University 47: 69–100.
- Garb J. 1999. "The Kabbalah of R. Joseph Ibn Sayah as a Source for the Understanding of Lurianic Kabbalah." *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, Cherub Press, 4.
- 2000. "Power and Intention in Kabbalah." Jerusalem, Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University.
- 2002. "Law, Prophecy and Antinomianism in the 'Shemonah Kevatsim' by Rabbi Kook", in: Huss B. and Kriesel H. eds., *Shefa Tal Studies in Jewish Thought in Honour of Professor Bracha Sack*. Beer Sheva, Ben Gurion University Press (in print).
- Gellman J. 2000. "Buber's Blunder: Buber's replies to Scholem and Schatz-Uffenheimer." *Modern Judaism* 20 (1): 20–40.
- Giller P. 2001. *Reading the Zohar: The Sacred Text of the Kabbalah*. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press.
- Hadari Y. 1966. "Two Great Priests" in Raphael I. ed., *Rabbi Kook: A Collection of Articles*. Jerusalem, Mossad Harav Kook: 154–168.
- Idel M. 1988. *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- 1995. *Hasidism: Between Ecstasy and Magic*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- 1998. *Messianic Mystics*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- 2000. "The Kabbalah in Morocco: A Survey" in: Mann V. ed., *Morocco Jews and Art in a Muslim Land*. New York, The Jewish Museum.
- Ish-Shalom B. 1996. "R. Kook, Spinoza and Goethe: Modern and Traditional Elements in the Thought of R. Kook", in Elior R. and Dan J. eds., *Rivkah Shatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*, Jerusalem, Hebrew University, Vol. 2: 525–556.
- Kalheim U. 1987. *The Song of a Nation for its Land*. Jerusalem, Ariel.
- Kaplan L., ed. 1995. *Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook and Jewish Spirituality*. New York and London, New York University Press.

- Kook A.I. 1983. *Arpelei Tohar*. Jerusalem, Rabbi Tvi Yehudah Kook Institute.
- 1984. *Collected Articles*. Jerusalem, Golda Katz Foundation.
- 1985a. *Orot Hakodesh*. Jerusalem, Mossad Harav Kook.
- 1985b. *Orot*. Jerusalem, Mossad HaRav Kook.
- 1985c. *Letters*. Jerusalem, Mossad HaRav Kook.
- 1999. *Shemonah Kevatsim*. Jerusalem, Limited Edition.
- Kook T.Y. 1979. *Lenetivot Yisrael*. Jerusalem, Hosen Lev Press.
- 2000. "Hassidism and Mitnagdism." *Shana Be Shana*, Jerusalem, Heichal Shlomo.
- Liebes E. 1997. *Love and Creation: The Thought of R. Baruch of Kosov*. Jerusalem, Doctoral Dissertation, Hebrew University.
- 2000. "The Novelty in Hassidism According to R. Barukh of Kosov." *D'aat*, Bar Ilan University 45: 75–90.
- Liebes Y. 1992. "Two Young Roes of a Doe: The Secret Sermon of Isaac Luria before his Death." *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*. Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 10: 113–169
- 1995. *On Sabbateism and its Kabbalah*. Jerusalem, Bialik Press.
- Liener M.I. 1995. *Mei Hashiloah*, Bnei Brak, Institute for Publication of Works of Izibiche Rebbes.
- Lubitz R. 1996. "Rabbi Kook's Conception of History" in: *Warphaptig I*. Ed., Yeshuot Uzo Memorial Volume for Rabbi Uzi Kalheim, Jerusalem, Ariel: 413–436.
- Margolin R. 1999. "The Interiorization of Religious Life and Thought at the Beginning of Hassidism: It Sources and Epistemological Basis." Jerusalem, Doctoral Dissertation, The Hebrew University.
- Maroz R. 1996. "An Anonymous Commentary on the Idra Raba by a Member of the Sarug School", In R. Elier and J. Dan (eds.) *Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer Memorial Volume*. Jerusalem, Hebrew University, vol. 1: 307–373.
- n.d. "The Sarug School." *Shalem*, Jerusalem, Yad Ben Tvi: 152–193.
- Mopsik C. 1993. *Le Grands Textes de la Cabaleles Rites qui Font Dieu*. Paris, Verdier.
- Morgenstein A. 1985. *Messianism and the Settlement of Eretz-Israel*. Jerusalem, Yad Ben Tvi.
- Morgenstein 1999. *Mysticism and Messianism from Luzatto to the Vilna Gaon*. Jerusalem, Maor.
- Nehorai M.T., "Rabbi Reines and Rabbi Kook: Two Approaches to Zionism," in: Ish Shalom B. and Rosenberg S. eds. n.d. *The World of Rabbi Kook's Thought*. Jerusalem. Avi Chai: 255–267.
- Neria M.T. 1988. *Sihot Hareiyah*. Kfar Haroeh, Chai Roi.
- Pedaya H. 1996. "Sabbath, Saturn and the Diminishing of the Moon The Holy Connection: Letter and Image." *Eshel Beer Sheva*, Ben Gurion University, 4: 143–191.
- Rapoport, Garb and Penso. 1995. *Religious Socialization and Female Subjectivity: Religious-Zionist Adolescent Girls in Israel*, *Sociology of Education*. American Sociological Association 68 (1): 48–61.
- Ravitski A. 1996. *Messianism, Zionism and Jewish Religious Radicalism*. trans. J. Chipman and M. Swirsky. Chicago, Chicago University Press.
- Ribek T. 2000. *Al Ketz Hatikkun*. Jerusalem, S.M. Press.
- Rosnak A. 2000. "Who's Afraid of Rav Kook's Hidden Treatises." (Review Article.) *Tarbiz*, The Hebrew University, 69 (4): 257–291.
- Sarug Y. 2001. *Drush Hamalbush VechaZimzum*. Jerusalem, Private Edition.
- Scholem G. 1941. *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. New York, Schocken Press.
- 1955. "The Paradisic Garb of Souls and the Origin of the Concept of *Haluka de-Rabbanan*." *Tarbitz*, Hebrew University, 24 (3): 290–306.
- 1974. *Kabbalah*. New York, Schocken Press.
- 1991. *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*. trans. Joachim Neugroschel. New York, Schocken.

- Schwartz D. 1999. *Religious Zionism Between Logic and Messianism*. Tel Aviv, Am Oved Press.
- 2001. *Challenge and Crisis in Rabbi Kook's Circle*. Tel Aviv, Am Oved Press.
- Segal H. 1987. "Orot Meofel." *Nekudah*: 113: 16–27.
- Sprinzak E. 1991. *The Ascendancy of Israeli Radical Right*. New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press.
- Suchat R. 1998a. "The Historiosophy of the Vilna Gaon and the Influence of Luzatto on Him and his Disciples." *D'aat*, Bar Ilan University 40: 125–152.
- 1998b. *The Theory of Redemption of the Vilna Gaon: Its Sources and Influence*. Ramat Gan, Doctoral Dissertation, Bar Ilan University.
- 1998c. "The Vilna Gaon's Commentary to *Mishnat Hassidim*: The *Mashal* and *Nimshal* in Lurianic Works." *Kabbalah Journal*, Cherub Press, 3: 265–302
- Tao T.Y. 2000. *Emanut Itenu*. Jerusalem, Erez.
- Yosha N. 1994. *Myth and Metaphor: Abraham Cohen Herera's Philosophic Interpretation of Lurianic Kabbalah*. Jerusalem, Magnes Press, The Hebrew University.
- Wax R. 1995. *Chapters From the Kabbalistic Doctrine of R. Shlomo Elyashiv*. Jerusalem, M.A. Thesis, Hebrew University.
- Wolfson E. 1990. "The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanidies." *D'aat*, Bar Ilan University, 24: 25–49.
- 1992, "Images of God's Feet: Some Observations on the Divine Body in Judaism." in Eilberg-Schwartz E. ed., *People of the Body*. Albany, State University of New York Press.
- 1996. "From Sealed Book to Open Text: Time, Meaning and Narrativity in Kabbalistic Hermeneutics" in Kepnes S. ed., *Interpreting Judaism in a Post-Modern Age*. New York, New York University Press.
- 2000. "Ontology, Alterity and Ethics in Kabbalistic Anthropology." *Exemplaria*, University of Florida, 12 (1): 129–155.

## MILLENNIALIST DREAMS AND APOCALYPTIC NIGHTMARES

Moojan Momen

Most of the major religions in the world began as a small movement, having many of the features of what we would now call a New Religious Movement. In addition, whether to a greater extent, as in Christianity and Islam, or a lesser extent, as in Hinduism and Buddhism, one of the features of these religious movements that have grown to become major religions is the presence in their scriptures of prophecies about a future catastrophe or age of decline as well as about a future golden age (Momen 1999: 242–54). In this paper, we will examine this process of the growth from a small religious movement to a major religion and look, in particular, at the role of millennialism in this process. Although for most of the time, millennialism is not a major component in the world's religions, its importance should not be underestimated. When millennialist movements appear in a religion, it is usually a time of change millennialism itself giving a major impetus to change. One can even go further and state that, in the case of, at least, Christianity and Islam, these religions in their earliest period had many of the features of millennialist groups and that they owed much of their initial vigour and dynamism to this millennialist element.<sup>1</sup>

One of the first scholars to write on the Bahā'ī Faith, Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge University, commented that one of the important aspects of studying the Bahā'ī Faith was the fact that here it was possible to study at close hand the birth of new religion (Balyuzi 1970: 50). In the Bahā'ī Faith, we have the interesting example of a religion that has evolved from the first stage of being a small millennialist new religious movement towards the later stage of taking on the features of a world religion.

---

<sup>1</sup> This paper has benefited from the valuable suggestions resulting from discussion of it on the Bridges e-mail list. I am grateful to those contributing to the discussion, who included: Dr William P. Collins, Dr Susan Maneck, Dr Christopher Buck, J. Vahid Brown, Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam, Ismael Velasco, and Dr Robert Stockman.

*New Religious Movements*

There has been a great deal of research on New Religious Movements (NRMs) in recent years. One feature that facilitates their emergence is a general feeling of discontent with the established religion that it has become corrupt, too closely identified with an unpopular political regime or does not address current problems and concerns. NRMs are often seen by the rest of society, and especially by the established religious authorities, as being subversive sometimes politically and usually morally. They are often accused of breaking up families and of sexual misdemeanours.

While those who study NRMs often define them as movements that have arisen within the last 50 or 100 years, there is no doubt that, if we study some of the major religions of the world, we can see that they would, in their early stages, have been considered NRMs, although not necessarily millennialist. We may consider the Buddha and the group of monks around him. They were not millennialists, but were viewed by the Indian establishment of the time as having many of the characteristics now commonly associated with NRMs in popular opinion. Masfield (1985) has drawn out the similarities between the way that way that society has treated the Buddha and modern NRMs. The Buddha was accused of deluding and brainwashing his disciples, such that they abandoned family life, severing ties with kindred, leaving behind their possessions and following an upstart religious leader. People began to say among themselves: "The recluse Gotama gets along by making [us] childless, the recluse Gotama gets along by making [us] widows, the recluse Gotama gets along by breaking up families" (Masfield 1985: 152). Rumours circulated that they were involved in drug abuse and sexual promiscuity and it was even said that a female disciple had been killed in the course of an orgy. The Buddha in turn complained, as do many NRMs, that his views were being misrepresented.

Some NRMs are millennialist in nature. When there is a catastrophe, great social ferment or the approach of a significant date, small groups form around millennialist and apocalyptic preachers and prophets. Such groups are frowned upon and discouraged by the mainstream religious leaders, and so they often form separate groups, which evolve into NRMs. Among the characteristic features of millennialist NRMs are:

- a strong charismatic leader, who may either claim to be the messianic figure or to be preparing the ground for such a figure;
- an interpretation of the current local or global situation in terms of the apocalyptic nightmares of the traditional religion;
- a tendency to interpret scriptural prophecy in a literal, historicist manner, in particular attempting to fix exact dates for the advent of the apocalypse;
- a tendency to view the immediate future pessimistically (the apocalyptic nightmare) and the more distant future optimistically (the millennialist dream);
- a negative view of material possessions and political structures;
- a view of those who oppose the movement, even in trivial inconsequential ways, as manifestations of evil, as assistants of the devil.

Millennialist NRMs are often divided into two types: pre-millennialist (the coming of the saviour will occur before and will usher in the Golden Age for the elect) and post-millennialist (the belief that the saviour will come after the start of the Golden Age). It has been suggested, however, that the terms “pre- and post-millennialism” are to some extent unsatisfactory (partly because they relate specifically to a Christian context). Although the belief in the advent of a saviour is a strong feature of the pre-millennialist groups, this is not necessarily a feature of the post-millennialists. Catherine Wessinger (2000) has suggested replacing these terms with “catastrophic and progressive millennialism” since these terms better describe the main social features of these movements. Both groups predict a change in the social order. The main difference between these groups is whether it is expected that the change will occur suddenly, catastrophically and through divine intervention (catastrophic millennialism), or whether it will occur gradually and mainly through human effort (progressive millennialism).

In “catastrophic millennialism” the belief is that the transition to the millennial kingdom will be accomplished by a great catastrophe (often caused by a superhuman agent) that destroys the currently evil world so that a collective salvation will be accomplished for the saved. . . . “Progressive millennialism” is belief that humans working in harmony with a divine or superhuman plan can progressively build the millennial kingdom . . . (Wessinger 2000: 8–9).

In the following discussion the word “millennialist” will be used to refer to those aspects of these movements that look to a “progressive”,

optimistic, long-term change in human society, and the word “apocalyptic” to refer to those aspects of these movements that look to a “catastrophic”, pessimistic, sudden overturning of the present order hence “millennialist dreams and apocalyptic nightmares”. It should of course be pointed out that NRMs can lie at various stages along a spectrum from the apocalyptic, pre-millennialist, catastrophic to the post-millennialist, progressive; these will all be called millennialist groups or millennialist NRMs.

Although these millennialist NRMs often stay small and many do not long survive the death of their founder, they should not be dismissed as inconsequential, for they show how it is possible for the religious landscape, which is usually so static and conservative, to undergo radical change. These millennialist NRMs (especially the messianic, “catastrophic” ones) are one of the most powerful agents of religious change and transformation. Whether at the level of the individual or at the level of society, millennialism and apocalypticism are one of the keys to understanding how radical religious change occurs: personal change in the form of moral regeneration or religious rededication; and societal change in the form of an effort to bring about an amelioration of social conditions. Through millennialist movements we can see how a traditional religious worldview can be overturned and a new vision can take its place, a “new heaven and a new earth.”

Such millennialist movements can grow into major religions. Jesus Christ and the Nazarene sect that gathered around him and survived him may be regarded as a millennialist group. The Gospels show a great desire by their authors to demonstrate Jesus as having fulfilled the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. This group arose in circumstances similar to the present and was seen by contemporary Jews and Roman citizens in the same way that we now regard NRMs. Jesus arose at a time of great millennialist and apocalyptic ferment among the Jews. Numerous non-canonical apocalyptic documents date from this period, when the Jewish people were under a military threat of occupation from the Romans and a cultural and religious threat of submersion under the tide of Hellenisation that was sweeping through the Middle East and had already claimed many Jews. In the midst of this period of great cultural stress, the Nazarenes put forward the claim that their founder was the promised Jewish Messiah. They were socially very marginal and a somewhat young group of people much like present-day NRMs. They were

treated with much the same disdain and hostility from the Jewish religious leaders that the leaders of the mainstream orthodox religious communities show towards the NRMs. The secular authorities also persecuted them because they refused to conform to the norms of the Roman Empire. They were accused of subversion, of incest and other sexual misdemeanours (Olson 1982: 64–83).

Thus we see that some groups that have all of the characteristics of NRMs have in the past evolved to become independent world religions. In this process, those of them that are millennialist must replace the immediacy of the millennialist and apocalyptic outlook with the more stable, long-term view of the established religions and this is the process that we will concentrate on in the rest of this paper. This transformation occurred, for example, in Christianity, where we know that the first generation of the disciples of Christ expected his imminent return and the Day of Judgement. They recorded that after Christ had described to them what would happen at the time of his return and the end of the world, he had said: "Verily I say unto you, this generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled" (Matthew 24:34, cf. Mark 13:30, Luke 21:32). Among this first generation, most were willing to wait in Jerusalem similar to many modern millennialist NRMs. In the subsequent course of the history of Christianity, this immediate expectation of Divine intervention was replaced by a vision that saw the second coming and the establishment of the Kingdom of God as a distant event and that the immediate task of Christians was to establish the teachings of Christ in the world.

Similarly in Islam, it is clear that the first few generations of Muslims were in imminent expectation of the advent of the Mahdī. Indeed there were numerous movements in the first three centuries of Islam led by individuals claiming to be either the Mahdī himself or his representative (Hodgson 1974: 1:197–8; Momen 1985: 45–60). It was only gradually that the teaching about the coming of the Mahdī was put into the distant future and Muslims were encouraged to concentrate on the task of building the Islamic civilisation. Thus what was a pre-millennialist or catastrophic type of millennialism evolved into a post-millennialist or progressive type of millennialism (see above).

In the rest of this paper, we will describe how this process can be observed to have taken place, and indeed to be still taking place, in the history of the Bahā'ī Faith. We will examine the process



whereby the message of an immediate apocalypse that will instantly transform the world through sudden dramatic other-worldly intervention evolves into the more long-term gradual improvement that the mainstream religions seek to achieve mainly by human effort. By studying the Bahā'ī Faith, we may come to understand something of the dynamics of this transformation.

### *The Bahā'ī Faith*

The Bahā'ī Faith began as the Bābī movement in Iran. This movement was founded by a young man, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, who took on the title of the Bāb in 1844. This religious movement was from the outset messianic in nature with the Bāb putting forward claims to be an agent of the Divine. The apocalyptic and millennialist tenor was greatly heightened, however, when the Bāb claimed in 1848 to be the Mahdī, the one who was awaited by all Muslims. In that year, at his trial in Tabriz, in northwest Iran, he made the public pronouncement:

I am, I am, I am, the promised One! I am the One whose name you have for a thousand years invoked, at whose mention you have risen, whose advent you have longed to witness, and the hour of whose Revelation you have prayed God to hasten. Verily I say, it is incumbent upon the peoples of both the East and the West to obey My word and to pledge allegiance to My person (Nabī 1962: 316).

The leading religious dignitary present sought clarification: "That is to say you are the Mahdī, the Lord of Religion?" "Yes," answered the Bāb (Balyuzi 1973: 142).

The Mahdī is a figure that, in Islamic eschatology, is expected to arise near the time of the end of the world and to defeat the forces of evil and to fill the world with justice under his rule. In other words, he will fulfill both the apocalyptic nightmare of war and destruction and the millennialist dream of a Golden Age. In Shī'ī Islam, he is identified with the Twelfth Imam who is said to have gone into occultation, and whose emergence is expected (Momen 1985: 161–71).

In the Bābī movement, there were numerous millennialist and messianic themes. In the Bāb's writings, he explains, at length, the manner in which he has fulfilled Islamic prophecies not only of the Mahdī, but also of the Day of Judgment and Resurrection. In some

of his actions, also, the Bāb played into certain well-known prophecies about the Mahdī, such as his pilgrimage to Mecca, his announcement of his claims from the Ka'ba, and his calling for the raising of a Black Standard in Khurāsān. Insofar as he interpreted the prophecies of the Day of Judgement and the Day of Resurrection metaphorically and not literally, however, he diffused some of the apocalyptic tension that his claims created. Nor did he at any time call for a holy war or the overthrow of the political order. He could not, however, diffuse completely the apocalyptic expectations of his followers and opponents, which had been imbibed from childhood by them from their culture. We read for example that one of the Bāb's most learned supporters, Mīrzā Aḥmad Azghandī, compiled a volume in which he recorded some twelve thousand Islamic traditions relating to the coming of the Mahdī (Nabīl 1962: 184). For many of his followers, the coming of the Mahdī meant inevitably wars and bloodshed (Smith 1987: 42–4).

The followers of the Bāb, the Bābīs, saw themselves as the returns of the prophets of the past which had been prophesied in Islamic Traditions to occur at the time of the Mahdī.<sup>2</sup> They saw themselves as being lined up on the side of the forces of good against the forces of evil, fighting apocalyptic battles and fulfilling prophecy. Thus, for example, one of the Bāb's leading disciples was ordered to raise a black standard in Khurāsān. This was an action designed to fulfill the prophecy that the coming of the Mahdī would be accompanied by a black standard coming from Khurāsān. Similarly, when the followers of the Bāb were surrounded by the Shah's troops at Shaykh Ṭabarsī near the Caspian coast, they saw themselves as the 313 companions of the Mahdī that had been prophesied.

Although some have tried to show the Bābīs as militant fanatics who initiated conflict with the government and people of Iran, the accounts of each episode of violence that occurred show that, although the Bābīs may on occasions have been provocative, it was usually the government or the Islamic religious leaders who initiated violence against them. With respect to the three categories of millennialist groups involved in violence described by Wessinger, the Bābīs may be classed as an "assaulted millennialist group" (Wessinger 2000:

---

<sup>2</sup> The Bāb saw the concept of "return" as being a return of archetypal attributes rather than in any sense of bodily resurrection or reincarnation.

3–4, 16–25). Their views were misunderstood and they were regarded as being a danger to the people, therefore they were assaulted without having initiated the violence themselves. Like other NRMs, they were accused of being morally subversive and of sexual misdemeanours.<sup>3</sup> The Bābī upheavals in Iran lasted some four years at the end of which, in 1852, the Bābī movement had been crushed by the government and religious leadership of Iran.

The Bahā'ī Faith emerged about 15 years later, building on the remnants of the Bābī communities. The apocalyptic and millennialist features of the religion continued. Bahā'u'llāh, the founder of the Bahā'ī Faith (1817–92), confirmed the eschatological elements of the Bābī movement and made messianic claims himself. Indeed, while the Bāb's claims related only to Islam, Bahā'u'llāh made messianic claims relating to all religions:

The time fore-ordained unto the peoples and kindreds of the earth is now come. The promises of God, as recorded in the Holy Scriptures, have all been fulfilled . . . Verily I say, this is the Day in which mankind can behold the Face, and hear the Voice, of the Promised One. The Call of God hath been raised, and the light of His countenance hath been lifted up upon men . . . Great indeed is this Day! The allusions made to it in all the sacred Scriptures as the Day of God attest its greatness. The soul of every Prophet of God, of every Divine Messenger, hath thirsted for this wondrous Day. All the divers kindreds of the earth have, likewise, yearned to attain it (1967: 111–112).

Nor do Bahā'u'llāh's writings lack an element of apocalypticism. He frequently referred to the imminent occurrence of a catastrophe:

O ye peoples of the world! Know, verily, that an unforeseen calamity is following you, and that grievous retribution awaiteth you (Bahā'u'llāh 1990, no. 63).

The time for the destruction of the world and its people hath arrived (cited in Shoghi Effendi 1990: 81).

By Him Who is the Eternal Truth! The day is approaching when the wrathful anger of the Almighty will have taken hold of them . . . He shall cleanse the earth from the defilement of their corruption . . . (cited in Shoghi Effendi 1990: 81)

However, Bahā'u'llāh was anxious to neutralize the millennialist fervour among the Bābīs that had caused them to clash with the gov-

---

<sup>3</sup> European diplomats and travellers reported such accusations against the Bābīs (see Momen 1980: 6, 7, 9, 17, 22).

ernment and had resulted in so much bloodshed. From the beginning of his ministry, Bahā'u'llāh abolished the law of holy war. He also indicates that the coming catastrophe is not merely an apocalyptic act of God, rather human actions will also contribute to it:

Say: O concourse of the heedless! I swear by God! The promised day is come, the day when tormenting trials will have surged above your heads, and beneath your feet, saying: 'Taste ye what your hands have wrought!' (cited in Shoghi Effendi 1990: 81)

The civilization, so often vaunted by the learned exponents of arts and sciences, will, if allowed to overleap the bounds of moderation, bring great evil upon men . . . If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation . . . The day is approaching when its flame will devour the cities (Bahā'u'llāh 1983: 342–3).

And Bahā'u'llāh even hints that human beings could act in such a way as to offset the worst effects of this calamity:

O ye that are bereft of understanding! A severe trial pursueth you, and will suddenly overtake you. Bestir yourselves, that haply it may pass and inflict no harm upon you (cited in Shoghi Effendi 1990: 81).

In his later writings, Bahā'u'llāh moved even further away from apocalypticism. He moved the Bahā'ī community away from the pure millennialist dream that the Golden Age would appear miraculously as an act of God and towards the idea that it would be a gradual process built up by the actions of human beings. The first stage of this would be a political peace established by the governments of the world. He wrote of the role of rulers and governments in coming together and agreeing upon peace.

The time must come when the imperative necessity for the holding of a vast, an all-embracing assemblage of men will be universally realized. The rulers and kings of the earth must needs attend it, and, participating in its deliberations, must consider such ways and means as will lay the foundations of the world's Great Peace amongst men (1983: 249).

He also wrote of the need for the Bahā'ī central institution that he had ordained, the House of Justice, to work for this peace:

First: It is incumbent upon the ministers of the House of Justice to promote the Lesser Peace so that the people of the earth may be relieved from the burden of exorbitant expenditures. This matter is imperative and absolutely essential, inasmuch as hostilities and conflict lie at the root of affliction and calamity (Bahā'u'llāh 1978: 89).

But beyond this political peace (“the Lesser Peace”), Bahā’u’llāh detailed the ways in which human beings could gradually work towards building a Golden Age, which he called the Most Great Peace. Bahā’u’llāh laid out certain social principles and aims, towards which he said it was essential for all humanity, and especially his followers, to work. These were to be the foundations of the Most Great Peace. Thus the Golden Age that was the subject of the millennialist dream would be brought about gradually through the efforts and sacrifices of the people of the world in general and the followers of Bahā’u’llāh in particular (Smith 1987: 74–6).

It is difficult to know how the Bahā’īs of the time of Bahā’u’llāh themselves viewed the question of the fulfilment of apocalyptic and millennialist prophecy whether they saw it as something that would happen miraculously and suddenly by divine intervention or whether it would be a gradual process that emerges through human action. There are at present insufficient sources available to judge this. Certainly some of the Bahā’īs, such as the great scholar Mīrzā Abu’l-Faḍl Gulpāyḡānī, emphasized a rational, non-miraculous approach to the scriptures, but he cannot be regarded as representative of the average Bahā’ī of that time.

‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, the son of Bahā’u’llāh, led the Bahā’ī community from 1892 to his death in 1921. He moved the religion further away from a focus on immediate millennialist expectations. Although ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ did make prophecies of apocalyptic events in the immediate future, these were phrased in ways that made it clear that it was largely to be a calamity of human making. Thus, for example, just two years before the outbreak of the First World War, he said in a talk in America:

The issue of paramount importance in the world today is international peace. The European continent is like an arsenal, a storehouse of explosives ready for ignition, and one spark will set the whole of Europe aflame, particularly at this time when the Balkan question is before the world (1982: 376).

In another talk in North America, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ again predicted a forthcoming European war and identified it with the Biblical prophecy of Armageddon (Anon. 1916: 85; Lambden 1999–2000). After the First World War, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ predicted more calamities to come but again not by a direct divine intervention:

The Balkans will remain discontented. Its restlessness will increase. The vanquished Powers will continue to agitate. They will resort to every

measure that may rekindle the flame of war. Movements, newly-born and world-wide in their range, will exert their utmost effort for the advancement of their designs. The Movement of the Left will acquire great importance. Its influence will spread (1978: 249–250).

Similarly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ writes of the millennialist dream of a Golden Age, which he also refers to as the Most Great Peace:

War shall cease between nations, and by the will of God the Most Great Peace shall come; the world will be seen as a new world, and all men will live as brothers (1987: 19–20).

‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, however, indicates that it will not just appear miraculously. It is something that the Bahā’īs must work towards.

If you arise in the Cause of God with divine power, heavenly grace, the sincerity of the Kingdom, a merciful heart and decisive intention, it is certain that the world of humanity will be entirely illumined, the moralities of mankind will become merciful, the foundations of the Most Great Peace will be laid, and the oneness of the kingdom of man will become a reality (1982: 55).

Among the Bahā’īs there were some who expected an apocalyptic fulfilment of these statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. Among the American Bahā’īs, for example, an expectation of an apocalyptic catastrophe to be followed by the millennialist establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth was a central part of the teaching of Ibrahim Kheiralla, the first to teach the Bahā’ī Faith in America. He had fixed a date of 1917 for the establishment of the Millennium,<sup>4</sup> and this expectation of an imminent fulfilment of prophecy was increased when ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, during his American and European journey in 1912–3 made frequent references to imminent war. The start of the First World War heightened, of course, these expectations. However the prophecy of the establishment of the Millennium by 1917 had not been made by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ himself and the Bahā’īs experienced no great dislocation when the prophecy was disconfirmed.<sup>5</sup> Writing in early 1918, Remey states:

---

<sup>4</sup> Browne 1918: 139; Kheiralla 1900: 480. This date was arrived at by taking Daniel 12:12 which refers to 1335 days and converting it to the same year of the Islamic calendar.

<sup>5</sup> On what occurs when a prophecy is disconfirmed, the classical study is that of Festinger, Rieckem and Schacter 1956. See also an overview of this theme in Momen 1999: 262–4.

We are living in the day of the great Armageddon. The ideals and institutions of the past ages are dying . . . this great struggle, now in progress, is essentially and fundamentally one of spiritual forces a struggle between the powers of Light and of darkness the heavenly powers arrayed against the satanic powers . . . It is due to the coming of the Promised One and the establishment of the cause of God that the evil forces are now so rampant, for their day is over, and having but a short time yet to live they are putting forth a great effort in the awful agony of their death struggle (Remy 1918: 3).

The early American Bahā'īs emphasized the fulfilment of prophecy a great deal in their expositions of the Bahā'ī Faith. The esoteric and metaphorical interpretations that they gave these prophecies meant however that these presentations were not appealing to the literalist mentality of the Adventist movement, where most of the apocalyptic rhetoric was to be found, and there were few Bahā'ī converts from such groups.<sup>6</sup>

Among the American Bahā'īs, there was therefore a tension between the imminent expectations of Divine intervention to bring about an apocalypse followed by the preternatural establishment of the Kingdom of God and the less dramatic vision of the Bahā'īs working for the gradual establishment of this Kingdom. Insofar as we can judge matters, the latter was the official stance of the community, as reflected in the pronouncements made and the literature published, while the former may well have constituted a considerable proportion of the conversation at Bahā'ī meetings.<sup>7</sup>

With the leadership of Shoghi Effendi from 1921 to 1957, there was an even greater move away from apocalypticism and millennialism as immediate expectations. Yet even with Shoghi Effendi, we do not entirely lose the apocalyptic element. In his book, *The Promised Day is Come*, Shoghi Effendi, writing in 1941 during the Second World War, gives his interpretation of the spiritual significance of the events of the previous hundred years. He concludes by writing:

---

<sup>6</sup> On millenarianism among American Bahā'īs and the links with William Miller and the Adventist movement, see Collins 1998; Collins 1998–9. See also Smith 1982: 157–161 and Smith 1987: 107–8.

<sup>7</sup> Smith, for example, cites an article by a non-Bahā'ī, Eric Dime, who attended the Bahā'ī Convention in 1917 and found that the “war proved the leading topic of discussion” and that the Bahā'īs were confident that the war would end within a year and “the foundations of Peace” would be laid (Smith 1982: 159).

Dear friends! I have, in the preceding pages, attempted to represent this world-afflicting ordeal that has laid its grip upon mankind as primarily a judgment of God pronounced against the peoples of the earth, who, for a century, have refused to recognize the One Whose advent had been promised to all religions, and in Whose Faith all nations can alone, and must eventually, seek their true salvation . . . (1941: 111).

Even the Second World War is not the totality of the apocalypse that Shoghi Effendi foresees. Writing in 1956, he states:

The violent derangement of the world's equilibrium; the trembling that will seize the limbs of mankind; the radical transformation of human society; the rolling up of the present-day Order; the fundamental changes affecting the structure of government; the weakening of the pillars of religion; the rise of dictatorships; the spread of tyranny; the fall of monarchies; the decline of ecclesiastical institutions; the increase of anarchy and chaos; the extension and consolidation of the Movement of the Left; the fanning into flame of the smouldering fire of racial strife; the development of infernal engines of war; the burning of cities; the contamination of the atmosphere of the earth these stand out as the signs and portents that must either herald or accompany the retributive calamity which, as decreed by Him Who is the Judge and Redeemer of mankind, must, sooner or later, afflict a society which, for the most part, and for over a century, has turned a deaf ear to the Voice of God's Messenger in this day a calamity which must purge the human race of the dross of its age-long corruptions, and weld its component parts into a firmly-knit world-embracing Fellowship (1971: 103).

Nevertheless, the expectations of the Bahā'ī community for the fulfilment of the millennialist dream, the coming of the Most Great Peace, was firmly altered from being something that would happen suddenly and in the near future to something that would come into being over a long period of time through the efforts of the Bahā'īs themselves.

Dearly beloved friends! Though the task be long and arduous, yet the prize which the All-Bountiful Bestower has chosen to confer upon you is of such preciousness that neither tongue nor pen can befittingly appraise it. Though the goal towards which you are now so strenuously striving be distant, and as yet undisclosed to men's eyes, yet its promise lies firmly embedded in the authoritative and unalterable utterances of Bahā'u'llāh (Shoghi Effendi 1990: 15).

In his writings, Shoghi Effendi is much more specific about the details of the millennialist dream. He lays out the stages that humanity must go through and the institutions that must be set up before humanity can enter the Golden Age, the Most Great Peace. All through his



writings on these themes, the emphasis is on the fact that it will be a gradual human process rather than a sudden divine intervention. Thus in the writings of Shoghi Effendi, there is a tension between the apocalyptic nightmare that will happen suddenly, in the near future, and is in the nature of a divine intervention (albeit that it may appear to occur through the agency of human beings) and the millennialist dream which will come in the distant future gradually through human effort. Shoghi Effendi describes the processes going on in the world as being of a dual nature. A destructive process caused by the fact that the “old world order” is disintegrating. This process is independent of the Bahā’īs and will proceed inevitably and inexorably to its end. The second is the building up of the “new world order”, which is to a large extent the work of the Bahā’īs and dependent on their efforts. Shoghi Effendi frequently uses the threat of the apocalyptic nightmare as a way of exhorting the Bahā’īs to greater efforts and encouraging them to disperse from Europe and North America and take the Bahā’ī religion to other lands (1947: 48, 52).

Among the Bahā’īs themselves, the millennialist tension faded greatly as, directed by Shoghi Effendi, the religion became doctrinally more systematized, administratively more organized and geographically more widespread. The major concerns of the Bahā’īs became the establishment of the Bahā’ī Administration and the spread of the Bahā’ī Faith. Nevertheless, the sense of millennialist excitement did not fade away altogether. There was continuing speculation about the date and nature of the coming apocalyptic catastrophe. Words attributed to Shoghi Effendi about this circulated in unofficial mimeographed format. One date that was frequently mentioned was that it would occur by either 1957 or 1963.<sup>8</sup> The common expectation was that some major catastrophe (perhaps a world war) would occur after which a chastened humanity would turn to the Bahā’ī Faith in large numbers and world peace would emerge (Piff 2000: 126).

In 1960, shortly after the death of Shoghi Effendi, a small group of Bahā’īs split away, under the leadership of Charles Mason Remey, from the main body of Bahā’īs. Remey himself had always been much attracted to apocalyptic speculation (see above), and this was

---

<sup>8</sup> This was an interpretation of Daniel 12:12 by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ which was published in Esslemont, *Bahā’u’llāh and the New Era*. Initially, the date was published as 1957, but Shoghi Effendi re-translated the passage concerned and this resulted in the date 1963.

now given a free reign in his break-away group. Predictions that the earth's axis would tilt and there would be global flooding by various dates were made and then revised when that date passed and nothing happened. Remey's followers have split into a number of very small sects, but apocalyptic thought remains a major motif. One group under Leland Jensen achieved temporary national notoriety in the United States when they predicted that the world would experience a nuclear catastrophe in 1980 (Balch, Farnsworth, and Wilkins 1983). Between 1979 and 1995, Jensen and his chief disciple Neal Chase had made twenty prophecies of global and local catastrophes, each one of which was disconfirmed (Balch et al. 1997). This group demonstrated all of the features of millennialist NRMs given above: they were centred on a single charismatic leader; they interpreted current events (such as the approach of Haley's comet) in terms of fulfilment of apocalyptic prophecies; they interpreted Biblical prophecies literally and attempted to fix dates for the apocalypse; they viewed the near future as being filled with apocalyptic disasters, while the more distant future was seen as an age of peace; they viewed political structures and material possessions negatively; and they considered those who opposed them or rejected them, especially the main body of Bahā'īs, as evil. The study by Balch et al. (1997) shows that Jensen's followers became increasingly disillusioned with the failure of the prophecies, no longer took them seriously and concentrated on the social and other teachings of the Bahā'ī Faith, and many left the movement so that it shrank to less than a one hundred members.

Following the death of Shoghi Effendi, the Universal House of Justice became the supreme authority of the Bahā'ī Faith in 1963. The official announcements of the Universal House of Justice are almost devoid of apocalyptic content. Insofar as they refer specifically to this theme, they usually discourage any speculation about the timing or details of the catastrophe. Some have speculated that they even seem to have indicated that whatever catastrophe may have been ordained has now passed. For example, we find that in 1967, the Universal House of Justice was saying, "As humanity enters the dark heart of this age of transition our course is clear."<sup>9</sup> By the

---

<sup>9</sup> Message to the Six Intercontinental Conferences, October 1967 (Universal House of Justice 1969: 120). Although Shoghi Effendi defines the term "Age of Transition" in relation to the developments within the Bahā'ī Faith, he clearly also links the term with the cataclysmic changes going on in the world (1938: 171–2). He states

Riḍvān Message of 1988, we find them saying “A silver lining to the dark picture which has overshadowed most of this century now brightens the horizon. It is discernible in the new tendencies impelling the social processes at work throughout the world, in the evidences of an accelerated trend towards peace” (Universal House of Justice 1992: 55). This could be interpreted as meaning that the Universal House of Justice believes that we are past the worst of the catastrophe that humanity has to endure. This does not mean that further adverse events may not occur for they also say in the Riḍvān Message of 1990: “Hopeful as are the signs, we cannot forget that the dark passage of the Age of Transition has not been fully traversed; it is as yet long, slippery and tortuous” (Universal House of Justice 1992: 79). But it does seem to imply that the worst of the apocalyptic nightmare is over.

In their writings, the Universal House of Justice are firm in directing the attention of the Bahāʾīs towards the tasks that need to be done in order to bring about the millennialist dream. They continue the vision of Shoghi Effendi that final fulfilment of the millennialist dream is to come about gradually over a long period of time and they emphasize that it will be mainly through the efforts of Bahāʾīs in coordinated and planned activities. These plans involve not just the geographical spread and numerical expansion of the Bahāʾī Faith, but have increasingly included development of the Bahāʾī community itself, social and economic development projects and efforts to influence national and international governmental institutions. The approach of the Universal House of Justice is not unlike the “managed millennialism” described by Jacqueline Stone.

... world peace, it is suggested, can be realized soon enough that individual members’ efforts will make a difference; this enables the mustering of collective energy to support organizational programs. At the same time, however, the goal is not arriving so soon as to disrupt the fabric of daily life or social responsibilities (Stone 2000: 277–9).

Thus both Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice, while not altogether ignoring the apocalyptic nightmare of pre-millennialist or catastrophic millennialist expectations, try to direct the focus

---

in 1936 that certain political events are the earliest occurrences “of that turbulent Age, into the outer fringes of whose darkest phase we are now beginning to enter.” (1938: 171). Similarly, the Universal House of Justice, in the passages cited in this paragraph, also link the term “Age of Transition” to events going on in the world.

and efforts of the Bahā'īs towards the post-millennialist or progressive millennialist dream of working towards and building up the institutions of a promised Golden Age, the Most Great Peace. Indeed, as noted above for Shoghi Effendi, they use the threat of the apocalyptic nightmare as "a strategy of persuasion" (Borchardt 1990), to exhort the Bahā'īs to greater efforts in spreading the Bahā'ī Faith as a way of mitigating to some extent the dire state of the world and the impending apocalyptic calamity. In a message addressed to the Bahā'īs of the world in 1969, the Universal House of Justice said:

In the worsening world situation, fraught with pain of war, violence and the sudden uprooting of long-established institutions, can be seen the fulfilment of the prophecies of Bahā'u'llāh and the oft-repeated warnings of the Master and the beloved Guardian about the inevitable fate of a lamentably defective social system, an unenlightened leadership and a rebellious and unbelieving humanity. Governments and peoples of both the developed and developing nations, and other human institutions, secular and religious, finding themselves helpless to reverse the trend of the catastrophic events of the day, stand bewildered and overpowered by the magnitude and complexity of the problems facing them . . .

What is needed now is the awakening of all believers to the immediacy of the challenge so that each may assume his share of the responsibility for taking the Teachings to all humanity . . . Every Bahā'ī, however humble or inarticulate, must become intent on fulfilling his role as a bearer of the Divine Message. Indeed, how can a true believer remain silent while around us men cry out in anguish for truth, love and unity to descend upon this world?<sup>10</sup>

Among the Bahā'īs, the numbers interested in millennialist speculation has dwindled further during the time of the Universal House of Justice and the majority have turned to other areas of interest. The subject has increasingly been pushed out of discussions at Bahā'ī meetings and has survived only among a small number of enthusiasts. Bahā'īs as a whole have remained interested in the fulfilment of prophecy but this has been more as a means of proving the Bahā'ī Faith to those of other religions. Thus for example, William Sears' *Thief in the Night*, a book interpreting Biblical prophecy and showing that the Bahā'ī Faith fulfilled this, has remained one of the best selling of all Bahā'ī books since it was first published in 1961.

---

<sup>10</sup> The message of the Universal House of Justice to the Bahā'īs of the world, 16, November 1969 (1996: 153–4). On this subject, see Borchardt 1990, especially pp. 203–227.

Among the minority of Bahā'īs still interested in apocalyptic speculation, attention turned to various years as the date of the expected apocalyptic catastrophe. David Piff, in his book *Bahā'ī Lore* (2000), has listed a number of such dates mentioned by his informants. Because Shoghi Effendi states in *Promised Day is Come* that God has respited human beings for one hundred years (1941: 6), speculation centred around centenary anniversaries of significant events: especially 1967, the centenary of Bahā'u'llāh's proclamation to the kings and rulers, and 1992, the centenary of Bahā'u'llāh's passing (Piff 2000: 127; see also Shoghi Effendi 1981: 456). But above all expectation was directed towards the year 2000. Since 'Abdu'l-Bahā' had indicated that a "unity of nations" would be established by that date,<sup>11</sup> some felt that this meant that the catastrophe mentioned by Shoghi Effendi (see above) must also happen by that date.

The present author is not aware of any further dates after the end of the year 2000 that have a scriptural or folkloric significance among the main body of Bahā'īs. Apocalyptic thinking seems, nevertheless, to have an endless fascination for some, as Daniel Wojcik has observed (1997: 209). Given this predisposition, it is unlikely that apocalyptic thinking among Bahā'īs will disappear altogether. Some Bahā'īs will undoubtedly continue to speculate but it seems probable that this aspect of the Bahā'ī Faith will be marginalized even further and that the situation among Bahā'īs will come to resemble that among Christians, Muslims and others where such speculation is a minor marginal activity continued by a small but enthusiastic minority.

This marks the completion in the Bahā'ī Faith of a process of evolution from a millennialist NRM, with an immediate apocalyptic Divine intervention at the forefront of concern, to a world religion, where millennialist concerns become a vehicle for progressive, long-term change and where apocalyptic concerns are marginalized. This paper has attempted to demonstrate the step-by-step changes whereby the leadership of the Bahā'ī Faith has managed this process, both utilizing the great energy that millennialism gives to the adherents of a movement and, at the same time, gradually reducing the "catastrophic" dimensions present in the movement so as to redirect energies towards a more long-term "progressive" outlook.

---

<sup>11</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahā' 1978, 32. This statement was clarified by 'Abdu'l-Bahā' to mean the twentieth century in an oral statement to the *Montreal Daily Star*, published 11 September 1912.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. 1987. *Abdu’l-Bahā’ in London*, London.
- . 1982, *Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Wilmette, Ill.
- . 1978, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’*, Haifa.
- Anon. 1916, “Some Bahai Teachings on Peace and War”, *Star of the West*, vol. 7, no. 9 (20 August 1916) 84–8.
- Bahā’u’llāh 1983, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā’u’llāh* (trans. Shoghi Effendi), Wilmette, Ill.
- . 1990, *The Hidden Words* (trans. Shoghi Effendi et al.), Wilmette, Ill.
- . 1967, *The Proclamation of Bahā’u’llāh*, Haifa.
- . 1978, *Tablets of Bahā’u’llāh*, Haifa.
- Balch, Robert, Gwen Farnsworth, and Sue Wilkins 1983, “When the Bombs Drop: Reactions to Disconfirmed Prophecy in a Millennial Sect”, *Sociological Perspective* 26:137–58.
- Balch, Robert, John Domitrovich, Barbara Lynn Mahnke and Vanessa Morrison 1997, “Fifteen Years of Failed Prophecy: coping with cognitive dissonance in a Baha’i sect,” in Thomas Robbins and Susan J. Palmer (eds.), *Millennium, Messiahs and Mayhem: Contemporary Apocalyptic Movements*, New York, pp. 73–90.
- Balyuzi, Hasan M. 1973, *The Bāb*, Oxford.
- Borchardt, Frank 1990, *Doomsday Speculation as a Strategy of Persuasion: A Study of Apocalypticism as Rhetoric*, Studies in Comparative Religion, vol. 4, Lewiston.
- Browne, Edward G. 1918, *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*, Cambridge.
- Collins, William 1998, “Millennialism, the Millerites, and Historicism”, *World Order*, vol. 30, no. 1 (Fall 1998) 9–26.
- . 1998–9, “Bahā’ī Interpretation of Biblical Time Prophecy”, *World Order*, vol. 30, no. 2 (Winter 1998–9) 9–29.
- Festinger 1956, Leon, H.W. Rieckem and S. Schacter, *When Prophecy Fails*, New York.
- Hodgson, Marshall 1974, *The Venture of Islam*, vol. 1, Chicago.
- Kheiralla, Ibrahim 1900, *Behā’u’llāh*, Chicago.
- Lambden, Stephen 1999–2000, “Catastrophe, Armageddon and Millennium: Some Aspects of the Bābī-Bahā’ī Exegesis of Apocalyptic Symbolism,” *Bahā’ī Studies Review*, 9:81–99.
- Masefield, Peter 1985, “The Muni and the Moonies”, *Religion*, 15:143–60.
- Momen, Moojan 1980, *The Bābī and Bahā’ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford.
- . 1985, *Introduction to Shī‘ī Islam*, New Haven and Oxford.
- . 1999, *The Phenomenon of Religion*, Oxford.
- Nabil 1962, *The Dawn-Breakers* (trans. Shoghi Effendi), Wilmette, Illinois.
- Olson, Theodore 1982, *Millennialism, Utopianism, and Progress*, Toronto.
- Piff, David 2000, *Bahā’ī Lore*, Oxford.
- Remy, Charles Mason 1918, *The Protection of the Cause of God*, Washington, D.C.
- Shoghi Effendi 1990, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- . 1941, *The Promised Day is Come*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- . 1947, *Messages to America*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- . 1971, *Messages to the Baha’i World*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- . 1938, *World Order of Bahā’u’llāh*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- . 1981, *The Unfolding Destiny of the British Bahā’ī Community: The Messages of the Guardian of the Bahā’ī Faith to the Bahā’īs of the British Isles*, London.
- Smith, Peter 1987, *Bābī and Bahā’ī Religions*, Cambridge.
- . 1982, “The American Bahā’ī Community, 1894–1917: a Preliminary Survey,” in M. Momen (ed.), *Studies in Bābī and Bahā’ī History*, vol. 1, Los Angeles.
- Stone, Jacqueline 2000, “Japanese Lotus Millennialism: From Militant Nationalism to Contemporary Peace Movements,” in Wessinger 2000, 261–80.

- Universal House of Justice 1969, *Wellspring of Guidance*, Wilmette, Illinois.
- 1992, *A Wider Horizon: Selected Messages of the Universal House of Justice, 1983–1992*, Riviera Beach, Florida.
- 1996, *Messages from the Universal House of Justice 1963–1986* (compiled by Geoffrey Marks), Wilmette, Illinois.
- Wessinger, Catherine (ed.) 2000, *Millennialism, Persecution, and Violence: Historical Cases*, Syracuse, New York.
- Wojcik, Daniel 1997, *The End of the World as We Know It: Faith, Fatalism, and Apocalypse in America*, New York.

## MILLENARIANISM AND NINETEENTH-CENTURY NEW RELIGIONS: THE MORMON EXAMPLE

Grant Underwood

In popular discourse, millennialism is often reduced to the simple belief that the Millennium (in the sense of a final, glorious conclusion to world history) is near. Such a notion, however, only grazes the surface. Actually, millennialisms (and there are many types) offer a rather complete worldview, including a comprehensive way of looking at human history and ultimate salvation. Not only are there non-Christian versions, but also Christian millennialism itself is far from a unified phenomenon with a single history. The focus in this study is on the particular manifestation of Christian millennialism found in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Only a brief overview can be provided, though a few suggestive comparisons with the Bahā'ī Faith will be offered along the way.

First, a few general comments about millennial taxonomies are in order. Millennialism is most often associated with Christianity both because the Revelation of St. John uses the phrase “thousand years” which is the literal meaning of the Latin-based loan word “millennium” to describe its version of the future golden age and because attempting to explicate that brief passage has been more or less a constant feature of Christianity over the past two thousand years. Often overlooked by those who do not specialize in the study of millennialisms is the fact that while ostensibly focusing on the future, millennialisms, in reality, offer profound commentaries on the present. Those millennialisms, like the original Christian millennialism, which are kindred spirits with Second Temple Jewish apocalypticism and messianism, exhibit a profound discontent with the status quo and see the dominant society and its power brokers as evil and antagonistic. The current state of affairs is seen to represent such a significant deterioration from the ideal that only a dramatic and supernatural intervention can make things right. That “right” is epitomized in the group’s millennial musings. How they describe their imminent millennium tells much about what they value in the world around them.



Apocalyptic millenarians almost always envision an overturning (usually violent though generally effected by supernatural powers) of what they view as the corrupt, present order. This eschatological dream of “the great reversal” has offered comfort to many persecuted religious groups over the centuries as it invokes the old biblical image that the first will be last and the last first. Such views can be found in various millennialist, messianist, and mahdist theologies (Hanson 1979; Collins 1984). They also capture the spirit of the early Bābī-Bahā’ī faith as well, since Bahā’u’llāh envisioned a world turned upside down “in which many statuses were reversed” (Cole 1998: 168). Such a faith engenders hope and satisfies theodicy. It is consoling to know that no matter how bleak the contemporary scene may appear, God and goodness will ultimately prevail, and, generally, in the near future. Many millennialists see themselves as living in the last days. Here Mormons resemble more the apocalyptic expectation of the Bābī phase than the later “realized eschatology” developed by Bahā’u’llāh and his interpreters. As William P. Collins expressed it, “the Mormon Church is working in anticipation of the second coming, resurrection, and millennium, whereas Bahā’īs labor in the conviction that these events have occurred or are now taking place in a world which in the throes of disintegration destined to force mankind to turn to the institutions of the Kingdom of God established by Bahā’u’llāh” (Collins 1980: 39).

The very name The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints illustrates the centrality of Mormon millenarian assumptions. In the founding prophet Joseph Smith’s (1804–1844) earliest description of his first encounter with Deity, he recorded the words of the Lord thus: “behold the world lieth in sin at this time and none doeth good no not one they have turned aside from the gospel and keep not my commandments they draw near to me with their lips while their hearts are far from me and mine anger is kindling against the inhabitants of the earth to visit them according to th[e]ir ungodliness and to bring to pass that which hath been spoken by the mouth of the prophets and Apostles behold and lo I come quickly as it [is] written of me in the cloud clothed in the glory of my Father” (Jessee 1984: 6). In certain ways, such an indictment parallels the Shaykhī and Bābī critique of the Islamic social world in mid-nineteenth century Iran.

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was formally organized on 6 April 1830. That act culminated ten years of visions and revelations to Joseph Smith, chief among which was the Book of

Mormon. In over five hundred pages, the Book of Mormon records the spiritual history in the western hemisphere of several groups who migrated from the Middle East. Like the Bible, its various prophetic authors are primarily interested in detailing the people's disregard of, or fidelity to, their covenant relationship with God. By preserving pure doctrine from antiquity, the Book of Mormon enabled Latter-day Saints to discern the true meaning of the Bible. This, along with the conferral of divine authority by heavenly messengers, provided the basis for a complete restoration of original Christianity rather than one more futile attempt at reforming a Christendom grown apostate beyond repair. Such views of contemporary religious corruption and a satisfactory resolution through a return to pristine spiritual perfection coincided well with millenarianism.

So did Mormon expectations for the world's salvation. As apocalyptic millenarians, the Saints did not expect to convert the world, only to warn it. Wrote one early Mormon apostle, "many are flattering themselves with the expectation that all the world is going to be converted and brought into the ark of safety. Thus the great millennium, in their opinion, is to be established. Vain, delusive expectation! The Saviour said to his disciples that 'as it was in the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the coming of the Son of Man.' Query. Were all the people converted in the days of Noah, or mostly destroyed?" The answer was clear, and events "will soon show to this generation that the hour of God's judgment hath come" (Hyde 1836: 344–45).

Apocalyptic millenarians like the Mormons were also distinguished from other millennialists by the literal hermeneutic with which they approached the interpretation of scripture. Contrary to popular nineteenth-century notions of Christ reigning in the hearts of the regenerate, early Latter-day Saints looked forward to the day when the "King of Kings" would physically reign as supreme terrestrial monarch. "Not," remarked a Church leader, "as some have said, a spiritual (which might be more properly called imaginary) reign; but literal, and personal, as much so as David's reign over Israel, or the reign of any king on earth" (Rigdon 1834: 162). The Lord of Hosts was also the Lamb of God, and the Saints anxiously contemplated the privilege of enjoying a thousand years in his visible presence. Mormons waxed eloquent in their descriptions of an earth renewed to its Edenic state, for this was the ultimate meaning of the "restoration of all things which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets

since the world began (Acts 3:21).” It would, they reasoned, “materially affect the brutal creation. The lion and the ox are to eat straw together; the bear and the cow to graze the plain in company, and their young ones to lay down in peace: there shall be nothing to hurt or destroy in all the Lord’s holy mountain” (Rigdon 1834: 131).

Such literalism not only separated the Latter-day Saints from other Christian millennialists but also provides an obvious contrast with the figurative, even allegorical approach to the scriptures articulated by Bahā’u’llāh and his interpreters. Bahā’u’llāh’s explanation in *The Book of Certitude* of the “first resurrection” as the process of spiritual rebirth accompanying each new Manifestation is just the kind of figurative interpretation Smith eschewed, preferring instead to see it as the literal corporeal revivification of flesh and bone. Moreover, unlike other millennialists over the years and unlike the Bahā’īs, Smith had little interest in trying to explicate St. John’s Revelation. Rather than reading the middle chapters of the Revelation, as did ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, as describing the early years of Islamic history, including seeing the Ummayyad and ‘Abbasid dynasties as John’s “beasts” (Riggs 1981), Joseph Smith, in one of the few instances in which he ever bothered to discourse on the text, took John at face value: The beasts were actual creatures who “were actually living in heaven, and were actually to have power given to them over the inhabitants of the earth precisely according to the plain reading of the revelations” (Ehat and Cook 1980: 187).

Though early Latter-day Saints expected the “great and dreadful day of the Lord” in their own lifetimes, unlike other millenarians and some Bahā’īs, they were not given to prophetic numerology or exact calendrical calculations as to the date of Christ’s Advent. Still, as their very name testified, the Latter-day Saints did feel that the divine reestablishment of the church of Christ in their day lifted the curtain on the final act in human history. In the words of their beloved hymn, they believed they were witnessing the “dawning of a brighter day, majestic rise upon the world” (*Hymns* 1985: 1). That brighter day had to be brought about by ordinary human beings, however. Though there was dissent from within, severe persecution from without kept the Mormons on the move for the first quarter century of their existence and besieged them for another seventy years thereafter. It drove them first from New York, then from Ohio, then Missouri, then Illinois, and finally to Utah where negative public sentiment and adverse legislative action relentlessly pursued them

from afar. Such tensions earlier led to the assassination of Joseph Smith, but by that time the basic structures and beliefs of the religion had taken shape.

Joseph Smith summarized the LDS “articles of faith” shortly before his death: belief in God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost as three separate and distinct, yet divine, beings; rejection of original sin and affirmation of personal moral accountability; a soteriology that included substitutionary atonement; the importance of proper ministerial authority and the need for ministerial organization along Biblical lines; spiritual gifts; additional scripture and continuing revelation to a living prophet; a pre-millennial eschatology that involved belief in the ultimate spiritual and territorial restoration of Israel, the establishment of the New Jerusalem in America, and the personal, millennial reign of Christ upon an earth renewed to its Edenic condition; affirmation of religious freedom and responsible political citizenship; and general encouragement to live life in pursuit of all that is “virtuous, lovely, or of good report” (Jessee 1989: 436–37).

Arguably the single most influential Mormon doctrine was their belief in a contemporary prophet to lead the Saints as a modern Moses. For nearly a century and a half, Latter-day Saints have sung a favorite hymn, which begins “we thank thee, O God, for a prophet, to guide us in these latter days.” The current prophet may be beardless and dressed in a business suit, but he is no less the living oracle of God. For Latter-day Saints, the word of God is continuous rather than confined to the past, as accessible and relevant as the latest address of the current prophet. By proclaiming the presence of an actual prophet rather than theologically trained interpreters of ancient prophets, the Latter-day Saints allow themselves both the relevancy of modern revelation and the normativeness of divine decree.

While Latter-day Saints hold a high view of the spiritually restorative work accomplished through Joseph Smith and subsequent prophets, comparisons between Joseph Smith and the Bāb or Bahā’u’llāh are easy to exaggerate. Though each saw himself playing an important role near the end of time, there are profound differences between how Joseph Smith and Bahā’u’llāh saw themselves. At most Joseph Smith, like Isaiah or St. Peter could be considered a minor prophet (though the Bahā’ī “Guardian,” Shoghi Effendi, commented that, in his view, Joseph Smith would not even qualify as a lesser prophet [Collins 1982: 51–52]), not the kind of independent, universal prophet Bahā’īs call a Manifestation. A Manifestation, alone and pre-existent

among earth-dwellers and, through the analogy of the mirrors, a full reflection of divine perfection, is categorically different from ordinary human beings. For ontological as well as eschatological reasons, Joseph Smith did not equate his own ministry with the return of Jesus Christ. He never would have said of himself, as Bahā'u'llāh did to Queen Victoria: "All that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled. The land of Syria hath been honoured by the footsteps of its Lord."

The potential for authoritative adaptation made possible by the Mormon belief in a living prophet has been crucial throughout their history in coping with modernization. The overarching issue from the LDS perspective has always been not whether the church is abandoning traditional ways for modern ideas, but whether God's hand is in it. The more than hundred and fifty years since Brigham Young led the embattled Saints to a desert haven in the Mountain West (1847) have witnessed much change and adaptation in the LDS community. During the second half of the nineteenth century, Latter-day Saint efforts to make the desert "blossom as a rose" and build the kingdom of God in their midst were at constant cross purposes with American expansionism and Victorian cultural sensibilities. Outsiders inveighed against the "blight" that was Mormonism and ultimately sought legislation aimed at undermining what they saw as Utah's economic communalism, marital promiscuity (polygamy), and theocratic politics. Such stereotypes, of course, exaggerated these practices and their importance to the Mormon faith, and overlooked the considerable continuity the Saints had with the culture around them.

Over the past century, most religious groups, including the Mormons, have been impacted by modernity. Of interest is how this has influenced, and been influenced by, their millenarianism. At the outset, it is important to distinguish between institutional and intellectual modernization. The former has been described as the "permeation of religious institutions by techniques and procedures developed in other sectors of [modern] society" that seem institutionally advantageous yet intellectually innocuous (Wilson 1988: 17–22). From statistical reports and time management to telecommunications and computerization, from the bureaucratic rationalism symbolized by its now insufficient 26-story headquarters building to its public relations typified by BYU athletics and the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, Mormonism, as an institution, has taken on the coloration of modernity.

When it comes to the world of thought, to beliefs and values,

however, modernity has been met with a different mindset. In important ways, this has been due to the mutually reinforcing persistence of primitivism as well as millenarianism. Both maintain a similar philosophy of history, which in spirit is anti-modern. The march of time is not upward. History is a long downward spiral of spiritual decay. Not surprisingly, severe judgments are proclaimed against the present since it is considered to be in a condition of abject apostasy, a faint and fallen image of a golden age long since past. Both millenarianism and primitivism see resolution only in restoration, by a dramatic return to pristine purity. As has been shown, the link between primordium and millennium is well illustrated in Mormonism.

The rise of modernism, however, has been antagonistic to such ideals. Two important consequences of this dramatic paradigm shift in Western consciousness are of particular relevance—the creation of secularism and the emergence of “scientific” history. “Modernization is in many ways a secularizing process,” writes Peter Williams, “and generally results in what we might call the ‘desacralization’ of the world.” Its impact on religion is that “the role of the supernatural as a direct, tangible force is downplayed considerably” (Williams 1980: 12). A second and related ramification is that a sense of profane time supplants the mythic realm of sacred time so elegantly portrayed by Mircea Eliade as central to millenarianism. John Dwyer has noted “the subjection of man to [non-mythical] history is the insight which, more than any other, characterizes the modern age” (Dwyer 1985: 352).

Such a perspective, however, is precisely what is absent in the “historylessness” of primitivism and millenarianism. While the more celebrated clashes between modernism and traditionalism have dealt with conceptions of creation, compared to the social sciences, the challenge presented by the physical sciences has been “relatively mild.” (Berger 1969: 39–40). Notions of doctrinal rather than biological evolution and of cultural and ethical relativism have been far more threatening to millenarian primitivists (Garrison 1988).

Latter-day Saints have responded, and continue to respond, to these influences in much the same way that conservative religionists do generally by rejecting them for a universe thoroughly grounded in absolutes and the supernatural. As much as any other factor, what makes this possible for Mormons today is their core conviction that they are led by a living prophet and living apostles. Admittedly, their modern Moses may be dressed in a business suit, but he still provides

a symbolic connection with the mythic world of the sacred past. Through a living prophet and continuing revelation, Mormonism is prepared to respond to change without succumbing to desacralization. While current prophets may theoretically supersede their predecessors, ancient or modern, in reality they are restrained by a primitivist respect for an additional primordium the corpus of modern prophetic pronouncement. The speeches and writings of apostles and prophets throughout the history of the church provide a large body of material generally regarded as on par with Scripture. Where particular comments stray too far, their non-canonical status can be invoked, but by and large Latter-day Saints, leader and layman alike, are as loath to contradict what an apostle in the 1800s declared as they are to challenge the writings of Paul. Thus, the eschatology of earlier years tends to be preserved by persisting primitivist impulses.

During the 1980s, LDS apostle and theologian Bruce R. McConkie published the longest work ever written by a Latter-day Saint on millennial matters. What is striking is how little McConkie's millennial treatise differs from those written during Mormonism's first generation. The same supernatural, biological and geological changes anticipated then are expected today, including the abolishment of infant mortality, the herbivorization of carnivores, the unification of continental landmasses, and the co-mingling of mortals and resurrected immortals. That such views seemed plausible in the early nineteenth century is perhaps not surprising. That they are still maintained today provides dramatic testimony of the degree to which LDS millenarianism in particular and Mormonism in general have resisted the encroachments of modernity.

The pendulum, however, should not be swung too far in the opposite direction. A study of leadership discourses at the church's general conferences over the past 150 years reveals that millenarian rhetoric "diminished drastically after 1920." Thus, "even though an apocalyptic scenario of the last days is still a central Mormon doctrine, it is no longer enunciated by modern conference speakers with anything like the emphatic fervor of nineteenth-century leaders" (Shepherd and Shepherd 1984: 196).

Though Latter-day Saints still talk about the end times, for many Mormons these doctrines have a detached and textbookish quality. The social ramifications of their eschatology are rarely if ever discussed today and soteriological dualism is disparaged. The term

“wicked,” for instance, no longer refers to all unbelievers. Today, it is applied only to the morally corrupt, and the good and honorable of all religions are expected to be alive during the millennium. As people make their peace with the world, the dream of the great reversal diminishes. In short, the more abrasive features of millenarianism, which served their needs in an earlier period, have been quietly, perhaps unwittingly, laid aside in recent years.

Still, at the dawn of the twentieth-first century, though Mormonism has acquired the institutional accouterments of modernity, it remains intellectually insulated from the acids of modernity by an essential core of supernaturalism. It has modernized without being secularized. This is most obvious in the conviction of continuing revelation. Primitivism produced living prophets and, in turn, has been preserved by them. So has millenarianism. But the door is always open to change. Shrouded in the “sacred canopy” of modern revelation, Mormons are free to pick and choose their way into modernity. Inspired guidance from living prophets gives them the confidence to feel that they can truly live “in” the modern world and yet be “of” it only to a degree not harmful to their sacred enterprise. Whatever the path pursued, Latter-day Saints continue to expect it to lead them to an actual thousand years of paradisiacal peace and prosperity.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alexander, Thomas G. 1986. *Mormonism in Transition: A History of the Latter-day Saints, 1890–1930*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Allen, James B., and Glen M. Leonard. 1976. *The Story of the Latter-day Saints*. Salt Lake City, Deseret Book.
- Arrington, Leonard J., and Davis Bitton. 1979. *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints*. New York: Knopf.
- Berger, Peter L. 1969. *A Rumor of Angels*. Garden City, Doubleday.
- Cole, Juan R.I. 1998. *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahā'ī Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- Collins, John J. 1984. *The Apocalyptic Imagination*. New York, Crossroad.
- Collins, William P. 1980–1981. “The Baha’i Faith and Mormonism: A Preliminary Survey.” *World Order* 15 (fall/winter): 33–45.
- . “Thoughts on the Mormon Scriptures: An Outsider’s View of the Inspiration of Joseph Smith.” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 15 (Autumn 1982): 49–59.
- Cowan, Richard O. 1985. *The Church in the Twentieth Century*. Salt Lake City, Bookcraft.
- Dwyer, John C. 1985. *Church History: Twenty Centuries of Catholic Christianity*. New York, Paulist Press.
- Eliade, Mircea. 1954. *Cosmos and History: The Myth of the Eternal Return*. New York: Harper & Row.
- . 1963. *Myth and Reality*. New York, Harper & Row.



- . 1957. *The Sacred and the Profane*. New York, Harper & Row.
- Garrison, Charles E. 1988. *Two Different Worlds: Christian Absolutes and the Relativism of Social Science*. Newark, University of Delaware Press.
- Hansen, Klaus. 1981. *Mormonism and the American Experience*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Hanson, Paul D. 1979. *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*. Philadelphia, Fortress.
- Hatcher, William S. and J. Douglas Martin. 1984. *The Baha'i Faith: The Emerging Global Religion*. San Francisco, Harper & Row.
- Hyde, Orson. 1836. "A Prophetic Warning." *Latter-day Saints' Messenger and Advocate* 2 (July): 344–45.
- Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. 1985. Salt Lake City, Utah: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.
- Jessee, Dean C. 1984. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake: Deseret.
- . 1989. *The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume 1 Autobiographical and Historical Writings*. Salt Lake, Deseret.
- Landes, Richard, ed. 2000. *Encyclopedia of Millennialism and Millennial Movements*. New York, Routledge.
- Leone, Mark P. 1979. *Roots of Modern Mormonism*. Cambridge, Harvard University Press.
- Momen, Moojan. 1997. *A Short Introduction to the Bahai Faith*, Oxford, Oneworld.
- Oliver, W.H. 1978. *Prophets and Millennialists: The Uses of Biblical Prophecy in England from the 1790s to the 1840s*. Auckland, Auckland University Press.
- Rigdon, Sidney. 1834. "Millenium. No. III." *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (Feb.): 131.
- . 1834. "Millenium. No. VI." *The Evening and the Morning Star* 2 (June): 162.
- Riggs, Robert F. 1981. *The Apocalypse Unsealed*. New York, Philosophical Library.
- Sandeen, Ernest R. 1974. "Millennialism." In *The Rise of Adventism: Religion and Society in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America*. Edited by Edwin S. Gaustad. New York, Harper & Row.
- Segal, Robert A. 1978. "Eliade's Theory of Millenarianism." *Religious Studies* 14:159.
- Shepherd, Gordon, and Gary Shepherd. 1984. *A Kingdom Transformed: Themes in the Development of Mormonism*. Salt Lake City, University of Utah Press.
- Shipp, Jan. 1985. *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Smith, Peter. 1996. *A Short History of the Baha'i Faith*. Oxford, Oneworld.
- Williams, Peter W. Williams. 1980. *Popular Religion in America: Symbolic Change and the Modernization Process in Historical Perspective*. Urbana, University of Illinois Press.
- Wilson, John F. 1988. "Modernity." In *Encyclopedia of Religion*, edited by Mircea Eliade. New York, Macmillan.

## CRITIQUE OF PURE GEMATRY

Meir Buzaglo

In Jewish tradition, every letter of the Hebrew alphabet is assigned a fixed number, so that each word has a numerical value, the sum total of the numbers of the letters that form this word. This correspondence between the letters, along with their combinations, and the numerical values they carry with them is called *gematry*, “numerology” (heretofore *G*). An argument by *G* is the claim that if two words have the same numerical value the same *G* they are semantically related. To put it differently, the *G* of every word tells us something about its meaning. For example, the Bible tells us that Abraham fought against the five kings of Canaan with 318 soldiers. According to the midrashic interpretation, however, only Eliezer was with Abraham. For in *G*, “Eliezer” equals 318 (אליעזר = 1+30+10+70+7+200 = 318). Another well-known *G* establishes the identity between *Elohim*, “God” (אלהים = 1+30+5+10+40) and *ha-teva*’, “nature” (הטבע = 5+9+2+70), both of which equal 86. The preoccupation with *G* is typical not only of Judaism but also of Christianity and the Islam, and it is very common in the Bahā’ī faith as well. Similar in its role to dreams, revelations, and the like, it is a universal phenomenon of religion. What distinguishes *G* as a religious pursuit is that while it is the product of religious imagination the realm of subjectivity (Yet, as I shall indicate later, it is entangled with dreams) by definition it deals with numbers the paradigm of objectivity. Surprisingly, despite its universal appeal, there has been no serious attempt to investigate *G* in a scholarly fashion, as against the attention given to dreams and the various disciplines that explore them, such as psychology, anthropology, and theology. For example, Maimonides was highly concerned with dreams and prophecy but almost completely ignored *G*.

Recently, there is a growing academic, historical interest in *G*. The present study, however, treats *G* from a more philosophical point of view. I intend to consider *G* as a rule for inference, and to start an examination of its content and validity. This paper, then, is not concerned with neither the history or the anthropology of *G*, nor with *G* and hermeneutics.

*Setting the Stage*

To prepare the grounds for this pursuit, I would like first to expand the object of my investigation by subsuming related rules of letter combination under the category of G. For example, there is a rule that says that if two words are combined from the same letters, then there is an internal connection between the references of these words. In the Jewish tradition, this rule is called *zeirufim* (literally, combinations). Combinatorial inferences are found in the Bible itself. The Bible conveys the notion that Noah found favor in the eyes of God by saying that “Noah (נח) *maza* (מָצָא) *hen* (הֵן)” (Gen. 6:8). By using the same letters, הן and נח, the Bible tells us something about Noah. Similarly, ‘Er (ער), Yehudah’s son, who was wicked, is labeled in the Biblical account as *ra’* (רָע), evil. Other examples are the addition of the letter *he* (ה) to the name “Abram” (thus forming the name “Abraham,” אַבְרָהָם), and the play on words in Jeremiah’s prophecy: *shaked* (שָׁקֵד), “almond” and *shoked* (שׁוֹקֵד) “diligent”. The Hebrew word *Sheshakh* (שֶׁשַׁךְ) is Babel (בָּבֶל), “Babylonia,” according to a code based on the Hebrew alphabetical order (forward and backwards). This technique, which is mentioned in Daniel, shows some sensitivity to the numerals that correspond to the letters. Combinatorial rules may be seen as cases of G, since if two words are written with the same letters, they possess the same G. (Sometimes G and combinatorial inferences are deeply related, as in the case of *Hanukkah* (חֲנוּכָּה), which is read as “encamping on the 25 [of the month of Kislev]” [חֲנוּכָּה = חנו [ב-] כ"ה [בכסליו]).

This expansion of the class of rules still excludes many other letter-based inferences, such as *dilugim*, “skipping”: finding regularities by skipping letters in the Bible. I intend to concentrate only on those inferences that have a very respected chain of tradition. G and inferences drawn from letter combinations go a long way back, to the origins of the Jewish heritage. They deserve the attention of any one who respects this heritage.

Let me point out that I was driven to this study by some political uses of G. Of these, the most terrible one was the claim that a hidden meaning is found in the name of Prime Minister Rabin’s assassin, Yig’al ‘Amīr (יגאל עמיר): by dropping the first and last letters we get *ga’āl ‘ammā* (גאֵל עַמָּא), the person who “redeemed my people.” In addition, the first and the last letters of his name are the initials of Yitzhak Rabin (יצחק רבין). When I heard of this, it struck

me that G must be guarded in some way from such inferences. What is more astonishing in this particular case is that *before* Rabin was murdered, somebody found out, by using the *dilugim* method mentioned above, that Rabin would be assassinated, and he even sent Rabin a letter to warn him of this danger. And what is still stranger is Yigal Amir's testimony that before he shot Rabin, he saw no soldier standing between him and Rabin and took this as a sign from God. Another example is the *gematries* used by the Habad movement to prove that the Lubavitcher Rabbi is the Messiah. These examples suggest that religious imagination requires some critical sense. But how should we apply it? Should we say, as does the enlightened secular person, that there is nothing true in G? Such an answer is too radical for a traditionalist Jew, who realizes that G is an essential part of the Jewish heritage!

In the following investigation I wish to restrict my attention of the nature of G by focusing exclusively on its manifestations in the Midrash. While other corpuses, such as the Kabbalah, may apply G in different ways. (Note that while G in its strict sense hardly appears in the *Zohar*, this text is impregnated with letter-based inferences). I do believe that the paradigmatic example of G is found in the Midrash. This is the source of all kinds of *gematries* that are found in biblical exegeses, such as those of Rashi, as well as the source of the use of G in Kabbalah and its manifestations in homiletic sermons. Thus, my question on the nature and validity of G is confined to the Midrash. As suggested subsequently, my thesis is that the Midrash as a whole conveys a unique kind of truth and that G is constitutive of this truth of the Midrash.

### *Structure of Argument*

In exploring the nature of G, I suggest that we begin by posing a simple, straightforward question: Is the *gematric* rule inference a valid one, a rule that leads us to the most profound mysteries of our existence, or is it just a weird, if not absolutely silly, rule? Does it tell us something of importance, or does its application merely reflect the psychology of the believers who employ it?

Bearing in mind that this question is part of my methodology, we should not assume that it requires a yes or no answer. For we may argue that such a question is too dogmatic, being grounded in a

false assumption. In this case, however, we must explain why it is not the right question.

Yet, before following this line of reasoning, I wish to say something about the critique of pure G, and explain my allusion to Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*. Kant's main goal in philosophy is to account for the possibility of metaphysics. Kant realized that there were two views on metaphysics. There were those who said, along with David Hume, that metaphysical works had to be thrown to the ashes. Others thought that dogmatic metaphysics contained some profound truth. Kant wanted to establish the conditions under which metaphysics was a true science and to find the middle ground between the two extremes. I want to generalize from this example:

G too is viewed as utter rubbish by some and by others as something that transcends natural science and philosophy. Can we define the nature of G in such a way that will reconcile these opposite approaches and do justice to both?

Here I wish to note that in fact, there are several fields that are regarded in the way that people regard Metaphysics and G. Among them are Kabbalah, modern art, and the writings of Heidegger and Derrida. Whenever the gap between the two poles is too wide to allow for a dialogue between them, the philosopher of language should take this as an opportunity to develop a critique. He/She has to tell us how we can find our way in this field of study.

I can now describe the structure of my argument in this essay. I believe that the question that opens this section is a wrong one. In my view, Gemtary and metaphysics are intellectual pursuits that fluctuate between reality and illusion. (See chapter 9 of my *Logic of Conceptual Change*. See also my book *Solomon Maimon's Metaphysics: A Reconstruction*—forthcoming in Pittsburgh University Press—where I discuss this point at length.) Every attempt to salvage G, by making it look scientific, will not only be false, since G is not a science, but will also destroy its very nature.

This should be emphasized: *Every attempt to rescue G must preserve its elusive character.*

I believe that this should be taken as a constraint on understanding G, but I shall argue that this is the way it is understood. The same applies to an attempt to show that G is nothing but rubbish. The latter view runs counter to the principle of charity accepted by every enlightened theory of translation (if not by all of them): if you have "found out" that a lot of people are irrational idiots, check your

translation. It therefore follows that the two easy ways to reply to our question, namely that G is a valid argument and that G is a silly argument, are bad answers. All we need to do is to test this thesis against existing answers to our question and to look for the assumption that underlies the question.

### *Answers to the Question*

So far, I have outlined my question. I am looking for a philosophy of G., not of the opinions on, or of the psychology of, G. Moreover, in my explorations, I focus on what important and respected rabbis like Nahmanides and Abulafia said about G. In fact, I think that in a theory of G, what the kabbalists and the sages say about G should be taken as a given that requires explanation, and not as a teaching, addressed to the *believers*, about the nature of G. (Naturally, comments are likely to enrich the philosophical discussion and alert us to interesting thoughts).

One famous argument against G that is usually provided in order to show that it is nonsensical is that by using G one can prove almost anything. In fact, it is somewhat misleading to call this an argument because those who articulate it do not even regard G as a procedure that is worthy of attention. Nonetheless, it is important to consider this argument because it can tell us something about G and how it is perceived.

An argument of this kind is analogous to Kant's argument that metaphysics leads to antinomies. It assumes that G is disprovable by reason: once you accept that a rule of inference leads to contradictions, you are forced to accept anything. Significantly, religious persons put this argument forward. This indeed was the view, for instance of Ibn Ezra, the Sephardic Jewish philosopher.

His view is important especially since it was raised by such a highly respected Jewish authority like himself. This teaches us that answers to our question are not determined by the camp to which one belongs. At the same time, tradition offers different answers to this question. Citing the Talmud to support his thesis, Rabbi Joseph Gikatila claims that although one may reach contradictory conclusions from G, all of them may be equally valuable.

For example, the fact that *ma'akhal* (מַאֲכָל), "food" and *mal'akh* (מַלְאָךְ), which are opposites, have the same numerical value, and

even the same letters, is significant. Thus, while the proponents of G concede that Ibn Ezra's observation is correct, they deny his conclusion that it is an invalid procedure.

This leaves us with the question whether some *gematries* are simply accidental or whether every G is telling. In order to arrive at the truth, should we rely on specific guidelines and authorities or, alternatively, can any one use any G as one pleases in order to prove what fits one's views? A conservative approach toward G is found in Nahmanides' sermon, "*Torat ha-Shem Temimah*":

Let no one deride me because I rely on the calculation of the value of the letters called gematria, and think that it is a vain matter, because someone might change the allusion in verses into a pernicious matter by the means of the gematria. The truth is that no one is permitted to deal with numerology [in order to] deduce from [numbers] something that occurred to his mind. But in the hand of our masters [there was a tradition] that [some] Gematria'ot, were transmitted to Moses at Sinai, and they are a remainder and a sign to the subjects transmitted orally together with the remnant part of the Oral Torah; some of those deal with the subjects of Haggadot (homilies), others with the issues of *issur ve-hetter* (laws of what is forbidden and what is permitted)

Nahmanides saw the danger inherent in G: irresponsible people may exploit it to arrive at far-fetched conclusions. He therefore offered to limit their use. In this he followed a similar strategy that was adopted in the case of *Gzerah Shavah*. According to this rule of inference, if a word appears in two separate verses, we should understand one [instance of the] word in terms of the other. To exclude the misuse of this rule of inference, the Talmud states: "One does not argue a *Gzerah Shavah* unless one has *received it* from one's master" (*BT, Pesahim* 66a). This suggests that the only cases of *Gzerah Shavah* that are valid are those received by tradition. Admittedly, this is a strange move, for it actually boils down to the claim that *Gzerah Shavah* is not a rule of inference but only a heuristic way of remembering ideas that were transmitted to us by tradition. While this strategy suggests an answer to the claim that one can prove contradictions by the use of G, it trivializes the whole issue.

Another approach to answering the question posed by Ibn Ezra is to argue that only beautiful *gematries* count. For example, R. Elijah, the Gaon of Vilna (Hagra) predicted that the Jews will return to the land of Israel in 1948 on the basis of the verse, "In the year of this jubilee *you shall return* [*tashuvu* תָּשׁוּבוּ] every man to his possession"

(Lev. 25:13):  $\text{השבו} = \text{הש"ה}$  ( $[400+300+2+6] = [400+300+8]$ ) = the year [5]708 in the Hebrew Calendar, which corresponds to 1948 in the Gregorian Calendar.

Here is one G, that I was happy to discover: if one takes the G of "Mount Sinai"  $\text{הר סיני}$  and search for all the places in the Bible where we can find a series of letters with the same numerical value, one discovers that such a sequence appears exactly 613 times. This number is very important for Judaism, as it corresponds to the number of the divine commandments (*mitzvoth*), which we believe we received in Mount Sinai.

One can propose arguments in favor of G that rest on the assumption that the Hebrew language is holy, and that in holy languages nothing is accidental. There is only one problem with this assumption: not that it is false, and that other religions claim that their language is holy; with such reservations we can live, and we can even admit that all languages are holy, one can even retain the chauvinism and claim that all languages are holy because they were derived from Hebrew. The problem is with the meaning of this assumption. What do we mean when we claim that a language is holy and that God spoke it?

One way of following this line of thinking is to maintain the Pythagorean view that numbers created both our languages and the world of meanings. From this it follows that an argument by G is what we call in philosophy of science a law-like generalization. This view may be read into the following Midrash (*BT, Baba Batra 75b*):

R. Hanina b. Papa said: The Holy One, blessed be He, wished to give to Jerusalem a [definite] size; for it is said: Then said I 'Whither goest thou?' And he said unto me: 'To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof and what is the length thereof' (Zech. 2). The ministering angels said before the Holy One, blessed be He, 'Lord of the Universe, many towns for the nations of the earth hast thou created in thy world, and thou didst not fix the measurement of their length or the measurement of their breadth, wilt thou for a measurement for Jerusalem in the midst of which is Thy Name, thy sanctuary and the righteous?' Thereupon [an angel] said unto him 'Run speak to this young man, saying: Jerusalem shall be inhabited without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein'. Resh Lakish said: The Holy One, blessed be He, will in time to come add to Jerusalem a thousand *tafot* [169 =  $\text{טפף}$ ] gardens, a thousand *kafot* [210 =  $\text{קפפ}$ ] towers, a thousand *litzyot* [146 =  $\text{ליצוי}$ ] places and a thousand and two *shilo* [345 =  $\text{שילה}$ ] mansions; and each [of these] will be as big as *Sephoris* in its prosperity.



אמר רבי חנינא בר פפא: בקש הקדוש ברוך הוא לתת את ירושלים במדה, שנאמר: (זכריה ב') ואומר אנה אתה הולך ויאמר אלי למוד את ירושלים לראות כמה רחבה וכמה ארכה, אמרו מלאכי השרת לפני הקדוש ברוך הוא: רבש"ע, הרבה כרכים בראת בעולמך של אומות העולם—ולא נתת מדת ארכן ומדת רחבן, ירושלים ששמך בתוכה ומקדשך בתוכה וצדיקים בתוכה—אתה נותן בה מדה! מיד: ויאמר אליו ריץ דבר אל הנער הלז לאמר פרוות חשב ירושלים מרוב אדם ובהמה בתוכה. אמר ריש לקיש: עתיד הקב"ה להוסיף על ירושלים אלף טפף נינואות, אלף קפל מגדלים, אלף ליצוי בירניות, אלף ושני שילה שוטפראות, וכל אחת ואחת הויא כצפורי בשלוותה. (ב"ב עה ע"ב)

No one was able to understand what the words *tafot* (טפף), *kafol* (קפל) and *shilo* (שילה) meant until Rashi explained that these are *gematries*. Thus although they seem like regular Hebrew verb forms, these words signify numbers that were transformed into Hebrew verbs. “All” that is needed is to give them meaning. Certainly no linguist will even begin to understand what’s going on here, but a Pythagorean may claim that the words were formed before acquiring their meaning and they originated in numbers.

Now, I don’t know whether or the Pythagorean view is true or false. I do believe, though, that even if it were scientifically correct, it would undermine our question by disregarding the elusive character of G, which is essential to it. The following section elaborates on this point.

The relation between *Halakhah*, the “Jewish Law,” and G can tell us something about the elusive nature of G. Actually, G is not really a rule of logic. If it were so, one could use it to deduce new norms. In practice, however, not even the most adherent proponents of G use it to decide on tough cases. This caution is indicative, for it suggests that even those who hold that G is a normative move are wary of giving full weight to it. This does not mean that Hebrew is not a holy language; it simply tells us how to approach the claim that there is nothing accidental in the Hebrew language.

At this point, it is important to suggest that this notion of the separation between G and *Halakhah* needs to be qualified. Let us read the following story:

R. Zera was evading Rab Judah. For he [R. Zera] desired to emigrate to the Land of Israel, whereas Rab Judah said He who emigrates from Babylon to the Land of Israel violates a positive command, for it is said [Jer. 27:22], “They shall be carried to Babylon, and there they shall be until the day I take heed of them.” (*Shabbat* 41a)

ר' זירא היה משתמש מרב יהודה, שביקש [ר' זירא] לעלות לארץ ישראל, ואמר רב יהודה כל העולה מבבל לישראל עובר בעשה: שנאמר: בבליה יובאו ושמה יהיו עד יום פוקדי אותם. (שבת מא ע"א)

According to another Talmudic passage,

Whoever sees *se'orim* (שְׁעוֹרִים), “barley” in his dream, [this means that] his inequities *saru* (סָרוּ) “are taken sway,” as it is said (Isa. 6:7) “*ve-sar* (וְסָר) *avonkha*, ‘thy iniquity is taken away’ and thy sin purged.” R. Zera said: “I did not emigrate from Babylon to the Land of Israel until I saw *se'orim* (שְׁעוֹרִים) “barley” in my dream.” (*BT, Berakhot* 57a)

הרואה שעורים בחלום סרו עוונותיו, שנאמר "וסר עונך וחטאתך תכופר" אמר רב זירא אני לא עליתי מבבל לארץ ישראל עד שראיתי שעורין בחלום. (ברכות נז ע"א)

In my view, if we read these passages according to their plain sense, it emerges that R. Zera used a combination of dream and G in order to strengthen his motivation to immigrate to the Land of Israel. We are not supposed to read these texts as a halakhic debate that leads to a dream. What is required here is a more conservative reading, according to which R. Zera had his own proofs for emigrating but he needed a sign in order to overcome the contrary position, which is equally well grounded.

It is worth mentioning the famous saying from *Avot* concerning G: “Nits and *pithei midah* are the body of the Halakhah whereas *tekufof* and *gimatriot* are but the aftercourse of wisdom.” The purpose of this saying is not to tell us something about the nature of G, but to separate between halakhic considerations and G. Along these lines, too, it is possible to understand Nahmanides’ view that the Halakhah was not to be established axiomatically by relying on *gezerah shavah*. *Extreme* receptivity to G is dangerous because the application of its rules of interpretation could lead to halakhic rulings and matters that no one meant to enforce (see for instance the Midrash on R. Meir who, when engaged in a debate, used to “uproot mountains and grind them against each other” [Sanhedrin 24a]; he was able to prove contradictory matters by dialectical ingenuity.)

Having mentioned Halakhic and Haggadic sources I wish to emphasize that a non-traditional reading of the genealogy of the Halakhah may suggest that the *Haggadah* and the Halakhah were not separate areas, but were both perceived as part of the Midrash. Only in later generations it was split into two separate preoccupations. If we read

the saying from *Avot* in this light, it seems to tell about the end of the process, which was obviously the beginning of another process.

The *Shulḥān 'Arūkh* advises not to eat nuts on *Rosh Ha-Shanah*, because *egoz* (אגוז), “nut,” is numerically equal to *heṭ* (חטא), “sin.” I believe that this gematrical inference is not meant to substantiate the recommendation. What Rabbi Joseph Caro has in mind is to reinforce the presence of *Rosh Ha-Shanah* in our consciousness. This passage from the *Shulḥān 'Arūkh* suggests the nostalgia of G to the Halakhah and to the united world in which it previously resided, whereas now it appears in the mere form of custom [מנהג].

Another argument for G is more interesting as it preserves the constraint I have suggested beforehand. In this argument we use G to prove its validity. This was the idea of Gikatila. After introducing his Pythagorean view, he tells us that *heshbon* (השבון) =  $8+300+2+6+50 = 366$ , “arithmetic” is equal to *shem ha-Shem* [שם יהוה] =  $[300+40] + [10+5+6+5] = 366$ , “the name of God.”

Here is another argument. I took the question, *Ha-im yesh emet ba-Gimatriyyah* (האם יש אמת בנימטריה) =  $[5+1+40]+[10+300]+[1+40+400]+[2+3+10+40+9+200+10+5] = 1076$ ) “Is there any truth in G?” and I have looked for a verse that has the same numerical value. This is what I found: *Elohim heivin darkah ve-hu yada' et mekomah* (אלהים הבין דרכה והוא ידע את מקומה) =  $[1+30+5+10+40]+[5+2+10+50]+[4+200+20+5]+[6+5+6+1]+[10+4+70]+[1+400]+[40+100+6+40+5] = 1076$ ) “God understands its way and he knows its place” (Job 28:23).

I am concluding this preliminary examination by claiming that it is not easy to falsify G. The argument that one can prove practically anything by G, as well as the knowledge that G is a traditionally transmitted knowledge is not sufficient to dismiss its power. Tradition survived these two directions of criticism. From this we may learn something about the nature of G: it is not argued as a rigorous principle; there is something elusive about it and this elusiveness is known to those who hold on to it. This is the reason why a traditionalist like Gikatila is not troubled by the refutations of G. [אינו מתרגש מפרכות בנימטריה]. At the same time, it is not clear whether we have an argument for G. The attempt to ground G in the holiness of Hebrew is not clear precisely because the very assumption that Hebrew is a holy language is not clear.

### *The Uses of Gematry*

Before proceeding with our question of the nature of G in the Midrash let me list here several of its uses:

- *G as a mnemonic device.* This use of G is innocuous: it assists our power of remembering important issues that have been established independently of G. This may be generalized as follows: *we can use G to strengthen a conclusion reached independently*, or to confirm something that is already known by viewing it from another angle.
- *G as a pastime*, as an amusement.
- *G employed for psychological purposes.* This has a weak aspect and a strong one. When the adherents of Hasidic Habad use G to show that R. Isaac Shneursohn, the Lubavitcher Rabbi, is the Messiah, one may use a counter G to disprove the argument. For example, the Lubavitcher Hasidim figured out that 770, the number of the Rabbi's house, equals *beit mashi'aḥ* (בֵּית מַשִּׁיחַ =  $[2+10+400]+[40+300+10+8]$ ), “the Messiah's house.” A counter argument is that 770 also equals *va-yamot va-ye'asef el 'amav*, “and he [Isaac] died and was gathered to his people” (Gen. 35:29): וַיָּמָת וַיֵּאָסֶף אֶל עַמּוּי =  $[6+10+40+400]+[6+10+1+60+80]+[1+30]+[70+40+10+6]$
- *G used as a therapeutic power.* When one has no conclusive grounds for preferring action A to action B but has to choose one of them, then he might consult a rabbi or a *zaddik*. This trustworthy and venerated person may help that person make his decision by using G. Now, one should not deduce from this practice that in this case G is as arbitrary and unenlightening as tossing a dice. (At the same time, one must not let gematric considerations replace a reasoned clarification of the case). For throwing a dice does not have any psychological power over us. In contrast, dreams and G have an impact on our imagination and if they do not interfere with our morals and our reason, we may be willing to consult them. Let us assume that one faces an important decision but is too ambivalent to make up one's mind. In this case, G may be helpful in suggesting what choice should be made. Thus G acts like a sign that encourages us in our decision. On the other hand, we are not allowed to use G when there is no choice to be made (e.g. we never convict a person by relying on the mere use of G). Where G acts against our reason and morals, we have to reject

it as mere nonsense. This, I believe, is a religious and an ethical imperative, and it can be supported by what our great rabbis say on dreams.

*Midrash and Gematry: A Proposal*

The above-listed uses of G are not its strong cases, those that are of special interest to us. I am seeking legitimate uses of G that are more serious and informative. Are there such uses?

I believe that one can answer this question in the affirmative. The uses of G in the Midrash add new information, and in this sense they are not conservative. Should we share Nahmanides' view that these *gematries* were literally given by Moses? I think the answer is no. I really don't know how Moses could *literally* speak about events that had taken place long before his time or interpret texts that tell us about his life. Perhaps one can claim that Moses literally suggested some of the *gematries* found in the Midrash but by no means all of them. In other words, the *gematries* that originate with Moses do not cover all the cases of the Midrash in which G is informative and is part of our heritage!

To understand the informative role of G in the Midrash means to understand the nature of the Midrash itself. Here I wish to invoke a term from contemporary philosophy of language:

When I speak, I may aim at communicating some information, in which case I convey my message with *an assertoric force*, to borrow a Fregean term. I may also aim to communicate something fictitious, let us call this mode a *fictive force*. In both kinds of utterance I may use the same words, so that sometimes the only indication as to the elocutionary force I am using is the context. A topical example that comes to my mind is this: "Bill Clinton entered the White House and saw Monica . . ." Here you do not know what force, or language game to use a Wittgensteinian term I am using.

My claim is that the midrashic text uses neither a fictive force nor an assertoric one; it employs a *sui generis* force. This kind of force is not acknowledged by the logocentric logician, who claims that an utterance is either true or completely fictitious. At this stage, I can only put this forward as a proposal. Yet even without elaborating on this point, this claim is sufficient to shed light on G. In a nutshell, I suggest that *G, along with other related rules of inference, is constitutive of the midrashic force.*

An analogy with Kant may be helpful in clarifying this: the relation between G and the elocutionary force of the Midrash is similar to that between the Kantian categories and the world of experience. In other words, the relation between truth, or the assertoric force, and logic, is the same as the relation between the truth of the Midrash and the rules of inference of G. Indeed, G was regarded as a typically midrashic rule of inference. The laws of logic tell us: if you assert P, then you cannot assert Q; but you can assert T. While this may not *tell* us what we mean by asserting, at least it *shows* this to us.

A comparison with painting is helpful. We should not classify paintings as either realistic or non-realistic. Nor should we form a strict division between painting and photography. There are styles of painting that correspond to reality without simply copying it (and there are kinds of photography that do not aim at copying reality). The artistic style, along with its own conventions, embodies its own notion of truth. This, I believe, is similar to the nature of the Midrash. It is not a fiction in the sense that Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is fiction; at the same time, it is not a historical record. It is something in between.

With this I believe that I am correcting a reading of the nature of the Midrash that equates it with myth. Such a position requires/envisions a dualism between Science and Myth. (This, I suppose, corresponds to Cassirer's hesitation to assign religion to the realm of myth). Apart from other problems involved in this view, this dualism does not capture the true nature of the Midrash and the way it is perceived by the believers. I believe that a true understanding of the Midrash, along with its rules of inference and its relations to the Halakhah and Kabbalah, can emerge only after we reject this dichotomy. We may conclude that when we ask, "Does G take us to the heart of existence or is it a mere figment of the imagination?" we pose the wrong question. For underlying this question is the erroneous assumption that the dichotomy between truth and fiction is an exhaustive and a clear-cut taxonomy.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Buzaglo, M. 2002a. *The Logic of Concept Expansion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- 2002. "Geula and 'Anava" (Redemption and Humility), in *Geula and Metsuka*, ed. Y. Luria, Ben-Gurion University.

*This page intentionally left blank*

PART TWO

THE BĀBĪ-BAHĀ'Ī VENTURE



*This page intentionally left blank*

# THE ESCHATOLOGY OF GLOBALIZATION: THE MULTIPLE-MESSIAHSHIP OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH REVISITED

Christopher Buck

## 1. *Mission and Message*

### 1.1. *Introduction*

Globalization is a fact of postmodern life and the entire world is impacted by it. While its definition eludes consensus and is hotly contested, “globalization” generally refers to the increasing interdependence of nation-states, the integration of economic systems, and the relativization of cultures which, in pre-modern times, had been worlds unto themselves. Clearly, globalization is supraterritorial in its domain, but always local in its effects. It is transforming the world, irreversibly. World religions are caught up in this tidal wave of change.

The new world religion known as the Bahā'ī Faith has recently been studied from the standpoint of globalization, as the titles of two recent sociological studies suggest: “Bahā'ī: A Religious Approach to Globalization” (Warburg 1999), and “The Religious Construction of a Global Identity: An Ethnographic Look at the Atlanta Bahā'ī Community” (McMullen 1997). This new global community has been described as “a unique religious movement responding to globalization processes by creating a worldwide religious identity for its adherents through both ideological and organizational means” (McMullen 1997: 224). The prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī Faith, Bahā'u'llāh (d. 1892), anticipated globalization and established ethics and laws for it. This study investigates the nature of his relationship to globalization.

Declaring himself the “Promised One” of all religions (that is, several messiahs at once a “multiple-messiahship” converging in one person), Bahā'u'llāh explained both his truth-claims and world reforms as the symbolic (rather than literal) fulfillment of messianic prophecies found in world religions (Buck 1986). These public proclamations were the dramatic climax of Bahā'u'llāh's progressive roles as mystic messiah, prophetic messiah, and royal messiah. In his messianic

role as “World-Reformer,” Bahā’u’llāh undertook one of the first global peace initiatives in modern history and thus was engaged in a dialectic with modernity. Since the notions of “World-Reformer” (*muṣliḥ al-‘ālam*: see Tablet to Queen Victoria below) and world reforms are globalizing concepts, inevitably a question arises: Was Bahā’u’llāh an epiphenomenon of globalization or a catalyst of it? The answer appears to be both. This study argues that Bahā’u’llāh’s signal contribution to globalization was to ethicize and sacralize it. Messiahship was the medium (Bahā’u’llāh as revealer), and world unity was the message (revelation).

An illustration of this interplay between medium and message may be seen in the following historical anecdote: Āqā ‘Azīzu’llāh, surnamed Jadhdhāb, was a Jewish merchant from Mashhad who, following his conversion, had visited the Holy Land and met Bahā’u’llāh. At the request of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, Jadhdhāb carried on a correspondence between Edward Granville Browne and Count Leo Tolstoy. In 1902, again at the request of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, Jadhdhāb traveled to Yasnaya Polyana to acquaint Tolstoy with the Bahā’ī Faith. Tolstoy asked several questions, and part of the interview, as recorded by Jadhdhāb himself, concerned Bahā’u’llāh’s messianic claims: “Next, his query was about the claim of the Blessed Perfection [Bahā’u’llāh], and I replied that He was ‘the Speaker on Sinai’, ‘the Everlasting Father’, ‘the Spirit of Truth’, ‘the Heavenly Father’ Whom the Sons of Israel and the Christians expect; the return or advent of Ḥusayn, according to the beliefs of Shī‘ī Islam; and according to the views of the Sunnīs the Advent of the Bāb was the Mahdī, the Advent of Bahā’u’llāh was the Second Coming of Christ; and according to the beliefs of the Zoroastrians, it was the Advent of Shāh Bahrām” (Balyuzi 1985: 189).

This is a fair characterization of Bahā’u’llāh’s eschatological claims which, together with his identification as the Bābī messiah, He Whom God Shall Manifest, reflect six distinctive messianic identifications: (1) *Judaism*: a messianic reading of the so-called “Yuletide prophecy” of Isaiah 9:6, which equates the “Everlasting Father” with Bahā’u’llāh as the promised Messiah; (2) *Christianity*: Bahā’u’llāh as the Spirit of Truth or Comforter predicted by Jesus in his Farewell Discourse of John 14–17; (3) *Zoroastrianism*: Shāh Bahrām Varjavand, a Zoroastrian messiah predicted in various late Pahlavi texts; (4) *Shī‘a Islam*: Ḥusayn *redivivus*, that is, the return of the Third Imam; (5) *Sunnī Islam*: the return of Jesus (*‘Īsā*), whose role, as attested in the “sound” (*ṣaḥīḥ*)

Sunnī *ḥadīth*, is to break crosses and kill swine; (6) the *Bābī movement*: He Whom God Shall Manifest (*man-yuẓḥiruhu'llāh*).

As mystic messiah, Bahā'u'llāh sustained a period of messianic secrecy in Baghdad (1853–1863), during which his messianic role was intimated but not openly disclosed. As prophetic messiah, Bahā'u'llāh announced his mission to the religious leaders of Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity (Catholicism, Orthodox Christianity, Protestantism), Islam (Sunnī and Shī'a), and the Bābī movement. As royal messiah, Bahā'u'llāh issued collective proclamations, as in the *Sūra* of the Kings, articulating his professed role as “World-Reformer” and corresponding world reforms. To communicate his mission to world leaders directly, Bahā'u'llāh addressed epistles to Pope Pius IX, Napoleon III, Czar Alexander II, Queen Victoria, the Shah of Iran, and others. Bahā'u'llāh also took pains to effect delivery of these epistles, especially through diplomatic channels. Magisterial in style, these letters about “God and country” from God to each country became the public record of Bahā'u'llāh's reformist vision, with its attendant teachings of unity, of which there are at least thirty specific types (twenty-three of which are itemized in Buck 1999).

Context interprets text. History can be used as a heuristic or interpretive device for understanding religions in terms of their founders. In what was possibly the first critical study of these truth-claims (Buck 1986), a first-order phenomenology was used to provide a descriptive (not explanatory) reduction of these claims to the concept of “multiple-messiahship,” which finds its only real analogue in the proclamations of the second-century prophet, Mānī (d. 274). This phenomenology ought now to be complemented (“revisited,” as the title of this study suggests) by a history of religions approach, to place Bahā'u'llāh's multiple-messiahship in historical perspective. A brief review of the form and function of these messianic proclamations will help provide a context for Bahā'u'llāh's world reforms, illustrative of his engagement with history a dialectic typically referred to in the broader literature as a “response to modernity.”

The following typology of Bahā'u'llāh's messianic claims is based on Bahā'u'llāh's own retrospective summation of three stages in the historical sequence of his mission, in which he communicated his messages to “mystics (*al-ʿurafāʾ*), then divines (*al-ʿulamāʾ*), and then the kings (*al-mulūk wa al-salāṭīn*)” (*Ishrāqāt* 260; tr. Saiedi 2000: 241).

Nader Saiedi sequences these stages as follows: (1) first stage, 1852–1860; second stage, 1860–1867; and (3) third stage, 1867–1892

(2000: 7). This chronology is neither rigid nor exclusive. Rather, it suggests a period of mystical intimations evident only to the relatively few who were attuned enough so as to discern them, followed by a period of increasingly overt messianic self-disclosures, culminating in public proclamations to world leaders.

## 2. *Mystical Messiah*

As stated, over the course of his forty-year ministry (1852–1892), Bahā'u'llāh “proclaimed” his mission to mystics, divines, and kings and rulers. Bahā'u'llāh’s mystical allusions to his impending prophetic vocation took place during the Baghdad period (1853–1863), which was characterized as a period of messianic secrecy, referred to as “days of concealment” (*ayyām-i buṭūn*), this term having a semantic association with gestation in the womb. Persian Bahā'ī sources even refer to Bahā'u'llāh’s visions of the heavenly Maiden in his 1852 imprisonment in the “Black Pit” (*Siyāh-Chāl*) as constituting a “private declaration.” To Westerners, this would appear to be an oxymoron. Yet the proclamations of Bahā'u'llāh are seen within a continuum of latent and kinetic self-disclosures, driven by the same spiritual energy but constrained according to the dictates of wisdom.

### 2.1. *Messianic Secrecy*

In 1848, the Bāb revealed a new law code (*Bayān-i Fārsī*), paradoxically super-Islamic in piety, yet supra-Islamic in principle. After the Bāb’s martyrdom, Bahā'u'llāh revitalized the Bābī community. Occasionally, Bahā'u'llāh would drop messianic hints, as instanced in the Four Valleys (*Chahār Vādī*): “Methinks I catch the fragrance of musk from the garments of [the letter] ‘H’ (*qumūṣ al-ha*) wafting from the Joseph of Bahā’ (*Yūsuf al-Bahā’*)” (tr. Lambden 1998: 39; cf. SV 59), a rather transparent circumlocution with messianic overtones. Bahā'u'llāh thus began his career in relative messianic secrecy, having first become a follower of the Bāb, who thereby finds a parallel in the figure of John the Baptist, to whom Christ at first submitted. While Bahā'u'llāh had a clear intimation of his messianic role in the Siyāh-Chāl dungeon in 1852, where he experienced a visionary annunciation when a celestial “Maiden of Heaven” appeared to him, he did not disclose the full messianic implications of these visions until 1863.

Islamic prophethology is anchored in the received interpretation of Q. 33:40, establishing Muḥammad as God's final Messenger or "Seal of the Prophets." In perhaps his most significant exegetical maneuver, Bahā'u'llāh relativizes that claim in order to supersede it, refocusing the reader's attention a mere four verses later (Q. 33:44), a verse that promises eschatological attainment to the "presence of God" (*ḥiḳā'u'llāh*) on the Last Day. Since direct beatific vision of God is impossible, Bahā'u'llāh reasons that Q. 33:44 anticipates a future theophanic messiah who, as *deus revelatus* and divine vicegerent, is symbolically "God" by proxy. By force of explicative logic, the Kitāb-i-Īqān (arguably the world's most widely read non-Muslim Qur'ān commentary), which was revealed in Jan. 1861, served as advance prophetic warrant for Bahā'u'llāh, who, on 22 April 1863, declared himself as "He Whom God Shall Manifest" (*man-Yuḏḥiruhu'llāh*), the messianic theophany foretold by the Bāb.

### 3. *Prophetic Messiah*

The vast majority of early Bahā'īs were, as would be expected, "apostates" from Shī'a Islam. (In Islam, apostasy [*irtidād*] is a capital offence.) This, in itself, tempts the hasty conclusion that the new religion was merely an offshoot of Islam, its sectarian roots notwithstanding. It was not long until the nascent Bahā'ī community emerged from its Islamic chrysalis as a universal religion, superseding, in some sense, traditional Islamic boundaries and, indeed, the dichotomous categories of the "House of Islam" (*dār al-Islām*) and the "Abode of War" (*dār al-ḥarb*) although the latter category foreshadowed the intense persecution that Bahā'īs were soon to face and had already experienced in the Bābī phase of their history. The universal character of the Bahā'ī religion was dramatically demonstrated through the entrance of Zoroastrians and Jews, who were the first religious minorities to convert to the Bahā'ī religion (Maneck 1991 and 1984).

#### 3.1. *Zoroastrianism*

The eminent Zoroastrian theologian, Dastur Dhalla, estimated that around 4,000 Zoroastrians had converted to the Bahā'ī Faith in Iran (primarily from the ethnic strongholds of Yazd and Kirman, including virtually all of the Zoroastrians of Qazvin), while 1,000 Parsees were won over in India (cited by Maneck 1991: 36). These conversions

were religiously actuated by acceptance of Bahā'u'llāh's identification as Shāh Bahrām, a belief that served as an eschatological "bridge" over which Zoroastrians conceptually transferred their allegiance from traditional Zoroastrianism to a new identity as messianic Zoroastrians.

Shāh Bahrām Varjavand was a Zoroastrian messiah predicted in various late Pahlavi texts. In a recent article, "Bahā'u'llāh as Zoroastrian Saviour" (Buck 1998a), the relevant texts are assembled and attention is drawn to some problems in connection with their fulfillment. One of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets to the Zoroastrians, reads, in part, as follows: "This is the Mystery of your Book (*Īn-ast sirr-i kitāb-i shumā*) [the Avesta], which was revealed [lit. 'sent'] aforetime (*ka az qabl firistāda shud*)" (MMM 24). In the Tablet of Seven Questions (*Lawḥ-i Haft Pursish* revealed in pure Persian for the benefit of a Zoroastrian audience), Bahā'u'llāh repeats a question posed by Ustād Javān-Mard, who, at one time, had served on the Council of Zoroastrians in Yazd (RB 3:272): "The fourth question: 'Our books have announced the [future] appearance of Shāh Bahrām with manifold signs for the guidance of mankind,'" (tr. Razavi 1993: 50) to which Bahā'u'llāh responded: "[O friend!] Whatsoever hath been announced in the Books hath been revealed and made clear. From every direction the signs have been manifested. The Omnipotent One is calling, in this Day, and announcing the appearance of the Supreme Heaven" (PDC 77; MMM 243–244). The effects of such proclamations were not, alone, sufficient cause for these conversions, but the eschatological claims themselves provided the requisite religious authority for those who suspended their disbelief in a realized *eschaton*.

The early Zoroastrian converts, as Maneck (1991 and 1984) has shown, tended to remain within their respective Zoroastrian enclaves of Yazd and Kirman. Some of them worked assiduously for the amelioration of the plight of the Zoroastrian community, and were quite effective at it, especially in educational reform. Inevitably, perhaps, the Zoroastrian priests took umbrage over the presence of apostates within their fold, and consequently exercised their authority in having these Zoroastrian Bahā'īs expelled from the community.

The notion of "apostasy" is itself relative. While the high priests found the conversions an offensive kind of betrayal or religious "treason," as it were the Bahā'ī converts themselves had embraced their new-found religion as the fulfillment of Zoroastrianism, not as a rejection of it. Suffice it to say that the conversions of Zoroastrians redounded to the welfare of the Zoroastrian community itself, which

witnessed a fresh resolve on the part of the converts to improve the conditions of the Zoroastrians who were socially marginalized as second-class citizens in an Islamic system which did not live up to its founding ideals of protection and relative parity of religious minorities under Muslim rule.

### 3.2. *Judaism*

As there was no centralized leadership or authority within Judaism, Bahā'u'llāh's proclamations to Jews were essentially of a local nature, with a collective rhetorical style of address. In an unpublished epistle to a certain Āqā Jān and other Bahā'īs of Jewish ancestry, Bahā'u'llāh declares: "The Face of the Ancient One [Bahā'u'llāh] hath turned towards the sages (*ḥukamā'*) in *al-hā'* and *al-mīm* [= Hamadān] and announceth unto them the glad-tidings of the Riḍwān of God, the Lord of all the worlds. . . . By God! He hath come who hath been named Jehovah in the Torah, and the Comforter (*al-mu'azẓī*) in the Gospel (*al-injīl*), as well as the Great Announcement (*al-naba' al-'azīm*) in the Qur'ān" (tr. Lambden 1986: 65). The inter-religious nature of Bahā'u'llāh's claims are typically expressed in messianic clusters, as this one, in which the convergence of such claims serves to heighten their dramatic impact. The "sages" addressed here are the rabbis of Hamadān, scene of the first concerted Bahā'ī mission to the Jews.

The late Ḥasan M. Balyuzi credits the celebrated Bahā'ī savant, Mīrzā 'Abu'l-Faḍl Gulpaygānī (d. 1914), with much of the success of the Jewish mission: "It was principally through his writings that the Bahā'ī Faith was presented to the Jews of Iran in such a way as to bring a large number of them into the Bahā'ī fold" (1985: 264–65). By 1884, the Bahā'ī missionary effort that began in 1877 in Hamadān yielded its fruit, where, according to the historian of Persian Jewry, Habib Levy, some 150 of the approximately 800 Jewish households had converted. From there, the Bahā'ī Faith spread like wildfire to the Jewish communities of Tehran, Isfahān, Bukhāra, Mashhad, Gulpaygan (where seventy-five percent of the Jewish community had been won over), and Kāshān (in which half of the Bahā'ī community was of Jewish origin), according to the best estimates (cited by Maneck 1991: 36).

The late Adib Taherzadeh notes that, while Bahā'u'llāh did, by and large, address the political and religious leaders of his day,



“[p]robably one exception was the Jewish people as they did not belong to a particular state at that time” (RB 4:168). This is a telling observation, a fact not lost on Bahā’u’llāh himself. In 1891, a year before the end of his life, Bahā’u’llāh reflected on his proclamation to the world’s rulers. Reportedly, Bahā’u’llāh said that, while he had fully proclaimed his mission to crown and mitre, he wanted to present his message to Baron Rothschild, who could in some ways be regarded as the leader of the Jewish diaspora at that time. Bahā’u’llāh therefore commissioned the aforementioned Jadhhdhāb to write to this magnate to acquaint him with the Faith and, if possible, to follow this up with a visit (RB 3:168). According to his memoirs, Jadhhdhāb did write his letter to the Baron, which was rendered into French (qtd. in RB 3:172), in which Bahā’u’llāh is represented as the Lord of Hosts. It is not known, however, whether or not the meeting between Jadhhdhāb and Baron Rothschild ever took place.

It was not just for rhetorical effect that Bahā’u’llāh’s proclamations to Jews were expressed in pluralistic terms. He gave further breadth to their traditional messianic imagination, expanding the notion of a world-prophet whose fulfillment of expectations from other world religions lent some credence to those religions themselves. In a Tablet to Ḥājī Elyahu Kohan, known as ‘Abdu’l-Ḥusayn, Bahā’u’llāh proclaims:

Say: This day the City of God hath appeared and can be witnessed in perfect adornment. This is the City in which the God of all peoples hath appeared. Ponder these words of John, who announced the great and sacred City and said: “And I saw no temple in it; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it; for the glory of God [Arabic: Bahā’u’llāh] did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light of it” (Rev. 21:22–23). (tr. Buck and Buck 1991: 35)

Lambden observes, “Bahā’u’llāh cites this verse in Arabic exactly as it was printed in the London 1671 (1858) edition of the William Watts Arabic Bible for Eastern Churches” (1998: 21). Bahā’u’llāh’s use of Rev. 21:22–23 as a proof-text in a Tablet to a Jewish Bahā’ī is perfectly consistent with the changed outlook of converts to the Faith, who embraced Christ and Muḥammad in the process of accepting Bahā’u’llāh as the Lord of Hosts.

### 3.3. Christianity

Bahā'u'llāh's proclamation to the Jews transitions to a proclamation to Christians, who have assimilated much of Hebrew scripture and tradition. Having already cited the Book of Revelation for the edification of Jewish converts, Bahā'u'llāh made further use of this text in a Christian context. On a specific prophecy elsewhere in the Apocalypse and on the prophecies of Jesus generally, Bahā'u'llāh, in "The Essence of Mysteries" (*Jawāhir al-asrār*) exclaimed:

Shouldst thou reflect on these words [Rev. 1:16–17], thou wouldst find them to exemplify the utmost perspicuity and highest eloquence nay, to have attained the furthest limit of refinement of expression (*faṣāḥa*) and the last degree of elegant lucidity (*balāgha*), as if the very suns of eloquence (*shumūs al-balāghat*) had been generated from them, and the stars of perspicuity (*anjum al-faṣāḥat*) had risen and shone resplendently above their horizon (Buck 1995: 81).

In Christian terms, Bahā'u'llāh saw himself as the Spirit of Truth or Comforter predicted by Jesus in his Farewell Discourse of John 14–17. This claim was of great moment, but Bahā'u'llāh superseded even this by his claim to be the "Father." In "The Most Holy Tablet" (*al-Lawḥ al-Aqdas*), popularly known among Bahā'īs as the "Tablet to the Christians" and thought to have been revealed to the first Christian convert to the Faith, Faris the Physician, Bahā'u'llāh explicitly declares: "Say, Lo! The Father is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!" (TB 11). This is an unexpected claim, to say the least, inasmuch as Christians for centuries had awaited the return of Christ in glory, but had never conceived of the eschatological advent of the "Father." The closest Christians ever came to such an interpretation was in their typological reading of the so-called Yuletide prophecy of Isa. 9:6, which heralds the advent of the "Everlasting Father," who was never identified as a messianic figure with Judaism. In their search for scriptural warrant, Bahā'ī apologists have often pointed to the Parable of the Vineyard as the New Testament witness for the advent of the Father.

Bahā'u'llāh explains that prophecies are, by design, arcane. They can only be decoded by those who are spiritually discerning, and who thus have the capacity to realize that fulfillment has already taken place. As Bahā'u'llāh states: "Know then that He [Jesus], Who in the realms of glory gave utterance to these words, wished to describe the signs of the One Who would appear by means of symbol

and allusion lest the worldly (*ahl al-majāz*) should perceive His meaning” (cited in Buck 1995: 81). As there are three major divisions within Christianity Orthodoxy, Catholicism, and Protestantism, Bahā’u’llāh’s approach to each of these great traditions within Christianity will be treated separately.

### 3.3.1. *Catholicism*

For an analysis of Bahā’u’llāh’s proclamation to Catholics, see the discussion of the Tablet to the Pope in section 4.5.2.

### 3.3.2. *Orthodox Christianity*

In *The Promised Day is Come*, Shoghi Effendi (1980) has translated around one-third of Bahā’u’llāh’s second tablet to the first Christian convert to the Bahā’ī Faith, Faris Effendi (Lambden 1993: 23). The most important proclamatory passages in this Tablet reflect Bahā’u’llāh’s familiarity with the hierarchy of the Eastern Orthodox Church:

Say: O concourse of patriarchs (*yā ma’shar al-baṭāriqa*)! He Whom ye were promised in the Tablets (*al-akwāh*) is come. Fear God, and follow not the vain imaginings of the superstitious. Lay aside the things ye possess, and take fast hold of the Tablet of God (*lawḥ Allāh*) by His sovereign power. . . . Pride ye yourselves on My Name (*bismā*), and yet shut yourselves out as by a veil from Me (*min nafsā*)? This indeed is a strange thing!

Say: O concourse of archbishops (*yā ma’shar al-maṭārīna*, lit. metropolitans)! He Who is the Lord of all men (*walī al-barrīya*) hath appeared. In the plain of guidance (*barr al-ahdi*) He calleth mankind, whilst ye are numbered with the dead! Great is the blessedness of him who is stirred by the Breeze of God (*nasamāt Allāh*), and hath arisen from amongst the dead in this perspicuous Name (*al-ism al-mubīn*).

Say: O concourse of bishops (*yā mala’ al-asāqif*)! Trembling (*al-zalāzil*, lit. earthquakes) hath seized all the kindreds of the earth (*al-qabā’il*, lit. tribes), and He Who is the Everlasting Father (*al-rabb al-abadī*, lit. Everlasting Lord) calleth aloud between earth and heaven.

Say: O concourse of priests (*yā ma’shar al-qissās*)! The Day of Reckoning (*yawm al-dīn*) hath appeared; the Day whereon He Who was in heaven hath come. He, verily, is the One Whom ye were promised in the Books of God (*fi kitāb Allāh*, lit. Book), the Holy (*al-muqaddas*), the Almighty, the All-Praised. How long will ye wander in the wilderness of heedlessness and superstition? (PDC 101–102)

This text was quoted at length to draw attention to the Orthodox ecclesiastical hierarchy to which this proclamation was directed. Bahā’u’llāh’s interactions with Protestants reveal other distinctive features.

### 3.3.3. *Protestantism*

Moojan Momen (1982) has written an account of contacts between the early Bahā'īs and the Presbyterian missionaries in Persia. These contacts led to the first public mention of Bahā'u'llāh in America. Speaking before the World's Parliament of Religions (1893), the Rev. Henry H. Jessup stated: "In the palace of Behjeh . . . just outside the fortress of Acre [in Palestine], . . . there died a few months since a famous Persian sage, the Bābī saint, named Baha Allah . . . the head of that vast reform party of Persian Moslems, who accept the New Testament as the Word of God and Christ as the deliverer of men, who regard all nations as one, and all men as brothers. Three years ago he was visited by a Cambridge scholar, and gave utterances [sic] to sentiments so noble, so Christ-like" (qtd. by Momen 1982: 76).

One Protestant who actually corresponded with Bahā'u'llāh was Georg David Hardegg (1812–1879). In 1854, he co-founded the "Society for the Collection of the People of God" that is, the German "Association of Templers" (*Tempelgesellschaft*) in Jerusalem. While at the Templer colony in Haifa, he naturally heard of Bahā'u'llāh, the mystique of whose reputation piqued Hardegg's curiosity. In consequence of this, Hardegg tried to meet with Bahā'u'llāh, but was never granted an audience. However, the two corresponded. In response to Hardegg's questions, Bahā'u'llāh revealed a tablet known as the *Lawḥ-i Hirtik*. An English rendering of a German translation of this letter was published by Momen (1981: 216–17; cf. RB III:28–31), but Stephen Lambden has provided a provisional translation from the original Arabic text, in which Bahā'u'llāh states:

As for what you mentioned, that a certain person hath supposed there are no differences between us with regard to the Spirit [Jesus]: This is the truth, inasmuch as the Spirit [Jesus] is sanctified above being overwhelmed by differences, or encompassed by symbolic expressions. He, verily, is the Light of Oneness among mankind, and the Sign of the Ancient among the peoples. He who turneth unto Him [Jesus] hath turned unto He [God] Who sent Him [Jesus] . . . He hath ever been what He was and will ever remain the same as what He was; only the effulgence of His Epiphany in the Mirrors varies on account of Their different forms and colours. (tr. Lambden 1983: 56).

In the *Lawḥ-i Hirtik*, Bahā'u'llāh does not openly proclaim his messiahship. But there are hints of it, in such passages as this: "Land and sea have rejoiced at the beneficence of God and the promise made unto the nations concerning [the appearance of] the 'Healer of Infirmities.'

(*muṭahhir al-ʿilal*) He, verily, is the builder of the Temple (*bānī al-haykal*). Blessed be those possessed of mystic knowledge. When the appointed time came, Carmel cried out, trembling (*ihtizāz*) as if shaken by the breezes of the Lord. Blessed be those who hearken” (Lambden 1983: 54). Taking as his imagery the sacred topography of the Holy Land, he personifies Carmel as one who recognizes the advent of Bahāʾuʾllāh. In this oblique way, Bahāʾuʾllāh “tests” the receptiveness of Hardegg. At one time, Bahāʾuʾllāh briefly lived among the Templers at the foot of Mount Carmel. This was towards the end of his life. While Bahāʾuʾllāh was a guest among them, he was erstwhile a prisoner of the Persian and Ottoman governments throughout the course of his forty-year ministry (1852–1852). This was the result of a fundamental conflict with one of the major tenets of Islam: the finality of Muḥammad’s prophethood.

### 3.4. *Islam*

While there is much in common between Sunnī and Shīʿī end-time predictions, there are considerable differences as well. Some of these differences will be discussed in the next two sections. However, many of Bahāʾuʾllāh’s proclamations to Muslims of whatever persuasion are pan-Islamic, in that they communicate his claims of universal prophethood by way of Qurʾānic exegesis, rather than through reference to the popular *aḥādīth* or *akhbār* narrations of the fantastic events of the *eschaton*. Bahāʾuʾllāh transforms certain current readings of verses, understood to relate to the afterlife, into dramatic messianic promises of which he was the fulfillment. The example of the *Kūṭāb-i-Īqān* was mentioned above, and in that text can be seen the key ingredients of Bahāʾuʾllāh’s unique exegetical approach to Qurʾānic eschatology. The Qurʾānic concept of the Day of Resurrection is interpreted in such a way as to describe Bahāʾuʾllāh’s own time (the hermeneutic of presentism), and the many verses promising the attainment to the presence of God (*liqāʾ Allāh*) are cited, not as assurances of beatific encounters after death, but as prophecies of Bahāʾuʾllāh’s advent.

#### 3.4.1. *Sunnī Islam*

There is a need to differentiate Bahāʾuʾllāh’s messianic identity within a Sunnī context from the specifically Shīʿī associations that the claim to *Ḥusayniyya* entails (on which see the next section). While the figure of Ḥusayn, the grandson of Muḥammad, is venerated in Sunnī piety,

he does not play a role in the Sunnī eschatological drama. For both groups, the emergence of al-Mahdī initiates the events of the last days, but, for Sunnī Islam, it is Jesus, not Ḥusayn, who is at the centre of the post-Mahdi *eschaton*. If one were to look for a specifically Sunnī messiah likely to correspond with Bahā'u'llāh's proclamations, it would be the Sunnī Jesus. However, the matter is not so simple.

As a prophetic messiah, Bahā'u'llāh repeatedly stated that he fulfilled the prophecies of all religions, that he was the Promised One of all the holy books. Within the chain of interpretive authority initiated by Bahā'u'llāh's "Book of My Covenant" (*Kitāb al-ʿAhdī*) both 'Abdu'l-Bahā' and Shoghi Effendi have identified Bahā'u'llāh with the Jesus of Sunnī eschatology (SAQ 39; GPB 94). And yet, while Bahā'u'llāh addressed a number of works to Sunnī audiences in which prophetic authority and claims to divine revelation are explicit, there is no known text in which he engages the traditional literature and expectations regarding the return of Jesus after al-Mahdī.

The works of Bahā'u'llāh that do amount to identifications of his messiahship with the return of Christ are directed to audiences that are either Christian or Shī'ī, and thus engage the elements of those traditions regarding the eschatological Jesus. The equation of Bahā'u'llāh with the Sunnī Jesus in Bahā'ī literature can therefore be seen as the elaboration of the principle of multiple-messiahship enunciated by Bahā'u'llāh. In the proclamations to the leaders of Sunnī communities, however, it is upon other grounds that Bahā'u'llāh establishes his prophetic credentials. This may be due to the nature of the traditional sources of Sunnī eschatology, in which the primary role of the returned Jesus was to break crosses and kill swine.

### 3.4.2. *Shī'a Islam*

Although Bahā'u'llāh's Shī'ī-referenced proclamations were aimed more at Bābīs than Shī'a Muslims, it is true that the latter had anticipated the advent of Ḥusayn *redivivus*, that is, the return of the Third Imam, an expectation that Bahā'u'llāh himself acknowledges: "Consider the eagerness with which certain peoples and nations have anticipated the return of Imam-Ḥusayn, whose coming, after the appearance of the Qā'im, hath been prophesied . . . "That hour is now come. The world is illumined with the effulgent glory of His countenance" (GWB 12). In an Arabic passage in Bahā'u'llāh's predominantly Persian Tablet, the *Lawḥ-i Nasīr*, Bahā'u'llāh proclaims:

By God! This is He Who hath at one time appeared in the name of the Spirit [*al-rūḥ* = Jesus Christ], thereafter in the name of the Friend [*al-ḥabīb* = Muḥammad], then in the name of ‘Alī [the Bāb], and afterwards in this blessed, lofty, self-subsisting, exalted, and beloved Name. In truth, this is Ḥusayn, Who hath appeared through divine grace in the dominion of justice, against whom have arisen the infidels, with what they possess of wickedness and iniquity. Thereupon they severed His head with the sword of malice, and lifted it upon a spear in the midst of earth and heaven. Verily, that head is speaking from atop that spear, saying: “O assemblage of shadows! Stand ashamed before My beauty (*jamālī*), My might (*qudraī*), My sovereignty (*salṭanatī*) and My grandeur (*kubrīyā’ī*). Turn your gaze unto the countenance of your Lord, the Unconstrained, so that you may find Me crying out among you with holy and cherished melodies.” (tr. Buck 1986: 163; MMM 196; cf. MacEoin 1989: 120)

This is a striking and powerful image. Indeed, the passion and pathos of Ḥusayn must surely have resonated with Bahā’u’llāh’s own suffering as a result of the persecutions he had to endure.

### 3.5. *Bābism*

Given the Islamic background of the Bahā’ī Faith, its message was cast in a traditional Islamic (that is, Shī‘ī) mould. Yet there was a transformation of function. While Islamic (specifically Ishrāqī) vocabulary was still being used, the very words took on new meaning. The Bāb, who was Bahā’u’llāh’s precursor, had already precipitated a decisive break from Islam. As stated earlier, the Bāb had established a religion that was super-Islamic in form, yet supra-Islamic in function (Buck 2001). In practical terms, Bahā’u’llāh completed what the Bāb began. Indeed, Bahā’u’llāh’s religion represents, from a certain perspective, the universalization of the religion of the Bāb.

To the Bābīs, Bahā’u’llāh proclaimed himself as He Whom God Shall Manifest (*man-Ẓuḥiruhu’llāh*), a figure promised throughout the Bāb’s writings. Bahā’u’llāh’s lengthiest work is the *Kitāb-i-Badī* (Edirne, c. late 1867 or early 1868), written in defense of his Bābī messiahship. In this book, Bahā’u’llāh cites a rather explicit and striking prophecy of the Bāb, from Sura 57 of the *Qayyūm al-Asmā’* (p. 224): “Indeed, God hath created everywhere around this Gate oceans of divine elixir, tinged crimson with the essence (lit., “oil”) of existence and vitalized through the animating power of the desired fruit; and for them God hath provided Arks of ruby, tender, crimson-colored, wherein none shall sail but the people of Bahā’ (SWB 57–58; cf. tr.

Lambden 1986: 60). One illustrative passage of Bahā'u'llāh's proclamation to the Bābīs is this: "Verily He Who is the Truth hath appeared in His sovereignty! His proof is the revelation of His divine verses, and His testimony is the manifestation of His own Self" (tr. Saiedi 2000: 182). This line of argument follows that of the Bāb himself. What remained for the Bābīs was to decide whether or not Bahā'u'llāh was indeed the one foretold by the Bāb. The majority of Bābīs accepted Bahā'u'llāh's claims.

### 3.6. *Hinduism, Buddhism, and Beyond*

While Bahā'u'llāh did not proclaim himself to be the Hindu messiah directly, he did so in principle. Moreover, in 1872 he sent a teacher Jamal Effendi to India, with the result that the latter is considered by Bahā'īs to be the "spiritual father of India." Later, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' confirmed an American Bahā'ī's identification of Bahā'u'llāh with Kalki ("Destroyer") Viṣṇuyasas ("Fame of Viṣṇu" or "Glory of God"), the Tenth Avatar of classical Vaisnavaite tradition (Buck 1986). Jamal Effendi also traveled to Burma, where the first Buddhists to become Bahā'īs converted.

## 4. *Royal Messiah*

Between the years 1867 and 1873, Bahā'u'llāh as mentioned above sent epistles to the world's rulers and religious leaders. Historically, the more important messages were addressed to the crowned heads of Europe, in public proclamations to Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, Pope Pius IX and other world leaders during the Adrianople (1864–1868) and 'Akkā periods (1868–1892). Dissemination of these messages was no easy task, and involved certain practical concerns. In the nineteenth-century Middle East and even to this day (especially in the Islamic Republic of Iran), mere possession of Bahā'u'llāh's writings could result in the arrest, imprisonment, torture, and possible execution of their bearer. This is most dramatically illustrated in the transmission of Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Shah of Iran (revealed in the spring of 1868; see Cole 1998a: 32), which will be discussed shortly.

Our knowledge of the dispatch of Bahā'u'llāh's epistles, revealed, for the most part, in 'Akkā to the leaders of the Great Powers, is sketchy. The circumstances under which they were written are as



dramatic as they were oppressive. A British lawyer, Myron Phelps, spent the month of December 1902 in 'Akkā. While he was there, he recorded a rare, oral account of the imprisonments and exiles of Bahā'u'llāh, his family and entourage as told by the prophet's daughter, Bahīyyih Khānum (see photograph in Balyuzi 1980: 348). Owing to the prevailing Muslim customs, it was not possible for Phelps to meet with Bahīyyih Khānum personally, and so her narrative was conveyed, in installments, through Madam M.A. de S. Canavarro.

"When we had entered the barracks," Bahīyyih Khānum recounts, "the massive door was closed upon us and the great iron bolts thrown home. I cannot find words to describe the filth and stench of that vile place. We were nearly up to our ankles in mud in the room into which we were led. The damp, close air and the excretions of the soldiers combined to produce horrible odours. Then, being unable to bear more, I fainted." "As I fainted," Bahā'u'llāh's daughter continues, "those about me caught me before I fell; but because of the mud and filth there was no place upon which I could be laid" (Phelps 1903: 57).

When illness broke out among the Bahā'ī prisoners, no physician was allowed, until a prison officer pleaded with the governor to allow a physician to treat 'Abdu'l-Bahā', who had been stricken with dysentery. Bahīyyih Khānum recalls: "My brother begged him [the physician] to take a message to the believers who were waiting to hear from the Blessed Perfection [Bahā'u'llāh]. He undertook to do so, and carried away a tablet in the lining of his hat. For two years this physician conveyed tablets to and from in this way" (Phelps 1903: 65). Bahā'u'llāh's daughter then makes this general statement, from which we can deduce the manner in which Bahā'u'llāh's epistles to the kings and rulers were both revealed and relayed to their intended recipients: "We were imprisoned in the barracks, without any substantial change in our manner of life, for two years. During this time none of us left the prison not even my brother or any of the children. The Blessed Perfection passed his time in his room, writing tablets, or rather dictating them to my younger brother, who was a rapid penman. 'Abbās Effendi would copy them and send them out by the physician" (Phelps 1903: 65–66).

Notwithstanding the perils of dissemination, Bahā'u'llāh took specific measures for the delivery of his epistles and other writings to various heads of state and to leaders of religions as well. One of the few Europeans to have personally met Bahā'u'llāh attests to this

practice and to the intentions behind it. This was Henry Edward Plantagenet, known as Count Cottrell, who, because of his involvement with the 'Akkā-Damascus railway, was in 'Akkā during the last year or two of Bahā'u'llāh's life. Around 1891, together with his wife and daughter, Count Cottrell had the rare privilege of enjoying Bahā'u'llāh's hospitality. On that occasion, the Count was given a copy of Bahā'u'llāh's law code, the Arabic *al-Kitāb al-Aqdas*, penned in the hand of Mīrzā Āqā Jān, Bahā'u'llāh's amanuensis. Count Cottrell wrote:

I have personal and intimate knowledge of the present leaders of the Bābīst movement in Persia, the four sons of the late Mirza Hussein, who are political prisoners in 'Akkā, though the Shāh within the last twelve months has repealed the penal laws against the sect, and is now very friendly. These princes have a large library of books written by their father on the peculiar doctrines of the sect, which aim at nothing less than the reconciliation of Buddhism, Christianity, and Mahomedanism. The father in his will directed his sons to transmit to all the sovereigns of Europe copies of certain of his works, accompanied by an autograph letter. The late Czar of Russia, since Mirza Hossein's decease, sent to the sons and obtained copies of several of the principal works and had them translated into Russian. The princes are very anxious to carry out the wish of their late father [Bahā'u'llāh], and to have copies of the works presented to Her Majesty the Queen; and also to obtain, unofficially, the countenance of the British Foreign Office to enable them to reach the other sovereigns with a similar object. They have furnished me with summaries of the principal works in Arabic and Persian, with the object of having them translated and published in Britain and in the United States of America. (Cottrell 1895; qtd. in Momen 1981: 236).

Cottrell's references to "the princes" may appear unusual to a reader who is aware that Bahā'u'llāh and his entourage were exiles and virtual prisoners. Under such circumstances, they were hardly "princes" by any stretch of the imagination. In reference to Bahā'u'llāh himself, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' has said: "Every person, friend or stranger, who came into His presence used to say, 'This is a prince, not a captive'" (SAQ 32). This was true in Cottrell's case. His observations concerning Bahā'u'llāh's intent to proclaim his mission to world leaders are validated by Bahā'u'llāh's own statement: "Upon Our arrival at this Prison ['Akkā], We purposed to transmit to the kings the messages of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Though We have transmitted to them, in several Tablets, that which We were commanded, yet We do it once again, as a token of God's grace"

(GPB 206). This refers to an earlier set of proclamations, contained in the Sura of the Kings (*Sūrat al-Mulūk*), revealed in Edirne (Adrianople) in 1867.

On the delivery of these epistles to the various kings and rulers whom Bahā'u'llāh addressed, Nabīl reports Bahā'u'llāh as saying:

From Our Most Great Prison, We were moved to address to the several rulers and crowned heads of the world Epistles, in which We summoned them to arise and embrace the Cause of God. To the Shah of Persia, We sent Our messenger Badī, into whose hands We entrusted the Tablet. It was he who raised it aloft before the eyes of the multitude and, with uplifted voice, appealed to his sovereign to heed the words that Tablet contained. The rest of the Epistles likewise reached their destination. To the Tablet We addressed to the Emperor of France, an answer was received from his minister, the original of which is now in the possession of the Most Great Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahā’]. . . . The Epistle we addressed to the Czar of Russia, alone failed to reach its destination. Other Tablets, however, have reached him, and that Epistle will eventually be delivered into his hands.

‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ confirms, “these letters, with one exception, were sent through the post” (1979: 177).

“The most important of His Tablets addressed to individual sovereigns,” Shoghi Effendi writes, “Bahā'u'llāh ordered to be written in the form of a pentacle, symbolizing the temple of man” (PDC 47). Taherzadeh discloses that the Tablets were copied in the following order: (1) the *Sūrat al-Haykal* itself; (2) the Tablet to Pope Pius IX; (3) the Tablet to Napoleon III; (4) the Tablet to Czar Alexander II; (5) the Tablet to Queen Victoria; (6) and the Tablet to Nāsir al-Dīn Shah (RB 3:133; cf. Walbridge 1996: 168). An overview of these Tablets and their dispatch will afford a glimpse into this phase of Bahā'u'llāh's mission. As to their dating, Browne observes: “It seems to me not unlikely that the Epistles to the Pope, the Emperor of the French, and the Czar of Russia were written at Acre at about the same time as the Epistle to the Queen of England” (1892a: 313). Precise dates of the revelation of the Tablets addressed to the Pope, Czar Alexander II, and the Queen of England still cannot be determined. However, due to the fact that five individual Tablets to the Kings were inscribed in the *Sūrat al-Haykal* which, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ (SAQ 25), circulated amongst the Bahā'īs during the early period of Bahā'u'llāh's incarceration in ‘Akkā, these Tablets were probably revealed in 1869 during the same period when the Tablet to Napoleon was also written.

Bahā'u'llāh's proclamation to kings and ecclesiastics represents possibly the earliest (or one of the earliest) global peace initiatives ever undertaken, rendering this mission historic. "When We arrived in the Prison," Bahā'u'llāh recounts, "We desired to send to the monarchs the epistles of their Lord, the master of men, that they might know that tribulations have not deprived God of His sovereignty" (AQA I 341; tr. Cole 1998: 60; cf. Browne 1992: 280). During this time, when the "Great Powers" held sway Europe's world dominion having been achieved through imperialism and exploitative colonization the United States of America was relatively insignificant on the world scene. It should be noted that Bahā'u'llāh did address a short Tablet to the "Rulers of America" (PB 63).

#### 4.1. *Tablet to the Shāh of Iran*

Evidently before his arrival in 'Akkā, Bahā'u'llāh revealed an epistle for Nāsir al-Dīn Shah, king of Persia (r. 1848–1896). In this epistle, Bahā'u'llāh refers to the order decreeing his banishment to 'Akkā: "And the lords of authority and wealth are about to send us from this land, which is named Edirne [Adrianople], to the city of 'Akkā [Acre]" (Browne 1892a, 282 and 313; cf. TN 80). That *firmān* was dated 26 July 1868. And so Browne was right when he surmised: "Though the Epistle may very likely have been finished at Acre, it must have been begun, therefore, in August, 1868" (Browne 1892a: 309). This is confirmed by 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. "During the latter days [passed] in Adrianople," he recounts, "Bahā'u'llāh composed a detailed epistle" which he then "placed . . . in a packet and adorned its address with the royal name of His Majesty the King of Persia, and wrote [on it] that some person pure of heart and pure of life, dedicated to God, and prepared for martyr-sacrifice, must, with perfect resignation and willingness, convey this epistle into the presence of the King" (TN 58). The most probable date is March 1868.

##### 4.1.1. *Transmission*

The king's resolve to exterminate the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions was actuated by the attempt on his life by Bābīs who were aggrieved over the Bāb's execution in Tabriz in 1850. There had been a long-standing need to assure the Shah that the Bahā'īs their persecutions notwithstanding were loyal subjects, and not bent on sedition. It was important that Bahā'u'llāh communicate this directly, in writing, to

the Shah, in order to state for the record that the former condemned the assassination attempt on the latter as a misguided and vile act.

In early 1869, a seventeen-year-old youth named āqā Buzurg Nīshāpūrī, known by the honorific Badīʿ (“Unique,” “Wondrous”), arrived in ‘Akkā to attain the presence of Bahā’u’llāh. During his two interviews, Bahā’u’llāh mentioned his Tablet to the Shah of Iran, which had been revealed but not yet dispatched. Badīʿ requested the honor of being chosen as the one to personally deliver that Tablet, and was granted that historic opportunity. In a tablet, Bahā’u’llāh wrote: “We ask God to send one of His servants, and to detach him from Contingent Being, and to adorn his heart with the decoration of strength and composure, that he may help his Lord amidst the concourse of creatures, and, when he becometh aware of what hath been revealed for His Majesty the King, that he may arise and take the Letter, by the permission of his Lord, the Mighty, the Bounteous, and go with speed to the abode of the King.” (tr. E.G. Browne 1891: 2:391–392; cited in Balyuzi 1980: 299). Pursuant to this mission, Badīʿ journeyed on foot, for four months, until he reached his destination. Bahā’u’llāh anticipated the danger or even inevitability of the martyrdom of Badīʿ in saying, further in the tablet:

And when he shall arrive at the place of his throne, let him alight in the inn, and let him hold converse with none till he goeth forth one day and standeth where he [the Shah] shall pass by. And when the Royal harbingers shall appear, let him raise up the Letter with the utmost humility and courtesy and say, “It hath been sent on the part of the Prisoner.” And it is incumbent upon him to be in such a mood that, should the King decree his death, he should not be troubled within himself, and shall hasten to the place of sacrifice . . . (tr. Browne, *apud* Balyuzi 1980: 299)

The Shah would decree not only the death but the torture of the youth as well. From Tehran, Badīʿ sought out the Shah’s summer resort at Lār, approached the Shah, and attempted to deliver to him Bahā’u’llāh’s tablet. Arrested and tortured to extract from him the names of his companions, Badīʿ maintained that he had acted solely on his own. This torture the dauntless youth endured with indomitable resolve. (A photograph of Badīʿ taken during this period of torture, is published in Balyuzi 1980: 306.) After this excruciating ordeal, Badīʿ was finally killed in July 1869 by the blow of “a pounder used for ramming in iron pegs.” Muḥammad-Valī Khān Sipahdār-i Aʿzam’s moving account of the martyrdom of Badīʿ was penned in the mar-

gins of the copy of the Persian version of *Some Answered Questions* which he had been given while in Paris in 1913 (Balyuzi 1980: 292–310, with facsimile on 302).

The Tablet to the Shāh was acquired by Russian consular officials in Persia who then dispatched it to St. Petersburg, where it was archived in the Collection of the Institute of Oriental Languages by its director, M. Gamazov, who catalogued it as MS. No. 48/465. Baron Victor Rosen sent Cambridge Orientalist a copy of the catalogue of the Collection, which gives a complete description of the Tablet. According to Browne, Bahā'u'llāh's "instructions to the bearer" that is, Badī' were "written on the outside of the packet" (1892a: 270).

#### 4.1.2. *Proclamation*

Browne notes that this tablet "is characterized by extreme moderation of tone" (SWEGB 261). It is, moreover, "written with great humility and moderation," as evinced by Bahā'u'llāh's self-reference as "this slave" (*hādha al-mamlūk*)" (264). Notwithstanding, Bahā'u'llāh named this tablet, "The Rumbling" (RB 3:174). This Tablet is not without the grandeur that is so salient a feature in the other epistles to kings. Bahā'u'llāh speaks of himself as the "Comforting Spirit" (*ruh-i tasallī*) in a transparent reference to his role as Paraclete (Lambden 1997: 91). Towards the end of the Tablet (38), Bahā'u'llāh states that "soon" (*yawma'idhin*) there would be entry by "troops" (*qfwājan*) into the Bahā'ī community.

#### 4.1.3. *Response*

The Shah's immediate response to the arrest and torture of Badī' has already been noted. On the eve of his jubilee in 1896, the Shah was assassinated.

### 4.2. *Tablet to Czar Alexander II*

#### 4.2.1. *Transmission*

"One of the sections of the *Sūratu'l-Haykal*," Bahā'u'llāh writes, "is the Tablet addressed to His Majesty, the Czar of Russia" (ESW 56). The tablet begins: "O Czar of Russia! Incline thine ear unto the voice of God, the King, the Holy, and turn thou unto Paradise, the Spot wherein abideth He Who, among the Concourse on high, beareth the most excellent titles, and Who, in the kingdom of creation,

is called by the name of God, the Effulgent, the All-Glorious (*Allāh al-Bahīyy al-Abhā*)” (PDC 33; cf. SWEGB 275). As stated earlier, Bahā’u’llāh’s epistle to Emperor of Russia, Czar Alexander II (r. 1855–1881), was revealed at a time when Bahā’u’llāh languished as a prisoner in the barracks in ‘Akkā. The Research Department at the Bahā’ī World Centre in Haifa, Israel has not been able to locate any further evidence as to whether or not the Tablet to Czar Alexander II had ever been delivered. Recalling Bahā’u’llāh’s reported statement, “The Epistle We addressed to the Czar of Russia, alone failed to reach its destination. Other Tablets, however, have reached him, and that Epistle will eventually be delivered into his hands” (*Dawnbreakers*), Juan Cole has drawn attention to what he describes as a “second” Tablet to the Czar, in which Bahā’u’llāh writes:

In the Tablets to the Kings a mention was revealed of this wronged one’s imprisonment and the protection afforded by the resident minister of the glorious Russian state, may God aid him. O Tsar, one of your ambassadors helped me when I was in prison, weighed down by manacles and chains. Therefore, God has inscribed for you a station that no one can know. Beware lest you exchange this august station. During the days when this wronged one was being tormented in the dungeon, the ambassador of that glorious state may God assist him arose with perfect zeal to rescue me. On a number of occasions, permission to have me released was obtained, but some of the ulama of the city forbade it. But in the end the attention and efforts of the ambassador succeeded in freeing me. Then we set out for Iraq. (Cole 1998b)

This recognition of Russian intervention is written in a respectful, even deferential tone. Internal evidence suggests that this second epistle to the Czar was revealed after 1889. Clearly, Bahā’u’llāh assumes an altogether different “voice” in his earlier, proclamatory epistle, in which an exalted theophanic claim is made.

#### 4.2.2. *Proclamation*

Elsewhere in the epistle, Bahā’u’llāh warns the Czar:

Beware lest thy sovereignty withhold thee from Him Who is the Supreme Sovereign. He, verily, is come with His Kingdom, and all the atoms cry aloud: ‘Lo! The Lord is come in His great majesty!’ He Who is the Father (*al-ab*) is come, and the Son [Jesus], in His holy vale, crieth out: ‘Here am I, here am I, O Lord, My God!,’ whilst Sinai (*al-ṭūr*) circleteth around the House (*al-bayt*), and the Burning Bush (*al-shajār*) calleth aloud: ‘The All-Bounteous is come mounted upon the clouds (*al-sahāb*)!’, (PDC 33; ESW 57; LS 53).

This proclamation is stunning in its eschatological audacity, and represents a claim that was sure to challenge Russian Orthodoxy, had sufficient publicity been drawn to it.

#### 4.2.3. *Response*

As Bahā'u'llāh's first epistle to the Czar had never, evidently, reached its destination, no response was forthcoming.

### 4.3. *Tablet to Napoleon III*

#### 4.3.1. *Transmission*

Bahā'u'llāh sent two epistles to Napoleon III (r. 1852–1870). In response to the first, Napoleon is reportedly exclaimed: "If this man is God, I am two Gods" (PDC 51). In a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, the following observation was made: "We do not know at the present time of any particular material about Napoleon III with reference to his reported exclamation, 'If this man is God, I am two Gods.' Such matters will undoubtedly be investigated by Bahā'ī historians in the future" (28 July 1971 to an individual). Bahā'u'llāh himself writes:

In proclaiming His Cause, He, in no wise, hesitated. Addressing Himself unto the kings and rulers of the earth may God, exalted be He, assist them He imparted unto them that which is the cause of the well-being, the unity, the harmony, and the reconstruction of the world, and of the tranquility of the nations. Among them was Napoleon III, who is reported to have made a certain statement, as a result of Our Tablet while in Adrianople. To this, however, he did not reply. After Our arrival in the Most Great Prison there reached Us a letter from his Minister, the first part of which was in Persian, and the latter in his own handwriting. In it he was cordial, and wrote the following: "I have, as requested by you, delivered your letter, and until now have received no answer. We have, however, issued the necessary recommendations to our Minister in Constantinople and our consuls in those regions. If there be anything you wish done, inform us, and we will carry it out." From his words it became apparent that he understood the purpose of this Servant to have been a request for material assistance. We, therefore, revealed in his (Napoleon III's) name verses in the *Sūratu'l-Haykal*, some of which We now quote, that thou mayest know that the Cause of this Wronged One hath been revealed for the sake of God, and hath come from Him. (ESW 45–46)

Regarding this second Tablet to Napoleon, revealed in 1869, it was spirited out of the prison barracks in the lining of the hat worn by



the Bahā'ī physician referred to in Bahiyyih Khānum's narrative (supra and PDC 51). Bahā'u'llāh discloses that: "We bade a Christian dispatch this Tablet, and he informed Us that he transmitted both the original and its translation" (ESW 56). Corroboratively, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' states: "This epistle was sent to Napoleon, by post . . . as was known to all the companions of His [Bahā'u'llāh's] exile" (SAQ 33). It was dispatched by a Christian Arab, Khājih Louis Catafago (Balyuzi 1980: 320), French consular agent in 'Akkā and Haifa at that time, who first translated it into French. The son of Catafago became a Bahā'ī after seeing the fulfillment of Bahā'u'llāh's prophecies regarding Napoleon come true (RB 3:114).

#### 4.3.2. *Proclamation*

Bahā'u'llāh addresses Napoleon, saying: "Give ear, O King, unto the Voice that calleth from the Fire (*al-nār*) which burneth in this Verdant Tree (*al-shajara al-khaḍrā'*), upon this Sinai (*al-buḡ'ah al-muqaddasah al-bayḍā'*) which hath been raised above the hallowed and snow-white Spot, beyond the Everlasting City (*qulzum al-baqā'*)" (ESW 47; PDC 29; Lambden 1988: 142, who notes that what is here translated as "Everlasting City" is literally the "Abyss of Eternity").

#### 4.3.3. *Response*

Napoleon's responses have already been noted above. In his account of his visit to 'Akkā in March 1874, Shaykh Kāzīm Samandar (d. 1918), a notable Bahā'ī of Qazvin later designated by Shoghi Effendi as an "Apostle of Bahā'u'llāh" (see photos in Balyuzi 1985: 199, 202 and 262), stated that Bahā'u'llāh said that Napoleon III was a godless man, and that he had made an idol of his own intellect (Balyuzi 1985: 208).

### 4.4. *Tablet to Pope Pius IX*

#### 4.4.1. *Transmission*

Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Pope is from the "Everlasting Father" to the "Father" (which is the meaning of the word "Pope") of the Catholic Church, which was and still is the largest body of Christians. The Pope at that time was Count Mastai-Ferretti, former Bishop of Imola, installed as the 254th pope since the inception of the primacy of St. Peter. For centuries, the Papacy exercised and enjoyed temporal as well as spiritual sovereignty. To be sure, the Pope was

a political power to be reckoned with in Europe. However, Pius IX, author of papal Bull, which established the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin (1854) and promulgator of the new dogma of Papal Infallibility (1870) adopted during Vatican I, was a poor statesman and ruler.

Despite Bahā'u'llāh's reported statement that the epistles to the kings and ecclesiastics reached their destination (with the exception of the Czar of Russia), there is some question as to whether or not Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Pope was ever really delivered to Pius IX. Expressing his doubts, Shoghi Effendi writes:

It seems likely that Bahā'u'llāh's Tablet to the Pope was never delivered to him. We do not know the method used to transmit it to him, and can only guess that Church dignitaries would not have attached sufficient importance to it to deliver it. . . . [I]t would be wonderful if it were actually found in the Vatican archives. The original was written in Arabic. In 1868 Bahā'u'llāh arrived in 'Akkā, and the Tablet was supposedly sent from there about that period. Unfortunately this is the closest we can come at present to an accurate date (From a letter dated 15 November 1947 to an individual believer.)

#### 4.4.2. *Proclamation*

In studying this tablet, I have consulted the version in *Kitāb-i Mubīn* (AQA I), without critically collating texts. The text, however, appears to be reliable. I follow Shoghi Effendi's translation, while supplying Arabic terms from the original. The Tablet opens:

O Pope (*an yā pāpā*)! Rend the veils asunder. He Who is the Lord of Lords (*rabb al-arbāb*) is come overshadowed with clouds (*al-sahāb*, pl. *suhub*) . . . On His right hand flow the living waters of grace (*kawthar al-faḍl*), and on His left the choice Wine of justice (*salsabīl al-'adl*), whilst before Him march the angels of Paradise, bearing the banners of His signs. . . . Dwellst thou in palaces (*al-quṣūr*) whilst He Who is the King of Revelation (*sultān al-zuhūr*) liveth in the most desolate of abodes (*'akhrab al-buyūt*)? Leave them unto such as desire them, and set thy face with joy and delight (*rūḥ wa rayḥān*) towards the Kingdom (*al-malakūt*). . . . Arise in the name of thy Lord, the God of Mercy, amidst the peoples of the earth, and seize thou the Cup of Life with the hands of confidence, and first drink therefrom, and proffer it then to such as turn towards it amongst the peoples of all faiths (*aḥl al-adyān*) . . . (PDC 31; AQA I:38–39)

In this Tablet, Bahā'u'llāh refers to his own station as the "Father" in three passages. In the first, Bahā'u'llāh proclaims: "The Word (*al-kalima*) which the Son concealed is made manifest. It hath been sent

down in the form of the human temple (*haykal al-insān*) in this day. Blessed be the Lord Who is the Father (*al-ab*)! He, verily, is come unto the nations in His most great majesty. Turn your faces towards Him, O concourse of the righteous!" (PDC 32; AQA I:41; cf. Browne's trans. in SWEGB 271).

In the second passage, which soon follows the first, Bahā'u'llāh proclaims:

This is the day whereon the Rock (Peter) crieth out and shouteth, and celebrateth the praise of its Lord, the All-Possessing, the Most High, saying: 'Lo! The Father (*al-ab*) is come, and that which ye were promised in the Kingdom is fulfilled!' [Browne:] This is a word which was concealed behind the veil of Might, and when the promised (time) came, it shone forth from the horizon of the (Divine) Will with manifest signs . . . My body longeth for the cross, and Mine head waiteth for the thrust of the spear, in the path of the All-Merciful, that the world may be purged from its transgressions . . . (PDC 32; AQA I:41).

Compare Browne's translation, which reads: "that the world may be purified from sin" (SWEGB 271; AQA I:41). The Arabic term, *al-ʿiyyān*, carries the idea of disobedience or mutiny against God (Steingass 852), thus suggesting that Bahā'u'llāh's concept of sin is focused on a "falling away" rather than a Catholic notion of "the Fall."

In the third passage, Bahā'u'llāh uses a different term for the "Father": "O people of the Son! We have sent unto you John (the Baptist) another time . . . This is indeed the Father (*al-wālid*), whereof Isaiah gave you tidings, and the Comforter (*al-muʿazzī*) whom the Spirit promised" (SWEGB 272; AQA I:44). [Cf. Lambden's translation: "This is indeed the Father (*al-wālid*), whereof Isaiah gave you tidings [Isa. 9:6b] and the Comforter (*al-muʿazzī*) whose coming was promised by the Spirit [Jesus]" (1983, 47).] This triple reference to Bahā'u'llāh's station as the Father appears to reinforce this particular messianic identification. The following observation was made by the Rev. Robert Bruce, CMS Missionary to Iran, who wrote in 1894 a report of his contacts with the Bahā'īs of Isfahan:

I am just now reading the latest Bible of the Baabis. The sect of Baabis which is now increasing in Persia is that called the Bahai. Their chief is in Accahe calls himself The Father and says Bab bore to him the same relation as John the Baptist did "The Son." His book is a collection of Divine Revelations addressed to "The Pope," "The Queen of England," "The King of Paris" and other crowned heads. In all his letters to Christians he never alludes to Mahomed but freely quotes the N.T. and says his appearance is the fulfillment of the promise of

the Son that he would return. But that he has returned in the person of the Father.

He says to the Pope: “You dwell in (*kasir* which in Arabic means both sin and) palaces and I the greatest Manifestation of the Deity dwell in the meanest of hovels (the prison). My body is imprisoned to give you freedom, it has submitted to dishonour to bring you honour. Remember how the Pharisees turned away from the Son. Take care that you do not thus turn from the Father. Oh ye monks ye array yourselves in gorgeous robes and forget that the robe of God is red with the blood of enemies.”

I had a great many Baab is with me yesterday including some of those who were imprisoned and whom I had got set at liberty. I said to them You allow that Christ is the Son, the Word, The Spirit of God, even God himself and you say Baha is the Father. What is Mahomed then? . . . They would give no answer to this but would talk forever of Christ and Baha. (Momen 1982: 63–64)

Rev. Bruce understood quite clearly what Bahā’u’llāh’s messianic proclamations represented, although the good missionary would doubtlessly have regarded these as messianic pretensions.

#### 4.4.3. *Response*

On page 44 of the Arabic text, Bahā’u’llāh addresses the followers of all faiths in his call, literally translated: “O people of religions! (*yā ’ahl al-adyān*)”. The Tablet to the Pope concludes: “Verily, He [Jesus] said: ‘Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become fishers of men (*ṣayyādī al-insān*).’ In this day, however, We say: ‘Come ye after Me, that We may make you to become the quickeners of mankind (*muḥyī al-‘ālam*)’ (PDC 106; AQA I:46; cf. SWEGB 272–273). Metaphorically in Persian, a *ṣayyād* is a “ravisher of hearts” (Steingass 796). Foreboding, as it were, of things to come, Bahā’u’llāh urged the Pope: “Abandon thy kingdom unto the kings” (PB 85). Commenting on the utter loss of Papal patrimony in 1870 when King Victor Emmanuel II waged war against the Papal states and captured Rome in the process, Shoghi Effendi observes that: “The Tablet of Bahā’u’llāh, addressed to Pius IX, precipitated its extinction” (PDC 53).

#### 4.5. *Tablet to Queen Victoria*

##### 4.5.1. *Transmission*

In 1936, Shoghi Effendi, the foremost authority of his time on the writings of Bahā’u’llāh, referred to the Tablet to the Queen as having

been “revealed almost seventy years ago to Queen Victoria,” which would make the *terminus a quo* a post-1866 date (WOB 163). This is corroborated by internal evidence in the Tablet itself, in which reference is made to the *Sūrat al-Mulūk* (Sura of the Kings), an earlier work revealed circa 1866 in Edirne (= Adrianople). The precise starting point is 31 August 1868, the date of Bahā’u’llāh’s arrival at the prison-fortress of ‘Akkā, as indicated by Bahā’u’llāh himself: “Upon Our arrival at this Prison, We purposed to transmit to the kings the messages of their Lord, the Mighty, the All-Praised. Though We have transmitted to them, in several Tablets, that which We were commanded, yet We do it once again, as a token of God’s grace” (GPB 206).

In an earlier letter dated 1931, Shoghi Effendi wrote, “Over sixty years ago, in His Tablet to Queen Victoria,” establishing a pre-1871 date as a *terminus ad quem* (WOB 39). The more precise point of termination would be 4 November 1870, marking the end of Bahā’u’llāh’s confinement in the army barracks of ‘Akkā. Balyuzi notes that Bahā’u’llāh and his family and companions were confined to the barracks for two years, two months and five days (1980: 319, n. 3). There appears to be a consensus that the Tablet to Queen Victoria was revealed during this period of confinement, although supporting evidence is lacking. Browne concludes: “Most of these letters appear to have been written about the same time, viz. soon after the arrival of Beha [sic] at Acre (A.H. 1285–86, A.D. 1868–69)” (1987: 260).

In any event, actual delivery of the Tablet to the British monarch herself appears to be uncertain. Bahā’u’llāh, in his last major work, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, expresses the wish that: “Likewise, We mention some verses from the Tablet of Her Majesty, the Queen [Queen Victoria] may God, exalted and glorified be He, assist her. Our purpose is that haply the breezes of Revelation may envelop thee, and cause thee to arise, wholly for the sake of God, and serve His Cause, and that thou mayest transmit any of the Tablets of the kings which might have remained undelivered. This mission is a great mission, and this service a great service” (ESW 59).

#### 4.5.2. *Proclamation*

In his Tablet to Victoria (r. 1830–1901), Queen of Great Britain and Queen-Empress of India, Bahā’u’llāh opens by saying: “O Queen in London! Incline thine ear unto the voice (*nida’*, lit. “call”) of thy

Lord, the Lord of all mankind, calling from the Divine Lote-Tree (*al-sidrat al-ilāhiyyat*): Verily, no God is there but Me, the Almighty, the All-Wise! Cast away all that is on earth, and attire the head of thy kingdom with the crown of the remembrance of thy Lord (*dhikr rabbiki al-jalīl*), the All-Glorious. He, in truth, hath come unto the world in His most great glory (*majdiḥ al-aʿẓam*), and all that hath been mentioned in the Gospel hath been fulfilled (*kamula ma dhukira fī al-injīl*)” (ESW 59–60; PDC 35; PB 33; LS 59). Note that, before the mention of any of his world reforms, Bahāʾuʾllāh establishes his divine authority on the basis of his prophetic credentials.

#### 4.5.3. *Response*

He then proceeds to praise Queen Victoria for her abolition of slavery, and for her support of parliamentary democracy (LS 59). Bahāʾuʾllāh even reveals a short prayer for British parliamentarians who, before entering the Parliament to carry on the work of passing legislation, should pray: “O my God! I beseech Thee, by Thy most glorious Name, to assist me in that which will cause the affairs of Thy servants to prosper, and Thy cities to flourish. Thou, indeed, hast power over all things!” (LS 59–60; cf. Monjazeḥ 1993: 6). The legislators are then called upon to exercise “pure justice” (*ʿadl al-khālīṣ*) and to deliberate on the needs of the world (LS 60).

Bahāʾuʾllāh then develops an extended metaphor, that of the world as a sick patient, suffering various maladies and disorders. It is in need of a divine Physician (Bahāʾuʾllāh), who has his finger on the pulse of the world and can prescribe a cure for its ills. And then these famous words are given: “That which the Lord hath ordained as the sovereign remedy and mightiest instrument for the healing of all the world is the union of its peoples in one universal Cause, one common Faith. This can in no wise be achieved except through the power of a skilled, an all-powerful and inspired Physician” (GWB 255). It is here where Bahāʾuʾllāh shifts from Physician to World Reformer, counselling the kings and rulers, who had not acted on Bahāʾuʾllāh’s previous request, as stated in the *Sūrat al-Mulūk*, to establish the “Most Great Peace,” to establish a less comprehensive settlement referred to in Bahāʾī terms as the “Great Peace” (as contrasted to the “Most Great Peace”), more commonly known as the “Lesser Peace”:

“Consider these days in which He Who is the Ancient Beauty hath come in the Most Great Name, that He may quicken the world and

unite its peoples. They, however, rose up against Him with sharpened swords, and committed that which caused the Faithful Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) to lament, until in the end they imprisoned Him in the most desolate of cities [*‘Akkā*], and broke the grasp of the faithful upon the hem of His robe. Were anyone to tell them: ‘The World-Reformer (*muṣliḥ al-‘ālam*) is come,’ they would answer and say: ‘Indeed it is proven that He is a fomenter of discord!’, and this notwithstanding that they have never associated with Him, and have perceived that He did not seek, for one moment, to protect Himself” (ESW 63; LS 60).

Bahā’u’llāh concludes the Tablet with a prayer revealed for the Queen, in which she should beseech God to assist her to “aid Thy Cause in Thy lands” (PDC 36; LS 62).

In *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā’ī Revelation* (Nabīl-i A’zam 1996: 586), we are told that most of Bahā’u’llāh’s Tablets to kings and ecclesiastics had been delivered to their recipients. What, then, was Queen Victoria’s response? Shoghi Effendi has written that Queen Victoria, in response to reading Bahā’u’llāh’s letter to her in translation: “If this is of God, it will endure; if not, it can do no harm” (PDC 65). However, this must be qualified as hearsay, as Shoghi Effendi himself duly noted: “. . . as we have no written statement to this effect, we cannot be sure about it. We do not know where the original of this statement is” (21 February 1942 to an individual, qtd. in Research Department memorandum).

Bahā’u’llāh interpreted the very prophecies he was to fulfill. In a tablet described by E.G. Browne (SWEGB 257), Bahā’u’llāh states: “I revealed all the heavenly books by the glorious tongue of Divine Might” (*kull-i kutub-i samawī bi-lisān-i jalīl-i qudrat nāzil farmūdām*). Prophecy, being a truth-claim liable to denial, is typically not in alignment with popular expectations. This fact alone may explain why the response to Bahā’u’llāh’s message was so lacking.

## 5. Conclusions

### 5.1. *The Eschatology of Globalization*

Globalization refers to “both the compression of the world and intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole” and as “both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole” (Robertson 1992: 8). It is further defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many

miles away and vice versa” (Giddens 1990: 64). Ethical responses to globalization are essentially world order issues (Lerche 1998), in a search for values of egalitarianism, equity, and sustainability a worldview that some have called “globalism” (Ritchie 1996). As a response to globalization, globalism may be viewed as a reflex or extension of Kantian cosmopolitanism as the “moral universalism of international relations” (Robinson 1996: 4).

Bahā’īs often assert that, since Bahā’u’llāh anticipated modernity, then he must have been a prime mover of it. Historically, it can be observed that Bahā’u’llāh was a sudden sparkle of the nineteenth-century flash of visionary brilliance. And it may be safe to say that Bahā’u’llāh and modernity are dynamically coincidental and, apart from directions of influence, that Bahā’u’llāh was engaged in dialectic with modernity.

Regarding Bahā’u’llāh’s world reforms and their historical significance, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ observed: “These precepts were proclaimed by Bahā’u’llāh many years ago. He was the first to create them in the hearts as moral laws. Writing to the sovereigns of the world, he summoned them to universal brotherhood, proclaiming that the hour for unity had struck unity between countries, unity between religions” (DP 85). This sympathetic appraisal of the historical significance of Bahā’u’llāh’s international peace mission reinforces our hypothesis: viz., that Bahā’u’llāh’s signal contribution to globalization was to ethicize and sacralize it. Bahā’u’llāh’s “multiple-messiahship” furnished the divine authority necessary if ever his world reforms were to be taken seriously. This is Bahā’u’llāh’s eschatology of globalization.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### *Abbreviations*

- Bahā’u’llāh: Published Works in Persian and Arabic  
 AQA I Bahā’u’llāh. *Kitāb-i Mubīn*. ‘Athār-i Qalam-i ‘A’lā, vol. 1.  
 IQT Bahā’u’llāh. *Iqtidārāt*.  
 LS Bahā’u’llāh. *Lawḥ-i mubārak khūṭāb ba Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqī Muḥtahid-i Isfahānī ma’rūf ba Najafī*.  
 MA Bahā’u’llāh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, Shoghi Effendi, *Mā’ida-yi ‘Āsmānī*. Nine vols.  
 MHB Bahā’u’llāh, *Muntakhabātī ‘az ‘Āthār-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bahā’u’llāh*.  
 MMM Bahā’u’llāh. *Majmū‘a-yi maṭbū‘a-yi alwāḥ-i mubāraka-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Bahā’u’llāh*.

Bahā’u’llāh: English Translations

- BC *Book of Certitude*.  
 ESW *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*.  
 GWB *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā’u’llāh*.



PB	<i>Proclamation of Bahā'u'llāh.</i>
SV	<i>The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys.</i>
TB	<i>Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh revealed after the Kitāb-i-ʿAqdas.</i>

## Other Works in Persian and Arabic

KH	<i>Khūṭabāt</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
----	----------------------------------

## Other Bahā'ī Texts: English Translations

PT	<i>Paris Talks</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
SDC	<i>Secret of Divine Civilization</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
SWAB	<i>Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā'.</i>
SWB	<i>Selections from the Writings of the Bāb.</i>
SAQ	<i>Some Answered Questions</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
TN	<i>A Traveller's Narrative</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā' 1980).

## Other Abbreviations

ADJ	<i>Advent of Divine Justice</i> (Shoghi Effendi).
BWF	<i>Bahā'ī World Faith</i> (Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā').
DP	<i>'Abdu'l-Bahā' on Divine Philosophy</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
GPB	<i>God Passes By</i> (Shoghi Effendi).
PDC	<i>The Promised Day Is Come</i> (Shoghi Effendi).
PUP	<i>Promulgation of Universal Peace</i> ('Abdu'l-Bahā').
RB	<i>The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh.</i> 4 vols. (Taherzadeh).
SWEGB	<i>Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne.</i> (Browne).
COP	<i>A Compilation on Peace.</i>
WOB	<i>The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh</i> (Shoghi Effendi).

*Primary Sources (Arabic and Persian)*

- 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. 1984. *Khūṭabāt: Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahā'*. Reprint of 3 volumes of the original edition printed in Egypt 99 B.E. (1942–43), 1340 A.H. (1921) and Tehran 127 B.E. (1970–71). Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī-Verlag.
- . 1891. *A Traveller's Narrative* Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb (*Maqala-yi shakhs-i sayyāh ka dar qazīya-yi Bāb nivishta ast*). Ed. and trans. Browne, Edward Granville. 2 vols. Cambridge University Press.
- Bahā'u'llāh. 1992. *Kitāb-i Badī*. Reprinted from the facsimile edition (Tehran, n.d.) of a MS dated 26 Badī' [Bahā'ī Era = 1870 A.D.] in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabīn. Prague: Zero Palm Press.
- . 1984. *Muntakhabatī az 'Athār-i Hadrat-i Bahā'u'llāh*. Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī-Verlag. Arabic/Persian edition of Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh.
- . 1984. *Maḥmū'a-yi maṭbū'a-yi alwāh-i mubāraka-yi Hadrat-i Bahā'u'llāh*. Cairo: Sa'adah Press, 1920; reprinted, Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 1984 [1978].
- . 1982. *Lawḥ-i mubārak khūṭab ba Shaykh Muḥammad-Taqī Muṭtahid-i Isfāhānī ma'rūf ba Najafī*. Hofheim-Langenhain: Bahā'ī-Verlag. Arabic/Persian edition of Epistle to the Son of the Wolf.
- . 1964. *Kitāb-i Mubīn. 'Āthar-i Qalam-i 'Alā*, vol. 1. Tehran: Mu'asisa-yi Milli-yi Matbu'at-i Amri, 120 Badī (1963–64).
- . 'Abdu'l-Bahā', Shoghi Effendi. 1963–64. *Mā'ida-yi Asmānī*. Tehran: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust. Nine vols.
- . 1892–1893. *Iqtidārāt va chand lawḥ-i dīgar*. Ed. Mishkūn-Qalam. Bombay: Nasiri Press, 1310 A.H.

## Translations

- ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. 1982. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912*. Compiled by Howard MacNutt. 2nd edn. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1981. *Some Answered Questions*. Tr. Laura Clifford Barney. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1930].
- . 1979. *Paris Talks*. London: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1978. *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Translated by the Marzieh Gail et al. Haifa: Bahā’ī World Centre.
- . 1970. *The Secret of Divine Civilization*. Trans. Marzieh Gail. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1957].
- . 1969. *Paris Talks: Addresses given by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ in Paris in 1911–1912*. 11th edn. London: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1917. *‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ on Divine Philosophy*. Compiled by Isobel F. Chamberlain. Boston: The Tudor Press.
- Bāb, the 1976. *Selections From the Writings of the Bāb*. Tr. Habib Taherzadeh. Haifa: Bahā’ī World Centre.
- Bahā’u’llāh. 1986. *The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys*. Tr. Marzieh Gail. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1945].
- . 1978. *Tablets of Bahā’u’llāh revealed after the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*. Tr. Habib Taherzadeh. Haifa: Bahā’ī World Centre.
- . 1978. *The Proclamation of Bahā’u’llāh to the Kings and Leaders of the World*. Haifa: Bahā’ī World Centre [1967].
- . 1974. *The Kitāb-i-Iqan: The Book of Certitude*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1931; 1974 rev. ed].
- . 1969. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā’u’llāh*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1939].
- . 1962. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Tr. Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust [1941].
- Browne, Edward Granville, ed. and tr. 1891. *A Traveller’s Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb (Maqala-yi shakhsi-i sayyāh ka dar qaziya-yi Bāb niwāshta ast)*. By ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. 2 vols. Cambridge University Press.
- Cole, Juan. 1998b. “A Tablet of Bahā’u’llāh apostrophizing Tsar Alexander III.” Translations of Shaykhā, Bābī and Bahā’ī Texts, vol. 2, no. 4 (July, 1998). Online: <www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol2/tsar2.htm>. Also provides a translation of a tablet published in ‘Andalib, vol. 16, no. 64 (Fall, 1997): 4–7.
- . 1990. “Bahā’u’llāh’s Commentary on the Sura of the Sun”, in *Bahā’ī Studies Bulletin* 4 (1990), 4–27.
- Monjazeb, Shāhroakh 1993. “The Tablet of Bahā’u’llāh to Queen Victoria (*Lawḥ-i Malikih*): An Introductory Note and Completed Translation.” *Bahā’ī Studies Bulletin* 7.3–4 (June 1993): 4–21.
- Nabil-i A‘zam, Muḥammad Zarandī 1996. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil’s Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā’ī Revelation*. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.
- Razavi, Shāhriar 1993. “The Tablet of the Seven Questions of Bahā’u’llāh (*Lawḥ-i haft porsish*): An Introductory Note and Provisional Translation.” *Bahā’ī Studies Bulletin* 7.3–4 (June 1993): 48–68.
- Shoghi, Effendi. 1926. *Prayer of Bahā’u’llāh*. Prayers and Tablets of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. New York: Bahā’ī Publishing Committee.

## Secondary Sources

- Anonymous. 1993. “Bahā’ī Archives: Preserving and Safeguarding the Sacred Texts.” *Andalib [Nightingale]* 12 (no. 48): 48–49.

- Balyuzi, Hasan M. 1985. *Eminent Bahā'īs in the Time of Bahā'u'llāh with Some Historical Background*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- . 1980. *Bahā'u'llāh, the King of Glory*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Beyer, Peter 1994. *Religion and Globalization*. London: Sage.
- Browne, Edward Granville 1987. *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne*. Ed. Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald.
- . 1892a. "Some Remarks on the Bābī Texts edited by Baron Victor Rosen in Vols. I and VI of the Collections Scientifiques de l'Institut des Langues Orientales de Saint-Petersbourg." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24: 259–335.
- . 1892b. "Catalogue and Description of 27 Bābī Manuscripts." *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 24: 433–499; 637–710.
- Buck, Christopher. 2001. "Bahā'īs." *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ān*. Volume A–D. Ed. Jane McAuliffe. Leiden: Brill.
- . 1999. *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Bahā'ī Faith*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- . 1998a. "Bahā'u'llāh as Zoroastrian Saviour." *Bahā'ī Studies Review* 8 (1998): 14–33. Online: <bahai-library.org/bsr/bsr08/821\_buck\_zoroaster.htm>.
- . 1998b. *A brief description of the Kitāb-i Iqān* by Mirza Ḥusayn-ʿAlī Bahā' Allah/Bahā'u'llāh (d. 1892), with facsimile of the 1310 A.H. Bombay Iqan lithograph, in *Occasional Papers in Shaykhā, Bābī and Bahā'ī Studies*, 2 (May 1998). East Lansing: H-Bahai Digital Publications. Online: <http://h-net2.msu.edu/~bahai/bhpapers.htm>.
- . 1995. *Symbol and Secret. Qur'ān Commentary in Bahā'u'llāh's Kitāb-i Iqān*. Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, vol. 7. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press.
- . 1991. "Bahā'u'llāh as 'World Reformer'." *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 3.4 (Dec. 1990–March 1991): 23–70.
- , and Nahzy Abadi Buck, tr. 1991. "Crown of Glory" (Tāj-i-Vahhaj): Memoirs of Jinab-i-ʿAziz-u'llāh Azizi. Ed. Hamid and Sandra Azizi. North Vancouver, BC: private printing. Revised edition. New York, 1988. Private publication.
- . 1986. "A Unique Eschatological Interface: Bahā'u'llāh and Cross-Cultural Messianism." In *Iran*. Ed. Peter Smith. *Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, vol. 3. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press. 157–179.
- Cole, Juan 1998a. *Modernity and the Millennium. The Genesis of the Bahā'ī Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- . 1998b. "A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh apostrophizing Tsar Alexander III." *Translations of Shaykhā, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts* 2.4 (July, 1998). Online: <www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol2/tsar2.htm>.
- Collins, William and Jan T. Jasion. 1991. "Lev Tolstoi and the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions: A Bibliography." *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 3.3: 1–9.
- Cottrell, Henry Edward Plantagenet, Count. 1895. "Bābism." *The Academy* (Syracuse, NY), vol. 47, no. 1192 (9 March 1895): 220.
- Faizi, Abu'l-Qasim. 1969. *From Adrianople to Akkā*. London: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Fadil Mazandarani. 1972. *Asrār al-Athār-i Khushūṣī*. Vol. 5. Tehran: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust, 129 Bādī.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1990. *The Consequences of Modernity*. Cambridge: Polity.
- Isaacs, M. 1983. "The Prophetic Spirit in the Fourth Gospel." *The Heythrop Journal* 24: 391–407.
- Khursheed, Anjam. 1991. *The Seven Candles of Unity: The Story of 'Abdu'l-Bahā' in Edinburgh*. London: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Lambden, Stephen. 1998. "The Word Bahā': Quintessence of the Greatest Name of God." *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 8.2 (Dec. 1997–March 1998): 13–45. Previously published in *Bahā'ī Studies Review* 3.1 (1993).
- . 1997. "Prophecy in the Johannine Farewell Discourse: The Advents of the Paraclete, Ahmad, and the Comforter (Mu'azzī)." *Scripture and Revelation*. Ed. Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald: 69–124.

- . 1993. "A Further Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Faris the Physician." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 7.3–4 (June 1993): 22–46.
- . 1988. "The Sinaitic Mysteries: Notes on Moses/Sinai Motifs in Bābī and Bahā'ī Scripture." In Momen 1988, 64–183.
- . 1986. "The Mysteries of the Call of Moses: Translation and Notes on a Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh addressed to Jināb-i Khalīl." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 4.1 (March 1986): 33–79.
- . 1984a. "A Tablet of Mirza Husayn-ʿAlī Bahā'u'llāh of the Early Iraq Period. The Tablet of 'All Food'." in *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 3 (1984): 4–67. Online: <<http://www.interlog.com/~winters/provisionals/food.html>.
- . 1984b. "An Early Poem of Mirza Husayn-ʿAlī Bahā'u'llāh: The Sprinkling of the Cloud of Unknowing (*Rashh-i Amā*)." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 3.2 (September 1984): 4–114.
- . 1983. "A Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Georg David Hardegg: The *Lawh-i Hirṭiq*." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 2.1 (June 1983): 32–62.
- Lawson, Todd. 1988a. "Interpretation as Revelation. The Qur'ān Commentary of Sayyid ʿAlī Muḥammad Shirāzi." *Approaches to the History of the Interpretation of the Qur'ān*. Ed. Andrew Rippin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988: 223–253.
- . 1997a. "The Dangers of Reading: Inlibration, Communion and Transference in the Qur'ān Commentary of the Bāb." *Scripture and Revelation*. Ed. Moojan Momen. Oxford: George Ronald.
- . 1992. "The Structure of Existence in the Bāb's tafsīr and the Perfect Man Motif." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 6 (1992): 4–25.
- Lerche, Charles O. 1999. "Statecraft, Globalization, and Ethics." *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 9.2 (June 1999): 71–90.
- . 1998. "The Conflicts of Globalization." *International Journal of Peace Studies* 1.3 (January 1998): 47–66.
- MacEoin, Denis. 1989. "Divisions and Authority Claims in Bābīsm (1850–1866)." *Studia Iranica* 18: 93–128.
- Maneck, Susan Stiles. 1991. "The Conversion of Religious Minorities to the Bahā'ī Faith in Iran: Some Preliminary Observations." *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 3.3: 35–48.
- [Maneck] Stiles, Susan. 1984. "Early Zoroastrian Conversions to the Bahā'ī Faith in Yazd, Iran." *From Iran East and West*. Ed. Juan Cole and Moojan Momen. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press: 67–93.
- McMullen, Michael. 1997. "The Religious Construction of a Global Identity: An Ethnographic Look at the Atlanta Bahā'ī Community." *Contemporary American Religion: An Ethnographic Reader*. Ed. Penny Edgell Becker and Nancy L. Eiesland. Walnut Creek, London, New Delhi. Altamira Press: 221–243.
- Momen, Moojan, ed. 1988. *Studies in Honor of the Late Ḥasan M. Balyuzi*. Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 5. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press.
- . 1982. "Early Relations between Christian Missionaries and the Bābī and Bahā'ī Communities." *Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*, 1. Ed. M. Momen. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press.
- . 1981. *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Monjazebe, Shāhroakh. 1995. *Provisional translation of Bahā'u'llāh's Lawh-i Ittīḥād*. Unpublished.
- . 1993. "The Tablet of Bahā'u'llāh to Queen Victoria (*Lawh-i Malīkīh*): An Introductory Note and Completed Translation." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 7.3–4 (June 1993): 4–21.
- Phelps, Myron H. 1903. *Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi: A Study of the Religion of the Bābīs, or Behā'īs (sic) Founded by the Persian Bāb and by his Successors, Beha Ullah (sic) and Abbas Effendi*. New York and London: G.P. Putnam's Sons.
- Rabbani, Ahang. 1999. "The Conversion of the Great-Uncle of the Bāb." *World Order* (Spring 1999): 19–38.

- Ritchie, Mark. 1996. "Globalization vs. Globalism: Giving Internationalism a Bad Name." Conference "Trade Strategy" <trade-strategy@igc.apc.org>.
- Rippin, Andrew. 1993. *Muslims: Their Religious Beliefs and Practices*. Vol. 2: The Contemporary Period. London and New York: Routledge.
- Robertson, Roland. 1992. *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*. London: Sage.
- Robinson, Fiona. 1996. "Rethinking Ethics in an Era of Globalization." Sussex Papers in International Relations No. 2 (January 1996).
- Rosen, Baron Viktor. 1892a. "Poslanie: 'Blagiya Vesti'" [Translation of the Lawh-i Bisharat]. *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva* 7: 183–192.
- . 1892b. "Eschche o poslanii 'Blagiya Vesti'" [More about the translation of the Lawh-i Bisharat]. *Zapiski Vostochnago Otdeleniya Imperatorskago Russkago Arkheologicheskago Obshchestva* 7: 311–316.
- Saiedi, Nader. 2000. *Logos and Civilization: Spirit, History, and Order in the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh*. Bethesda: University Press of Maryland.
- Shoghi Effendi 1980. *The Promised Day is Come*. Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust [1941].
- . 1974. *The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh*: Selected Letters of Shoghi Effendi. 2nd rev. ed. Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust [1938].
- . 1971. *The Advent of Divine Justice*. 3rd edn. Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust [1939].
- . 1970a. *God Passes By*. Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust [1944].
- . 1970b. *Dawn of a New Day*. Delhi: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- . (1944). *The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh*. Wilmette: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust [1938].
- Stiles [= Maneck], Susan 1984. "Early Zoroastrian Conversions to the Bahā'ī Faith in Yazd, Iran." *From Iran East and West*. Ed. Juan Cole and Moojan Momen. Los Angeles: Kalimāt Press: 67–93.
- Taherzadeh, Adib. 1980. *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*. Vol. 1. Baghdad 1853–63. Oxford: George Ronald [1974].
- . 1986. *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*. Vol. 2. Adrianople 1863–68. Oxford: George Ronald [1977].
- . 1984. *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*. Vol. 3. 'Akkā, The Early Years 1868–77. Oxford: George Ronald [1983].
- . 1988. *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*. Vol. 4. Mazra'ih and Bahji 1877–92. Oxford: George Ronald [1987].
- Universal House of Justice. 1991. *Compilation of Compilations*. Victoria: Bahā'ī Publications Australia. 2 vols. Contains Conservation of the Earth's Resources and A Compilation on Peace.
- . 1986. *Women: Extracts from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh, 'Abdu'l-Bahā', Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice*. Compiled by the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice. Thornhill, ON: Bahā'ī Publications Canada.
- Walbridge, John. 1996. *Sacred Acts, Sacred Space, Sacred Time*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Wansbrough, John. 1977. *Quranic Studies: Sources and Methods of Scriptural Interpretation*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Warburg, Margit. 1999. "Bahā'ī: A Religious Approach to Globalization." *Social Compass* 46.1: 47–56.
- Woll, Bruce D. 1981. *Johannine Christianity in Conflict: Authority, Rank and Succession in the First Farewell Discourse*. Atlanta: Scholars Press.

## THE BĀBĪ-STATE CONFLICT IN MĀZANDARĀN: BACKGROUND, ANALYSIS AND REVIEW OF SOURCES

Siyamak Zabihi-Moghaddam

The Bābī movement was formed around the religious claims of a young merchant from Shīrāz, named Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad. In May 1844 he advanced the claim that he was the *Bāb* (the “Gate”). To his contemporaries this term referred to an intermediary between the community of the believers and the messianic figure of Islamic eschatology, the Mahdī, or the Hidden *Imām*. By 1848 the Bābī movement had attracted tens of thousands of adherents. In September of that year some 200 Bābīs entered the shrine of Shaykh Aḥmad ibn-i-‘Alī ibn-i-Abī Ṭālib-i Ṭabarsī, located about fourteen miles southeast of Bārfurūsh, the chief commercial town in Māzandarān. Within a few months, the first major clash between the Bābīs and the Qājār state had begun, which would involve a substantial military force and leave an estimated 1,500 dead. The episode set the stage for later clashes between the Bābīs and the state.

The purpose of this article is to investigate the background, immediate circumstances and events of the Māzandarān conflict. It examines those developments, both in the political sphere and within the Bābī community, which led to the outbreak of open warfare in 1848, and focuses on the question of the objectives of the Bābī participants in the conflict. The Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict is often portrayed as the first of a series of unsuccessful attempts by the Bābīs to subvert the ruling dynasty. This is the view reflected in Western diplomatic reports and contemporary state chronicles, and has since been accepted by many scholars. In an influential study, MacEoin (1982) attempts to place the Shaykh Ṭabarsī and the later Bābī-state conflicts in the context of a Bābī concept of holy war. His discussion, however, largely overlooks the implications of the development of this concept in the Bāb’s later writings. More significantly, a theoretical discussion of the Bābī concept of holy war, or *jihād*, cannot by itself explain the objectives of the Bābīs involved. Rather, to find meaningful interpretations of the Bābīs’ intentions it is essential to analyze carefully what happened and how the Bābī participants themselves

understood their situation and their own actions. Such a study has been lacking in the case of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, though there are relatively many sources available on the conflict. This article is an attempt to fill this gap.

There are three Bābī and Bahā'ī eyewitness accounts of the episode, which are generally more reliable than other sources available. Two of these are very detailed. They also reflect the Bābī participants' perceptions of their circumstances and their own actions, which is crucial for understanding the event. This paper draws in particular on these sources. It also discusses the concept of *jihād* in the Bāb's later writings. The paper argues that when the Bābīs found themselves trapped in Māzandarān, they chose to fight a defensive holy war as a testimony to the truth of their cause. It was not their objective to mount an insurrection. Investigating the question of the objectives of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī also casts light on a broader and more essential issue: the nature of the Bābī movement in the early years of its development (The existing sources on the Māzandarān conflict are surveyed in a section at the end of this paper, and the circumstances around their composition and the question of reliability are discussed).

The Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode constituted a turning point in the history of the Bābī movement. It was the first time that the state, previously content with the incarceration of the Bāb in a remote corner of the country, resolutely moved to suppress the Bābīs. Near the end of the conflict, some ten thousand troops and irregulars were engaged in fighting a few hundred Bābīs. After this experience, the state acted more swiftly and forcefully against the Bābīs when new conflicts broke out in other parts of the country, once in Zanjān, and twice in Nayrīz. It was also during the conflict at Shaykh Ṭabarsī that half of the Letters of the Living, the core of the leadership of the movement, lost their lives. The reduction of the Bābī leadership to a handful of individuals was a severe blow, which contributed to the almost entire collapse of the movement a few years later. The episode also played a part in the government's decision to execute the Bāb. Decades later its memory was still fresh in the minds of the people of Māzandarān.

The Bābī movement has often been interpreted in the light of its later developments into Azalī Bābism or the Bahā'ī movement. Though they share the same historical origins, and many of the doctrines and tenets of the early Bābī movement can be found in both



of them, Azalī Bābism and the Bahā'ī Faith constitute departures, in different directions, from the original Bābī movement. Treating the Bābī movement as identical with either one displaces it from its proper historical context.

### *The Development of the Bābī Movement*

The spread of the Bābī movement in Īrān and 'Irāq was swift and wide. The Bābīs' activities, announcing the religious claim of the Bāb, met with immediate opposition from the clergy. The Bāb was banished to the far-off province of Ādharbāyjān, and some of his followers were maltreated. In October 1847 a young Shaykhī, probably assisted by two others, killed the powerful *mujtahid* of Qazwīn, Mullā Muḥammad Taqī-yi Baraghānī, who was known for his anti-Shaykhī and anti-Bābī propaganda. The assassination intensified the hostility of the clergy toward the Bābīs, several of whom were killed. This was the first instance of Bābīs being put to death in Īrān. In April 1848 the Bāb was brought to Tabrīz, the provincial capital, to be interrogated in the presence of the crown prince and the clergy (for the dating of this event, see Zabihi-Moghaddam 2000: 40). On this occasion the Bāb publicly declared himself to be the *Imām* Mahdī, an open challenge to the clergy, for which he was bastinadoed.

In late June 1848 a number of Bābīs gathered at Badasht, a small village in Khurāsān, and it was during this gathering that the movement effectively broke with Islām. Shortly afterwards, a group of Bābīs, under the leadership of Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī, the Bāb's most renowned disciple, set out from Khurāsān toward Māzandarān, where they became involved in the conflict of Shaykh Ṭabarsī. In 1850 two other major Bābī-state clashes occurred, in which more than 2,000 Bābīs lost their lives. In July of that same year the Bāb was publicly executed. In August 1852 a group of Bābīs made an abortive attempt on the life of the shāh. Simultaneously, the twenty-two year old Mīrzā Yaḥyā Azal, regarded by most of the Bābīs as their new leader, tried to stage a revolt in Māzandarān, which also failed. In the aftermath of these attempts, the remaining Bābī leadership was almost entirely wiped out. Azal's elder half-brother, Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī-yi Nūrī Bahā' Allāh, who was among those imprisoned after the assassination attempt, was spared execution, but exiled to 'Irāq. In 1853 another Bābī-state clash occurred, which resulted in



the death of some 250 Bābīs. In about 1866 Bahā' Allāh openly claimed to be the *man yuzhīruhu 'llāh* ("He whom God shall make manifest"), the messianic figure of the Bābī religion. The majority of the Bābīs came to accept his claim. Bahā' Allāh enjoined his followers to abstain from violence, obey their governments, and shun political strife. In contrast, for some among the small band of Azal's supporters, religious concerns gave way to political activism, and several of them played prominent roles in the Constitutional Revolution of 1906–1911.

*The Bābīs, the State, and the 'Ulamā'*

The writings of the Bāb reflect his view of temporal power. The legitimacy of Muḥammad Shāh's rule, it is implied, is dependent on his accepting the Bāb's claim. In the *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*, the earliest work written following the announcement of his claim in May 1844, the Bāb maintains that, as the representative of God, he is the source of sovereignty. He (1978: 41–42) summons the shāh to embrace his religion and instructs him to wage *jihād* in order to bring people into his faith:

O King of Islām! Aid thou, with the truth, after having aided the Book, Him Who is Our Most Great Remembrance [the Bāb] . . . God, verily, hath prescribed to thee to submit unto Him Who is His Remembrance, and unto His Cause, and to subdue, with truth and by His leave, the countries, for in this world thou hast been mercifully invested with sovereignty.

Besides his summons to Muḥammad Shāh in the *Qayyūm al-Asmā'*, the Bāb addressed several letters to the shāh, and requested an audience with him, but to no avail. In his letters, the Bāb warned the shāh of the punishment that awaited him if he did not change his attitude toward the Bāb, and at the same time disclaimed any material interests. Toward the end of Muḥammad Shāh's reign, the tone of the Bāb's letters to him, and especially to his premier, Ḥājji Mīrzā Āqāsī, became more severe. In a letter that appears to be his last appeal to Muḥammad Shāh, the Bāb (1978: 26–27) writes:

I have no desire to seize thy property, even to the extent of a grain of mustard, nor do I wish to occupy thy position . . . This is indeed My last reminder unto you, and I shall make no mention of you here-

after, nor shall I make any remark other than affirming you [the monarch and his premier] as infidels.

In this same letter, the Bāb refers to the chief minister as “the devil” and “Satan.” It was the premier who had control over the affairs of the kingdom.

It seems that Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī had early on seen in the Bāb a threat to his position. Muḥammad Shāh’s mystical leanings tied him closely to Āqāsī, who was his former tutor and acted as his spiritual guide. The Bāb was a descendent of the Prophet and a charismatic figure who could inspire a strong devotion in his followers. He had already proved his influence by winning the support of some of his potential clerical adversaries. Apparently due to such considerations, Āqāsī persuaded the shāh not to grant the Bāb an interview, and instead to order his banishment to the fortress of Mākī in Ādharbāyjān. As the Bābī movement spread, and the opposition of the clergy mounted, the state complied to a greater extent with their wishes. Following the assassination of Baraghānī, his heirs and other clerics forced the government to imprison several Bābīs, a few of whom, though apparently innocent, were subsequently killed. On this occasion the government failed to shield the Bābīs, though it did not voluntarily engage in persecuting them.

As for the local governors, their attitudes toward the movement varied. While the governor of Fārs, the Bāb’s native province, under the influence of the clergy, gave orders for the Bāb to be placed under house arrest and punished some of his followers, the powerful governor of Isfahān extended his protection to the Bāb. Likewise, the governor of Kirmān protected one of the Bāb’s chief disciples.

The clergy had an obvious interest in involving the authorities in the persecution of the Bābīs. In the period prior to the Māzandarān conflict, the clergy, more than once, called on the authorities to suppress the Bābī movement, which they regarded as a heresy that threatened the foundations of the religion. They also ascribed subversive intentions to the Bābīs. The Bāb probably viewed a confrontation with the religious establishment as inevitable. However, he apparently did not consider an understanding with the state impossible, since he continued sending letters to the shāh as late as 1848. Several times the Bāb and his followers challenged the shāh and the authorities to summon them and the *‘ulamā’* to a meeting where the “truth” could be established.

The Bāb's claim to Mahdihood, publicly announced during the interrogation in Tabrīz, had significant repercussions for the movement. It posed too serious a challenge to the clerical establishment to be ignored. After all, had "the Bāb in fact been acknowledged as the Hidden Imam, the function of the ulama would have ceased to exist" (Algar 1969: 148). Apart from this, the Bāb did not fulfill the expectations of the *'ulamā'* about the Mahdī's appearance. As for the state authorities, even though the Bāb did not make any claims to the throne, his claim to Mahdihood could be perceived as a challenge, since in the context of Shī'ī theology the promised Mahdī was the ultimate source of power, whether religious or secular. On this basis, it has been argued that the Bābīs' belief that the Bāb was the Mahdī constituted "a permanent bar to any real coexistence of the Babis and the State," and that once the government understood the nature of the Bābī movement, it "moved systematically and implacably to destroy it" (Wallbridge 1996: 359). However, it is difficult to find evidence that could substantiate this view in contemporary sources written up to and during the Māzandarān conflict. At the time, the state authorities did not take the Bāb's claim to Mahdihood seriously. The young crown prince, Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā, in his report to Muḥammad Shāh about the interrogation (Browne 1918: 249–55), simply ridicules the claim voiced by the Bāb during the proceedings. A later report ascribed to Niẓām al-*'Ulamā'* (Hidāyat 1960–61: 423–28), who led the interrogation, likewise, does not indicate that anybody there paid attention to any political implications attached to the claim to Mahdihood. The campaign against the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī was not directly linked to this claim. In general, there was much confusion in the early years among the authorities and the public about the exact nature of the Bāb's claims and his and the Bābīs' objectives. It seems that the dominant view was that the Bāb claimed charismatic religious authority in order to gain power. Clearly at the time of the Māzandarān conflict, which began just a few months after the interrogation of the Bāb in Tabrīz, the view that the Bābīs used religion as a cover for political ends had gained some currency among the authorities. The British Chargé d'Affaires, Lt.-Col. Farrant, in his dispatch of 30 January 1849, remarked about the motives of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī: "It is supposed their true object is not in any way relative to religion, but to create a revolutionary movement against the Government" (Momen 1981: 92).

Though the authorities failed to notice the implications of the Bāb's claim to Mahdihood, it nevertheless worsened an already tense situation. There had been sporadic cases of persecution of the Bābīs prior to April 1848. Such incidents seem to have occurred more frequently, as the clergy, infuriated by the open challenge of the Bāb, and encouraged by the punishment imposed on him, stepped up its attempts to incite the authorities and the population to persecute the Bābīs. An early account by Dr. Austin Wright (1851: 384–85, cited in Momen 1981: 73), an American missionary stationed not far from Čahrīq, where the Bāb was held in confinement, states that “fierce quarrels” had already taken place between the Bābīs and “the so-called orthodox party,” when, following the bastinado inflicted on the Bāb, the government issued orders that “[the Bāb's] disciples should be arrested wherever they were found and punished with fines and beatings.” The Bāb's assumption of the role of an independent prophet through the advancement of claims to religious authority and the formulation of a new set of laws was hardly less revolutionary than his claim to Mahdihood. His followers' resolve to announce the claim to Mahdihood and to effect the annulment of Islamic law only increased tensions. The episode of Mashhad and the attack on the Bābīs after the conclave in Badasht should be viewed in this light.

In Mashhad, following a fight between a young Bābī and a servant of one of the local religious leaders, the Bābī involved was beaten and dragged through the streets by a string through his nose. About seventy Bābīs, armed with swords, attempted to rescue him, and in the clashes that occurred a few townspeople and Bābīs were injured (Mahjūr 1861–62: 6–8; Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 23, 46–47; Samandar 1974–75: 168; see also Nabīl 1932: 288–89). It was this episode that led to Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī's expulsion from Mashhad, upon which he set out on his march to Māzandarān. In Badasht, Qurrat al-ʿAyn Ṭāhira, the only woman among the Letters of the Living, appeared unveiled in a gathering of Bābīs, signalling the abrogation of Islamic law, and the commencement of the *qiyāma* (resurrection). On hearing the news that the Bābīs had discarded the *sharīʿa*, and rumours of immoral acts committed, the inhabitants of Nīyālā, a village in Māzandarān, attacked the Bābīs who had arrived there from Badasht, killed and injured some, and plundered their belongings (Nabīl 1932: 298–300; Munīrih Khānum 1986: 15–16).

It was shortly after these events that Muḥammad Shāh died, and

with the accession of Nāṣir al-Dīn Mīrzā, power fell into the hands of the new premier, Mīrzā Taqī Khān, entitled Amīr Kabīr. This radically changed conditions for the Bābīs, as he gave high priority to exterminating them. Amīr Kabīr was a secularist reformer, determined to achieve his aims at any cost. He apparently regarded the Bābī movement as religious in nature, and not political, but saw it as a threat to the public order. When Muḥammad Shāh finally succumbed to his illness, the country was already in a state of turmoil. Gross mismanagement in the later years of Ḥājji Mīrzā Āqāsī's premiership had caused much discontent. The state treasury was almost empty, bringing the government to the verge of bankruptcy. Following the shāh's death, disorder broke out in many parts of the country, and the rebellion in Khurāsān gained support. To stabilize the position of the new government and to proceed with his reform plans, Amīr Kabīr needed to restore order in the country. Such concerns seem to have motivated Amīr Kabīr's determination to crush the Bābīs. His actions against them do not seem to have been aimed at appeasing the religious establishment. Rather, he tried to curtail the influence of the clergy at the same time as he directed his power against the Bābīs. Amīr Kabīr's alarm about the swift spread of the Bābī movement is reflected in a contemporary report by Prince Dolgorukov, the Russian Minister in Tehran. On 7 March 1849, at the height of the Māzandarān upheaval, Dolgorukov wrote:

However, no matter how serious this question may be [i.e. the question of the success of Sālār's rebellion in Khurāsān], it has not pre-occupied society to the same extent ever since the sectaries of the Bab have apparently had the tendency to grow in all parts of the Kingdom. The Amir [Amīr Kabīr] confessed to me that their number can be already put at 100,000; that they have already appeared in southern provinces; that they are found in large numbers in Tihiran itself; and that, finally, their presence in Adhirbayjan is beginning to worry him very much. In truth, there are rumours that in Zanjan they have appeared 800 strong, and that by their presence they threaten to disrupt the public order ("Excerpts" 1966: 19).

Commenting later on Amīr Kabīr's harsh policy toward the Bābīs, Ferrier, the French Agent, wrote in his report of 25 July 1850: "The Amīr had thought to strike the evil at its root in showing himself pitiless towards them [the Bābīs]; but the bloody executions that he ordered have not arrested the progress of the evil" (Momen 1981: 71).

*The Qiyāma: A Bābī Perspective*

A discussion of the background of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode would not be complete without reference to the views and expectations of the Bābīs in general, regarding the events associated with the appearance of the Mahdī. Their views, like those of the populace, were shaped by Shīʿī traditions. According to the dominant view, the Mahdī, accompanied by an army, would wage a holy war against the forces of unbelief, restore justice in the world, and establish his rule. The Bāb's claim to *bābiyya* (gatehood) was linked to the imminent advent of the Mahdī himself, which implied the beginning of the final *jihād*. The *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ* contains many references to *qitāl* (war or battle), keeping the Bābīs alert to a coming struggle. According to the traditions, the Mahdī would begin his *khurūj* (literally “coming out”; insurrection) from Mecca. When the Bāb instructed his followers to go to the Shīʿī shrine cities in ʿIrāq (the ʿAtabāt), where he would meet them after his pilgrimage to Mecca, many thought that the *khurūj* was to begin there. As it happened, however, the Bāb failed to appear in the ʿAtabāt. The activities of his emissary to the ʿAtabāt had created tensions in the area (Momen 1982: 116–18). With thousands of pilgrims in Karbalāʾ (Momen 1981: 87), it was likely that the appearance of a large number of Bābīs would have resulted in a confrontation with the local population and the pilgrims. The Bāb (letter in Afnān 2000: 183–86) later said that it was because of the disbelief of the *ʿulamāʾ* and to avoid “strife” (*fitna*) that he changed his plans and did not appear at the ʿAtabāt (p. 184). This sudden change of plans, termed *badāʾ* (change in the divine will), led to the defection of some of the Bābīs, but those who remained loyal to the Bāb still expected the struggle to occur, though it now seemed to have been postponed to an unspecified future. The Bāb also referred to *qitāl* occasionally in his later writings (Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī c. 1932: 252), and there is evidence of Bābī armament in Khurāsān and Qazwīn (Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī 1944?: 374; Amanat 1989: 279; Smith 1987: 22), apparently in preparation for the expected battle. It is even reported that the Bāb had alluded to the episode of Shaykh Ṭabarsī one or two months before it began (Browne 1910: 139; Āwāra 1923: 133).

Certain factors created some uncertainty in the Bābīs' expectations of future events. Apart from the possibility of *badāʾ*, allegorical reading of the eschatological traditions left room for different interpretations.

There are also many contradictory traditions. Rather than depicting the Mahdī's victory over his enemies, some traditions refer to his martyrdom and the humiliation and martyrdom of his companions (Amanat 1989: 196). The Bāb and his followers were aware of these traditions, and in their writings referred to them (see the Bāb's *Dalā'il-i sab'a* n.d.: 47–48, and the treatise by Ibn-i Karbalā'ī, written in 1263/1846–47, about a year before the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict, in Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī 1944?: 514). The Bāb had hinted at his own martyrdom in some of his writings, and in conversation with his followers. According to some sources, he had anticipated Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī's martyrdom, and had informed him of it (Browne 1910: 139; Nabīl 1932: 262). Ḥājji Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī-yi Bārfurūshī, later entitled Quddūs, the Bāb's foremost disciple, is likewise reported to have predicted Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī's martyrdom a few years before the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā c. 1852: 118). Probably only a few understood their hints at the time. Yet these statements and reports indicate that the Bābī leadership anticipated trials ahead.

As the confinement of their leader continued, and tensions surrounding them grew, the Bābīs were increasingly compelled to revise their views about a decisive victory followed by the reign of the Mahdī. The Bāb himself addressed such issues in his writings, as did the Bābī leaders. In his *Dalā'il-i sab'a* (n.d.: 33), written in 1847, the Bāb rejects the idea that the *faraj* (deliverance) of the Mahdī implies sovereignty, an army, and a kingdom. Likewise, the Bāb's amanuensis, Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn-i Kātib, in a letter to one of the Bāb's uncles, which appears to have been written after the death of Muḥammad Shāh, comments on the common understanding of the *faraj*. He states that its true meaning is the revelation of verses (*nuzūl-i āyāt*), and not “the ascension on the throne of sovereignty (*salṭana*) or other vain imaginings current among people” (Afnān 2000: 320). It is quite plausible that by the time the Māzandarān episode began, the belief among the generality of the Bābīs that the Mahdī would establish his temporal rule through the power of his sword had been shaken.

### *An Outline of the Conflict at Shaykh Ṭabarsī*

The conflict at Shaykh Ṭabarsī lasted from September 1848 to May 1849. The prelude to the conflict was the march from Khurāsān to

Māzandarān of a group of Bābīs under the leadership of Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī (July–September 1848). Initially, the band numbered about 200 Bābīs, some of whom were armed. Along the way their numbers swelled, as fellow Bābīs and new converts joined them. On the afternoon of 12 Shawwāl 1264/11 September 1848 the party reached Bārfurūsh (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā c. 1852: 24). Shortly before that, Muḥammad Shāh had died (4 September 1848). On their arrival, the Bābīs were met by a mob of 3,000–4,000 townspeople and villagers, armed with muskets, sticks and stones, who refused to let them enter the town. Mullā Ḥusayn instructed the Bābīs to turn back, but meanwhile the mob shot and killed two of them. Mullā Ḥusayn and a few others returned the attack and chased the mob away. The mob attacked again a couple of times and was repelled. In the meantime the Bābīs who arrived later took lodging in the caravansary of the town. After a long journey, during which some had fallen ill and one had died, the Bābīs were exhausted. In the following days, hundreds of people from nearby villages joined the mob, which attacked the Bābīs again several times. The attacks stopped with the arrival of 'Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārījānī, one of the most prominent chiefs (*sarkardas*) of Māzandarān, and it was agreed that the Bābīs should leave the area.

When the Bābīs left Bārfurūsh on the morning of 21 Shawwāl/20 September, a crowd of townspeople followed them, and Khusraw-i Qādī-Kalā'ī, “a tribal brigand in the service of the local government” (Amanat 1989: 368), with his armed men forcibly joined the Bābīs, ostensibly to protect them (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā c. 1852: 36–40; see also Browne 1910: 158; Nabīl 1932: 339). Khusraw, intending to loot the Bābīs, led them around the countryside, while his men and other local people began secretly killing them off. When the Bābīs discovered this, they killed Khusraw, chased away his men, and took refuge in the nearby shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī (Thursday, 22 Shawwāl 1264/21 September 1848, a few hours before sunrise) (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā c. 1852: 52–53). The shrine consisted of a building, which housed the Shaykh's tomb, and a grassy enclosure surrounded by a wall about two meters high. Browne (1893b: 617), who visited Shaykh Ṭabarsī, writes that it is “a place of little natural strength.” The site was not chosen for strategic reasons. As the Bābīs expected to be attacked, they built four small towers around the shrine, from which they kept watch over the area. Some time later, Quddūs joined the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. Other people



joined them, and their number rose to about 500 (Ḥājji Naṣīr 1974–75: 505; cf. Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 71, 80–81, 116; Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, c. 1932: 299).

When Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh heard about the Bābīs entrenching themselves at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, he gave orders to the chiefs of Māzandarān to obliterate the Bābīs (Sipīhr 1958–59: 63, Hidāyat 1960–61: 433). Soon some local chiefs arrived with a militia about 4,000 strong. On 23 Muḥarram 1265/20 December 1848, some horsemen and villagers approached the fort and started shooting. The Bābīs made a sortie in daylight on 25 Muḥarram/22 December, surprised and routed their enemies, and killed 70 or more, including the commander and many of the chiefs of the army. Of the Bābīs only one was injured in this attack (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 74–76; Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 10). They also captured a huge amount of ammunition, provisions, and about a hundred horses. This was of great importance to the Bābīs, as their own equipment was completely inadequate at the time. On their arrival at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, the Bābīs had only seven muskets, a number of swords and daggers, and perhaps five horses (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 43–44, 75).

After this defeat, the shāh gave emphatic orders to his uncle, prince Maḥdī Qulī Mīrzā, the newly appointed governor of Māzandarān, that the Bābīs should be eradicated. Shortly after the prince-governor’s departure from Tehran, the shāh reiterated the importance of the matter in a written order (*farmān*). His edict (*Bahā’ī World* 1936: 58; Mehrabkhani 1987: 249–51), dated 3 Ṣafar 1265/30 December 1848, referred to the Bābī movement as a “fresh heresy” (“*bid‘a*”), the extermination of which was required by the religion and Shī‘ī doctrine. “First of all,” the edict pointed out, “to extinguish this blazing flame will require the diligence of the most learned ‘*ulamā*’ and the most revered and respected scholars. Second, it will depend upon the pious servants of the eternal State, who must suppress it with great vigour.” A note in the shāh’s own handwriting read: “It is true . . . you must exert yourself to the utmost in this affair. This is not a trifling amusement. The fate of our religion and of Shī‘ī doctrine hangs in the balance” (Mehrabkhani 1987: 250–51). The edict reveals a significant measure of religious motivation on the part of the young shāh for the suppression of the Bābīs.

During the first half of January 1849, the prince-governor arrived at the village of Shīrgāh, about fifteen miles from Shaykh Ṭabarsī. Soon he moved with his troops, about 1,000 in number, to another

village closer to the shrine. The prince did not launch an attack immediately, as he was waiting for reinforcements. The Bābīs had, on 1 Šafar 1265/28 December 1848, started digging a ditch around the shrine, and were now engaged in building a fort. They also began storing provisions in preparation for a siege. Clearing the area around the shrine, they used the wood of the trees for building material. The digging of the ditch and the construction of the octagonal fort, with several towers and two gates, were completed within twenty-four days. When the Bābīs discovered that the prince was waiting for ‘Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārjānī and his forces, who were native to the region, they decided to strike first. On the night of 29 Šafar 1265 (the night between 24 and 25 January 1849), some 200 Bābīs made a sortie and routed the government forces (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 91). The prince-governor managed to flee, but two other princes and a number of soldiers were killed. The Bābīs lost not more than 5 men. Quddūs was injured during this clash.

Three days later, ‘Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārjānī arrived with his forces, whose number gradually rose to some 6,000 (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 99; Semino, 1997: 192). On the night of 9 Rabī‘ I 1265 (the night between 2 and 3 February 1849), over 200 Bābīs, about 20 on horseback and 20–30 bearing muskets, made a sortie on ‘Abbās Qulī Khān’s forces. In the clash, some 400 of the troops, including many chiefs, lost their lives. The high casualties among the troops were in part due to their shooting and slashing at each other in the dark during the confusion that had followed the Bābīs’ attack. This time the Bābīs suffered many casualties. Over 40 of them, including Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū’ī, were killed during the battle or died of their injuries later. On the following day, the troops approached and attacked the fort, apparently in order to collect the injured and some of their dead and bury the rest. When they retreated from the area, the Bābīs went to the battlefield to fetch their own dead. They found that the Bābī corpses had been either decapitated, burned, or both. On seeing this, the Bābīs exhumed and decapitated the bodies of the soldiers, and fixed their heads on poles near one of the gates of the fort (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 112; Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 16; Ḥājji Našīr, 1974–75: 510–11; Maḥjūr 1861–62: 64–65; Browne 1910: 177; Sipīhr 1958–59: 68–69; Hidāyat 1960–61: 439–40).

Soon the prince-governor returned with a new army, and ‘Abbās Qulī Khān joined forces with him. At this time, a number of ‘*ulamā*’,

leading a large group of people, arrived at Shaykh Ṭabarsī to wage *jihād* against the Bābīs. However, when they saw the impaled heads of the soldiers near the fort, they were horrified and returned to the camp. Here they were asked to leave, so that the troops would not be demoralized. Gradually, the number of troops and irregulars reached 10,000–12,000 (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 119; Ḥājji Naṣīr 1974–75: 515; Ferrier to de LaHitte 21 February 1850, cited in Momen 1981: 95). The fort was now completely surrounded, and supplies were cut off. In late February or early March, after much hesitation, the troops stormed the fort, but the Bābīs repulsed their assault. After the defeat of ‘Abbās Qulī Khān’s forces in early February, the prince and the commanders of the army had made persistent demands on Amīr Kabīr for artillery. A strong detachment of soldiers equipped with four wagons of cannons and mortars, and two howitzers arrived at Shaykh Ṭabarsī in March, and a heavy bombardment of the fort began in the second half of this month (Browne 1910: 200; Nabīl 1932: 391; Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 121; Mahjūr 1861–62: 68; Sipihr 1958–59: 70).

By early April the Bābīs had used up all their supplies of rice and grain, and had already slaughtered and consumed the thirty or so horses that were left. They had to live on grass from then on (Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 17, 22, 25; see also Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 127; Ḥājji Naṣīr 1974–75: 514). Since ‘Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārijānī and the Māzandarānī chiefs had failed to capture the fort in spite of their superior forces, the government in Tehran dispatched Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār (c. 9 April). It seems that ‘Abbās Qulī Khān was suspected of having become a Bābī (Semino 1997: 192). Under Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār’s command galleries were dug to the fort from opposite directions, and mines were placed under two of its towers. On about 1 Jumādā II 1265/25 April 1849, preparations were completed, the mines were ignited and the fort was stormed from four directions. This second general assault failed, too, and the troops lost a few flags to the Bābīs. Shortly afterwards, thirty or more Bābīs deserted the fort, but their leader and perhaps a few others were killed and the rest captured by the troops and killed later. By this time the troops had discovered that the Bābīs left the fort at night to collect grass, so they maintained fire on the area around the fort through the night. The Bābīs could not even get a hold of grass any more. In the last nineteen days of the siege, they were reduced to eating the putrefied meat, skin, and bones of their dead horses,

and even the leather of their saddles (Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 127–28; Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 17, 25; Ḥājji Naṣīr, 1974–75: 515–16; Browne 1910: 188; Sipihr 1958–59: 73).

The siege was brought to an end when the prince-governor resorted to treachery. The Bābīs were promised safety if they left the fort. Copies of the *Qurʾān* were sealed and sent to confirm the pledge. On the afternoon of 15 Jumādā II 1265/9 May 1849, the surviving Bābīs, some 220 in number, evacuated the fort (Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 21, 32–33, 36; see also Mahjūr 1861–62: 100 [London text]; Browne 1910: 192; Nabīl 1932: 399–400; Sipihr 1958–59: 74). Once outside the fort, they were soon disarmed and massacred (10 May 1849, at noon). Some of the more prominent Bābīs were distributed among the troops and taken to various towns in Māzandarān to be executed. Only some sixty Bābīs survived the conflict. Of these, some had managed to escape, while others were kept alive to be ransomed or were simply spared due to their young age or lineage (descent from the Prophet Muḥammad). Prince Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā spared Quddūs in order to take him to the capital Tehran. However, when he arrived in Bārfurūsh, he was forced to deliver Quddūs to his clerical enemies, who killed him in a brutal way (23 Jumādā II 1265/17 May 1849). With his death, the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode was brought to an end.

### *An Analysis of the Nature of the Bābī Movement*

The Bābīs have often been portrayed as revolutionaries, and the Bābī clashes with the state as uprisings against Qājār rule. In his thesis published in 1939, M.S. Ivanov expressed the view that the Bābī movement was a “popular mass movement, born out of definite social conditions and directed against the ruling class” (Minorsky 1946: 878). In his analysis, the economic crisis in Īrān at the time accounted for the emergence of the movement. In a more recent paper, Kurt Greussing (1984) argues for a similar view. According to his study, the Bābī movement was initially a religious reform movement, which sought converts among urban elites. However, when the Bābīs failed to obtain success among the elite, they gradually turned to the urban poor and the peasants, and after 1848, under the pressure of the economic crisis, the movement was radicalised and turned into a social revolution (pp. 266–67). He argues

that the Bābīs' influence was strongest in areas near trade routes, since these places were most heavily hit by the economic crisis. He also acknowledges that the "uprisings" were "defensive," and attributes this to "logistic difficulties" (p. 267). For the Bābīs to launch a military campaign to overthrow the central government, Greussing maintains, they "would have had to plunder their fellow peasants in order to supply their army, a method widely used by their enemies, the imperial troops" (p. 267).

There were economic problems in Īrān in the mid-nineteenth century. However, Momen (1983) has studied the social basis of the Bābīs involved in the clashes with the state, and his survey does not indicate any large representation of peasants or urban craftsmen and artisans, that is, the groups that would be most affected. He has discussed Ivanov's analysis, but many of the points he raises apply equally to Greussing's article. The minor '*ulamā*' constituted by far the largest single element in the "leadership cadre" of the Bābī movement (over 40%) (Smith and Momen 1986: 71–72). In the case of Shaykh Ṭabarsī, of some 360 identified Bābī participants, the occupational background of about 220 is known. Of these, over 60 percent belonged to the '*ulamā*' class, while craftsmen, skilled and unskilled urban workers and labourers, and peasants together accounted for some 25 percent (Smith and Momen, 1986: 72; cf. Amanat 1989: 359). Among all the participants, however, the latter group probably constituted more than 25 percent, as they are more likely to have been unidentified than members of the '*ulamā*' class. With regard to the peasants and villagers who joined the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, their action seems to have been motivated by religious concerns, and not by a desire to revolt. For instance, in the case of the villages Sangsar and Shāhmīrzād, it was the acceptance by one of their '*ulamā*' of the religious claims of the Bābīs, which he had been appointed to investigate, that prompted the villagers to go to Shaykh Ṭabarsī (for more details, see under the narrative of Mīr Abī Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī in the section on sources). In general, the picture that emerges from the eyewitness accounts of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict do not reveal a radical-social outlook on the part of the Bābīs, but rather their deep religious concerns.

In their discussions of the Bābī-state clash at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, neither Ivanov nor Greussing has made use of the Bābī or Bahā'ī eyewitness accounts of this episode. These accounts do not confirm the revolutionary intentions that these authors ascribe to the Bābīs. With

regard to the defensive character of the Bābīs' struggle, it seems clear that it was not motivated by a sense of common interest with the peasants, as Greussing argues. The eyewitness accounts indicate that the Bābīs did not refrain from burning villages to stop the army from using them for cover or acquiring provisions from them (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 77, 98; Mīr Abī Ṭālib n.d.: 11; Ḥājī Naṣīr 1974–75: 506–07; see also Mahjūr 1861–62: 56 [London text]. In a siege, such measures are part of the defence of the fortress [Bode 1993: 2418]).

E.G. Browne and other scholars, such as Hamid Algar and Denis MacEoin, propose different interpretations of the Bābī-state clashes that emphasize the religious, as opposed to socio-economic, basis of the conflict. According to Browne, the objective of the Bābīs was nothing less than the replacement of Qājār rule with a Bābī theocracy in the immediate future. He (1918: xv) writes:

The original Bābīs who fought so desperately against the Persian Government at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, Zanjān, Nayrīz and elsewhere in 1848–50 aimed at a Bābī theocracy and a reign of the saints on earth; they were irreconcilably hostile to the existing government and Royal Family, and were only interested for the most part in the triumph of their faith, not in any projects of social or political reform (see also Browne 1893a: xvi).

Comparing the Bābī and Ismā'īlī movements, Algar (1969: 148) writes: "Both Ismā'īlism and Bābism were heresies of Shi'ite origin seeking to overthrow orthodoxy (Sunni and Ithnā'asharī respectively) by violence, and spreading their doctrines by secret instruction." According to Algar, the Bābī rebellion began in Khurāsān with the march of Mullā Ḥusayn and his party toward Māzandarān, but this "fact was obscured by the death of Muḥammad Shāh, and the Bābī revolt became one element in the chaos surrounding the succession" (p. 144).

More recently, MacEoin (1983: 222) has expressed the view that "between 1847 and 1850, following the Bāb's announcement that he himself was the Qā'im, his followers took up arms to begin the last crusade or share in the messianic woes in the hope of hastening the final restitution of things." Like Browne, MacEoin (1986: 70; 1983: 222) states that the Bābīs intended to establish a "Bābī theocracy" and "the immediate rule of the saints on earth." He (1982; 1989: 316) links the clashes between the Bābīs and the state to the Bābī concept of an "offensive *jihād*," but maintains that at Shaykh

Ṭabarsī and elsewhere, the Bābīs proclaimed a “defensive,” and not an “offensive,” *jihād* against the Qājār state and its forces. MacEoin (1982: 121) suggests that the Bābīs attempted unsuccessfully to transform these local upheavals into “a more widely-based revolutionary struggle against the forces of unbelief,” and he (1982: 121; 1989: 316; 1986: 70) gives a number of factors for their failure.

The theme of *jihād* is treated extensively in the early writings of the Bāb. In different passages of the *Qayyūm al-Asmāʾ*, warfare is conditioned on God’s leave, on the command of the Bāb and of the *Imām*, and the believers are, for instance, instructed to purchase arms in expectation of a struggle. The concept of *jihād* in this work and others written before the Persian *Bayān* seems similar to the Shīʿī concept of *jihād* (see MacEoin 1982: 107). There are also references to, and regulations regarding, *jihād* in some later writings by the Bāb including the Persian *Bayān*, written in late 1847. The concept of *jihād* in these writings clearly centres around the authority of a Bābī king. The *Bayān* (n.d.: 158) instructs the Bābī kings that people should be brought into the faith in the same way that it was done in Islām. They are allowed to use conquest to convert people, although, as far as possible, other means should be used, such as the seizure of property (p. 120). The Bābī kings are permitted to take the property of the unbelievers, and only return it to them if they convert (p. 157). Furthermore, there are a number of harsh regulations in the Persian *Bayān* regarding non-believers. For instance, it is the duty of every future Bābī king not to allow any unbeliever to live in his country, except traders (pp. 262–63). Likewise, non-Bābīs are not permitted to stay in the five provinces of Fārs, ʿIrāq, Ādharbāyjan, Khurāsān, and Māzandarān, because the faith appeared first in these areas (p. 193). There is, however, the instruction that gentleness, and not violence, should be used in persuasion (p. 63).

References to Bābī kings in the Persian *Bayān* seem to anticipate the appearance of some form of a Bābī state (or states). However, the laws of the *Bayān* regarding holy war are given as instructions to Bābī kings, implying that a Bābī king must be in power before offensive *jihād* can be carried out. There are no provisions here for rank-and-file Bābīs, without a Bābī king, to declare offensive *jihād*. Neither are there provisions for the Bābīs to wage a *jihād* in order to put a Bābī king into power. In the *Dalāʾil-i sabʿa* (n.d.: 42), the Bāb states that when the believers (*adillāʾ-i iḥbāʾī*) see that people are not guided by proofs, then there is no way for unbelievers to be



guided other than the Bābīs asking God to raise up one who would bring all men into the True Faith. He adds that today there is no way of guiding the followers of various prophets except through a strong king who would bring them into the True Faith (p. 43). The argument that the Bābīs wanted to establish a “Bābī theocracy” through a “holy war” is primarily based on references to Bābī kings in the Bāb’s “later” writings (MacEoin 1986: 70). However, as mentioned above, these same writings, in effect, precluded the possibility of waging an offensive *jihād*, as only a Bābī king could conduct an offensive *jihād*, and such a king did not exist.

It is commonly acknowledged that a Bābī offensive *jihād* was never declared. In MacEoin’s treatment of the subject, there is a tension between the Bābī concept of offensive *jihād*, as he interprets it, and the actual defensive warfare of the Bābīs. He (1982: 121) attempts to resolve this apparent tension by suggesting that offensive *jihād* was not declared, “probably because it was regarded as wrong to declare a holy war unless there was a reasonable chance of success a condition clearly lacking in the case of the Bābīs.” Again, however, as the concept of *jihād* is developed in the Bāb’s later writings, the question would not have arisen.

The above discussion about the implications of the concept of *jihād* in the writings of the Bāb does not consider the extent to which the Bābīs were acquainted with these texts, or how they interpreted them. While the regulations about *jihād* and the severe laws formulated by the Bāb are relevant to the Bābī-state clashes to the extent that they influenced the actions of the Bābīs or provoked reactions from the clerical establishment and the state, they cannot by themselves explain the Bābīs’ motives. To address this question, it is essential to investigate thoroughly the course of the events and circumstances of the Bābī-state clashes as well as the Bābī actors’ understanding of those events. Such an analysis will provide insight into whether or not the Bābīs were intent on insurrection or establishing a Bābī theocracy by means of holy war.

In the next section, the events and circumstances around the Bābīs’ march to Māzandarān and their entrenchment at Shaykh Ṭabarsī will be analyzed to establish the context in which the Bābīs’ actions took place and to find possible explanations for them. The Bābīs’ understanding of their situation and their actions will also be studied, as this is crucial for clarifying their objectives. The three existing Bābī and Bahā’ī eyewitness accounts by survivors of the event,



Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī, Mīr Abī Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī, and Ḥājī Nāṣir-i Qazwīnī, are particularly relevant in this analysis, because besides providing significant information about the Māzandarān episode not available in other sources, they reflect the Bābī participants’ understanding of it. Of these three, Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s account is the earliest and the most important one. The history by Mahjūr-i Zawāra’ī and the *Kitāb-i Nuṣṣatu’l-Kāf* are also significant, since they are early Bābī texts that predate the final Bahā’ī-Azalī break of the 1860s.

*The Objectives of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī*

In his narrative, Nabīl refers to the raising of the Black Standard by the group of Bābīs, as they embarked on their march to Māzandarān. This issue has attracted the attention of various scholars. In the Shī‘ī prophetic traditions, there are references to black standards proceeding from Khurāsān, which signify the advent of the Mahdī. According to Nabīl (1932: 324–25), Mullā Ḥusayn unfurled the Black Standard on the Bāb’s instruction as he set out toward Māzandarān. Nabīl cites a tradition that refers to the Black Standard, and adds that this standard “was carried aloft all the way from the city of Mashhad to the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī,” where it was flown until the fall of the fort (p. 351). Commenting on Nabīl’s statements, various scholars have drawn attention to the significance and implications of the raising of black standards (see Momen 1983: 161; MacEoin 1982: 115). It is argued that apart from its messianic overtones, fulfilling literally the prophecies about the appearance of the Qā’im in Khurāsān, raising black standards also had political implications. It was exactly by such an act that the ‘Abbāsids began their rebellion against the Umayyads, which ended with the overthrow of the latter. However, the main issue is what such an act meant to the Bābīs, and how it was interpreted by the authorities and the public. In this respect, it is noteworthy that there is no evidence that contemporaries attached any political significance to such an act. The Qājār chronicles are silent on this issue, and there is no mention of the government being alarmed by it, or taking any notice of it at all. An explanation for this, that is, how a banner could be flown without attracting suspicion can be found in the custom of *čāwush-khwānī* (Molavinegad, September 2000).

The practice of *ĉāwush-khwānī* (recitation by a *ĉāwush* or guide) was common at the time and was associated with pilgrimage. The *ĉāwush* would chant poems praising the Prophet or the *Imāms* and call on people to persuade them to take him on as a guide on a pilgrimage to Mecca, the 'Atabāt, or Mashhad. He would hoist a special banner to announce the imminent pilgrimage (Yūsufī 1992). Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā (c. 1852: 2–4, 8–9) indicates in his account that the Bābīs were apprehensive about being attacked, and attempted to conceal their identity by alleging to be pilgrims on their way to Karbalā'. Considering the practice of *ĉāwush-khwānī*, it would seem that Mullā Ḥusayn's party could have flown a black banner without necessarily arousing suspicion. However, there is evidence suggesting that Nabīl's portrayal of this event is not entirely correct.

The earlier accounts do not mention any such episode. In fact, Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī's (c. 1852) account contains evidence that makes it seem rather doubtful. Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā had joined Mullā Ḥusayn's band shortly before their entry into Māzandarān. He comments in passing on Mullā Ḥusayn's black garment, saying that this was the meaning of the Black Standard from Khurāsān reported in the tradition (p. 19). This suggests that the travellers were not flying black standards at that time. There is corroboratory evidence in the account by Mīr Abī Ṭālib-i Shahmīrzādī (n.d.), who joined the Bābīs after they entered the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī. He refers several times in his narrative to the prophecies about the Black Standards having been fulfilled (pp. 9, 10, 11, 37). However, he implies that the Bābīs "understood Mullā Ḥusayn to be the Standards from Khurāsān" (p. 37; see also p. 10). The *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* (Browne 1910), too, contains references to the various standards in the prophecies. It is stated that the "Khurāsānī Standard" refers to "janāb-i Sayyid al-Shuhadā' [Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī], who set out from Khurāsān" (p. 153). Considering this evidence, it seems likely that the Bābīs did not carry black standards on the way to Māzandarān. Even if they did, they apparently did not attach any eschatological significance to it. Rather, it was the act of Mullā Ḥusayn and his party, who set out on a march from Khurāsān, which was viewed as the fulfilment of the prophecies.

Elsewhere in his narrative, Nabīl (1932: 354) gives the number of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī as 313. Like the Black Standard, the figure 313 has eschatological significance. According to certain traditions, the companions of the Mahdī number 313, which is the

numerical value of the word *jaysh* (army), that is, the *jaysh* of the Mahdī (Amir-Moezzi 1998: 578). It is not unlikely that an emphasis on the literal fulfillment of such prophecies led to the circulation among the Bābīs of stories about the carrying of the Black Standard and the number of participants at Shaykh Ṭabarsī being exactly 313, which subsequently found their way into Nabīl's narrative.

Evidence about why Mullā Ḥusayn and a large number of Bābīs were heading for Māzandarān is rather scanty. Mullā Ḥusayn had just been ordered to leave Mashhad. The region was unstable due to a prolonged state of rebellion, and clashes between the Bābīs and the local people would have worsened the situation. Mullā Ḥusayn reportedly once remarked that his purpose in leaving Mashhad had been to "exalt the word of God" (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 18; cf. p. 88). However, it seems that he had had another, more concrete aim. According to a number of sources, one of the objectives of the conference of Badasht was to deliberate about how the Bāb could be rescued from his imprisonment (Shoghi Effendi 1974: 31; Āwāra, 1923: 129). Āwāra (1923: 129), the author of a late Bahā'ī history, states that it was decided at Badasht that the Bābīs should go to the prison fortress in Ādharbāyjan, and once there, ask Muḥammad Shāh to release the Bāb, or liberate him by force if necessary, avoiding conflict as far as possible. Probably it was because of the bastinado inflicted on the Bāb that the Bābīs determined to rescue their leader (see Hidāyat 1960–61: 428). According to Shaykh Kāẓim-i Samandar (1974–75: 168), Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī and his party intended to proceed to Ādharbāyjan to meet the Bāb. Samandar's statement is significant, as it occurs in his short biography of one of the survivors of the conflict, whom he had met. Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī (c. 1932: 259), too, refers to the party's plan to rescue the Bāb, and adds that the Bābīs chose to travel via Māzandarān and Gīlān, since it was dangerous to go through Tehran. Of the Qājār chroniclers, only Riḍā Qulī Khān-i Hidāyat (1960–61: 422, 428–29) states that Mullā Ḥusayn's original intention was to go to Čahrīq to liberate the Bāb (see also Browne 1891: 189). He also writes that the Bābīs intended to begin the *khurūj*.

The existing sources do not clarify the Bāb's attitude and position towards his followers' plan to rescue him. Some sources report that while on his way to the prison fortress of Mākī, the Bāb sent a message to a certain Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār-i Šā'in-Qal'ā'ī, asking for assistance (Nabīl 1932: 235–36; Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī 1944?:

75). A group of Bābīs, being informed of this, offered to rescue the Bāb, but he declined their request. MacEoin (1982: 106) refers to this incident, but confuses Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār-i Šā'in-Qal'ā'i with Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār, later entitled Šāhib Ikhtiyār, who, as he writes, was "one of the country's leading military men" (for Šāhib Ikhtiyār, see Afshār 1989: 607–08; Bāmdād 1968–69: 116–18; for Sulaymān Khān-i Šā'in-Qal'ā'i, see Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī 1944?: 74–75). The former, Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār-i Šā'in-Qal'ā'i, had been an admirer of the late head of the Shaykhī school, from which the majority of the early Bābīs were recruited. This Sulaymān Khān was known for his wealth, and may have been in a position to arrange for the rescue of the Bāb. However, it seems that in this case the Bāb's message was meant as a challenge to him.

The rescue of the Bāb, if carried out by force, would amount to interfering in the affairs of the authorities. Apparently, the Bābīs regarded such an act as legitimate, as it was in response to persecution. It is difficult to conjecture the course of action the Bābīs would have taken, had they succeeded in rescuing the Bāb. Nowhere in the available Bābī or Bahā'ī histories is there any clear indication of the Bābīs' future plans. The only clue given is that the Bābīs intended to go to the Shī'ī shrine cities of 'Irāq (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 88; cf. Browne 1910: 166; Sipīhr 1958–59: 59; Hidāyat 1960–61: 431). If this is taken at face value, it could suggest that the Bābīs intended to leave the country. However, considering the fate of the Bāb's emissary to the 'Atabāt (Momen 1982), it is hard to imagine that the Bābīs would fare any better there, in the heartland of the Shī'ī world, than in Īrān.

It is important to have a sense of the context in which the Bābīs' march toward Māzandarān took place. As mentioned earlier, according to Austin Wright, the government issued orders for the persecution of the Bābīs at about this time. Wright's statement is corroborated by Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā's account. He (c. 1852: 10–11) writes that, entering Māzandarān, the Bābīs encountered the party of prince Khānlar Mīrzā, the newly appointed governor of the province. When the governor discovered that they were Bābīs, he said to a number of them: "You are all Bābīs and *mufsid-i fi 'l-arḍ* (literally, "the corrupt upon the land," from the Qur'ān 18: 94), and killing you is obligatory, and the shāh [Muḥammad Shāh] has ordered that wherever they find you, they kill you" (p. 14). Other sources do not refer to Muḥammad Shāh giving orders for killing the Bābīs. Still, the

incident reflects the tension that surrounded the Bābīs at the time. Previously, on Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s advice, Mullā Ḥusayn had instructed the Bābīs to keep watch at night (pp. 3–6).

When the Bābīs, near Bārfurūsh, received news of the death of Muḥammad Shāh, they headed toward the town. The Bābīs must have been aware that trouble could break out in the town due to the presence there of Sa‘īd al-‘Ulamā’, an influential cleric who was hostile toward the Bābīs. However, it doesn’t seem that they had any alternative. Shortly before this, they had been forced to leave the village of Arīm because of the complaints of some of the local people. Some had objected to the Bābīs occupying their pastureland, and others had said that foodstuffs had become scarce, because the Bābīs paid well, so everybody went to them to sell their rice. The people had threatened to attack the Bābīs if they did not leave (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 20–21). The death of Muḥammad Shāh complicated this situation radically. The Bābīs could no longer move from place to place, as they risked attacks by robbers exploiting the temporary anarchy, or by local people or authorities who might take them for a band of plunderers (see Ḥājji Naṣīr 1974–75: 504). A letter, written from the provincial capital Sārī shortly after Muḥammad Shāh’s death, reads: “. . . Saree [Sārī] . . . is the only town not in a disturbed state in all Mazandaran, and the roads are infested by robbers in every direction” (Anon. 12 September 1848; cf. Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 25–26; Watson 1866: 360). Bārfurūsh was the major town most easily accessible from Arīm. Here, the Bābīs would be able to find provisions sufficient for their numbers until the situation stabilized.

Describing the Bābīs’ entry into and stay in Bārfurūsh, the two main official histories of the period give more or less the same version of the events. Neither of them states that the Bābīs were attacked on their arrival. Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s eyewitness account clearly states that they were, as do other Bābī and later Bahā’ī sources, and Shaykh al-‘Ajam’s (1866) account seems to confirm this. The latter, who was hostile toward the Bābīs, writes that news reached Bārfurūsh that 500 Bābīs had rebelled and were intent on making a surprise attack (pp. 206–07). The people of Bārfurūsh armed themselves with muskets, cudgels, etc., and waited for the Bābīs to arrive in order to kill them. The townspeople were waiting for a second day, when the Bābīs arrived. During the clash that followed, Mullā Ḥusayn killed 7–8 people (p. 207). Probably, there were more casualties

among the townspeople in this first clash. Nevertheless, they were relatively few, and this suggests that the Bābīs had not intended to attack the inhabitants. When Mullā Ḥusayn and his fellow Bābīs made sorties on the besieging troops at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, they proved capable of imposing great casualties on their enemies.

After leaving Bārfurūsh, the Bābīs reluctantly accepted that Khusraw-i Qādī-Kalāʾī and his armed men should escort them. The Bābīs were followed by a mob from Bārfurūsh, intent on revenge, and they were strangers to the inhospitable surroundings of Māzandarān, with its narrow paths, thick forests, and impassable marshland (see Browne 1893a: 53). When the Bābīs discovered that their escort intended to kill them and steal their goods, they killed Khusraw in the middle of the night, and attacked and dispersed his men (see Sipīhr 1958–59: 61; Hidāyat 1960–61: [432]). Leaving behind all their belongings, the Bābīs chased the escort, and attacked a village, which they thought was Qādī-Kalāʾī's. On returning, the Bābīs discovered that nothing of their belongings was left. Then, the Bābīs made their way, with the help of a local guide, whom they had taken prisoner, to the nearby shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī.

The Bābīs decided to stay at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, because they could not move on. The Bābī survivors' accounts show that the party's leader, Mullā Ḥusayn, was aware that they had reached the end of their journey. On entering the shrine, he addressed his companions, saying that this was the place all of them would be killed (Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 54). Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā describes the agony of the Bābīs when they heard that there was no escape from "martyrdom" (p. 54). After Muḥammad Shāh's death, it was no longer possible for them to proceed with their initial plan of rescuing the Bāb. Apart from the general lawlessness in the region and the risk of being attacked by robbers, the Bābīs' enemies wanted to revenge the blood of those killed in Bārfurūsh, and Khusraw and his men. The Bābīs would make an easy target for their enemies if they attempted to travel on the narrow paths of Māzandarān. It would not have improved their chances if they dispersed and tried to make it out of the province in small groups. Their dialect as well as their dress would reveal that they were strangers in the region (see Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 61; Mahjūr 1861–62: 37). Ḥājji Naṣīr's (1974–75: 504) account indicates that the Bābīs expected the townspeople to attack. It seems that word had also been sent to the nearby villages that the Bābīs were infidels, whom it was lawful to kill and plunder

(Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 36). For some time, the people from Qādī-Kalā, together with other villagers, looted all the strangers in the area, and even killed a few (Mīr Abū Ṭālib n.d.: 3). In short, the Bābīs were trapped, so they began raising some rudimentary defences around the shrine. The fact that the first major attack on the Bābīs did not come until three months later was only due to the absence of the chiefs and notables of Māzandarān, who had been obliged to go to Tehran for the coronation of the shāh (Sipihr 1958–59: 62; Hidāyat 1960–61: 433). In the meantime the inhabitants of Qādī-Kalā attacked the Bābīs at the shrine (Browne 1910: 160; cf. Nabīl 1932: 345).

Under these circumstances, the motifs of *jihād* and martyrdom emerged fully. The Bābīs, like the general Shī‘ī population of Īrān, were well acquainted with these motifs. To them, the appearance of the Mahdī marked the culmination of Shī‘ī history. As the struggle began, it appeared to the Bābīs that the episode of Karbalā’ was being re-enacted. For them, the Qājārs were the new Umayyads, and their clerical enemies were the eschatological figures who would wage war against the Mahdī. The first major attack occurred in the month of Muḥarram, the very month in which the *Imām* Ḥusayn was martyred. Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū’ī referred specifically to this in his interview with the emissary of the prince-governor, and drew a parallel to the Umayyads and the *Imām* Ḥusayn (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 87; Mahjūr 1861–62: 42).

Certain factors indicate that the Bābīs were not intent on insurrection. Their limited arms and equipment, consisting initially of eighteen muskets, a number of swords and daggers, and a few horses, and the many children and elderly among the party made them unfit for a struggle against a trained army (see Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 43–44, 80). If the actions of the group of Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī were part of a Bābī plan aimed at overthrowing the state, it seems reasonable that they would have sought to take advantage of the instability created by the death of the shāh. It was then that uprisings and disorder broke out in many parts of the country, and Sālār, the leader of the rebellion in Khurāsān, used the opportunity to consolidate his position. For another two years, his rebellion engaged a substantial part of the country’s military resources (see Adamiyat 1976–77: 231–47). Without support from outside, the fall of the fort of Shaykh Ṭabarsī was obviously only a matter of time, as it is always factors outside the fortress that decide the success or



failure of the defenders in a siege. “In war history, there is no known case of a defender, once encircled in a fortress, being able to compel the attacker to call off a siege alone and with his own resources. Defence of a fortress is always a battle to gain time” (Bode 1993: 2417). Therefore, preparing for defensive warfare at Shaykh Ṭabarsī would not serve any end in itself, if the other Bābīs did not conduct insurrectionary activities in other parts of the country. It would seem that they were in a position to do so, if that was what they intended. Mullā Muḥammad Alī-yi Zanjānī Ḥujjat, who was to lead the Bābīs of his town in the most severe of the Bābī-state clashes two years later, used the opportunity offered by the death of the shāh to escape from the capital, apparently while the Māzandarān conflict was unfolding. He had a large following in Zanjān, and had had contact with them during his confinement in Tehran. The first major attack on Shaykh Ṭabarsī came in late December, three and a half months after the death of the shāh, and the conflict lasted until May, so it seems that the Zanjānī Bābīs would have had sufficient time to organize a revolt there, had they been instructed to do so. Another Bābī leader, Āqā Sayyid Yaḥyā-yi Dārābī Waḥīd, who two years later would be involved in the first Nayrīz conflict, had many followers in this town, as well as in Yazd. He, too, would seem to have been in a position to stage a revolt. However, neither Ḥujjat nor Waḥīd, nor, indeed, any other Bābīs, attempted to organize a revolt. During this time, the Bāb was in communication with his followers, and while, at one point, he may have instructed them to join the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī, he never issued an order for a Bābī offensive *jihād*.

The early Bābī and later Bahāʾī narratives of the episode do not indicate that the participants at Shaykh Ṭabarsī aspired to establish a Bābī theocracy. The claim of the court historian Sipīhr (1958–59: 63) that Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrūʾī promised his fellow Bābīs kingship and rulership of various lands stands in sharp contrast to the statements in these accounts that Mullā Ḥusayn, soon after entering Māzandarān, warned his companions that all of them would be killed. He told them that whoever wanted to leave had to do it then, and that “it will not be possible to leave later. They will close the roads and spill our blood. Soon the enemies will attack from all sides” (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 18–19; cf. Browne 1910: 155–56; Nabīl, 1932: 326).

The eyewitness accounts show that the Bābīs did not view themselves



as insurrectionists, and that in response to the authorities they denied such an objective. Several of the accounts refer to an exchange of messages between the Bābīs and the prince-governor. According to Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā (c. 1852: 83), when the prince-governor arrived at Shīrgāh, he sent a strongly worded message to Mullā Ḥusayn asking why the Bābīs had stayed in the province, gathered a number of the wicked around them, and stirred up “mischief” (“*fasād*”). The message also said that the Bābīs were no match for the royal troops, and that they should leave the province (p. 83). Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā then gives a summary of Mullā Ḥusayn’s replies to the prince’s emissary. The emissary remarked that the Bābīs should produce a miracle to prove the truth of their cause, and that the prince had said he would join forces with them, if they did so, and attempt to overthrow Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh (p. 84). Mullā Ḥusayn answered that the greatest miracle, the revelation of verses, had already been performed, but that they had denied it. He asked why they would not, instead, gather their ‘*ulamā*’ to engage in logical arguments with the Bābīs. If the ‘*ulamā*’ defeated the Bābīs in argument, they could kill them; otherwise, the ‘*ulamā*’ should accept the cause of truth (pp. 84–85; cf. Mīr Abū Ṭālib n.d.: 12; Browne 1910: 163). The interview was interrupted when Mullā Ḥusayn went to get Quddūs’s response to the prince’s message. On returning, Mullā Ḥusayn addressed the prince-governor’s emissary in an angry tone, relating what the Bābīs had suffered, and emphasizing that it was their enemies, and not the Bābīs, who had caused mischief. To the prince’s remark about the superiority of the royal troops, Mullā Ḥusayn answered that truth always prevailed over falsehood, and that if the whole world united to assail them, he would wage *jihād* against it, until he either was martyred or defeated his adversaries (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 85–88).

In response to the prince’s remark about joining forces in order to overthrow the shāh, Mullā Ḥusayn said that he did not seek “the sovereignty and kingdom of the ephemeral world” (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 88), and reproached the prince and his emissary for ascribing such objectives to the Bābīs, whom they did not even know (p. 88; cf. pp. 91–92 [London text]). He also remarked that he had left Mashhad “with the aim of spreading the truth, in whatever way might prove possible, whether by overcoming falsehood or by means of the sword or by suffering martyrdom” (p. 88). He refused to leave the province, saying, “I shall make manifest the cause of God by

means of the sword” (p. 89), and added that he had been deceived in Bārfurūsh by the Sardār, i.e. ‘Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārjānī, and that he would not be deceived again, and would not disperse his few companions, until they had overcome all their enemies or had all been killed (p. 89; cf. p. 92 [London text]). Mullā Ḥusayn hinted at the prince’s dishonesty, and occasionally called the shāh a puppy. He concluded the interview by writing a short answer to the prince (p. 89). Obviously, the Bābīs were not begging for mercy. Mullā Ḥusayn’s reference to ‘Abbās Qulī Khān, and his hints at the prince’s dishonesty indicate that he believed that the prince could not be relied on, and that his only intention was to get the Bābīs out of the fort, so that they could be killed easily. Mullā Ḥusayn’s remarks, as related by Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, also clearly show the Bābīs’ determination to spread their cause and to defend themselves. Mullā Ḥusayn’s boldness also suggests that if the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī really aimed to overthrow the shāh, they would not hesitate to say so.

In his paper “The Bābī Concept of Holy War”, MacEoin (1982: 115–17) provides an analysis of the objectives of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. He cites passages from Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s history regarding this exchange, and comments that Mullā Ḥusayn, in his reply to prince Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā’s inquiry about the Bābīs’ motives, refused to leave Māzandarān as “requested” (p. 116). MacEoin’s portrayal of this incident gives the impression that the Bābīs and their leader would not listen to reason. To call the prince’s demand that the Bābīs should leave Māzandarān a “request” is misleading. The prince had received emphatic instructions from Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh in person to eradicate the Bābīs, and, shortly afterwards, the shāh had issued a royal decree ordering him to “cleanse the realm of this filthy and reprobate sect, so that not a trace of them remains” (Mehrabkhani 1987: 251). The Bābīs had heard about the prince’s mission and knew that Māzandarānī troops had been ordered to assist him. Some of the local people who had initially expressed their support for the Bābīs had now reneged. The prince’s message was phrased in harsh language and accused the Bābīs of stirring up mischief (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā, c. 1852: 82–83). This cannot be called a “request.” MacEoin (1982: 116) refers to Mullā Ḥusayn’s statement about not departing from Māzandarān “until the cause of God is manifested,” but leaves out his remark that he had once been deceived by the Sardār in Bārfurūsh, and that he would not be deceived again (Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā,

c. 1852: 89; cf. 92 [London text]). All this makes it clear that Mullā Ḥusayn believed the prince's "request" was a trick, and that if the Bābīs agreed and left the fort, they would be killed.

Some of the sources mention a letter allegedly written by Quddūs to the prince. Of these, the *Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* (Browne, 1910) is the earliest source to refer to the contents of this letter. According to the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf*, Quddūs, in answer to the prince-governor's enquiry about the Bābīs' objectives, said that their cause was religious and not worldly (p. 163). The letter said further: "Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh is a false king and his helpers shall be punished in the fires of God; we are the true sovereign, who seek for the good-pleasure of God" (p. 166, cited in MacEoin 1982: 116). The tone of this passage in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* agrees, to some extent, with the attitude of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī depicted above. However, it is unlikely that the author(s) of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* would have had first-hand information about the contents of such a letter. The tone of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* reflects the antagonism that many Bābīs had developed toward the authorities by the time it was written, i.e., following the execution of the Bāb and the death of a large number of Bābīs in clashes with government forces. In the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf*, no effort is made to hide animosity toward the Qājārs (see Browne 1893a: xvii). However, it does not seem justified to conclude on this basis that the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī aimed at subverting the shāh. Antipathy developed as a result of persecutions is not the same as a religious position requiring the overthrow of an illegitimate state. Considering the attitude expressed in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* toward the ruling class, it is significant that the text consistently maintains that the sovereignty referred to by Quddūs was not a material one. It is stated, for instance, that 'Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārījānī had heard Quddūs say, "we are the rightful sovereign, and the world is under our signet-ring, and all the kings in the East and the West will become humble before us" (Browne 1910: 162). 'Abbās Qulī Khān had believed that this "sovereignty" (*salṭana*) was like "the sovereignty of the people of oppression, meaning that dominion must be obtained through oppression and cruelty, and the blow of the sword, and covetousness for worldly possession, and all sorts of deception" (p. 163). It is added that when 'Abbās Qulī Khān realized that this was not the case, he turned toward Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh to achieve his ends. The text goes on to explain that Quddūs had intended a spiritual sovereignty, and that the humility of the kings referred to would

appear with the passage of time (p. 163). It should be pointed out that such a revision of the idea of the sovereignty of the Mahdī was not necessarily a result of the severe persecutions that had taken place. As mentioned earlier, even before the beginning of the Māzandarān conflict, the Bāb and the Bābī leaders had engaged in revising common views regarding the Mahdī's appearance, distancing themselves from the idea of worldly sovereignty.

Evidence about the way the Bābī participants at Shaykh Ṭabarsī understood their situation and actions, the circumstances which forced them to stay in Māzandarān and fight, the fact that other Bābīs did not use the opportunity that the death of the shāh offered to organize rebellions in other parts of the country, as well as the insufficient armaments and the composition of Mullā Ḥusayn's party all support the view that they were not intent on insurrection, and that there was no such plan of a general Bābī insurrection. Mullā Ḥusayn and his companions knew that they were fighting a war they could not win. In their view, it was a defensive holy war that would be a testimony to the truth and power of the Bābī cause.

### *Conclusion*

The Māzandarān conflict was seen by contemporaries as the result of a Bābī uprising. When the Bābīs later became involved in warfare with the local authorities in other places, their actions were also interpreted as insurrectionary. This view was confirmed in the mind of the authorities and the public by the plot to assassinate Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh and the abortive attempt at rebellion in Māzandarān in 1852. Though scholars have differed on whether to emphasize socio-economic or religious aspects of the Bābī-state conflicts, they, too, often interpret them as uprisings. A close analysis of the background, the immediate circumstances, and the course of events of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī clash, as well as the Bābī participants' understanding of their actions do not substantiate the view that the conflict was the result of an attempted insurrection. Rather, the analysis points to a combination of other factors: the build-up of tensions between the Bābīs and the surrounding Muslim community, and a critical concurrence of events immediately before the conflict.

The Bābīs' struggles cannot be interpreted as a simple reaction to factors outside their control. They were active supporters of doctrines

and ideas that constituted a challenge to the establishment. The Bāb advanced claims to charismatic religious authority, the most radical ones being the claims to Mahdihood and prophethood. Likewise, the Bābīs publicly proclaimed their cause in the mosques and elsewhere. In doing so, they provoked attacks from the clerical establishment and the public. As it happened, these confrontations led to the intervention of the state. The conflict of Shaykh Ṭabarsī began only a few months after the Bāb publicly claimed to be the Hidden *Imām*. The advancement of this claim was followed by the conference at Badasht, and from there, news spread that the Bābīs had broken the *sharīʿa*. The Bābīs' determination to announce the coming of the Mahdī, the clergy's resolve to eradicate this heresy, and the escalating climate of hostility toward the Bābīs were the background causes of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict.

Against this background, certain crucial events coincided to precipitate the conflict. Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrūʿī and his fellow Bābīs were on a march through Māzandarān in pursuance of their plan to rescue the Bāb from prison, when the country was thrown into chaos by the death of Muḥammad Shāh. Under these circumstances, the Bābīs were regarded as insurrectionists, though they were hardly outfitted for battle. The fact that their fellow Bābīs did not attempt to create uprisings when they had the opportunity indicates that there was no Bābī plan of insurrection at the time. Soon the new premier and the young shāh, motivated by political considerations, and for the latter, also to a great extent by religious bigotry, gave orders for the extirpation of the Bābīs. The Bābīs, on their part, were determined to defend themselves in what they saw as a holy war and a testimony to the truth of their cause.

#### *A Note on Sources*

There are a good number of primary sources on the conflict at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. Some secondary sources also include extensive primary source material about this episode. Most of the sources are in Persian. These include Bābī, Bahāʾī, and Muslim accounts. Beside these, there are a number of Western sources, the most important of which are the reports and dispatches of the representatives of the Russian and British governments in Īrān. The primary sources are discussed below.

## I. *Bābī and Bahā'ī Accounts*

The Bābī and Bahā'ī sources include three eyewitness accounts as well as another narrative of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict. Besides these four histories, the brother of one of the eyewitnesses mentioned above left an account that contains some interesting information about the episode. Moreover, general histories of the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions contain sections on the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. A number of other sources include some primary source material about the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict.

### A. *Eyewitness Accounts*

The eyewitness accounts as a whole are by far the most important source for the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict. These accounts, as far as it can be established from their texts, were written independently of each other. This, as well as the fact that the authors belonged to different social classes, each with his particular outlook and experience, enhances the value of these accounts. By comparing these accounts with each other, as well as with other sources, it is possible to draw conclusions about the credibility of their narratives of the events.

1. Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī's untitled history of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode: Among the Bābī and Bahā'ī eyewitness accounts of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā's chronicle is the earliest and the most extensive. The name of the author does not appear in the narrative, though the text suggests that the author was a native of Shīrāz. The identity of the author is established in the account by Mahjūr-i Zawāra'ī (see below). This indicates that some early Bābīs and Bahā'īs were aware of the identity of the author of this work.

Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī was a member of the Qājār ruling tribe. He joined the group of the Bābīs at Dih-i Mullā, a village close to the border of Māzandarān, on 12 Ramaḍān 1264 (August 1848). His chronicle, therefore, does not cover the early stages of the Bābīs' march through Khurāsān. Furthermore, the narrative is incomplete, and, apart from a short reference to the Bābīs' desperate conditions when they ran out of provisions, does not follow the events beyond early April 1849. The Bābīs evacuated the fort on 9 May 1849. The author was executed in Tehran in August 1852, in the aftermath of

the attempt on the life of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s chronicle was, therefore, written within three years and three months of the conclusion of the Ṭabarsī episode. According to Malik-Khusrawī (1973–74: 274), Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā wrote his account in Tehran.

An uncatalogued photocopy of Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s account, the original of which was transcribed by Muḥammad ‘Alī-yi Malik-Khusrawī for his own use, is held in the Afnān Library in London. The text is dated 1 Farwardīn 1346 Sh./21 March 1967. Malik-Khusrawī’s copy is transcribed from a manuscript in the hand of a Bahā’ī, Muḥammad Bāqir-i Ṭīhrānī, and dated 1319/1901–02. Muḥammad Bāqir-i Ṭīhrānī writes that he has transcribed his copy from an autograph manuscript obtained in Bārfurūsh. Another manuscript copy of Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s account is available at the Cambridge University Library, Browne Manuscripts, Or. F. 28, item 3. This copy was transcribed for Browne by the Azalī scribe Mīrzā Muṣṭafā (Mullā Ismā‘īl-i Ṣabbāgh-i Sidihī) in 1912. There are some differences between the Cambridge and the London texts. The Cambridge text is available on the World Wide Web (2001). Unless otherwise stated, page references to Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā’s account are based on this manuscript.

2. Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī’s narrative of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode: Some personal information about the author can be gathered from the narrative. Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī’s father was a *sayyid*, who enjoyed some influence in the *wilāyat* (region) of Simnān (n.d.: 25). He was the custodian of the local Shī‘ī shrine of Imāmzāda Qāsim (p. 48). Mīr Abū Ṭālib was in Māzandarān when he heard that the Bābīs had come to the shrine of Shaykh Ṭabarsī. He was not a Bābī before the Māzandarān conflict, nor had he associated with them. However, he sympathized with the Bābīs, because his father, on reading some of the writings of the Bāb in Karbalā’ shortly before his death, had remarked that the Bāb’s writings were divinely inspired, and that everyone who was capable should arise and assist his cause (p. 5). For this reason, when Mīr Abū Ṭālib heard of three Bābīs who wanted to go to Shaykh Ṭabarsī, he agreed to take them there. Associating with the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī for a short time and meeting Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū’ī, one of the two main Bābī leaders there, he converted, and then travelled back to the villages of Sangsar and Shahmīrzād to inform the inhabitants of the Bābīs’ cause. Subsequently, a number of Mīr Abū Ṭālib’s relatives, including two of his three brothers, went to Shaykh Ṭabarsī (p. 18). Mīr

Abū Ṭālib's eldest brother, Āqā Sayyid Aḥmad, who had become the custodian of the shrine of Imāmzāda Qāsim after the passing of his father, was asked by the people in Sangsar and Shāhmīrzād to investigate the matter and report back to them. Shortly after the arrival of Mīr Abū Ṭālib's relatives, the chiefs of Māzandarān attacked the fort.

Mīr Abū Ṭālib's narrative begins with an account of the meeting between Sa'īd al-'Ulamā' and Khusraw-i Qādī-Kalā'ī, and ends with the description of the massacre of the Bābīs following their evacuation of the fort. It does not discuss the events during the Bābīs' march to Māzandarān. The narrative also includes some material not related to the episode of Shaykh Ṭabarsī.

Internal evidence indicates that Mīr Abū Ṭālib wrote his narrative some time after 1866. The author's Bahā'ī convictions, which are clearly expressed in the account, point to this. In early 1866 Bahā' Allāh instructed some of his followers to visit the Bābī communities in Īrān and announce Bahā' Allāh's claim to be the messianic figure of the Bābī religion. Before this, the overwhelming majority of the Bābīs in Īrān were not aware of Bahā' Allāh's claim. Nabīl states in his narrative, which he began writing in August 1888 (see below), that he has made use of an account by the same Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī. This indicates that Mīr Abū Ṭālib's account was written prior to August 1888. Mīr Abū Ṭālib died in around 1310/1892–93.

More than one copy of Mīr Abū Ṭālib's history exists. Probably, the author himself transcribed his narrative more than once, and the differences between the texts are the result of this. An uncatalogued photocopy of an autograph manuscript of Mīr Abū Ṭālib's account is held in the Afnān Library in London. This is the text cited in this paper.

3. Ḥājī Naṣīr-i Qazwīnī's account of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode: Ḥājī Naṣīr's eyewitness account, published in *Tārīkh-i Samandar wa mulḥaqqāt* (131 B.E./1974–75), is the only part of a more extensive history that has survived. This history was not solely about the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. The narrative of this episode, the beginning of which is missing, starts abruptly with the description of Khusraw's treachery and his subsequent assassination, and follows the events to the conclusion of the Ṭabarsī upheaval. Ḥājī Naṣīr's narrative is much shorter than the other two eyewitness accounts described above.



Ḥājjī Naṣīr died in prison in 1300 (beginning in November 1882). The exact date of the composition of his narrative is not known. However, Samandar's (1974–75: 216) statement that Ḥājjī Naṣīr continued his narrative to include the events of the later days of his life, suggests that it was written not long before the author's death.

### B. *Other Histories of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī Conflict*

1. *Waqā'ī-i mīmīyya* by Sayyid Muḥammad Ḥusayn-i Zawāra'ī Mahjūr: Mahjūr wrote this narrative at the request of some of the believers, including the mother and sister of Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū'ī. It is partly based on the oral accounts of several Bābī survivors of the episode. Of these, the names of the following four appear in all three texts of this history consulted for this paper: Ustād Ja'far-i Bannā-yi Iṣfahānī, Ḥājjī 'Abd al-Majīd-i Nīshābūrī, Mīrzā Muḥammad Kāẓim, and Ḥājjī Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurāsānī. Mullā Muḥammad-i Maḥallātī and Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī-yi Ardistānī are mentioned as informants in two of the manuscripts, and Muḥammad Ḥasan-i Bushrū'ī in only one. It is, moreover, clear that Mahjūr had also had access to Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī's anonymous account. He quotes it a few times, and indicates that he knows the author's identity, though he does not always mention his source. However, the other two eye-witnesses who left written accounts, i.e. Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī and Ḥājjī Naṣīr-i Qazwīnī, are not mentioned among Mahjūr's informants. Of the informants mentioned above, only Ustād Ja'far-i Bannā-yi Iṣfahānī and Ḥājjī 'Abd al-Majīd-i Nīshābūrī are quoted frequently. Moreover, Mahjūr's narrative clearly shows that he had not actually met Ḥājjī Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurāsānī, and uses information ascribed to him.

Evidence suggests that Mahjūr wrote his account in 1278 (beginning in July 1861). A manuscript copy of Mahjūr's account, dated 1 Jumādā II 1325/12 July 1907, a photocopy of which is in my possession, states that it was completed in 1278. This same date also appears in the manuscript of the *Waqā'ī-i mīmīyya* kept at the Cambridge University Library (see below). Browne (1918: 238) and MacEoin (1992: 161) both suggest that Mahjūr composed his account in 1265/1848–49, that is, the same year as the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict ended. They base this view on a phrase that occurs at the end of the Cambridge manuscript. This cannot be the case. Some of the account's inaccuracies, for instance the date of the evacuation of the fort, which is given as the 11th of Naw-Rūz, more than

a month earlier than the actual date, contradict the dating of the narrative to 1265 (1861–62: 76, 83). A reference to the day when the *man yuzhīruhu ʿllāh*, the messianic figure of the *Bayān*, was to appear (p. 2) also suggests that the narrative was written after the execution of the Bāb, which took place in 1850.

Mahjūr's narrative covers the entire episode, from the events in Mashhad prior to the march to Māzandarān, to the final massacre of the Bābīs, and the killing of Quddūs in Bārfūrūsh (May 1849). It is more comprehensive than Luṭf ʿAlī Mīrzā's narrative with respect to the time span. However, there are relatively many inaccuracies in Mahjūr's narrative. The presumed early dating of this manuscript has led some scholars to overestimate the reliability of this source, taking some inaccurate information in the text at face value.

The manuscript copy of Mahjūr's account at the Cambridge University Library, Browne Manuscripts, Or. F. 28, item 1, was transcribed for Browne by Mīrzā Muṣṭafā in 1912. Another copy of this history, an uncatalogued photocopy of a manuscript in the hand of Malik-Khusrawī, dated 1342 (1343?)/1963–64?, is held in the Afnān Library in London. There are discrepancies between these two texts. For example, the latter contains passages that are missing in the former, and seem to be later additions. There are fewer differences between the manuscript of Mahjūr's history dated 1 Jumādā II 1325/12 July 1907 and the one at the Cambridge University Library. However, the latter contains more transcription errors. The Cambridge manuscript has been published online (2001). This is the manuscript cited, unless otherwise stated.

2. Memoirs of Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā Shāhmīrzādī: Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā was the youngest brother of Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī, the author of one of the eyewitness accounts discussed above. He was about nineteen years old at the time of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, in which he did not participate. However, he includes some information about the event in his notes, mostly a description of the hardships his family faced in Shāhmīrzādī after the conclusion of the Māzandarān upheaval. The text reflects the Bahā'ī convictions of the author. It seems to have been written, at least in part, in the 1890s. Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā died in around 1317/1899–1900. An uncatalogued photocopy of his autobiography history is held in the Afnān Library in London.

C. *General Histories of the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*

1. The *Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kāf*. This book, published by E.G. Browne in 1910, is an edition of a manuscript ascribed to Ḥājji Mīrzā Jānī, a merchant from Kāshān and an early Bābī convert, who perished in the 1852 executions in Tehran. It is known that Ḥājji Mīrzā Jānī wrote an account of the history of the Bābī religion. His work is one of the earliest attempts, if not the very first, at writing a general history of the movement. The text of the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* is based on, or incorporates, Mīrzā Jānī's account, but, as internal evidence indicates, it is not entirely his work. The text in its present form seems to be the result of consecutive redactions, the latest of which was probably done in the 1860s (Cole 1998). It consists of two parts, a lengthy prologue in the form of a theological treatise, and a historical narrative. The value of the *Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* lies in its being an early Bābī general history. It is the earliest text of its kind so far published.

2. The *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* by Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī: An English translation of this work was published by E.G. Browne in 1893 under the title *The Tārīkh-i Jadīd or New History of Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad the Bāb*. There are many different versions of the *Tārīkh-i Jadīd*. Browne has provided a parallel edited translation of two recensions of the text. One of these two, the Cambridge manuscript F. 55, is the *Tārīkh-i Badī -i Bayānī*, a revised version of Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī's work prepared by Āqā Muḥammad-i Qā'inī. The location of the original autograph manuscript of the *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* was for a time unknown, until it was discovered in mid-1980s in the Cama Oriental Institute Library in Bombay. It remains unpublished. Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī was a relative of Riḍā Khān, one of the Bābīs at Shaykh Ṭabarsī killed in the final massacre. According to one source, Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī began writing his book in about 1296 (beginning in December 1878). He died in 1299 (beginning in November 1881). Ḥājji Mīrzā Jānī's account, in at least two different recensions, was Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī's chief source (see MacEoin 1992: 153–58). There are significant differences between the published text of the *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* and the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf*. The *Tārīkh-i Jadīd* is the second earliest general history of the Bābī movement that has been published. With regard to the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict, it adds almost no new information to what is already available in the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf*. (For a comparison of the contents of the *Nuqtatu'l-*

*Kāf* and the *Tārīkh-i-Ĵadīd* with regard to the Shaykh Ṭabarsī clash, see Browne 1893a: 360–68).

3. Nabīl-i Zarandī's narrative: An edited English translation of the first part of this narrative was published in 1932 under the title *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabīl's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation*. The author, Yār-Muḥammad-i Zarandī Nabīl, was born on 18 Ṣafar 1247 (July 1831) (p. 434). He was about seventeen years old when he became a Bābī (c. April 1849) (pp. 433–34, 437–38). Later he became one of the active followers of Bahā' Allāh, travelling extensively in Īrān, and also visiting 'Irāq, Turkey, Syria, and Egypt. From the time of his conversion in 1849 he was in contact with prominent Bābīs and, later, Bahā'īs. He began writing his narrative on 7 August 1888 (Zabihi-Moghaddam 1998: 153), i.e. more than forty years after the inception of the Bābī movement. Nabīl completed his manuscript on 10 November 1890 (Rafati 1996: 76). In the course of his narrative, Nabīl names his informants (see MacEoin 1992: 220–21). Five of these, all early Bābī converts, are mentioned in the introduction as his chief sources (Nabīl 1932:lxiii).

Nabīl's narrative covers the episode of Shaykh Ṭabarsī more extensively than the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* and the *Tārīkh-i-Ĵadīd* do. Nabīl identifies his sources, the most important of which is an eyewitness account by Mīr (or Sayyid) Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī (see above). He writes that he was "to a very great extent" inspired by Mīr Abū Ṭālib's written account (p. 580). Nabīl also had access to a "brief survey" prepared by Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī-yi Ardīstānī, another survivor of the conflict (p. 580). He also met and obtained information from other survivors of the episode, of whom the following three are named: Mullā Muḥammad Ṣādiq-i Muqaddas-i Khurāsānī, Mullā Mīrzā Muḥammad-i Furūghī, and Ḥājjī 'Abd al-Majīd-i Nīshābūrī (p. 580). Ḥājjī 'Abd al-Majīd-i Nīshābūrī was also one of Mahjūr's informants.

Nabīl's narrative is far more comprehensive and detailed than both the *Nuqtatu'l-Kāf* and the *Tārīkh-i-Ĵadīd*. It begins with the rise of the Shaykhī school of Shī'ī Islām, and follows the events of the Bābī and Bahā'ī movements up to the time of the completion of the text. The part of his narrative that deals with the Shaykhī and Bābī movements has been edited and translated by Shoghi Effendi. This edition also includes extensive footnotes, which comprise about a third of the published text.

Nabīl's narrative is of a relatively late date, and contains many

inaccuracies, as indicated by some internal discrepancies, and new evidence that has come to light. Moreover, he tends to give an idealized picture of the Bābīs. In spite of these problems, Nabīl's narrative remains an indispensable source for the history of the Bābī movement.

#### D. *Other Bahā'ī Sources*

A number of other sources deserve comment. Volume three of the *Kūtāb-i zuhūr al-ḥaqq* (Tehran, 1944?) by Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī contains a wide range of primary source material on the Bābī movement that is not published elsewhere. It also contains short biographies of the participants at Shaykh Ṭabarsī. Volume two of this same book, written in about 1932 and published online (2000), contains an account of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī seems to have based his account primarily on the narrative by Nabīl-i Zarandī, and, to a lesser degree, on the accounts by Mahjūr-i Zawāra'ī, Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī, and Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā-yi Shāhmīrzādī. The author apparently did not have access to Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī's account.

Samandar-i Qazwīnī's historical account published in the *Tārīkh-i Samandar wa mulḥaqqāt* (Tehran, 131 B.E./1974–75) contains references to, and short biographies of, a few of the participants in the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. His account consists of several distinct parts, written over several years. The second part consists mostly of the author's often very short memoirs and impressions of about seventy early Bābīs and Bahā'īs, including some of the survivors of the Ṭabarsī episode, and was written in about 1330/1911–12. Born in 1844, the son of an early Bābī convert, Samandar knew many of the early Bābīs and Bahā'īs.

Muḥammad 'Alī Malik-Khusrawī has devoted the first two volumes of his *Tārīkh-i shuhadā-yi amr* (in three volumes, Tehran, 130 B.E./1973–74) to the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. Volume one deals with the narrative of the event, and volume two contains biographies of the Bābī participants. Malik-Khusrawī's work is primarily based on the Bābī and Bahā'ī accounts referred to above, with the exception of the narrative by Nabīl-i Zarandī. He has also made use of various, unpublished local Bahā'ī histories. The author did not have access to Western accounts, or the narrative by Shaykh al-'Ajām (see below).

*A Discussion of the Reliability of the Bābī and Bahā'ī Sources*

The Bābīs and early Bahā'īs attached great significance to the events associated with the rise of their religions. In their view, these events fulfilled age-old prophecies of universal and lasting consequence. As such, they were too precious to be lost. This applies to both the early Bābī and the later Bahā'ī historical accounts, whether written by eyewitnesses or others. However, there are significant differences between the Bābī and Bahā'ī accounts, and between the eyewitness accounts and other primary sources. The Bahā'īs who in later times wrote the history of the early days of the Bābī movement had undergone a great change in their outlook and ideals. This change is reflected in their interpretation of the history of the Bābī religion. However, more significant in this regard are the aims and motives of the authors. In this respect, the existing accounts, whether written by eyewitnesses or not, can be divided into two categories: first, those accounts that were written with the sole purpose of recording the events for the benefit of the believers, like the eyewitness accounts of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī clash; and second, those narratives that were obviously not written for the believers only, but also had a polemical or apologetic objective, like the *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd*.

When the eyewitnesses wrote down their recollections, some, like Ḥājji Naṣīr, at an advanced age it was primarily to record the significant events of the history of their religion for future generations of their co-religionists. They did not write their accounts with a view to circulating them outside the community. Thus, the accounts were not part of an ongoing polemic, and the authors were not required to defend a point of view that was disputed by the surrounding Muslim community. Nor would it have been as important to be cautious in recording the events, so as to avoid creating trouble for the believers in their dealings with non-believers. Thus, the eyewitness accounts are not polemical or apologetic works. The same applies to many of the other primary sources. On the other hand, histories like the *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd* and similar works, as indicated by internal evidence, were written for an audience of both believers and non-believers. Besides the historical narratives, they included a presentation of the teachings of the new religion. The *Tārīkh-i-Jadīd* is a history with an apologetic orientation, arguing for the validity of the new religion. What applies to all these early historical narratives, regardless of their intended audience, is that they were written in a "precritical"

environment, with standards very different from those of modern Western historical research (see Lambden 1986).

## II. *Muslim Accounts*

There are a number of Muslim sources that discuss the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode. Of these, the more important ones are the two main chronicles of the period, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī-yi Sipīhr's *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, and Riḍā Qulī Khān-i Hidāyat's *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī*, as well as a brief account by a certain Shaykh al-ʿAjam, who was apparently in Bārfurūsh at the time of the event.

### A. *Official Chronicles of the Qājār Period*

1. *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*: The author, Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī, was entitled Lisān al-Mulk ("The Tongue of the Kingdom"), but was better known by his sobriquet Sipīhr. *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh* is a general history, of which the last three volumes are devoted to the Qājār dynasty. In the last volume, the history continues to the year 1274/1857–58.

Browne (1891: 187–88) admired the author for his candour, because, as he put it,

... if, on the one hand, he [Sipīhr] brings against the Bābīs many unfounded and absurd accusations, on the other hand he portrays with a fidelity scarcely surpassed by the witty and sarcastic Comte de Gobineau the cowardice, incapacity, and treachery of Mahdī-Qulī Mīrzā, the courage of Mullā Huseyn of Bushraweyh, the constancy of Āqā Muḥammad ʿAlī of Tabrīz, and the heroism of the Bābī women of Zanjān.

This account of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, the most detailed of the official histories, contains many inaccuracies, including erroneous dates for some major events.

2. *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī*: The author, Riḍā Qulī Khān, was entitled Amīr al-Shuʿarāʾ. Hidāyat was his sobriquet. He wrote his history on Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's instruction. *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī* consists of three volumes. References to the Bābī movement are found in the last volume. It was first published in 1274/1857–58. Hidāyat's narrative of the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode agrees in substance with the one in *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, but is shorter. The author leaves out some episodes that would put the prince-governor Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā or the royal troops in a bad light (see, for instance, Hidāyat 1960–61: 445; cf. Sipīhr 1958–59: 71).

There are other histories from this period, official and otherwise, that refer to the Bābī movement. Of these, *Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i nāṣirī* and *Mutanabbīʾin* can be mentioned here. *Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i nāṣirī* was written by Mīrzā Muḥammad Jaʿfar Khān-i Khurmūjī on the instruction of Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh. It was published in 1284/1867–68. *Mutanabbīʾin* is by prince ʿAlī Qulī Mīrzā Iʿtīdād al-Saṭṭana, and was written in 1295/1878. The portion of this work which deals with the Bābīs was edited by ʿA. Nawāʾī and published in 1333 Sh./1954–55. It contains some first-hand information about the Bābīs, which enhances its value. This information is not related to the Māzandarān episode. With regard to the Shaykh Ṭabarsī episode, both *Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i nāṣirī* and *Mutanabbīʾin* are based on *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*. *Mutanabbīʾin* summarizes the contents of *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, at times even using some of the same phrases. Muḥammad Jaʿfar Khān-i Khurmūjī in his *Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i nāṣirī* provides an even more condensed version of the contents of *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh*, from which it varies only in a few minor details.

The official histories of the period could not provide an impartial narrative of the events, as the authors were obliged to appease the biases of the monarch, on whose instruction they wrote their accounts. To this it must be added that the authors wrote in an atmosphere steeped with suspicion, prejudice, and hatred toward the Bābīs, and later the Bahāʾīs. It would not be easy, even for the fair-minded, to rise above these prejudices, and attempt to look at the events objectively. *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī*, in particular, reveals its author's bigotry.

#### B. *Shaykh al-ʿAjām's Account*

The German orientalist, Bernard Dorn, obtained this short account during a trip to Māzandarān in 1860. No information is available about the author. Dorn writes about this account:

During my stay in 1860 in Māzandarān, and specifically in Bārfurūsh . . . I took the opportunity to make a closer study of them [the Bābīs] and their Qurʾān . . . The information given me was not so satisfying as might have been expected from the eyewitnesses that I questioned . . . I also collected a history of the Bābīs in Bārfurūsh in both the Māzandarānī and Persian dialects. Attempts have been made to deny all merit to this history except that of its being composed in the Māzandarānī dialect. But even those who know how one-sided such information and reports sometimes are, will scarcely be able to reject everything related by eyewitnesses, some of whom were even active in the efforts to exterminate the Bābīs (Momen 1981: 15–16).



The account in the Māzandarānī dialect was published in 1866 in St. Petersburg. Its text indicates that the author was a native of the province, and probably a resident of Bārfurūsh. The date of the composition is not known, but the many inaccuracies of the account as well as its short length may suggest that it was written many years after the Shaykh Ṭabarsī event. Indeed it is not unlikely that the account was composed during Dorn's stay in Bārfurūsh (29 October–27 November 1860), as Dorn apparently inquired about the Bābīs from various people there. The author is obviously biased against the Bābīs.

### III. *Western Accounts*

1. *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts* (Oxford, 1981): Diplomatic reports and accounts by Western travellers and resident missionaries from the period constitute another category of primary sources. This book, edited by Moojan Momen, contains by far the most comprehensive collection of accounts of this sort. Momen has, moreover, made extensive use of other published and unpublished primary and secondary sources in Persian as well as other languages.

2. "Excerpts from Dispatches written during 1848–1852 by Prince Dolgorukov, Russian Minister to Persia," *World Order*, Vol. I, No. I (Wilmette, 1966), pp. 17–24. This source provides a number of reports by the Russian Minister in Tehran, and one by the consul in Astarābād. A number of these reports are reproduced in Momen's book referred to above.

Though far from being free from inaccuracies, these accounts put the events into a new perspective, and occasionally provide information not available in other sources. The reports by foreign diplomats are particularly valuable because of the insights they give into the views and policies of the authorities, and the approximate chronology of the events that they provide. With regard to the Shaykh Ṭabarsī conflict, while the Bābī and Bahā'ī sources and the Qājār chronicles seldom give the dates of the events of the closing stages of the siege, approximate dates for these events can be inferred from the diplomatic reports of the Russian Minister.

There are other sources that deal with, or contain information about, the Shaykh Ṭabarsī Bābī-state clash. One of the most important of these sources is Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh's *farmān* (edict) to prince

Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā, a facsimile of which is published in vol. 5 of *The Bahā'ī World* (1936: 58). Ruhū'llah Mehrabkhani (1987: 249–51) gives an English translation of this document in his book, *Mullā Ḥusayn: Disciple at Dawn*. There is also a letter written by General Barthélémy Semino (1997: 191–94), a French citizen in the service of the Persian government at the time, which provides some new information about the Māzandarān episode.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī, Mīr *see* Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī.  
 Adamiyat, F. 1976–77. *Amīr Kabīr wa Īrān*. Tehran, Khwārazmī.  
 Afnān, A. 2000. *Ahd-i A'lā: Zīndigānāy-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb/The Bābī Dispensation: The Life of the Bāb*. Oxford, Oneworld.  
 Afshār, Ī. ed. 1989. *Čihil sāl tārikh-i Īrān dar dawra-yi pādishāhī-yi Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh*. vol. 2. Tehran, Asāṭīr.  
 Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā Shāhmīrzādī. n.d. Untitled history. London, Afnān Library, uncatalogued photocopy of autograph manuscript.  
 Algar, H. 1969. *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906: The Role of the Ulama in the Qajar Period*. Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press.  
 Amanat, A. 1989. *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*. Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press.  
 Amir-Moezzi, M.A. 1998. “Eschatology iii. In Imami Shi'ism.” In: E. Yarshater, ed. *Encyclopædia Iranica*. vol. 8 London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul, pp. 575–81.  
 Anon. 12 September 1848. “Translation: Extract of a letter from a person sent to M. [Māzandarān] by Colonel F. [Farrant],” “Enclosed Farrant's No. 85 of 1848.” London, Public Record Office, FO 60/138.  
 Āwāra, 'A. 1923. *Al-Kawākib al-durriyya*. al-Sa'ada. vol. 1. Cairo.  
 Bāb, The. 1978. *Selections from the Writings of the Bāb*. Haifa, Bahā'ī World Centre.  
 ———. n.d. *Bayān-i fārsī*. n.p.  
 ———. n.d. *Dalā'il-i sab'a*. n.p.  
 Bahā'ī World, The. 1936. vol. 5. New York, Bahā'ī Publishing Committee.  
 Bāmdād, M. 1968–69. *Sharḥ-i ḥāl-i riḡāl-i Īrān dar qarn-i 12 wa 13 wa 14 hijrā*. vol. 2. Tehran, Zuwwār.  
 Bode, G. 1993. “Siege.” In: T.N. Dupuy, editor-in-chief. *International Military and Defense Encyclopedia*. vol. 5. Washington D.C., New York, pp. 2417–22.  
 Browne, E.G. ed. and trans. 1891. *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bāb*. vol. 2. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.  
 ———. ed. and trans. 1893a. *The Tārikh-i Jadīd or New History of Mīrzā 'Alī Muḥammad the Bāb*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.  
 ———. 1893b. *A Year Amongst the Persians*. London, A. and C. Black.  
 ———. ed. 1910. *Kitāb-i Nuqtatū'l-Kāf*. Leyden and London, E.J. Brill, Luzac & Co.  
 ———. 1918. *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.  
 Cole, J.R.I. 1998. “*Nuqtat al-Kāf* and the Babi Chronicle Traditions.” *Research Notes in Shaykhī, Babi and Baha'i Studies*, 2 (6). Online. East Lansing, Michigan, H-Bahāi. Available from: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/babi-hist.htm>. [Accessed 3 March 2001].  
 “Excerpts from Dispatches written during 1848–1852 by Prince Dolgorukov, Russian Minister to Persia.” 1966. *World Order*, 1 (1), pp. 17–24.

- Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī, A. c. 1932. *Kitāb-i zuhūr al-ḥaqq*, vol. 2. Afnān Library. uncatalogued photocopy of manuscript. London. Published online. 2000. H-Bahai. East Lansing, Michigan. Available from: <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol2/tzh2>>. [Accessed 3 March 2001].
- . 1944?. *Kitāb-i zuhūr al-ḥaqq*. vol. 3. Tehran, Āzurdigān.
- Greussing, K. 1984. "The Bābī movement in Iran 1844–52: from merchant protest to peasant revolution." In: J.M. Bak, G. Benecke. eds. *Religion and Rural Revolt*. Manchester, Manchester University Press. pp. 256–69.
- Ḥājīr Naṣīr-i Qazwīnī. 1974–75. "Tārīkh-i janāb-i Ḥājīr Naṣīr-i shahīd." In: 'A. 'Alā'ī. ed. *Tārīkh-i Samandar wa mulḥaqqāt*. Mu'assasa-yi millī-yi maṭbū'āt-i amrī. Tehran. pp. 500–20.
- Hidāyat, Riḍā Qulī Khān. 1960–61. *Rawḍat al-ṣafā-yi nāṣirī*. vol. 10. Tehran, Markazī, Khayyām, Pīrūz.
- Lambden, S. 1986. "An Episode in the Childhood of the Bāb." In: P. Smith. ed. *In Iran: Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*. vol. 3. Los Angeles, Kalimāt Press. pp. 1–31.
- Luṭf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī. c. 1852. Untitled history. Cambridge University Library. Browne Manuscripts, Or. F. 28, item 3. Cambridge. East Lansing, Michigan. Published online. 2001. H-Bahai. Available from: <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol5/lutfali>>. [Accessed 3 March 2001].
- Afnān Library. Uncatalogued photocopy of a manuscript. London.
- MacEoin, D. 1982. "The Bābī Concept of Holy War." *Religion* (12). pp. 93–129.
- . 1983. "From Babism to Baha'ism: Problems of Militancy, Quietism, and Conflation in the Construction of a Religion." *Religion* (13). pp. 219–55.
- . 1986. "Bahā'ī Fundamentalism and the Academic Study of the Bābī Movement." *Religion* (16). pp. 57–84.
- . 1989. "Babism." In: E. Yarshater. ed., *Encyclopædia Iranica*. vol. 3. London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul. pp. 309–17.
- . 1992. *The Sources for Early Bābī Doctrine and History. A Survey*. Leiden, E.J. Brill.
- Mahjūr-i Zawāra'ī, Muḥammad Ḥusayn. 1861–62. *Waqā'ī-i mīmīyya*. Cambridge University Library. Browne Manuscripts, Or. F. 28, item 1. Cambridge. East Lansing, Michigan. Published online. 2001. H-Bahai. Available from: <<http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol5/mimiyih>>. [Accessed 3 March 2001].
- Afnān Library. Uncatalogued photocopy of a manuscript. London.
- Manuscript dated 1 Jumādā II 1327/12 July 1907, a photocopy of which is in possession of present author.
- Malik-Khusrawī, M.A. 1973–74. *Tārīkh-i shuhadā-yi amr*. vol. 3. Tehran, Mu'assasa-yi millī-yi maṭbū'āt-i amrī.
- Mehrabkhani, R. 1987. *Mullā Ḥusayn: Disciple at Dawn*. Los Angeles, Kalimāt Press.
- Minorsky, V. 1946. "M.S. Ivanov: *The Bābī Risings in Iran in 1844–1852*, Trudi of the Oriental Institute of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, vol. 30, Moscow 1939." *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (11). pp. 878–80.
- Mīr Abū Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī. n.d. Untitled history. London, Afnān Library. uncatalogued photocopy of autograph manuscript.
- Molavinegad, S. September 2000. personal communication.
- Momen, M. 1981. *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- . 1982. "The Trial of Mullā 'Alī Baṣṭāmī: a Combined Sunnī-Shī'ī Fatwā against the Bāb." *Iran* (20). pp. 113–43.
- . 1983. "The Social Basis of the Bābī Upheavals in Iran (1848–53): A Preliminary Analysis." *International Journal of Middle East Studies* (15). pp. 157–83.

- Muḥammad Riḍā Shāhmīrzādī, Āqā Sayyid *see* Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā Shāhmīrzādī.
- Munīrih Khānum. 1986. *Munīrih Khānum: Memoirs and Letters*. S.A. Smith. trans. Los Angeles, Kalimāt Press.
- Nabīl-i Zarandī. 1932. *The Dawn-Breakers: Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation*. Shoghi Effendi. trans. and ed. Wilmette, Illinois, Bahā'ī Publishing Committee.
- Naṣīr-i Qazwīnī, Hājī *see* Hājī Naṣīr-i Qazwīnī.
- Rafati, V. 1996. "Tārīkh-i Nabīl-i Zarandī." *Khūshahā'ī az kharman-i adab wa hunar* (7). Wienacht, Society for Persian Arts and Letters. pp. 76–85.
- Samandar-i Qazwīnī, Shaykh Kāzīm. 1974–75. "Tārīkh-i janāb-i Samandar." In: 'A. 'Alā'ī ed. *Tārīkh-i Samandar wa mulḥaqqāt*. Tehran, Mu'assasa-yi millī-yi maṭbū'āt-i amrī. pp. 12–370.
- Semino, B. 1997. *Ẓhinirāl Semino dar khidmat-i Īrān-i 'aṣr-i Qājār wa jang-i Hirāt: 1236–1266 hijrā-yi qamavī/Le Général Semino en Iran Qājār et la Guerre de Hérat: 1820–1850*. M. Ettehadieh (Nazam Mafi), S. Mīr-Mohammad Sadegh, eds. Nashr-i tārikh-i Īrān. Tehran.
- Shaykh al-'Ajam. 1866. "Min kalām-i Shaykh al-'Ajam-i Māzandarānī." B. Dorn. "Nachträge zu dem Verzeichniss der von der Kaiserlichen öffentlichen Bibliothek erworbenen Chanykov'schen Handschriften und den da mitgetheilten Nachrichten über die Baby und deren Koran, von B. Dorn." *Bulletin de l'Académie Impériale des Sciences de St-Petersbourg* (9). pp. 202–31.
- Shoghi Effendi, 1974 *God Passes By*. rev. ed. Wilmette, Illinois, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Sipīhr, Muḥammad Taqī Lisān al-Mulk. 1958–59. *Nāsikh al-tawārīkh: dawra-yi kāmīl-i tārikh-i Qājāriyya*. vol. 3. J. Qā'im-Maqāmī. ed. Amīr Kabīr. Tehran.
- Smith, P. 1987. *The Babi and Baha'i Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- , and Momen, M. 1986. "The Bābī Movement: A Resource Mobilization Perspective." In: P. Smith. ed. *In Iran: Studies in Bābī and Bahā'ī History*. vol. 3. Los Angeles, Kalimāt Press. pp. 33–93.
- Walbridge, J. 1996. "The Babi Uprising in Zanjan: Causes and Issues." *Iranian Studies* 29 (3–4). pp. 339–62.
- Watson, R.G. 1866. *A History of Persia from the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century to the Year 1858*. London, Smith, Elder and Co.
- Wright, A.H. 1851. "Bāb und seine Secte in Persien." *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* (5). pp. 384–85.
- Yūsufī, Gh.H. 1992. "Čāvoš." In: E. Yarshater. ed. *Encyclopædia Iranica*. London and New York, Routledge & Kegan Paul. vol. 5, pp. 101–02.
- Zabihi-Moghaddam, S. 1998. "Pīrāmūn-i kitāb-i Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb." *Pazhūheshnāmeḥ* 2 (2), pp. 130–59.
- . 2000. "Mu'arriḥ-yi kitāb. 'Ahd-i A'lā: Ẓindigānī-yi Ḥaḍrat-i Bāb." *Payām-i Bahā'ī*. no. 253. December. pp. 37–4.

*This page intentionally left blank*

## THE AZĀLĪ-BAHĀ'Ī CRISIS OF SEPTEMBER 1867

Juan R.I. Cole

I present here the history of a fateful weekend during which the Bābī movement in the nineteenth-century Middle East was definitively split into the Bahā'ī and Azalī religions. There has not before been any extended account of this event that takes advantage of the whole range of available primary documentation for the crisis, or which attempts to weight these documents so as to arrive at a sound picture of the sequence of events and the roles and motives of the main players. In addition, I shall be interested in the way in which this crisis involved a process of boundary-drawing between the two incipient communities. How were events affected by the nature of their leaders' vision of society? That is, I will investigate the significance of the crisis for the definition of the Bahā'ī and Azalī factions of Bābīsm, and, indeed, for the development of the Bahā'ī faith as a separate religion. The basic work of establishing which accounts are more reliable, and reconstructing the train of events has never before been essayed, and necessarily will form part of the task here. I shall also be interested in the literary and religious symbolism used to make sense of the contest between Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī Nūrī (1817–1892), known as Bahā'u'llāh, the founder of the Bahā'ī religion, and Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī (d. 1912), known as Šubḥ-i Azal, who said he was the vicar of the Bāb. What large ideological commitments may have helped decide the outcome of this momentous struggle?

Implicit in much of the dissension between partisans of Azal and partisans of Bahā'u'llāh was a different conception of order in society. Mary Douglas writes,

Ideas about separating, purifying, demarcating, and punishing transgressions have as their main function to impose system on an inherently untidy experience. It is only by exaggerating the difference between within and without, above and below, male and female, with and against, that a semblance of order is created . . . The only way in which pollution ideas make sense in reference to a total structure of thought whose key-stone, boundaries, margins and internal lines are held in relation by rituals of separation (Douglas 1984: 4, 41).

Bābīsm inherited from Shī'ite Islam strong feelings about ritual pollution, called in Arabic *najāsāt*. In traditional Shī'ism, shaking the sweaty hand of a non-Shī'ite would make the believer impure and necessitate repeating ablutions before the next of the five daily prayers could be said. Further, Shī'ite sectarian movements tended to practice systematic shunning, whereby individuals or entire groups came to be viewed as polluted, and with whom all contact was forbidden. The religiously more conservative Azal faction put special stress on these practices.

The practice of ritual pollution has nothing to do with intellectual or theological debate. It is not about the merits of an argument:

A polluting person is always in the wrong. He has developed some wrong condition or simply crossed some line which should not have been crossed and this displacement unleashes danger for someone . . . These are pollution powers which inhere in the structure of ideas itself and which punish a symbolic breaking of that which should be joined or joining of that which should be separate. It follows from this that pollution is not likely to occur except where the lines of structure, cosmic or social, are clearly defined. (Douglas 1984: 113).

The schism of 1867, it will be argued, was in part about the sort of boundary-drawing through rituals of separation that Douglas has discussed.

The millenarian Bābī movement roiled Iran (1844–1850) under the leadership of Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, the “Bāb” or supernatural gateway to God (Amanat 1989). After the Bāb was executed in 1850, the leadership of the movement became extremely fragmented, with many claimants to Bābī leadership and to divinity putting themselves forward (MacEoin 1989). Sometimes in the 1850s a single city would be split into three distinct Bābī communities, each with a different “divine” leader. Mīrzā Sa'īd “Basīr” Hindī, a claimant to leadership with great charisma, was executed by a government official in the early 1850s, and many Bābī leaders died in regional conflicts and then the pogrom of 1852 after the Bābī attempt on the life of the shah.

The Nūrī household of four brothers from a great-landlord background was another focus of leadership. They seem to have made a self-conscious decision to put forward the youngest brother, Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal, as a sort of first among equals, and to attempt to convince the generality of the Bābīs to look to them, and to Azal in particular, for leadership. They were bolstered in this endeavor

by a letter of the Bāb written before his execution that appeared to appoint Mīrzā Yaḥyā to a leadership role (Bāb 2001). The household consisted of Mīrzā Yaḥyā “Azal” Nūrī, of Mīrzā Ḥusayn ‘Alī “Bahā’u’llāh” Nūrī, of Mīrzā Mūsā “Kalām” Nūrī, and of Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī Nūrī. These were sons, all but two of them from different mothers, of the Iranian nobleman Mīrzā ‘Abbās “Buzurg” Nūrī, who had served in high governmental positions under Faṭḥ-‘Alī Shāh (r. 1797–1834). They were forced into exile in Ottoman Baghdad in the wake of the failed Bābī assassination attempt on Nāṣiru’d-Dīn Shāh of 1852. Bahā’u’llāh was the treasurer for the household and for contributions received in Azal’s name from believers. He also screened Azal’s appointments and met with pilgrims, given that Azal’s position of leader put him in great danger from the shah’s assassins. Bahā’u’llāh himself in the 1850s was careful to deny that he had a high station or could work miracles (Cole 1997). Despite Azal’s reclusive style of leadership, and despite continual behind-the-scenes conflicts between Azal and Bahā’u’llāh, they succeeded in presenting a relatively united front from their place of exile in Baghdad (1853–1863). They continued in this vein when the Ottomans first exiled Bahā’u’llāh to Edirne in Ottoman Europe near Istanbul. He and his brothers and some Bābīs lived there November 1863 through summer, 1868, and it was midway through this period that open conflict between Azalīs and Bahā’īs broke out (Cole 1998a: 27–29).

Most Bābīs in Iraq and back in Iran came to accept Azal as the Bāb’s vicar by the early 1860s, then, though many of them also came to admire Bahā’u’llāh’s mystical writings (Browne 1910; Cole 1998b). The Nūrīs had an advantage over would-be Bābī leaders based in Iran, insofar as they were in the Ottoman Empire, which was not eager to execute or entirely silence them given that they might be a card that could be played in Ottoman-Persian relations. The Ottoman Empire, in any case, had, as a result of the Tanzimat reforms and intense European scrutiny of its policies toward religious minorities, less leeway for arbitrary persecution of the latter. Among the increasingly pro-Azal Bābīs, there was a sprinkling of partisans of Bahā’u’llāh from the late 1850s, who saw him as the esoteric, real successor to the Bāb, whereas they painted Azal as an exoteric figurehead. This sentiment was especially strong in Baghdad, but also could be found as a decidedly minority view in Iran during the early 1860s. The question of Bahā’u’llāh’s own evolving self-conception is



a vexed one that may never be satisfactorily settled. Some maintain that he all along had messianic aspirations and was simply biding his time in giving some outward support to Azal (Lambden 1991: 75–83). Others have seen him as genuinely unambitious until the mid-1860s (MacEoin 1989).

Probably beginning in autumn of 1865 or winter of 1866, Bahā'u'llāh gradually put forth an open claim of his own to be the promised one spoken of by the Bāb, while living in the house of Amru'llāh (Zarandī 1924: 39–40). He thus infuriated Azal and his followers, both in Edirne and in Iran. Bahā'u'llāh reports that, as a result, he overheard partisans of Azal plotting against him in the joint Bābī household at the house of Amru'llāh (Cole 2002). Salmānī reports that Azal attempted to have Bahā'u'llāh assassinated in the late winter of 1866 (Salmānī 1997; 1982: 49–53.) As a result, Bahā'u'llāh broke up his household and moved away from Azal, cutting off contact with him. According to Salmānī, in March and April of 1866, “Darvīsh Šidq-‘Alī was directed to go to Azal’s house every day and fetch whatever he asked. However, as soon as Azal was separated from the rest of us, and his “brotherhood” was ended, Darvīsh refused to go to his house. ‘After a thing like that,’ he said, ‘I cannot go there any more.’” (Salmānī 1997: 35; 1982: 93). Šidq-‘Alī was thus announcing his intention to shun Azal. But Salmānī makes it clear that Bahā'u'llāh expected his companions to follow through on any promises they had made to Azal, even to the extent of dispatching his letters to Iran, if they had so pledged. This fair-mindedness on Bahā'u'llāh’s part was made possible in part by his rejection of the notion that some persons are ritually impure, a stance he took at least from his private declaration to some close friends and family members in the garden of Riḍvān near Baghdad in 1863 before his departure for Istanbul (Cole 1998a: 149–50). He even went so far as to say that if a Bābī examined his claims in a fair-minded and judicious manner and ended up rejecting them, he would be in no danger of divine punishment: “Even if you are not, in the end, satisfied with the decree of God and what he revealed, God will nevertheless be pleased with your judgment if it is fair, so that perhaps an eye might be opened by justice and gaze toward God” (Bahā'u'llāh in Cole 2001). The Bahā’īs of Baghdad saw the abolition of ritual pollution among communities as a key Bahā’ī teaching by spring, 1867, as evidenced by their letter to the U.S. consulate seeking freedom from persecution. They complained that past reli-

gious communities “consider each other unclean, though they are all human beings, having different and numerous religions” and said of their prophet, “That learned and wise man wrote many works containing the rules of union, harmony and love between human beings, and the way of abandoning the differences, untruthfulness, and vexations between them, that people may unite and agree on one way and to walk straightforwardly in the straight and expedient way, and that no one should avert or religiously abstain from intercourse with another, of Jews, Christians, Mohammadans and others” (Stauffer 1997).

In late spring, 1866, Bahā'u'llāh himself briefly withdrew from contact with any but his closest family, but after two months began receiving visitors again. In the subsequent year (summer 1866 to summer 1867), Bahā'u'llāh wrote many tablets (letters and treatises in the form of revelation) setting forth his new claims to be the return of the Bāb and the promised one of the Bābīs, thus superseding any authority Azal might have had as the putative vicar of the Bāb (e.g. Cole 2001). Bahā'u'llāh denied in this period that the Bāb had ever actually appointed a vicar [*vaṣī*], though most Bābīs at that point believed Azal had been so appointed. Many Bābīs still hoped for reconciliation between the two brothers, whereas others had already begun choosing up sides.

A partisan of Bahā'u'llāh, Sayyid Miḥdī Dahajī, reports that the Baghdad community had by February or March of 1867 split into three factions Bahā'īs, Azalīs, and the undecided, with Bahā'īs in the majority. During that same period, a meeting was held in Baghdad in which the minority Azalīs and the Bahā'īs presented their proofs for their positions to neutral members of the third, undecided faction. He says that the Bahā'īs prevailed:

At the end of the year 1283 [circa February-March 1867], when I was in Baghdad, news arrived that Bahā'u'llāh had proclaimed his manifestation. Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣubḥ-i Azal refused to accept his cause. Between the two, a complete schism had occurred, and recently had led them to separate from one another. Bahā'u'llāh now lived in a separate house, while Mīrzā Yaḥyā Azal had his own dwelling. The friends, in yet another house, were distraught and depressed. Each of the friends in Edirne wrote a daily account of events and sent this news to Baghdad. Every day, as well, verses and tablets of Bahā'u'llāh arrived. The majority of the friends in Baghdad believed in him, whom God shall make manifest [Bahā'u'llāh]. Some persons, seeing that Azal had opposed Bahā'u'llāh, did likewise. Others yet were cautious and

bewildered about where their duty lay and what should be done. A great deal of discussion and argumentation took place among these three groups of friends in Baghdad partisans, opponents, and the undecided. Morning and night, views were exchanged. (Dahaji 2000: 36–38).

It is significant that in Dahaji's account, the various sorts of Bābī were still willing to meet and debate with one another early in 1867, demonstrating that they were not systematically shunning one another and did not view each other as ritually impure.

The same sorts of divisions, along with a willingness to cross them socially, existed in Edirne that year. The social distance between them was increasing, however. In summer, 1867, Bahā'u'llāh rented the house of 'Izzat Āqā. Balyuzi writes that it "was newly-built and possessed a fine view of the river and the southern orchards of the city. Its rooms were spacious, and although the *bīrūnī* was smaller than the *andarūnī*, both had ample space and large courtyards planted with a variety of trees. . . . The companions moved to another house in the same neighbourhood, large enough for them all and provided with a Turkish bath. Visitors also lodged in this house . . ." (Balyuzi 1980: 241). By then, Bahā'u'llāh's and Azal's partisans were living far apart from one another. Late in the summer of 1867, the conflict between Bahā'u'llāh and Şubḥ-i Azal had come to a head. The Bahā'ī accounts of the way in which the Tablet of the Divine Test (*Lawḥ-i Mubāhalih*) came to be written by Bahā'u'llāh contain a number of discrepancies, but all agree that it was written in late August or in September of 1867, not long after Bahā'u'llāh had moved to the house of 'Izzat Āqā. Moreover, it came about as a result of a building conflict between the "Bahā'īs" (Bahā'u'llāh and his partisans) and the "Azalīs" (his half-brother Mīrzā Yaḥyā Şubḥ-i Azal and his partisans). Only two years before, they had been outwardly united as Bābīs and most had recognized Azal as at least the first among equals among Bābī leaders, and many saw him as much more. It is not possible to be sure of the exact date for these events. Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī is the only one who gives a precise day, 26 Rabī' II, 1284, corresponding to 27 August 1867, which fell on a Wednesday rather than (as it should have) a Friday (Qazvīnī 1914: 24). However, several other reliable sources report the month as having been Jumāda I, which coincided with September 1867.

The accounts we have of the incident derive from a number of pens. I take as my base a very early report written in autumn, 1867, by Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī, that quotes extensively from Bahā'u'llāh's

contemporaneous account (Qazvīnī in Māzandarānī 5: 1999: 39n–44n). We also have a much later brief narrative by Qazvīnī, translated by Browne in 1918. Qazvīnī was literate and was on the scene, though he did not see everything with his own eyes since Bahā'u'llāh forbade his partisans to come to the mosque. His accounts often have the ring of truth to them and demonstrate firm knowledge of telling detail. I will also weight very heavily two later narratives of Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kāshī, “Khādimu'llāh,” Bahā'u'llāh's secretary (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādimu'llāh in Ishraq-Khavari 1973: 4: 277–281; 7: 238–246). He was an eyewitness to most of the events he recounted, and he quotes from Bahā'u'llāh's first, early Tablet about the Divine Test, as well as from a later, second such document. I have translated these documents into English (Cole 2000). It is impossible to date the composition of Khādimu'llāh's accounts, for while they appear in tablets that presumably come from the 1880s, he could have been quoting much earlier diary entries. They were probably written, in any case, no more than 15 years after the event, and so are earlier than most other extant memoirs. Khādimu'llāh had direct access, as well, to Bahā'u'llāh's memories of the events. One problem in documenting this fateful weekend is that Bahā'u'llāh had forbidden his partisans to come to the Sultan Selim mosque in Edirne. Khādimu'llāh, however, somehow received special dispensation to do so. I do not have access to most of the narrative of Bahā'u'llāh's disciple and biographer, Nabīl Zarandī, but I do have a paragraph on his attempt to deliver the tablet to Azal, and Nabīl would also be weighted as important (Zarandī 1999). The account of Muḥammad 'Alī Salmānī, Bahā'u'llāh's barber and masseur, provides some interesting information, but suffers from the author not having been directly involved in the events (though he was in Edirne at the time), from his being illiterate, and from his writing decades after the fact. In particular, he appears to confuse two distinct persons named “Sayyid (or Mīr) Muḥammad,” and he recounts some events that seem implausible and are unsupported by other sources. The least trustworthy account is that of Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Isfahānī in his *Delight of Hearts* (*Bihjat as-Šudūr*), which is embellished by exaggeration and unbelievable details of a sort that make me question whether he was still in Edirne when the incident occurred (Isfahānī 1914: 77–79; Isfahānī 1980: 22–24). My suspicion is that he only heard much later oral retellings of it, which had added grandiose details that he reports uncritically. The main value of his brief passages on this subject lies in

his revelation that Bahā'u'llāh went to the Mevlevī Şūfī centre after leaving the mosque, something that other sources do not mention, but which is at least plausible.

The earliest two published accounts we have, then, are from an eyewitness, Khādimu'llāh. Late in the 'Akkā period it was apparently common for Bahā'u'llāh to suggest to Khādimu'llāh the gist of what he should write, and then to review it, and make corrections and to add passages in his own words. Later Bahā'ī tradition has maintained that such tablets (the *Lawḥ-i Maqṣūd* is a famous example) only employed this form as a literary device, and that the entire tablet was written by Bahā'u'llāh, some of it in the voice of Khādimu'llāh. This theory strikes me as a little unlikely, however, and it seems more natural to accept that Khādimu'llāh wrote the passages himself as an amanuensis, having been given general instructions by Bahā'u'llāh, and with the latter going over the final text before it was released.

The background to the crisis, as described by Khādimu'llāh, is that Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī, a partisan of Azal's, came into conflict with Bahā'u'llāh in Edirne during the summer of 1867 (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādimu'llāh 7: 1973: 239). According to this text, Bahā'u'llāh informed him, "O Muḥammad, you have no knowledge of the path of the prophets or the character of the pure ones." A few days later he visited Bahā'u'llāh. He made some statement, which was not accepted. A few days passed, and he again asked to come into Bahā'u'llāh's presence. He requested that Bahā'u'llāh order Azal not to write anything more "For Āqā Muḥammad 'Alī Isfahānī asked a question about a verse of Persian poetry, and he could not understand its meaning." Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī, although he generally supported Azal, is said to have had a low opinion of his abilities and to have manipulated him, and may have wondered whether he should see if he could develop a similar relationship with Bahā'u'llāh. Bahā'u'llāh said, "Sayyid, what business do you have with this impertinent meddling?"

In the end, Bahā'u'llāh banished him from his presence. Many years later, Bahā'u'llāh wrote,

Every one of this people well knoweth that Siyyid Muḥammad [Isfahānī] was but one of Our servants. In the days when, as requested by the Imperial Ottoman Government, We proceeded to their Capital, he accompanied Us. Subsequently, he committed that which I swear by God hath caused the Pen of the Most High to weep and His Tablet

to groan. We, therefore, cast him out; where upon, he joined Mīrzā Yahyā and did what no tyrant had ever done. We abandoned him, and said unto him: "Begone, O heedless one!" After these words had been uttered, he joined the order of the Mawlavīs, and remained in their company until the time when We were summoned to depart (Bahā'u'llāh 1971: 164; Bahā'u'llāh 1982: 106–107).

Muḥammad 'Alī Salmānī appears to be referring to this incident when he mentions that Bahā'u'llāh wrote a tablet for a newly-arrived Bābī named Mīrzā Muḥammad Kāzīrūnī in which he "dismissed" a "Sayyid Muḥammad," who is certainly Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī (Salmānī 1997: 35; Salmānī 1982: 93). Salmānī says that Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī was furious with Bahā'u'llāh at the time because the latter had virtually ordered him to leave Edirne, appointing for him a sum of money. "He has shed his poison on me," this Sayyid Muḥammad is reported by Salmānī to have said of Bahā'u'llāh. Salmānī tended to mix up Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī with Mīr Muḥammad Kāzīrūnī, and Khādīmu'llāh says that Bahā'u'llāh wrote the dismissal letter directly to Isfahānī. He says Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī then went to Azal and, despite severe reservations about him, put himself out as an Azalī for a while, until the two finally fell out. During this time Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī was cultivating and meeting with about 70 other Bābīs who leaned toward Azal (Bahā'u'llāh 1973: 7: 239). There were about 100 Iranian Bābīs in Edirne, so that about 30 were neutral or siding with Bahā'u'llāh around 1866–67.

Salmānī says that Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī complained to Azal that Bahā'u'llāh was claiming to be the embodiment of God's dominion, and that Sayyid Muḥammad encouraged Azal to issue the challenge and make his own claims clear. Salmānī writes that Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī:

went to Azal at the time of the separation and told him, "Our master, Bahā'u'llāh, now claims to be the embodiment of 'Mine is My dominion,' and announces that all must be subject to his command. Here is his tablet revealed for me. What have you to say?"

Azal replied, "His Holiness the Exalted One, the Bāb, appointed me as His successor (*jā-nishīn*). The successor is myself."

"Don't confuse us," Mīr Muḥammad said. "You speak thus he makes a claim that is absolute [or 'universal': *kullīyyih*]. Go and sit down; settle the question between you."

"I am willing," Azal said. "I can vindicate my claim in any way he chooses" (Salmānī 1997: 35; Salmānī 1982: 93–94).

Salmānī now implausibly has Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī serve as a mediator between Azal and Bahā'u'llāh in setting up the mosque meeting. This is highly unlikely for a number of reasons. Isfahānī had already been banished from Bahā'u'llāh's presence, and so would not have been a welcome mediator. Moreover, Khādimu'llāh makes it clear that the news of Azal's challenge reached Bahā'u'llāh at the last moment, and through other persons. Still, the identification of Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī as the instigator of the challenge is borne out by both Khādimu'llāh and Nabīl Zarandī. Bahā'ī sources also are convinced that Azal only issued his challenge in the end because he and Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī were convinced that Bahā'u'llāh would never agree to meet him face to face after he had announced their separation more than a year before (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādimu'llāh 1973: 7: 240).

Khādimu'llāh reports that one Friday morning Azal abruptly issued a document (*sanad*) calling for Bahā'u'llāh to meet him at the Sultan Selim mosque in Edirne that very afternoon. The Selimiye is perched on a hill and is a central place for Edirne. A highly impressive structure designed by the great early modern architect Sinan, until recently it had among the largest domes, and highest minarets, of any mosque in the world. It was built at the command of Sultan Selim II (1569–1575). The challenge document envisaged that Azal and Bahā'u'llāh would face each other there and call down ritual curses on one other, in hopes that God would send down a sign that would demonstrate the truth of one or the other. This custom, called *mubāhalih* in Persian, is a very old one in the Middle East, and appears to have evoked the contest between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians. The Iranian tobacconist Ḥasan Āqā Salmāsī, who was not a Bābī, was with Azal when he wrote the document, and was responsible for spreading knowledge of it among the Iranian Bābī community (many of whom frequented his shop). One who heard about the challenge was a recently-arrived Bābī, Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī Shīrāzī (whom Salmānī called “Kāzīrūnī”), who appears to have been sitting in the tobacconist's shop talking with the Azalīs when his conversation turned to the conflict between Azal and Bahā'u'llāh, and Ḥasan Āqā told him about the recently-issued challenge. This individual must have been from a village near Kāzīrūn in Fārs province. Some sources call him “Mukārī,” others “Shikārī,” others “Kāzīrūnī” and still others “Shīrāzī.” Mukārī, a caravan leader, was an old-time Bābī who had accompanied the Bāb to Mecca, and

had also been in the party that went with Bahā'u'llāh from Baghdad to Istanbul. Khādimu'llāh says that it was only after the *mubāhalih* document was issued that Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī became aware of it. Mukārī, like most Bābīs, accepted Azal's leadership, but he may initially have been one of those who hoped for reconciliation between Azal and Bahā'u'llāh.

Khādimu'llāh reports that Mukārī then went to the house of 'Izzat Āqā and informed Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī, Bahā'u'llāh's half-brother, of the challenge. In a letter written from Edirne to his friends in Qazvīn, Mīrzā Javād reports, "One day I was in the house of God [Bahā'u'llāh's mansion], when I noticed that someone had arrived in the receiving room. He said, 'I met with the idolaters [Azalīs]. After some conversation they made a decision and wrote out a document.'" Mukārī did not have the document with him, clearly, but was reporting it. Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī told Mukārī that there was no need for the Bāb's camel driver (*jilūdār*) actually to present the document. Rather, they were ready to appear. Qazvīnī says he instructed Mukārī to go and tell Azal and his companions to come to the mosque (Qazvīnī in Māzandarānī 1999: 5: 39n). Khādimu'llāh depicts Mukārī as actually meeting with Bahā'u'llāh at that point, and says that Bahā'u'llāh himself told him "Go and inform the gentleman that I am waiting in the mosque" (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādimu'llāh 1973: 4: 278). Bahā'u'llāh had been preparing to take his midday rest, according to another account by Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī. Instead, he set out that very hour for the Sultan Selim mosque. Mīrzā Javād reports of Bahā'u'llāh that "from the moment of his exit from the house until he entered the above-mentioned mosque, in the streets and markets, he continued to utter verses in an audible voice so that all who saw him and heard the verses were astonished" (Qazvīnī 1918: 24–25). In his contemporary letter of the time, Mīrzā Javād describes the scene with similar language, but mentions that Bahā'u'llāh addressed his verses to Mukārī. Since, however, Mukārī had been sent to inform the Azalīs that Bahā'u'llāh had accepted the challenge, it seems more likely that he met back up with Bahā'u'llāh later at the mosque. The only source we have for Bahā'u'llāh's afternoon discourse, therefore, is Bahā'u'llāh's own later report of it to companions like Javād Qazvīnī and Khādimu'llāh. Qazvīnī says that when Mukārī arrived at Azal's house, his wife came out and said, "It will be today" (Qazvīnī in Māzandarānī 1999: 5:42n).



When Bahā'u'llāh arrived at the mosque, the preacher was preaching a sermon. Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī reports that the preacher fell silent on Bahā'u'llāh's entry, "either by choice or because he forgot what he had to say." Bahā'u'llāh took his seat on the mosque floor amongst the worshippers, and gestured for the preacher to continue his sermon. "Time passed and everyone expected Azal to arrive also, but to their great surprise he never appeared" (Isfahānī 1914: 78; 1980: 23). News that Bahā'u'llāh was waiting at the mosque spread among the network of Bābīs. Khādīmu'llāh reports that the news reached him while he was shopping for household goods at the bazaar, and that he immediately set off for the Sultan Selim. He saw that a crowd of curious onlookers lined the way near the mosque and they gestured toward it, indicating that "Şeyh Efendi" (as Bahā'u'llāh was known in Edirne) had gone that way. Inside, he found that the worship ceremony was over and Bahā'u'llāh was sitting alone with Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī, reciting a stream of verses that had reduced the other to tears. Bahā'u'llāh had forbidden the other Bābīs from attending. At length Bahā'u'llāh dispatched Mukārī to remind Azal again of the appointment, saying "O Muḥammad, go to them and say, come, with your ropes and your staff" (a reference to the magic snares and staffs used by Pharaoh's magicians in their contest with Moses) (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādīmu'llāh 1973: 7: 240–241).

According to Khādīmu'llāh, when Mukārī arrived at Azal's house the latter came out to see him and replied directly that the confrontation would have to be postponed. Khādīmu'llāh dramatizes Mukārī's attempt to convince Azal to come to the mosque, having him say, "You yourself chose these arrangements. You stated a preference for this matter. You wrote a document saying that whoever did not appear today is false and far from the truth. Then how can any word of yours be depended upon?" (Bahā'u'llāh/Khādīmu'llāh 1973: 4: 278). Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī reports that Azal said he was ill (Isfahānī 1914: 78). Mukārī returned, unsuccessful, to the Sultan Selim mosque, rejoining Bahā'u'llāh there, and delivered Azal's message. Qazvīnī says that Mīr Muḥammad arrived saying, "Mīrzā Yaḥyā asks to be excused because today it is not possible for him to present himself. He therefore begs you to appoint another day, and to write a note to this effect, signed and sealed, that whoever does not present himself at the appointed time is an impostor" (Qazvīnī 1918: 25).

Salmānī says that “Mīr Muḥammad” (whom we know to be Mukārī here) went back and forth to Azal’s house two or three times, and that Azal at one point promised to come, but never did (Salmānī 1997: 35; 1982: 93). Salmānī is probably right that Mukārī made two trips, one after he had met Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī at Bahā’u’llāh’s house, and one from the mosque later that afternoon. However, the detail from the contemporary letter by Qazvīnī that in response to the first trip, one of Azal’s wives had come to the door and said the contest would occur that day, rings true, and might help explain Azal’s seeming inconsistency if she was unaware that he was saying he was ill. After a while, Bahā’u’llāh, Mukārī and Khādimu’llāh, who had joined him, said ritual prayers (*ṣalāt*) (Bahā’u’llāh/Khādimu’llāh 1973: 7: 241). Bahā’u’llāh waited till sundown, but Azal never arrived. (In the Muslim world, sundown marked the beginning of the new day, so at that point the date appointed by Azal in his initial challenge passed).

Bahā’u’llāh walked with Mukārī and Khādimu’llāh through Edirne’s streets that dusk, no doubt feeling triumphant. He is said by Khādimu’llāh to have delivered a long Arabic sermon to Mukārī as they walked in the lanes, proclaiming himself the return of the Bāb and of the Prophet Muḥammad, stating his fearlessness before both clergy and kings, and celebrating his victory over Azal, whose boasting had been revealed to be empty. Although Khādimu’llāh says that “everyone” heard the sermon, it was in classical Arabic, which no one in the street could have understood except Ottoman clerics or the more educated Iranian Bābīs (or those who had spent a long time in Baghdad), and these appear not to have been present. It so happened that on the route Bahā’u’llāh took lay a tobacco shop, that of Ḥasan Āqā Salmāsī, which was frequented by partisans of Azal. Ḥasan Āqā had been the first to know of Azal’s initial challenge, and had been responsible for spreading news of it among the Iranian Bābīs in Edirne. Bahā’u’llāh stopped at Ḥasan Āqā’s store and told him, “Based on the decision that the gentleman had announced in his proclamation, the countenance of the All-Merciful [Bahā’u’llāh] presented himself, whereas the idolaters repudiated their own agreement.” (Bahā’u’llāh/Khādimu’llāh 1973: 4: 278–80).

As he continued on his route, Bahā’u’llāh passed the Mevlevī *tekye* or Şūfī centre, and decided to join the chanting, dancing, whirling mystics to celebrate his day of triumph. Mevlevīs were followers of

Mawlānā Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, and their twirling dances to the accompaniment of chants from the Mathnavī or mystical “couplets” of Rūmī made them known in the West as the “whirling dervishes.” Referring to Rūmī, whom many Iranians look upon as a significant spiritual teacher, Bahā’u’llāh quipped, “Mawlānā needs a visit from us.” (Isfahānī 1914: 78; 1980: 23). Bahā’u’llāh went into the building. Mīrzā Ḥaydar ‘Alī says that there were many others, including city notables, around Bahā’u’llāh at this point, but we cannot be sure that was true. Here, too, the dervishes are reported to have ceased their dancing and chanting on Bahā’u’llāh’s entrance, until he and his companions were seated and he gestured for the festivities to resume. Salmānī in his homely style says that when Bahā’u’llāh finally reached home, he commented, “The fellow said he would appear. But there was no sign of him” (Salmānī 1997: 35; 1982: 95). As soon as he arrived home that Friday evening, Bahā’u’llāh wrote out the *Sūrat al-Mubāhalah* or *Tablet of the Divine Test*. Calligraphed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, it summarized some of the discourse he had delivered to Mukārī while walking down the street after the event. It fixed a further two days in which Azal might fulfill his challenge, Sunday and Monday, during which Bahā’u’llāh would be at Sultan Selim mosque waiting for him (Bahā’u’llāh/Khādimu’llāh 1973: 7: 241, Māzandarānī 1999: 5: 29).

Mīrzā Ḥaydar ‘Alī wrote in his memoirs that Bahā’u’llāh himself pointed out the next day how on that Friday on two occasions worshippers had fallen silent at Bahā’u’llāh’s entrance. This coincidence was clearly held by the Bahā’īs to be an auspicious sign. That Saturday Bahā’u’llāh sent the *Tablet of the Divine Test* to Ḥasan Āqā the tobacconist. He entrusted delivery of this tablet to Muḥammad “Nabīl-i A’zam” Zarandī, but stipulated that he only hand it over to one of the Azalīs who frequented the shop if he received a sealed note from Azal, in accordance with the agreement struck Friday afternoon. Nabīl tried three days with partisans of Azal who socialized at the tobacco shop, but proved unable to procure from Azal any such warranty, nor did Azal appear either Sunday or Monday at the mosque (Zarandī in Māzandarānī 1999: 5: 30n; Qazvīnī 1918: 25). Nabīl himself tells the story in this way:

He favored me with his grace by entrusting that Tablet to this servant, so that I might deliver it, and read it out to them. For Sayyid Muḥammad [Isfahānī] always said, “We shall make the truth known by means of a divine test [*mubāhalah*], and Bahā’u’llāh will never come.”

Also, Bahā'u'llāh told me to compose a poem recounting the details of the day, from his departure from his house until his return from the Sultan Selim mosque, and to send it along with the blessed Tablet [*Sūrat al-Mubāhala*] to Azal. That very moment I put everything that had happened into verse, and delivered the poem, with the Tablet. When Mullā Muḥammad Salmāsī Tabrīzī saw the Tablet, he said, "I swear by God, nothing but the truth could be ascribed to the author of these words!" He stood up and said, "I am going to Sayyid Muḥammad [Isfahānī] and will say to him, 'Either you must bring from Yaḥyā a paper with his seal on it, and without delay, or you will have to admit that you lied and you'll never again challenge someone to a ritual cursing match.'"

I sat in the shop. When he came back, he said, "I will bring the paper stamped with a seal tonight." For three days, I went every day, and Mullā Muḥammad spoke ill of those persons. They had written far and wide that they had come to the mosque for the divine test, and that Bahā'u'llāh did not show up. Mullā Muḥammad Tabrīzī also saw the verse narrative, and wept upon reading it, saying, "If Sayyid Muḥammad [Isfahānī] and Mīrzā Yaḥyā [Azal] had been able to produce verses in a whole week such as you wrote out in one day, at that time they might have had a right to put themselves forward" (Zarandī in Māzandarānī 1999: 5: 30n).

This counter-challenge had met Azal's request that another day be appointed, and was probably intended to show the ultimate in fairness to Azal, who had claimed to be ill on the day he had originally fixed for the divine test. In this way, Azal was deprived of any such excuse, since he had two whole further days to meet the new challenge, and would have had to be on his deathbed to make a plausible plea of illness again! For his part, Azal appears to have given himself an out insofar as he refused to take delivery of Bahā'u'llāh's sealed note and refused to reciprocate with one of his own. From an Azalī point of view, there never was an agreement from Mīrzā Yaḥyā's side to Bahā'u'llāh's stipulations for a new rendezvous. Some Azalīs, the Bahā'īs allege, wrote letters back to Iran reversing the actual course of events and having Azal appear while Bahā'u'llāh cowered in his house. Whether this is true and what exactly was Azal's reaction to the fiasco could only be explored with better access than I now have to Azalī sources. The Bahā'īs interpreted as a sign of cowardice Azal's failure to show up on any of the three days he or Bahā'u'llāh had put forward, and partisans of Bahā'u'llāh such as Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī and Mīrzā Hādī Shīrāzī put that spin on these events, quickly spreading news of them and the related tablets to Iran (Tāherzādeh 1974–1987: 2: 298). Mīr

Muḥammad Mukārī, is also reported by Salmānī to have said of Azal, "That man is nothing but a liar. He never showed his face" (Salmānī 1997: 35; 1982: 95). He took leave of Bahā'u'llāh and set out for Istanbul. As we saw in Bahā'u'llāh's own account, above, Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī fell out with Azal (perhaps as a result of his poor performance in the challenge) and joined the Mevlevī Sufi order. He was exiled with the Bahā'īs to 'Akkā in 1868, where he spied on them for the Ottomans. Some of the rougher Bahā'īs in 'Akkā, furious that he was interfering by his intelligence-gathering with the ability of Iranian Bahā'īs to visit Bahā'u'llāh, murdered him and two of his associates in 1872, against Bahā'u'llāh's wishes.

The crisis produced three contemporary texts or discourses by the two leaders. The first was Azal's challenge, which unfortunately is not reprinted in any of the sources available to me. The second is Bahā'u'llāh's oral discourse, delivered to Sayyid Muḥammad Mukārī in the streets of Edirne after they had departed the mosque at sundown. The third is the *Tablet of the Divine Test*, penned late Friday evening after Bahā'u'llāh had returned home from the chanting and dancing session of the Mevlevī Sufis. Although the oral discourse on the way back from the mosque was delivered only that evening, and probably memorized on the spot by Khādīmu'llāh, Bahā'u'llāh most likely composed elements of it earlier in the day, beginning with his swift march to the mosque at midday, when he was said to have amazed bystanders by reciting verses as he went. One important theme is the comparison of this divine test to the contest between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians. This theme emerges as early as Friday afternoon when Bahā'u'llāh sent Mukārī for the second time to fetch Azal, telling him, "O Muḥammad, go to them and say, come, with your ropes and your staff." This language is repeated in the body of the subsequent evening discourse. It evokes Qur'ān 20: 59–72, which speaks of the Egyptian magicians menacing Moses with their rope snares and their staffs:

So we showed Pharaoh all Our signs, but he cried lies, and refused. 'Hast thou come, Moses,' he said, to expel us out of our land by thy sorcery? We shall assuredly bring thee sorcery the like of it; therefore appoint a tryst between us and thee, a place mutually agreeable, and we shall not fail it, neither thou.'

'Your tryst shall be upon the Feast Day,' said Moses.

'Let the people be mustered at the high noon.'

Pharaoh then withdrew, and gathered his guile. Thereafter he came

again, and Moses said to them, 'O beware! Forge not a lie against God, lest He destroy you with a chastisement. Whoso forges has ever failed.'

And they disputed upon their plan between them, and communed secretly, saying, 'These two men are sorcerers and their purpose is to expel you out of your land by their sorcery, and to extirpate your justest way. So gather your guile; then come in battle-line. Whoever today gains the upper hand shall surely prosper.'

They said, 'Moses, either thou wilt cast, or we shall be the first to cast.'

'No,' said Moses. 'Do you cast!'

And lo, it seemed to him, by their sorcery, their ropes and their staffs were sliding; and Moses conceived a fear within him. We said unto him, 'Fear not; surely thou art the uppermost. Cast down what is in thy right hand, and it shall swallow what they have fashioned; for they have fashioned only the guile of a sorcerer, and the sorcerer prospers not, wherever he goes' (Qur'ān in Arberry 1973: 1: 343-342).

This theme of Bahā'u'llāh as a new Moses is also evoked when he says in the discourse that the palm of his hand was rendered white (the miracle of the suddenly whitened palm was attributed to Moses in Muslim tradition), and he refers to his "staff," saying, "were we to cast it down, it would swallow to the entire creation," just as Moses' staff swallowed the magicians' serpents.

Bahā'u'llāh begins the discourse by saying that he had departed from his house with "manifest sovereignty," presumably meaning that he went of his own sovereign will to confront Azal. He tells Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī that the spirit has thereby vacated its seat, and that thereby the spirits of the pure ones went forth, along with the souls of the past messengers. "Spirit," of course, is an Islamic sobriquet for Jesus, but it is unclear if that is the referent here. I think Bahā'u'llāh is referring more to the Holy Spirit. Bahā'u'llāh then says he is the return of the Bāb, and also the return of the Prophet Muḥammad. (It is thus particularly appropriate that he wins his victory in a mosque). Bahā'u'llāh is here appealing to the Bābī doctrine of the "return" or *raj'at*, wherein the personality-attributes of past historical persons recur in contemporary human beings. Although the messianic figure sought by the Bābīs was called by the Bāb "He whom God shall make manifest," Bahā'u'llāh in this period seems instead to have said he was the "return" of the Bāb, establishing a continuity between the Bāb's writings and persona and his own. Bahā'u'llāh announces his defiance of all the clergy, mystics, and monarchs on earth, insisting that he would recite God's verses to

them without any fear. These assertions also echo the Moses theme, insofar as he defied Pharaoh (civil authority) and his priests (religious authority). Bahā'u'llāh notes that he is, technically speaking, acting contrary to religious counsels in agreeing to meet with a hypocrite and an idolater like Azal. And despite this one exception, he does insist that the bonds with any loved ones (such as a brother) who rejected Bahā'u'llāh's cause in favor of Azal had from that moment been severed. He defines Azal as having previously been the embodiment of only one of God's names, and to prefer one of the divine names over God himself would be a form of idolatry. He redefines religious authority (prophets, messengers, imams and vicars) as being legitimate only if it upholds Bahā'u'llāh's Cause. (This assertion undermines Azal's authority as the supposed vicar of the Bāb.) Finally, Bahā'u'llāh complains that Azal had once been just one of the Bābīs, like any other man, but that his passions and selfishness had led him to begin having grandiose ideas about himself. Bahā'u'llāh explains that he had himself helped build Azal up, to his current regret, for a "secret reason" (*ḥikmat*). (The traditional Bahā'ī explanation is that Azal was put forward as the exoteric leader in order to protect the real leader, Bahā'u'llāh, though this story no doubt presents an overly rationalized picture of the complex relationship between Bahā'u'llāh and Azal, 1850–1865).

There are many details that remain unclear with regard to the events of that day. Is it possible to make a clear distinction between the roles of Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī and Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī in the issuance of Azal's challenge? Khādimu'llāh's version, of the 1880s, explains the origins of Azal's challenge in the disgruntlement toward Bahā'u'llāh of Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī. Salmānī, as we have seen, at some points confused Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī with Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī (or certainly did not carefully distinguish in his narrative between the two). The illiterate Salmānī seems unaware of the written document Azal released, and instead makes "Mīr Muḥammad" a go-between, and paints him as hostile to Bahā'u'llāh. In contrast, Shoghi Effendi has Mukārī resent Azal's claims (Rabbani 1970: 168). This assertion is certainly an error, and is directly contradicted by Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Isfahānī, who makes it clear that Mukārī accepted Azal as the Bāb's vicar and could not believe he would break the Bāb's covenant (Isfahānī 1914: 77). (Ṭāherzādeh, who translated this passage from Isfahānī, left out the

information about his favoring Azal, substituting ellipses: Ṭāherzādeh 1974–1987: 2: 295). Ḥaydar 'Alī's report makes far more sense than Shoghi Effendi's version, written over 75 years after the events, since if Mukārī already resented Azal, why was he visiting with him or the Azalīs that Friday morning, on which he heard of Azal's challenge? Why did he try so hard to ensure that Azal showed up and that there was a fair contest? It is far more likely that he was a typical Bābī and recognized Azal. In Shoghi Effendi's version, Mukārī prevails upon Azal to issue the challenge for a meeting at the Sultan Selim mosque so as to settle the issue. But the version of Khādimu'llāh merely has Mukārī find out about the challenge through Āqā Ḥasan and depicts him as delivering the news of it to Bahā'u'llāh's household. The contemporary letter by Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī does seem to say that after Mukārī had been conversing for a while with the Bābīs, the document was issued. It is possible that the whole affair had already been set in motion by earlier discussions between Azal and Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī, and that the direction Mukārī's conversation took that morning merely provided an occasion for Ḥasan Āqā to announce the document containing the challenge. It seems unlikely that Mukārī served as anything more than a pretext for its promulgation. Khādimu'llāh makes it clear that Mukārī found out about it after the fact. If he at that time accepted Azal as the vicar of the Bāb but had a somewhat open mind about Bahā'u'llāh's claims to be the return of the Bāb, this impartiality may help explain why some sources make him pro-Azal and others make him pro-Bahā'u'llāh. Moreover, Salmānī may not have been alone in confusing this "Mīr" (i.e. Sayyid) Muḥammad Mukārī with Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī.

It is a minor point, but it seems to me unlikely that Bahā'u'llāh delivered his discourse to Mukārī on the way to the mosque, as Qazvīnī alleges in his letter (he was not himself allowed to go to the mosque with Bahā'u'llāh, so he is repeating perhaps garbled hearsay). Rather, Khādimu'llāh says Bahā'u'llāh delivered his sermon to Mukārī on the way back from the mosque, and to this he was certainly an eyewitness, and most probably was the one who recorded or memorized the discourse for later transcription. Because the sermon to Mukārī says that Bahā'u'llāh "will go" to the mosque, it may have been thought necessary that it was composed on the way there rather than on the way back. But this approach to the



text is overly literal, ignoring the possibility that the future tense is a rhetorical device, and it contradicts Khādimu'llāh's eyewitness account.

Further confusion was introduced by Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Isfahānī, whose account seems especially untrustworthy in some regards. Khādimu'llāh's narrative, written presumably in the 1880s, contains no mention of any participation in these events either by the Ottoman governor of Edirne or of the city notables, and does not speak of crowds at any point lining Bahā'u'llāh's path. Had these persons and events been involved in the story, given how much prestige they bestow on Bahā'u'llāh, it seems to me highly unlikely that Khādimu'llāh would have neglected them. Nor are they mentioned by Qazvīnī, another eyewitness. Still, the author of *The Delight of Hearts* says that Azal wrote a letter to Hurşid Paşa, the Ottoman governor of Edirne, complaining about Bahā'u'llāh and charging that he was not sharing the Ottoman stipend with the other Bābīs (Isfahānī 1914: 76–77; 1980: 22). (Bahā'u'llāh denied this vehemently, and also at one point has some fun with the Azalīs, saying that these same persons who complain so bitterly about needing a bigger share of the Ottoman stipend also claim to be divine.) Isfahānī has Hurşid Paşa showing the letter to Bahā'u'llāh and seeking advice on how to deal with the conflict. Bahā'u'llāh is said to have offered to meet Azal any time, and to acknowledge the justice of his claims were he actually to come to such a rendezvous. Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī reports that the governor first suggested to Azal that he go to Bahā'u'llāh's house, but that Azal declined, saying that he and his brother did not visit each other's houses. (This statement probably echoes Azal's view of his brother as ritually polluted). The alternative of the governor's mansion was rejected because, Azal was supposed to have said, Bahā'u'llāh's Shī'ite sensibilities made him see civil government as a usurpation of authority that should belong to the Imam. Finally, he is said to have suggested the Great Mosque of Sultan Selim as the meeting place. Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī also depicts a thronging crowd around Bahā'u'llāh as he marched to the mosque that Friday afternoon, stopping traffic, with many in the crowd attempting to kiss his feet.

All of these assertions are lacking in earlier and more reliable reports, and they seem to me to be pure fantasy. We are told by eyewitness Āqā Ḥusayn Āshchī that the governor, Hurşid Paşa, did have social relations with Bahā'u'llāh (Āshchī 1997: 43–44). But neither Khādimu'llāh nor Bahā'u'llāh refer to any role in these events

for the governor, and it is absolutely incredible that they should not have mentioned it if he had had one. Moreover, it is not plausible that there were crowds in the street around Bahā'u'llāh as he went to the mosque. The crowds would already have been *in* the mosques, since it was the time of Friday congregational prayers. Other sources, like Mīrzā Javād, simply note that Bahā'u'llāh's chanting of verses as he walked toward the mosque elicited the amazement of by standers who saw him. Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī also depicts the governor and city notables as accompanying Bahā'u'llāh from the Sultan Selim mosque to the Mevlevī *tekiye* and sitting with him at the latter place. These elements of Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī's account strike me as almost certainly untrue. Unfortunately, the great early twentieth-century Bahā'ī historian, Fāḍil Māzandarānī, gives credence to some of these details from Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī in his account of the incident (Māzandarānī 1999: 5: 27–29). Shoghi Effendī, on the other hand, does not mention any role for the governor. He does, however, attribute a role to Sayyid Muḥammad Mukārī of Shiraz in pressing Azal to issue the initial dare and depicts Mukārī as a strong partisan of Bahā'u'llāh, something that the phrasing of Khādimu'llāh's account makes most unlikely. The latter proposition is flatly contradicted by Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī, who plainly says that Mukārī was initially a partisan of Azal.

From a welter of conflicting accounts and detail, I have attempted to construct as complete and as plausible a picture of events on that long weekend of September, 1867 as is possible from currently available sources. In my telling, the crisis began more distantly with the conflict between Azal and Bahā'u'llāh in 1866–1867, and more proximately with Bahā'u'llāh's "dismissal" of Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī, who appears to have been the one who convinced Azal to issue the challenge to a divine test. On the morning of that Friday in September 1867, Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī Shīrāzī, a newly arrived old-time Bābī, was sitting with partisans of Azal at the tobacco shop of the Shi'ite, Ḥasan Āqā Salmāsī. He was told about Azal's challenge to a *mubāhalih*, which functioned in the way Douglas explained, as a ritual of separation intended to uphold the structure of the Bābī religion by demarcating the vicar or the messiah as having passed beyond acceptable boundaries, having become impure and accursed. Mukārī hurried to Bahā'u'llāh's residence, the house of 'Izzat Āqā, where he informed Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī, Bahā'u'llāh's brother, of the announced rendezvous at the Sultan Selim mosque. He was sent back to Azal to confirm that Bahā'u'llāh would be there, and one

of Azal's wives replied that so would Azal. Mukārī rejoined Bahā'u'llāh at the mosque, where Bahā'u'llāh spent the afternoon reciting verses and waiting. After some time, he sent Mukārī for a second time to Azal, who begged off on grounds of severe illness, and who asked that Bahā'u'llāh appoint another day for the challenge. At sunset Bahā'u'llāh, Mukārī, and Khādīmu'llāh left the mosque and walked in the streets of Edirne, with Bahā'u'llāh delivering a messianic discourse to Mukārī, announcing himself as a new Moses, and as the Return of the Bāb and Muḥammad. They stopped at the tobacco shop and Bahā'u'llāh told Ḥasan Āqā what had happened. Then Bahā'u'llāh stopped in at the Mevlevī Sufi chanting and dancing session that evening. When he arrived home, he composed the *Tablet of the Divine Test* and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' calligraphed it. He sent it the next day with Nabīl Zarandī to Ḥasan Āqā's shop in an attempt to have it delivered to Azal and to receive from him a sealed reply, but in this mission Nabīl failed, though he kept trying all day Saturday, Sunday and Monday.

Azal's unwillingness to follow through on his own challenge appears to have caused his stock to fall enormously both among the Bābīs in Edirne and those in Iran, despite attempts of his partisans to muddy the waters. The weekend of the divine test was a crucial propaganda tool for Bahā'ī missionaries in Iran, and helps explain the relatively rapid desertion of Azal by so many Bābīs in Iran who had relatively recently looked to him for leadership. The entire incident appears to have been a crucial miscalculation on his part. He seems to have thought Bahā'u'llāh would not consent to face him. And while he may have genuinely been ill on the Friday he had appointed for the challenge, most Bābīs, who interpreted reality rather symbolically, might well have seen his illness itself, on the day he chose for the confrontation, as a divine sign. Certainly, few could forgive him for not meeting Bahā'u'llāh's subsequent challenge.

The incident spelled closure for the Bahā'īs in their relations with Azal and the Azalīs. No further serious hope seems to have been entertained of restoring Bābī unity. The Azalī-Bahā'ī split was permanent, and the Bahā'īs had become convinced that they needed fear nothing from Azal. With the passage of time, chroniclers such as Mīrzā Ḥaydar 'Alī Isfahānī embellished the story, adding in pashas and street crowds, and thus endowing the events with the sort of exoteric significance that the Bābī-Bahā'īs attributed to them on the esoteric plane. Subsequent Bahā'ī theologian-historians began the

process of erasing Azal from history, denying his popularity among the Bābīs 1854–1865, and finding it implausible that an old-time Bābī like Mukārī could have initially leaned toward Azal. By the time we get to Ṭāherzādeh in the 1970s, information to the contrary is being actively suppressed in English. Bahā'u'llāh in the view of these later partisans had to have not only won out that September, he had to have always possessed supremacy. That the magnitude of Bahā'u'llāh's victory can only be diminished by rendering Azal a non-entity did not faze them.

At the time, Bahā'u'llāh was able to cast the crisis rhetorically as a replaying of the contest between Moses and Pharaoh's magicians. He depicted Azal as the representative of hidebound and selfish religious hierarchy, prideful and haughty before God. From the point of view of Bahā'u'llāh's partisans, Azal played the worldly "magician." Bahā'u'llāh was a serene and fearless Moses, imbued with charismatic power and ensured of success. His "staff" of divine support and audaciousness swallowed up Azal's challenge and erased the efficacy of whatever poor gifts the latter might have possessed. The ritual of separation constituted by the *mubāhalih* was felt in the aftermath by a majority of Bābīs to have demarcated a social and cosmic boundary between the wrongness of Azal and his partisans and the rightness of Bahā'u'llāh and his. Bahā'u'llāh's ability to enchant the mundane world by pointing to signs within it of recurrent divine dramas was one key to his growing popularity among the Bābīs. It seems to me most likely that Azal was bluffing all along. He believed in shunning, and in the ritual pollution of the Bahā'īs. His reclusiveness probably reflected this belief that he was living in an unclean world. He refused to come to Bahā'u'llāh's house as a matter of course, and probably never intended to come into Bahā'u'llāh's presence in a Sunni mosque. He was, however, egged on in issuing the challenge by Mīrzā Muḥammad Isfahānī, in the hopes of creating some ritual theater by presenting Bahā'u'llāh with a challenge to which he could not respond. The *mubāhalih* would have been an easy victory for Azal if Bahā'u'llāh had also been unalterably wedded to the practice of shunning and belief in ritual pollution. He would have declined to meet Azal, and so would have been the party that was faced down. Azal and Isfahānī almost certainly believed that this would be the outcome. This calculation depended upon the practice of some strict Shī'ites of holding non-believers and heretics to be ritually polluted (*najis*) and untouchable. If both sides

treated the other as ritually impure, no one would appear for the divine test, and the initial challenger would win by default. By declaring himself the One whom God shall make manifest, foretold by the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh had introduced a schism into Bābīsm and so broken “that which should be joined,” transgressing a clear structural line of both social and cosmic import (as in the Douglas quote above). Azal probably could not bear to come into his presence for this reason, and he believed that his half-brother felt the same way about him. Here Azal made a crucial error. Bahā'u'llāh was moving toward a universalist vision of human unity across religious and other boundaries, and had already abolished the whole notion of ritual pollution. He might not enjoy meeting those of whom he disapproved, but nothing in his beliefs categorically forbade him from doing so. To the contrary, his followers had been taught by spring of 1867 “that no one should avert or religiously abstain from intercourse with another, of Jews, Christians, Mohammadans and others.” It may well have been Bahā'u'llāh's emerging globalist ideology that allowed him victory over the more closed, esoteric, and sectarian Azalī movement.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Amanat, Abbas. 1989. *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Bābī Movement in Iran, 1844–1850*. Ithaca, N.Y., Cornell University Press.
- Arberry, A.J. 1973. *The Koran Interpreted*. 2 vols. in 1. London, Macmillan.
- Āshchī, Aqa Ḥusayn. 1997. *Tārikh-i Vaqā'i-i Baghdad va Istanbul va Edirne va Ākkā*. East Lansing, Mi., H-Bahai, at: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/ashchi/ashchi.htm>
- Bāb, Sayyid 'Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī. 2001. *Alvaḥ-i Vaṣayā*. East Lansing, Mi. H-Bahai, at: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/areprint/bab/S-Z/vasaya/vasaya.htm>.
- Bahā'u'llāh. 1971. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*. Trans. Shoghi Effendi. Wilmette, Ill., Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1982. *Lawḥ-i Mubārak khūṭāb bih Shaykh Muḥammad Taqī Mujtahid-i Isfahānī mā'rūf bih Najafī*. Hofheim-Langenhain, Bahā'ī-Verlag.
- Bahā'u'llāh [with Khādīmu'llāh]. 1973. “Lawḥ-i Mubāhalih.” In 'Abdu'l-Hāmid Ishrāq-Khavārī, ed. *Mā'idih-i Asmānī*, 9 vols. Tehran, MIMA. 4: 277–281.
- Bahā'u'llāh [with Khādīmu'llāh]. “Lawḥ.” In 'Abdu'l-Hāmid Ishrāq-Khavārī, ed. *Mā'idih-i Asmānī*, 9 vols. Tehran, MIMA. 7: 238–246.
- Balyuzi, H.M. 1980. *Bahā'u'llāh, The King of Glory*. Oxford: George Ronald.
- Browne, E.G., ed. 1910. *Kūṭab-i Nuṭāt al-Kāf: Being the Earliest History of the Bābīs*. Leiden, E.J. Brill.
- , ed. 1918. *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.
- Cole, Juan R.I. 1997. “Bahā'u'llāh's ‘Book of the Tigris’ (*Ṣaḥīfih-i Shattīyih*): Text, Translation, Commentary.” *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts* vol. 1, no. 1 (April) at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/shatt.htm>

- . 1998a. *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahā'ī Faith in the 19th Century Middle East*. New York, Columbia University Press.
- . 1998b. "Nuḡṭat al-Kāf and the Bābī Chronicle Traditions." *Research Notes in Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Studies*, Vol. 2, no.6 (August 1998) at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/notes/vol2/Bābīhist.htm>
- . 2000. "Bahā'u'llāh's Tablets concerning the Divine Test." *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts*, vol. 4, no. 6 (September) at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol4/mubahal.htm>
- . 2001. "Bahā'u'llāh's 'Tablet of the Son [Jesus]': Translation and Commentary." *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts*, vol. 5, no. 2 (May) at: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol5/son/bhson.htm>
- . 2002. "Bahā'u'llāh's 'Tablet of God' Text, Translation, Commentary." *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts*, vol. 6, no. 1 (January) at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/vol6/surall.htm>.
- Dahajī, Sayyid Miḥdī. 2000. *Risālih*. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 2000, pp. 36–38, on the Web at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol4/dahaji/dahaji.htm>.
- Douglas, Mary. 1984. *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo*. London, Routledge.
- Isfahanī, Mirza Ḥaydar 'Alī. 1914. *Bihjat as-Sudūr*. Bombay: Deccan Printing Press.
- . 1980. *Stories from the Delight of Hearts*. Trans. A.Q. Faizi. Los Angeles, Kalimāt Press.
- Lambden, Stephen. 1991. "Some Notes on Bahā'u'llāh's Gradually Evolving Claims of the Adrianople/Edirne Period." *Bahā'ī Studies Bulletin* 5(3)–6(1) (June): 75–83.
- MacEoin, Denis. 1989 "Divisions and Authority Claims in Bābīsm (1850–1866)." *Studia Iranica* 18, (1): 93–129.
- Māzandarānī, Asadu'llāh Fāḍil. 1999. *Tārīkh-i Ṣuḥūr al-Haqq*. Vol. 5. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol3/tzh5/5tzh.htm>
- Qazvīnī, Mīrzā Javād. 1918. "An Epitome of Bābī and Bahā'ī History to A.D. 1898." In E.G. Browne, ed. and trans., *Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press. This English translation is keyed to the Arabic text, available at: <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol4/Qazvīnī/Qazvīnī.htm>
- . 1999. "Khaṭṭ bih Bābiyān-i Qazvīn." In Asadu'llāh Fāḍil Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh-i Ṣuḥūr al-Haqq*. Vol. 5. East Lansing, Mi.: H-Bahai, 39n–44n at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol3/tzh5/5tzh.htm>
- Rabbani, Shoghi Effendi. 1970 *God Passes By*. Wilmette, Ill.: Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Salmānī, Muḥammad 'Alī. 1997. *Sharḥ-i Ḥāl*. Lansing, MI: H-Bahā'ī, 1997 at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/arabic/vol1/Salmani.htm>
- . 1982. *My Memories of Bahā'u'llāh*. Trans. Marzieh Gail. Los Angeles, Kalāmāt Press.
- Stauffer, Robert, ed. 1997. "Petition of March, 1867, to the U.S. Government, by Bahā'īs of Baghdad: Text, Consular Translation." *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts* vol. 1, no. 3 (July) at <http://www2.h-net.msu.edu/~bahai/trans/bhpetit.htm>
- Ṭāherzādeh, Ḥabīb. 1974–1987. *The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh*. 4 vols. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Zarandī, Muḥammad "Nabīl." 1999. "Dar bāriḥ-i Mubāhilih." In Fāḍil Māzandarānī, *Tārīkh-i Ṣuḥūr al-Haqq*, vol. 5, p. 30n.
- . 1924. *Mathnavī-yi Mulla Muḥammad 'Alī Ṣārandī al-mulaqqab bi al-Nabīl dar Tārīkh-i Amr-i Bahā'ī*. Cairo, al-Matba'ah al-'Arabiyyah.

*This page intentionally left blank*

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

Necati Alkan

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

### 1. *Reform and Opposition in the Ottoman Empire*

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



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

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

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

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

## 2. *Young Ottomans and Bahā’īs*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

### 3. *Young Turks and "Bābis"*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### 4. Abdullah Cevdet and the Bahā’ī Faith

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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



wounded, we have conquered but our field of battle never was coloured by anyone's blood'.

Never does it befit the station of those who were sent as a mercy to the people to kill but to be killed!

'Abdu'l-Bahā', who said 'the candle gives its life: drop-by-drop it sheds its very essence in order to diffuse those tears. This shall be an example, a model for you', indeed burned like a torch, and after kindling thousands of torches he left to be alight in other worlds . . .

But how much heat and light can spread from this spark? In order to heat the world the fire in Bahā'u'llāh's soul is necessary, a spiritual and divine fire to illuminate and heat at the same time.

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

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

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

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

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

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

### *Conclusion*

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

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

### BIBLIOGRAPHY

#### *Official Records*

Başbakanlık Osmanlı Arşivi (BOA; Prime Ministry Ottoman Archive), Istanbul.

- 1) *İrade Hususî*, no. 65, 19 Cemaziyülevvel 1326/18 Haziran 1908.
- 2) *Yıldız Esas Evrakı* 87/86 (31-1110/1709), 1313/1896. (no exact date)
- 3) *Yıldız Tasnifi Sadaret Hususi Maruzat Evrakı*, no. 352/12, 13, 23, 28 and no. 354/13, 19 Muharrem 1314/30 June 1896.

#### *Books and Articles*

- 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. 1330/1912. *Makātib-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā'*, vol. 2, Cairo.
- . 1982<sup>2</sup>. *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust: Wilmette.
- Abdullah Cevdet. 1922. 'Mezheb-i Bahau'llah Din-i Ümem', *İctihad*, no. 144, 1 March 1922, 3015–17.
- Algar, H. 1970. 'Introduction to the History of Freemasonry in Iran', *Middle Eastern Studies* 6: 3, 276–96.
- . 1973. *Mirza Malkum Khan*, Berkeley, Los Angeles.
- . 1969. *Religion and State in Iran, 1785–1906*, Berkeley, Los Angeles.
- Alkan, N. 1998. *Die Bahā'ī-Religion und ihre Beziehung zu den islamischen Reformbewegungen am Ausgang des Osmanischen Reiches, 1860–1922* (unpublished MA thesis), Ruhr-Universität Bochum, Germany.
- Arslan, A. 1896. 'Une visite au chef du Babisme', *Revue Bleue* 6, no. 10, September 5, 314–16.
- Bahā'u'llāh 1988. *Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh Revealed after the Kitāb-i-Aqdas*, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Ill. Tr. By Habib Taherzadeh et al. (pocket-size).
- Balyuzi, H.M. 1980. *Bahā'u'llāh: King of Glory*, George Ronald: Oxford.
- Bayat, Mangol 1974. "Mirza Āqā Khān Kirmānī: A Nineteenth Century Persian Nationalist" in *Middle Eastern Studies* 10: 34–59.
- Bereketzade İ.H. 1332/1915. *Yâd-ı Mâzî*, Tevsi-i Tibaat: Istanbul; in modern Turkish, ed. Mümtaz Habib Güven, Nehir Yayınları, Istanbul 1997.
- Berkes, N. 1964. Niyazi: *The Development of Secularism in Turkey*, McGill: London (Hurst & Co., London 1998).
- Bilgegil, M.K. 1970. *Żiyâ Paşa Hakkında Bir Araştırma*; Atatürk Üniversitesi Basımevi: Erzurum.

- Buck, C. 1991. "Bahā'u'llāh as a World Reformer", *Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 3: 4, 23–70.
- Cahun, L. 1924. "Le Monde Islamique de 1840 à 1870", *Histoire Générale du IV<sup>e</sup> Siècle à Nos Jours* (eds. Ernest Lavisse, Alfred Rambaud), vol. XI: *Revolutions et Guerres Nationales, 1848–1870*; Librairie Armand Colin: Paris (3rd edition), 527–545.
- Cole, Juan R.I. 1998a. "Autobiography and Silence: The Early Career of Shaykhū'r-Ra'īs Qājār", in: Johann C. Bürgel/Isabel Schayani (eds.), *Der Iran im 19. Jahrhundert und die Entstehung der Bahā'ī-Religion*, Olms-Verlag: Hildesheim.
- . 1997. 'Bahā'u'llāh's "Tablet of Fu'ād" (*Lawḥ-i Fu'ad*): Text, Translation, Commentary. *Translations of Shaykhī, Bābī and Bahā'ī Texts* vol. 1, no. 5 (July).
- . 1992. 'Iranian Millenarianism and Democratic Thought in the 19th Century Middle East', in: *International Journal of Middle East Studies (IJMES)* 24, 1–26.
- . 1998b. *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahā'ī Faith in the Nineteenth Century Middle East*, Cornell University Press.
- . 1981. "Muhammad 'Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā: A Dialogue on the Bahā'ī Faith", in *World Order* 15, nos. 3–4 (Spring/Summer), 7–16.
- . 2001. 'Shaykh al-Ra'īs and Sultan Abdūlhamid II: The Iranian Dimension of Pan-Islam' (forthcoming; copy in author's hand).
- Creel, F.W. 1978. *The Program and Ideology of Dr. Abdullah Cevdet: A Study of the Origins of Kemalism in Turkey* (unpublished PhD thesis), The University of Chicago.
- Davison, R. 1963. *Reform in the Ottoman Empire, 1856–1876*; Princeton University Press.
- Dawlatabadī, Y. 1983. *ayāt-i Yahyā* 1, 4th ed. Tehran.
- Düzdağı, M.E. 1977. *Türkiye'de Masonluk Meselesi*, 2 vols. Cihad Yayınları: Istanbul.
- Devereux, R. 1963 *The First Ottoman Constitutional Period: A Study of the Midhat Constitution and Parliament*; Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press.
- Earl C. 1892. *Excerpts from Persia*, vol. 1.
- Emin Â. 'Bahai hareketi hakkında ilmî bir tettebbu', *İctihad*, no. 140, 31 Kanun-i Evvel (November) 1921, 2952–2955; no. 142, 31 Kanun-i Sâni (January) 1922, 2983–2985; no. 143, 15 Şubat (February) 1922, 2999–3003.
- Gün, İzzet Nuri/Çeliker, Yalçın 1968. *Masonluk ve Masonlar*, Yağnur Yayınevi: Istanbul.
- Hanioglu, M. Şükrü. 1976–77. 'Ehl-i Sulh Birliği', in *İstanbul Üniversitesi İktisat Fakültesi Mecmuası* 36, no. 1–4, 239–67.
- . 1988. 'Abdullah Cevdet', in *İslam Ansiklopedisi* (new edition), vol. 1, Istanbul.
- . 1981. *Bir Siyasal Düşünür Olarak Doktor Abdullah Cevdet ve Dönemi*, Istanbul: Üçdal Neşriyat, (PhD thesis).
- . 1986. *Bir Siyasal Örgüt Olarak Osmanlı İttihad ve Terakki Cemiyeti ve Jön Türklük, (1889–1902)*, vol. 1, İletişim Yayınları: Istanbul.
- . 1995. *The Young Turks in Opposition*, New York: Oxford University Press.
- Horten, M. 1916. "Muhammad Abduh: sein Leben und seine theologische-philosophische Gedankenwelt," in *Beiträge zur Kenntnis des Orients* XIII: 85–114; XIV: 74–128.
- İğdemir, U. 1937. *Kuleli Vak'ası Hakkında bir Araştırma*, Ankara.
- Keddie, N.R. 1962. "Religion and Irreligion in Early Iranian Nationalism" in: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, IV: 265–295.
- . 1966. *Religion and Rebellion in Iran The Tobacco Protest of 1891–1892*, London.
- . 1972. *Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn "al-Afghānī" A Political Biography*, Berkeley et al.
- Kuntay, M.C. 1944–56. *Namık Kemal*, vols. 1, 2/I–II, Maarif Matbaası: Istanbul.
- Lavisse, E., Rambaud, A. 1924. *Revolutions et Guerres Nationales, 1848–1870*; Librairie Armand Colin: Paris (3rd edition) vol. XI.
- Lewis, B. 1968. *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, London: Oxford University Press.
- MacEoin, D. 1983. "From Bābism to Bahā'ism: Problems of Militancy, Quietism and Conflation in the Construction of a Religion", in *Religion* 13:219–55.

- Mardin, Ş. 1962. *The Genesis of Young Ottoman Thought: A Study in the Modernization of Turkish Political Ideas*, Princeton; Turkish transl.: *Yeni Osmanlı Düşüncesinin Doğuşu*, İletişim: İstanbul 1996.
- . 1964. *Jön Türklerin Siyasî Fikirleri*, 1895–1908, İstanbul (İletişim: 1992<sup>4</sup>).
- . 1969. *Continuity and Change in the Ideas of the Young Turks*, expanded text of a lecture given at the School of Business Administration and Economics-Robert College.
- McCants, W. 2001. “I never understood any of this from ‘Abbās Effendi.” ‘Abduh’s Knowledge of the Bahā’i Teachings and His Friendship with ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ ‘Abbās”; in this volume.
- Melikoff, I. 1988. “Namık Kemal’in Bektaşiliği ve Masonluğu”, *Tarih ve Toplum*, no.60: 337–39.
- . 2000<sup>3</sup>. “Türkiye’de Aydınlanma ve Bektaşiliğin Rolü”, *Türkiye’de Aydınlanma Hareketi: Dünü, Bugünü, Sorunları* (25–26 Nisan 1997 Strasbourg Sempozyumu), Server Tanilli’ye Saygı; Adam Yayınları: İstanbul, 25–33.
- . 1999<sup>2</sup>. *Hacı Bektaş: Efsaneden Gerçeğe*, Cumhuriyet Kitapları: İstanbul, 1999<sup>2</sup>; transl. of *Hadji Bektach, un mythe et ses avatars* (Brill: Leiden et al. 1998).
- Momen, M. (1981): *The Bābī and Bahā’ī Religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, George Ronald: Oxford.
- . 1983. “The Bahā’ī Influence on the Reform Movements of the Islamic World in the 1860’s and 1870’s”, in: *Bahā’ī Studies Bulletin* 2 (2). (ed. Stephen Lambden), Newcastel-upon-Thyne: 47–65.
- . 1982. “The Trial of Mullā’ ‘Alī Bastāmī: A Combined Sunnī-Shī’ī Fatwā Against the Bāb”, *Iran* 20 (British Institute of Persian Studies): 113–43.
- Nazif, S. 1923. *Nasıruddin Şah ve Babiler*, Kanaat Kütüphanesi Matbaası: İstanbul.
- Scharbrodt, O. 2000. *Theological Responses to Modernity in the 19th Century Middle East: The Examples of Bahā’ullāh and Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, School of Oriental and African Studies, London (unpublished MA thesis; copy in author’s hand).
- Shaw, S.J. Ezel K. (1977), *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, 2 vols. Cambridge University Press.
- Shoghi Effendi. 1974. *Bahā’ī Administration*, Bahā’ī Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Ill.
- . 1973<sup>2</sup>. *God Passes By*, Bahā’ī Publishing Trust: Wilmette, Ill. (1944).
- Süssheim, K. 1938 “‘Abd Allah Djewdet”, *Encyclopedia of Islam* (EI<sup>1</sup>; Supplement), Leiden, Leipzig, 55–60.
- Tansel, F.A. 1967. *Namık Kemal’in Hususî Mektupları*, 3 vols. Ankara.
- Tarih ve Medeniyet*: ‘Efgânî İslâm’ın neresinde? Sultan II. Abdülhamid ve Hür İslâm Sempozyumu’ndan notlar’, in, no. 47, Şubat (February) 1998, 51–55.
- Temimi, Mehmet Refik, Yazar, Mehmet Behcet. 1335/1917. *Beyrut Vilayeti*, 2 vols., Vilayet Matbaası: Beirut.
- Tevfik, E. 1974. *Yeni Osmanlılar Tarihi* (ed. Ziyad Ebüzziya), 3 vols. Kitab Yayınları, İstanbul.
- Uzunçarşılı, İsmail Hakkı/Karal, Enver Ziya 1961–83. *Osmanlı Tarihi*, vols. 1–8, Türk Tarih Kurumu: Ankara.
- Ülken, Hilmi. Ziya. 1994<sup>4</sup>. *Türkiye’de Çağdaş Düşünce Tarihi*, İstanbul (1966).

“I NEVER UNDERSTOOD ANY OF THIS FROM  
‘ABBĀS EFFENDI”: MUḤAMMAD ‘ABDUH’S KNOWLEDGE  
OF THE BAHĀ’Ī TEACHINGS AND HIS FRIENDSHIP  
WITH ‘ABDU’L-BAHĀ’ ‘ABBĀS

William McCants

In the field of Islamic reform in the modern era, few figures have commanded the prestige and scholarly attention that has been accorded to Muḥammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905). Born in Egypt in the mid-nineteenth century, ‘Abduh rose from humble origins to attend the premier institution of Muslim learning, al-Azhar, engage in a brilliant career in journalism, participate in a revolt, and attain to the highest religious office in Egypt, that of Grand Mufti, in the twilight of his life. Many of his intellectual influences are well known, including his Ṣūfī uncle, Shaykh Darwīsh, and the itinerate revolutionary Jamāl ad-Dīn al-Afghānī. The latter enigmatic figure directed his disciple toward a career in journalism, and only months after Afghānī’s arrival in Egypt in 1876, ‘Abduh wrote an article for the first issue of *al-Ahrām* (September 3, 1876), the prominent Egyptian periodical. Afghānī also gathered a small circle of students from al-Azhar, many of whom went on to noteworthy political careers.

‘Abduh, the most prominent of this group, graduated from Azhar in 1877 and received a teaching position at the newly opened Dār al-‘Ulūm of Al-Azhar in 1878. During this period of time Khedive Tawfiq Pasha expelled Afghānī from Egypt in 1879 for his political machinations, and ‘Abduh was temporarily placed under house arrest. In 1880, ‘Abduh was appointed editor of *al-Waqā’i’ l-Miṣrīyya*, a government journal that he infused with new life, writing numerous essays on education and social reform. Following in his teacher’s footsteps, he reluctantly supported the ‘Urābī Revolt, which was subsequently crushed by the British, and led to foreign occupation of Egypt and the exile of ‘Abduh for three years. In January 1883 he left Egypt for Beirut to begin his exile. After a year in Beirut, Afghānī asked ‘Abduh to join him in Paris. Once there, the two formed a secret society, “*al-Urwa al-Wuthqā*,” and published a periodical by the same name, as a means of resisting colonial incursion into the

Muslim world. ‘Abduh penned most of the articles at Afghānī’s direction. The periodical lasted only seven months, but received a great deal of attention for its literary style and themes. Its political radicalism and call for revolution also attracted the attention of the British government, which blocked its import into India and Egypt.

‘Abduh returned to Beirut at the beginning of 1885, where he remained for three years. In 1888 Lord Cromer, the British High Commissioner for Egypt, invited him back to the land of his birth, where he rose through a number of government posts until his final appointment as Grand Mufti. The warm reception accorded him by the British government was partially due to fundamental changes in his concepts of social change. Previously, he advocated political revolution as the primary vehicle of development, with education serving a complimentary role. However, he later split with Afghānī and repudiated the revolutionary doctrine of his mentor in favor of evolutionary change predicated upon reforms in education. This was partly due to his disillusionment with the effectiveness of political revolution, which only seemed to replace one form of dictatorial government with another, and his fear of revolt by the rural masses. Democracy, ‘Abduh felt, could only be sustained by a population thoroughly educated in its rights and responsibilities.

At the end of his life, Muḥammad ‘Abduh penned a letter in Arabic to Leo Tolstoy. The aged savant wrote admiringly of the Russian writer’s efforts to reform education and religious thought, reforms that ‘Abduh fought for in the Muslim world throughout his entire adult life. On May 12, 1904, little over a year before the death of ‘Abduh, Leo Tolstoy penned his reply to the Mufti’s letter of greeting. In it, he praised the reformist efforts of his correspondent and ended it by asking the question: “What do you know of the Bāb and Bahā’u’llāh?” Almost one hundred years since the question was asked, it still remains unanswered.

The emergence of several letters exchanged between ‘Abduh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, the son of Bahā’u’llāh and his later designated successor, may provide a meaningful answer for the first time. The correspondence and additional evidence illumines a little known friendship between one of the most influential Muslim intellectuals of the last two hundred years and the leader of a messianic religious movement that is considered “heretical” by many of the claimants to ‘Abduh’s legacy, who seek to proscribe it in national courts and the court of public opinion. In this paper, I discuss the role of one of these



claimants, Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā’ (1865–1935). Born in Greater Syria, Ridā’ travelled to Cairo in 1897 to study with ‘Abduh. Although Ridā’ implicitly claimed ‘Abduh’s reformist legacy after the death of his mentor, he became increasingly conservative, as evinced by his later embrace of the ideals of the Wahhābī movement. In addition to his support for the Ottoman Caliphate and nationalist sentiments, Ridā’ is also known for his religious journal *al-Manār*. As ‘Abduh’s chief disciple, he played the predominant role in shaping his mentor’s legacy.

In this paper, I discuss the various narrative techniques he employed to obfuscate the relationship between ‘Abduh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. Further, I examine the correspondence between ‘Abduh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ and illustrate the subtle manner in which the latter conveyed his father’s theophanic claims to the Muslim intellectual. Finally, I suggest further avenues of research and indicate the possible existence of additional correspondence between the two men that may shed further light on inter-religious dialogue in the Middle East at the end of the 19th century.

### *Appearance of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’*

It may surprise Western scholars that Ridā’’s history of ‘Abduh is, in reality, “histories” of ‘Abduh, as it contains an amalgam of accounts by his associates and disciples. The challenge of judging the veracity of Ridā’’s account, therefore, is multiplied by the presence of numerous voices. For instance, the Mufti’s exile in Beirut is narrated by three authors: Rashīd Ridā’, Sayyid ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ, and Shakīb Arslān (two students of ‘Abduh in Beirut). The accounts do not differ significantly in content, recounting ‘Abduh’s lectures at the Sulṭānīyya school in Beirut, his dialogues with various religious leaders, his writing activities, the formation of a secret society for the reconciliation between the three major monotheistic religions, and a frequent stream of visitors to his home. Only on the latter theme does Arslān diverge from the narrative of Ridā’ and ‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ by noting the appearance of ‘Abbās Effendi (1844–1921) on ‘Abduh’s doorstep:

None of the notables or his acquaintances journeyed to Beirut without coming to greet him [‘Abduh]. He honored and exalted each one and, even if he disagreed with him in belief, he did not cease to respect him. Foremost among those he honored was ‘Abbās Effendi al-Bahā’,



leader of the Bābīs, even though the Bābī way is different from what the Shaykh believes and is the creed that as-Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn refuted so strongly. But he revered ‘Abbās Effendi’s knowledge, refinement, distinction, and high moral standards and ‘Abbās Effendi similarly honored ‘Abduh (Ridā’ 1931: 407).

‘Abbās Effendi, more commonly known as ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, was the son of the founder of the Bahā’ī religion, Mīrzā Ḥusayn ‘Alī (1817–1892), and later designated his successor and expounder of his teachings. The religion is often regarded as a continuation of a religious movement initiated in 1844 by Sayyid ‘Alī Muḥammad (1819–1850), surnamed the Bāb (the Gate) from Shīrāz, Persia, who proclaimed himself the long-awaited return of the Hidden Imam and declared a new religious dispensation abrogating the Qur’ān. Throughout his prodigious writings, he wrote of a coming “manifestation of God” (*maẓhar allāh*). This station was later publicly claimed in 1863 by Ḥusayn ‘Alī (one of his followers who adopted the title Bahā’u’llāh), who guided the nascent Bābī community after the execution of the Bāb on July 9, 1850. The majority of the followers of the Bāb subsequently gave their allegiance to Bahā’u’llāh and became known as Bahā’īs.

At the time of his visit to Beirut, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ was a prisoner of the Ottoman Empire in ‘Akkā, Palestine, as a result of his father’s claim to be the recipient of a new revelation from God that abrogated the laws of the Qur’ān. At the core of Bahā’u’llāh’s worldview is the belief that the teachings of the various prophets represent a progressive unfoldment of religious truth suited to the exigencies of an ever-advancing society. Claiming to be the latest in this line of prophets and the bearer of a new revelation from God, his teachings emphasized the recognition of the oneness and the interdependence of humanity, which led him to call for the creation of global, transnational institutions to regulate human affairs. These teachings were later articulated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ during his travels in the West after being freed from Ottoman imprisonment in 1908 following the Young Turk revolution.

Although technically a prisoner, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ was invited to Beirut around 1879 by Miḍḥat Pāshā (d. 1883), the constitutional reformer and, at that time, governor of Syria. The date of his visit was calculated by Hassan Balyuzi, who notes “According to British consular records, Miḍḥat Pāshā was Governor-General in Damascus from November 1878 to August 1880. He visited Haifa and ‘Akkā

in May 1880." Balyuzi further asserts that 'Abduh met 'Abdu'l-Bahā' during the latter's visit to Beirut. (Balyuzi 1980: 378).

However, 'Abduh was in Egypt at this time, probably living in exile in his village due to his involvement with Afghānī. There is little doubt, however, that the two actually met, as attested by both Arslān and later by 'Abduh in a conversation with Ridā', who asserted that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' visited frequently during his sojourn in Beirut (Ridā' 1931: 930). We must assume, therefore, that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' visited Beirut at least a second time, between the years 1884–1888.

### *Ridā's Narrative Treatment of 'Abdu'l-Bahā'*

Not content with Arslān's account of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's visit, Ridā' informs his readers in a footnote that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' practiced *at-taḳyīyah*, or "dissimulation," and falsely portrayed himself as a Shī'ī reformer, thereby deceiving 'Abduh. Further, Ridā' assures his readers that he will clarify 'Abduh's relationship with 'Abdu'l-Bahā' in a later section (Ridā' 1931: 307, n. 2). Indeed, towards the end of his biography, Ridā' fulfills his pledge by offering an account of a conversation with 'Abduh in the summer of 1897 (for translation, see Cole 1981). In framing the conversation, Ridā' again alleges that his master was not informed of the true nature of the Bahā'ī teachings, the implication being that he would instantly have repudiated 'Abdu'l-Bahā'.

In his discussion with Ridā', 'Abduh does not focus on the religious beliefs of 'Abdu'l-Bahā' but rather on his efforts to change society peacefully through educational reform. At the beginning of their conversation, he professes his ignorance of Bahā'ī teachings but remarks, "This sect is the only sect that works diligently for the acquisition of the arts and sciences among the Muslims, the 'ulama' and the intellectuals" (Ridā' 1931: 930). In the course of their conversation, Ridā' informs his teacher that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' denied the finality of Muḥammad's prophethood and affirmed the need for a new revelation from God suited to the exigencies of humanity. 'Abduh responds that "I never understood any of this from 'Abbās Effendi. He only explained that they have undertaken to reform the Shī'ite sect and bring it closer to the Sunnis" (Ridā' 1931: 934, translated by Cole 1981). Even if we are reluctant to wholeheartedly accept Ridā's account, it is reasonable to presume that 'Abduh, as a devout

Muslim, did not approve of Bahā'ī theology and eschatology. However, I will present new evidence that suggests that he was not entirely forthright with his disciple regarding his knowledge of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's "heterodoxy."

In his article on 'Abduh and Ridā's conversation about the Bahā'ī religion, Juan Cole contends that the Mufti was well informed of the nature of the Bahā'ī religion, although he offers no evidence (1981: 8). Thankfully, new material has come to light in the last twenty years that supports Cole's contention.

It is likely that the Mufti's initial exposure to the Bahā'ī teachings transpired prior to his meeting with 'Abdu'l-Bahā'. During 'Abduh's first period of exile to Beirut in 1883, he and Abu Turāb began to translate Afghānī's "Refutation of the Materialists," which contained a highly inflammatory reference to the Bahā'ī teachings. The Persian original contains the following characterization of the "Bābīs" (a term that Afghānī used to refer to both followers of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh):

Let it be noted that the *Bābīs*, who recently appeared in Iran and iniquitously spilled the blood of thousands of God's servants, were the apprentices of those same neicheris [naturalists] of Alamut [*Ismailīs*] and the slaves, or bearers of begging bowls, of those men of the mountain, and their teachings are an example of bāṭinī teachings. We must anticipate what further effects their beliefs will have among the Iranian people in the future (Keddie 1968: 158).

Interestingly, 'Abduh and Abu Turāb's translation of the Persian text into Arabic makes no mention of the "Bābīs:"

It is clear that a group (*fī'ah*) has appeared in recent days in some of the Eastern countries that has shed abundant blood and murdered noble souls. It appears under a name that is not far removed from the names of similar movements that preceded it. They picked up the remnants of the materialists (*dahrīyyū*) of Alamut and the naturalists (*Ṭabī'īyyū*) of Kardkūh and its teachings are like the teachings of the *Bāṭinīs*. We must see what the effect is of its innovations [*bida'*] in the community in which it appeared (Afghānī 1973: 167).

Why did 'Abduh edit out the specific reference to the "Bābīs?" If, as Ridā' contended, he knew nothing of the movement, what purpose would it serve to substantively alter the imprecations of Afghānī's original text? Given the date of the publication of the translation, 1885–86 (Keddie 1972: 5), it is possible that 'Abduh already had a favorable view of the Bahā'īs or at least did not wish to further prej-

udice Afghānī's audience against them. Although speculative, this helps explain the curious omission of the name of the "group."

Further, 'Abduh characterizes the "Bābī" teachings as *bida'*, which literally means "innovation." In an Islamic context, the word is the closest equivalent to the English word "heresy." The use of this word is an advance on Afghānī's pejorative statements, which stopped short of accusing the movement of *bida'*. It also indicates that, whether 'Abduh knew 'Abdu'l-Bahā' personally by this time or not, he probably thought of the movement as "heretical." Strikingly, it did not seem to dampen 'Abduh's eagerness to befriend the "heretic," as we shall see in the following pages.

It is reasonable to assume, therefore, that 'Abduh's characterization of the Bābī and Bahā'ī teachings as *bida'* derived from knowledge of the teachings themselves. This knowledge was probably gleaned in large part from Afghānī, who nurtured a long-standing enmity toward the Bahā'īs, as evinced by the hostile article attributed to him in Butrus Bustani's encyclopedia (1876: 4–16). Despite his repudiation of the teachings of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh, Afghānī freely associated and intrigued with Azalī Bābīs, who refused to recognize the claims of Bahā'u'llāh and followed his half-brother, Mīrzā Yaḥyā, who named himself Ṣubḥ al-Azal (Morn of Eternity). It seems very likely, therefore, that 'Abduh, as Afghānī's closest collaborator, was exposed to his master's prejudices towards the movement. It is puzzling, however, that Ridā' would assert the ignorance of his mentor despite his knowledge of the close association between 'Abduh and Afghānī during this period of time.

In addition to Ridā's contention that 'Abduh was ignorant of the true nature of the Bahā'ī teachings, he also asserts that he dissuaded his master from his favorable opinion of the Bahā'ī religion. However, he offers no evidence of 'Abduh's disaffection other than his own word. It is possible, as Cole notes, that the polemic was intended to exonerate his teacher rather than adhere to the truth (Cole 1981: 8–9). As a claimant to 'Abduh's reformist legacy, the public perception of his mentor's association with and admiration for the leader of a "heretical" movement was anathema to Ridā'. Indeed, Ridā's hostility toward the Bahā'ī teachings was kindled as a student in Turabluṣ, where he had read an article on the history of the Bābī and Bahā'ī movements in the secular journal *al-Muqtaṭaf* (Mīrzā Faḍlu'llāh, 1896) penned by Mīrzā Abī'l-Faḍl (1844–1914), a Bahā'ī scholar who began teaching at al-Azhar around 1894–95. Ridā' was

further incensed by the warm reception of Abī'l-Faḍl's book, *ad-Durar al-Bahīyyah* (*Glorious Pearls*), by Mustafā Kāmil, an Egyptian nationalist leader, and Shaykh 'Alī Yūsif, owner of the newspaper of *al-Mu'ayyid* (Ridā' 1931: 937). Afraid that the people were being deceived by the Bahā'īs, he later used his periodical, *al-Manār*, as a medium of anti-Bahā'ī polemic (Cole 1983).

*'Abduh's Friendship with 'Abdu'l-Bahā'*

From the foregoing, it is clear that Ridā's treatment of his mentor's relationship with 'Abdu'l-Bahā' must be viewed with some incredulity. Still, the nature of 'Abduh's friendship with 'Abdu'l-Bahā' and his knowledge of the teachings of the Bahā'ī religion persists. Even though Cole has explored the subject in some detail, he admits that "the matter of how intimate the two men were bears more investigation" (Cole 1981: 12). The subject may be clarified by two letters exchanged between 'Abduh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' that have recently surfaced. According to an Egyptian Bahā'i, Salām Qa'bīn, Muḥammad 'Abduh sent a letter (*kitāb*, which could also mean "book") to Bahā'u'llāh, to which the latter instructed 'Abdu'l-Bahā' to reply Qa'bīn (1932: 125–127). If the letter accompanied a copy of *al-'Urwa al-Wuthqā*, then 'Abdu'l-Bahā's response was written after 1884. Indeed, Bahā'u'llāh notes the receipt of *al-'Urwa* in his "Lawḥ-i Dunyā," so this is not an unreasonable assumption.

There are two different ways to read the letter (see full translation in Appendix I). One way is to read it as a letter of encouragement, employing typical Muslim punctilios towards this end. For instance, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' opens the letter with a eulogy of the Prophet and his family commonly found in many eighteenth century letters from one learned Muslim to another. The text is permeated with quotes from the Qur'ān, a sign of erudition and well-crafted prose. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' also praises the Mufti's efforts to reform Islam and counsels him to contemplate the dynamism of an earlier age and the activities of the predecessors (*al-aslāf*). Interestingly, 'Abdu'l-Bahā', later the leader of a religious group that claimed to abrogate the laws of Islam, seems to encourage 'Abduh's rationale for reform (even the word associated with 'Abduh's reform movement, *salafīyyah*, comes from the same root as *al-aslāf*).

The friendship between the two men is also evident, as might be

inferred from the references to the “attraction of your love and devotion” (*jadhbat ḥubbika*) and the “ardor of your friendship” (*shiddat walā’ika*). These indicate that their friendship was already established by the time the letter was written, although a fixed date has yet to be determined.

There is, however, another way to read the letter. Given its general tone, repeated use of Qur’ānic allusions to the station of prophethood, and the employment of uniquely Bahā’ī symbology, ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ seems to have subtly hinted at the theophanic claims of his father. He begins the letter with a reference to the “Mystic Dove,” (*al-warqā’*) whose tongue has been loosed by God to speak in Paradise, and to the burning of the Divine Lote-Tree (*as-sidra ar-rabbīniyya*). In his writings, Bahā’u’llāh often identified himself with the *warqā’*, as evident in the following tablet written during his incarceration in Adrianople:

Thus doth the Nightingale [*al-warqā’*] utter His call unto you from this prison. He hath but to deliver this clear message. Whosoever desireth, let him turn aside from this counsel and whosoever desireth let him choose the path to his Lord (Bahā’u’llāh 1982: 210–11).

Another symbol Bahā’u’llāh frequently employed to indicate his prophetic station is that of the Burning Bush and the *sidratu’l-muntahā*, the Divine Lote-Tree mentioned in the Qur’ān, as evinced in the following letter to one of his enemies:

Open thine eyes that thou mayest behold this Wronged One shining forth above the horizon of the will of God, the Sovereign, the Truth, the Resplendent. Unstop, then, the ear of thine heart that thou mayest hearken unto the speech of the Divine Lote-Tree [*sidratu’l-muntahā*] that hath been raised up in truth by God, the Almighty, the Beneficent. Verily, this Tree, notwithstanding the things that befell it by reason of thy cruelty and of the transgressions of such as are like thee, calleth aloud and summoneth all men unto the *sadratu’l-muntaha* and the Supreme Horizon (Bahā’u’llāh 1988: 84).

Sometimes both symbols are used in conjunction, as demonstrated in the colophon to his most noted doctrinal work, the *Kūṭāb-i-Īqān* (*The Book of Certitude*):

Revealed [*al-manzūl*] by the “Ba’” and the “Ha’” [i.e. “Bahā’”].

Peace be upon him that inclineth his ear unto

the melody of the Mystic Bird [*al-warqā’*] calling from the *sidratu’l-muntahā* (Bahā’u’llāh 1970: 257)

Bahā'u'llāh often resorted to prophetic symbology to communicate his theophanic claims, particularly early in his ministry when he did not feel that the Bābī community and the wider Muslim populace were capable of sustaining the weight of an explicit claim to prophethood. It is evident that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' still employed this same practice in relating his father's claims to prominent Muslims, as evinced by the use of these same symbols in his letter to Muḥammad 'Abduh. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' further writes of the "universal and transcendent Reality" ("*al-ḥaqīqa al-kullīyya al-fā'iqa*") which is raised up in the "august station," (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*) and "described as the Outstretched Shadow in the Perspicuous Day [*al-yawm al-mashūd*]." In common Muslim parlance, the "Perspicuous Day" is a clear reference to the Day of Judgment when the soul will be asked to stand before God and account for its deeds (see Qur'ān 11: 103). In Bahā'ī eschatology, however, the appearance of the "universal and transcendent reality," or the Messenger of God, in the "august station" is the Day of Judgment; once again further evidence that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' was attempting to subtly communicate his father's claims to prophethood. Read in light of the foregoing, the mundane introduction is now transformed into a poetic elucidation, however hidden, of his father's theophanic claims.

In the main body of the text, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' continues to hint at his father's identification with the Semitic prophets through repeated Qur'ānic allusions to the revelatory experience. For instance, 'Abduh is instructed to proceed to the "Vale of Towa," the site where God spoke to Moses (see Qur'ān 20: 12, 79: 16), where he will hear the guidance from God emanating from the Burning Bush.

Towards the end of the letter, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' reaffirms that nothing but a new revelation from God is capable of regenerating the Muslim community. As noted above, this too is done subtly. 'Abdu'l-Bahā' first counsels 'Abduh to continue on his path of reform, but leaves the choice of the method to 'Abduh. However, he then proceeds to inform 'Abduh that only a divine power (*quwwat malakūtiyya ilāhiyya*) is capable of regenerating Islam. Given his background and the repeated allusions to Bahā'u'llāh's claims to a new revelation, there is little doubt as to the source of the "divine power" in the mind of 'Abdu'l-Bahā'.

Granted, 'Abduh may not have understood 'Abdu'l-Bahā's allusions, despite his religious training and appreciation for veiled messages (see Malcolm Kerr's *Islamic Reform* 1966: 105, 111). Unfortunately,

‘Abduh’s reply to the letter is missing, so it is impossible to gauge his response. Ridā’ mentions that he possesses several letters from ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ to his teacher, which might clarify his reaction, but he fails to reproduce them in the voluminous history of his mentor (Ridā’ 1931: 930). A letter written by ‘Abduh to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ on the 29th of Muḥarram, 1305 (October 17, 1887) may explain why Ridā’ did not publish their correspondence (see Appendix II for full translation).

In the letter, ‘Abduh’s admiration of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ is evident. He begins with the standard praise of Muḥammad, his family, and his companions. But he also addresses ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ as the “perfect master” (*al-mawlā al-kāmil*) and the “proof that the latter generation surpasses its forebears” (*ḥujjat al-awākhir ‘alā al-awwāl*). As further evidence of his high esteem for ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, he also addresses him as the “spirit of peace” (*rūḥ as-salām*) and admits that words cannot contain the depth of his feeling for him. While it could be argued that he was merely engaging in hyperbole (not uncommon in letters of the time), this level of praise in ‘Abduh’s writings was unusual. For example, compare the letter with the opening passages from a letter addressed to the English clergyman Isaac Taylor. As a member of Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s secret society for the reconciliation of the three major monotheistic faiths, Taylor was impressed with the Shaykh’s presentation of Islam and wrote several articles in English newspapers in praise of the religion (much to the chagrin of his fellow missionaries in the Middle East). Reciprocally, ‘Abduh so respected Taylor for his courage and insight that he had one of his articles translated and published in the journal *Thamarāt al-Funūn*. The letter is useful for comparison since there are several parallels with his letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’: 1) ‘Abduh did not agree with many of Taylor’s beliefs, 2) he admired Taylor, and 3) the letter was written in Beirut around the same time that ‘Abduh wrote to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. Below are excerpts from his letter to Taylor that are similar in purpose to phrases found in his letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, but different in tone:

This is my letter to him who is inspired with truth and speaks with sincerity the revered, respected minister, Isaac Taylor. . . . News has reached us of that which you presented to the religious assembly in the city of Lūndrā [London?] concerning the religion of Islam. If it is true, then light is radiating from within your words by which discernment knows true insight and to which the eyes of luminous minds are inclined (Ridā’ 1906: 513).



‘Abduh continues to extol Taylor’s efforts to dispel misconceptions about Islam, but nowhere in the letter does his praise for the minister reach the level of that found in his letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. Perhaps a more worthwhile comparison would be with one of his letters to a close, unidentified friend written in Beirut, which Ridā’ includes in his collection of ‘Abduh’s “letters of friendship” (*risā’iluhu al-widādiyya*) published in the second volume of the history of his teacher (1906):

The affection for you in our heart blazes forth by your radiance and the praise in our speech is inspired by your perfection and the respect in our breast is upraised by your splendor (*Bahā’uka*). Time can never dissolve our friendship nor create its like. We preserve it from the need for renewal and growth. No communication increases it and no delay weakens it. Truly, your place in [our] soul is a manifestation of your bounty (*tajallī fadlika*) and represents your loftiness and nobility. This immortality bequeaths everlastingness to the souls and eternality in the self-sacrifice of the spirits.

A letter has arrived from you divulging the secret of love and unfolding concealed friendship. In it is a demonstration of your emotion due that which we feel and your sympathy on account of our bereavement. We are already informed of the news [in the letter] and the fate of that which we decided, but we thank you for the favor of [your] letter and your friendliness. May God redeem your debt as recompense for your fidelity (Ridā’ 1906: 531–2)

Like ‘Abduh’s letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, this missive is filled with Sufi imagery and hyperbolic expressions of friendship. At the very least, therefore, his letter to the Bahā’ī leader should be read in a similar light. Still, ‘Abduh’s praise of ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ finds few parallels, save in his letters to Afghānī. Below is Elie Kedourie’s partial translation of one of his letters to his mentor that was written in 1883 during ‘Abduh’s first sojourn in Beirut, some portions of which were edited out of Ridā’’s reproduction of the letter in his *Ta’rīkh* (Kedourie 1966: 66):

My Exalted Lord (*mawlāy al-mu‘azzam*), whom God preserve and second in his purpose! Would that I knew what to write to you. You know what is in my soul, as you know what is in yours. You have made us with your hands, invested our matter with its perfect form [and created us in the best shape]. Would that I knew what to write to you. Through you have we known ourselves, through you have we known you, through you have we known the whole universe. Your knowledge of us is, as will not be hidden from you, a necessary knowledge; it is the knowledge you have of yourself, your confidence in your

power and will; from you have we issued and to you, to you do we return.

I have been endowed by you with a wisdom which enables me to change inclinations, impart rationality to reason, overcome great obstacles, and control the innermost thoughts of men. I have been given by you a will so powerful as to move the immovable, deal blows to the greatest of obstacles, and remain firm in the right until truth is satisfied. I used to imagine that my power [through your power] was limitless and my capacity infinite, but lo, the days have brought me endless surprises. I have taken up the pen to show you that in my soul with which you are more than myself familiar, but I have found myself defeated, with a paralyzed heart, a trembling hand, quaking limbs and distracted thoughts, [your] mind mastering me as though, O my lord (*mawlāyy*), you have given me a kind of power which, to indicate the potency of your dominion (*sulṭān*), you have made to extend over individuals, but you excepted from its sway that which relates to communication with you, and the approach to your majestic abode (*ilā maqāmika al-jalīl*) (Ridā’ 1925: 599–603).

Evidence that ‘Abduh was not typically prone to this type of extreme mystical praise in the openings of his letters can be deduced by the reaction of Rashīd Ridā’ to the above quoted letter to Afghānī. In his introduction to the letter, Ridā’ writes:

It is the strangest (*aghṛab*) of his letters, or rather odd (*ash-shādh*) in that he describes the Sayyid with words that resemble those of the Sufis and the proponents of existential monism (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) (Ridā’ 1925: 599).

In his letter to the Bahā’ī leader, ‘Abduh repeatedly speaks of his longing (*shawqī*) for ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’, indicating that their friendship was already well established by the time the letter was written. Further, he notes the receipt of a letter from ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’. Finally, and most significantly, ‘Abduh expresses his desire to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ in Haifa due to his “need to be illumined by your light” [*hājatī laka li-istiḍā’a bi-nūrikum*].

Although ‘Abduh ends the letter by expressing his desire to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ in ‘Akkā, there is no substantial evidence that he was able to carry out his wish. There is, however, evidence that he visited Palestine during his second exile in Beirut and he may have stopped in ‘Akkā to visit the prisoner. In a letter to Isaac Taylor, ‘Abduh mentions his trip to Jerusalem:

I was recently in Jerusalem for a visit of the holy lands, which the three major religions revere. Here, the visitor is struck by the impression

that the true religion is as a mighty tree from which numerous branches have spread out. The presence of differing leaves and branch networks in no way detracts from its unity of kind and species. It is correct that its resemblance in fruit, both in color and flavor, is condensed in the religion of Islam, which has been nourished by its roots and veins. Islam is its epitome, and the objective of its growth. For [Islam] affirms the whole and magnifies all while calling to unity and union. For this is the destiny of all creatures though their differences have attained a number, which is beyond all limits ('Abduh, 1972: 365; translated by Kuhn, 1993: 50).

As further corroboration, Shakīb Arslān wrote that 'Abduh not only visited Jerusalem, but also Damascus, Tarablus, Sidon, and Ba'alabek (Ridā' 1931: 405). It is quite possible, then, that he was able to carry out his desire.

### *Concealed History*

Although I have established that a friendship existed between Muḥammad 'Abduh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' and that the Mufti may have known more about the movement than he related to Ridā', the influence of the two men upon one another is still an open question. Further, the course of their friendship after 'Abduh's return to Egypt remains unresolved due to a dearth of information. There is a lengthy article on the Bābī and Bahā'ī movements published in *al-Ahrām* on June 18, 1896 that is attributed to 'Abduh in a Bahā'ī source (Qab'īn 1932: 122–123), although no name is attached. Further, the author of the article particularly focuses on challenges to 'Abdu'l-Bahā's leadership of the Bahā'ī community by members of his family, a tactic Ridā' would later employ in his anti-Bahā'ī polemic. Based on this, I am inclined to credit Ridā', rather than 'Abduh, with authorship of the article.

Sometime during this same period, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' wrote a letter to a Ḥājji Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurūsānī that included a message to 'Abduh ('Abdu'l-Bahā' c. 1903). Although the letter was undated, it seems to have been written between 1898 (the establishment of *al-Manār*) and 1905 ('Abduh's death). The most significant period of Bahā'ī persecutions in Yazd during this period of time took place in 1903, so we can tentatively fix this date to the letter. In the letter, 'Abdu'l-Bahā' mentions that Ridā' and Shaykh 'Alī Yūsuf (1863–1913), published a report in their respective journals concerning the murder of 200 Bahā'īs in the Persian city of Yazd.

Ridā's journal, *al-Manār* ("lighthouse" or "minaret") began its publication on March 17, 1898. 'Abduh chose its name and outlined its policies. In 1901, Ridā began publishing installments of the "Tafsīr al-Manār," a well-known Qur'ānic commentary composed by 'Abduh and Ridā. The latter continued to write and publish the *tafsīr* after 'Abduh's death. Although Ridā maintained that the ideas expressed in the commentary were 'Abduh's, it is difficult to discern the demarcation between 'Abduh and Ridā. (as-Sāwī 1954: 38). *Al-Mu'ayyad* was a daily paper established by Shaykh 'Alī Yūsuf in Cairo in 1889. In 1900, it published six articles of 'Abduh refuting the arguments put forward by French Cabinet Minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, who had published an article in the "Journal de Paris" in which he wrote at length on the "fatalistic Muslim mentality" (as-Sāwī 1954: 37).

In their articles concerning the murder of the Bahā'is in Yazd, Ridā and 'Alī Yūsuf contended that they were killed for slandering the prophets of the Qur'ān. 'Abdu'l-Bahā maintained that 'Abduh was well aware of the Bahā'is willingness to sacrifice themselves for the prophets and, therefore, would never have consented to the dissemination of the erroneous articles. Further, he contended that they were only published on account of 'Abduh's absence from Egypt during a trip overseas. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahā expressed his trust in the Mufti's continuing goodwill, the exact nature of 'Abduh's feelings towards the Bahā'is at the end of his life is unknown.

The reason that the matter is shrouded in mystery is related to the handling of a letter from 'Abduh to Leo Tolstoy that was written in Arabic at the end of his life. Murād Wahba has recently written an article in Arabic detailing the correspondence between the two men. He relates that 'Abduh's letter was relayed to Tolstoy by an English Orientalist named "S.K. Kūkūrīl" on May 2, 1904. This is probably Sydney Cockerell who served 'Abduh's English acquaintance and fellow political intriguer Wilfred Blunt as a private secretary for two years and then became director of the Fitzwilliam Museum at Cambridge. "Kūkūrīl" wrote Tolstoy and told him that he and 'Abduh had a number of mutual interests. He also attached a copy of 'Abduh's letter rendered into English by Wilfrid Blunt's wife, Anne. Wahba managed to recover Tolstoy's copy of the Arabic letter and discovered a postscript that was omitted from 'Uthmān Amīn's 1955 and 1965 printings of his book *Muḥammad 'Abdu, Essai sur ses Idées Philosophiques et Religieuses* and from an English translation appended by Blunt to the second volume of his *Diaries*: "If you prefer to respond, O wise one, it can be in French, as it is the only

European language I know” (Wahba 1994: 121). Despite Wahba’s claims to have discovered the postscript, however, Muḥammad ‘Imārāh had already produced a copy of the complete original (1972, vol. 1:269).

Wahba contends that the deletion of the postscript was intentional (“*muta‘ammad*”), as it would indicate the existence of a response from Tolstoy in French containing information that would tarnish ‘Abduh’s reputation in the Middle East as an “orthodox” Muslim. Indeed, Wahba reproduces Tolstoy’s response written in French on May 12, 1904 in which he praised the reformist efforts of ‘Abduh and asked about the secret of creation. As mentioned in the introduction, Tolstoy ended the letter by asking the question: “What do you know of the Bāb and Bahā’u’llāh?” (for information on Tolstoy’s interest in the Bahā’i religion see Stendardo 1985).

Internal evidence in the letters suggests that Rashīd Ridā’ worked assiduously to ensure that the question remained unanswered; an action that is commensurate with the pattern demonstrated in the forgoing. It seems that he deleted the postscript when he first published the letter in his *Ta’rīkh*, twenty years prior to Amīn (Ridā’, 1925: 623–624). But this in itself is proof of little more than editorial efficiency.

Following the reproduction of the letter in the biography of his mentor, however, Ridā’ adds a short message from ‘Abduh to Tolstoy, although it is unclear if the original was in French or Arabic. It is apparently an excerpt from a second letter, as it ends abruptly and contains no signature or traditional ending of “*as-salām*,” as found in the first letter. Ridā’, however, does not indicate that it is part of a larger letter, merely labeling it “He also wrote to him [Tolstoy].” The subject of the extract is quite interesting, as it is written in response to Tolstoy’s question regarding the secret of creation:

O sinless spirit! You have proceeded from an exalted station to the terrestrial world and assumed the corporeal form known as Tolstoy. My might [*qawāyy*] is in you, joined to your spirit in its belief [*mabda’*]. Your bodily needs have not kept you from that which you have aspired to. You have not been afflicted with that which hath befallen most of the people due to their obliviousness to that which separates them from the world of light. You were continuing to contemplate it with contemplation upon contemplation and [your] insight is returning to it time and again. In this regard, you have inquired about the secret of creation [*sirr fīṭra*]. You have comprehended that the person is cre-

ated in order to know and then to do and not created to be ignorant, idle and negligent (Ridā' 1925: 624).

Given the brevity of the response, the abrupt ending, the absence of an "*as-salām*" indicating a termination of the main body of the letter, and the subject matter, I believe this letter to be an incomplete excerpt from 'Abduh's response to Tolstoy's letter. From the preceding pages, one might deduce the reasons for Ridā's deletion of the rest of the letter, as it was likely a response to Tolstoy's second query concerning the Bahā'ī religion. The exact nature of 'Abduh's feelings towards the Bahā'ī teachings at the end of his life, therefore, was known only to Ridā'. If it was negative, it is hard to believe that Ridā' would have left it unpublished, as he tried assiduously to distance his teacher from the Bahā'īs. Although one can conclude that 'Abduh's final thoughts on the Bahā'ī teachings may have been positive, their exact nature remains hidden, either destroyed or part of a larger collection of 'Abduh's correspondence with 'Abdu'l-Bahā' left unpublished and in private hands.

What is clear, however, is the danger of giving too much credence to Ridā's narrative, which was subject to distortion when it suited his ideological agenda. As demonstrated, the friendship between 'Abduh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā' was far more meaningful than portrayed by Ridā', as it was based upon mutual admiration for *orthopraxis* not *orthodoxy*. Perhaps with the discovery of additional communication between the two men, a more nuanced intellectual history of 'Abduh can be composed.

Although the existence of a strong friendship has been established, however, the intellectual implications of this relationship still need more exploration. In his earlier article, Cole suggested two such avenues of investigation that rely on the establishment of an intellectual genealogy connecting the two men (Cole 1981: 9). In addition to his earlier view that 'Abdu'l-Bahā' may have influenced 'Abduh's arguments on polygamy, Cole also suggests that his ideas on "progressive revelation" and the fundamental unity of religions gleaned from his father may have also influenced 'Abduh. In his most recent book, however, Cole has inexplicably altered his previous conclusion concerning polygamy (Cole 1998: 181).

Intellectual genealogies, however, are notoriously difficult to prove, as attempts to construct the relationships of cause and effect, or even adequately encapsulate the thought of the subject are often frustrated

by the biases of the author and by inconclusive evidence. The study of 19th century Muslim intellectuals living in the Middle East is further complicated by several factors that limited the expression of their thought, including the presence of totalitarian regimes, foreign control, and a dominant Muslim discourse often hostile to foreign knowledge and religious innovation. Indeed, one might well question the feasibility of writing standard biographies given these constraints.

Perhaps a more fruitful enterprise would be to consider the social problems both men grappled with and the divergent paths they trod in search of solutions. After all, ‘Abduh called for a return to the rational elements of early Islam, as embodied in the Mu‘tazilite school, while ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ stressed the need for a new revelation from God. Further, it was their mutual pursuit of religious reform that caused them to cross paths in the first place and develop a friendship that transcended the boundaries of orthodoxy. The answers produced by the two men are still relevant, as the Islam articulated by the former and his rational apologetics have been appropriated by a number of Muslim thinkers, while the teachings of the latter hold a pivotal position in the corpus of writings that guide one of the fastest growing religious groups in the world.

#### APPENDIX I

*‘Abdu’l-Bahā’'s Letter to Muḥammad ‘Abduh, c. 1885 A.D.*

He is God!

Praise be to God Who hath caused the tongue of the Mystic Dove [*al-warqā’*] to speak with the best of words in the Garden of the All-Merciful upon the boughs with the most wondrous of melodies. Whereupon the holy, detached and pure realities, upon which were imprinted the luminous rays from the sun of Truth and which blazed with the kindled fire from the Divine Lote-Tree [*as-sidra ar-rabbāniyya*] in the reality of man, were stirred, gladdened, quickened and attracted by its fragrances. At this, they rejoiced with praise and glorification in commemorating their Lord, the Mighty, and the Powerful. And they loosed their tongues and proclaimed, “Praise be the One who hath caused it to speak of God’s praise in the garden of existence with the psalms of the family of David and Who hath taught it His wisdom and His mysteries and Who hath made it the repository of His inspiration and the dawning-place of His lights and the dayspring

of His signs. All necks are brought low through the power of His utterance and are made to bow through the appearance of His proof.” I give praise and salutations to the universal and transcendent Reality, subsisting from the beginning of existence, which is inundating [*al-fā’ida*] all existent things, raised up in the august station [*al-maqām al-mahmūd*], described as the Outstretched Shadow [see Qur’ān 56:30] in the Perspicuous Day, the greatest means and mightiest instrument [of the grace of God]. The blessings of God be upon Him and His family in this world and the next.

O learned man of distinction endowed with deep-rooted nobility!

If you desire to ascend unto the highest apex in the circle of existence, then you must have keen perception in this majestic age, so that you might behold the light of guidance shining above the exalted horizon: “the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord [39:69].” Seek, then, to inhale the fragrances of God, which are verily wafting from the meads of holiness, the Garden of Paradise. Direct your footsteps to the Vale of Towa [see Qur’ān, 20:12, 79:16] with a heart attracted to the heavenly realm, and you will find the Most Great Guidance in the kindled fire in the Blessed Tree that speaks upon Mount Sinai. Draw forth then your hand, white and glistening with lights, amongst the concourse of the righteous.

By your life, O erudite one! For a discerning critic like yourself, it is seemly to ascend unto the highest sphere of the heavens. Remove this tattered and threadbare garment, don the vestments of sanctity, spread out the wings of inner vision and betake yourself to the Kingdom of the All-Merciful and hearken unto the melodies of the birds of holiness perched upon the highest boughs of the Lote-Tree beyond which there is no passing. By your life! They give life to the moldering bone and restore the breasts that have been dilated through the love of God; and for them is a “great fortune” [Qur’ān 41:35]. Abandon this mortal life and all its concerns, which are destined to pass into extinction. I swear by your Lord, the Most High! They are dreams, nay, vain imaginings in the sight of those possessed of understanding. Rather, true life is the life of the spirit, adorned with virtues whose lamp is lit and shines forth in the Kingdom of creation. “God is to be likened to whatever is loftiest [Qur’ān, 16:60],” so if you desire a goodly life, scatter the seeds of wisdom in good, pure earth, in order that they may yield for you in every grain seven ears of blessed corn [See Qur’ān 2:216]. If you wish to rear a structure in the contingent world, erect a majestic edifice, strongly but-



tressed, its foundation immovable in the centre-most point of attraction, the lowest nadir, and raise up its chambers in the sublimest zenith of the ether. Quaff the exquisite wine of mystic meanings from the chalice in the Realm on High, the Centre of the Circle of the Most Mighty Bestowal, the Pole of the sphere of the Most Great Bounty and the Dawning-place of guidance and the Dayspring of the lights of your Lord, the Most Exalted.

I swear by my longing for you! It was naught but the attraction of your love and devotion and the ardor your friendship that prompted this discourse. I have the highest hopes for you, the benefits of which my hand is incapable of obtaining. Reproach me not for having removed the veil from the Face of the bestowal of your Lord, “for not to any shall the gifts of thy Lord be denied” [Qur’ān 17:20].

Contemplate with penetrating vision the bygone centuries; and their circumstances; and their traces and conditions; and their luminaries; and the marvels that occurred and their wondrous conditions; and the profound secret they contained and the variations among the schools of thought; and the different philosophies current amongst its leaders; and the diverse tastes of its luminaries. Truly, the annals of our predecessors are a reminder and a lesson to those who come after. Choose for yourself whatsoever you desire. What you need is something that is possessed of a firmer foundation, clearer elucidation, a greater proof, a more powerful sovereignty, a brighter light, a greater happiness, a sweeter subsistence, a deeper longing, a swifter remedy, a sounder method, a more radiant lamp, a greater gift, and a more perfect bestowalnay that is more potent in its life-force and more redeeming in spirit for the body of mankind. By your life! Whosoever is against it, the Face of God is abiding, the Possessor of majesty and honor. And if you are able to remain in the shelter of the Divine Countenance, then you will be preserved from extinction, attain immortality, and become radiant in the manifest horizon with a light illuminating the Kingdom of the heavens and the earth. The panoply of acceptance is rolled up and the cover of oblivion will be spread out. And the floods leave nothing behind except traces. And the rich will come down from the palaces to the graves and the throes of death will seize them and regrets will pile upon them. It is too late to escape. No sound will you hear from them or any stir [see Qur’ān 19:98]. And as for the dross, it will pass away uselessly. And as for that which benefits the people, it remains hidden. The former generations are for us a clear example.

And if God were to assist you with correct judgment and forceful sagacity, consider that which will return this noble community to its first beginning and exalted rank. I swear by the raising of its standard, the sun of its appearance, the light of its guidance and the foundation of its structure! Nothing save a divine power can renew its tattered garment, bring forth its profusely growing root and raise it up from the decay of its downfall and the “*hā*” of its decline [*hubūṭihā*] to the “*mīm*” of its station [*markazihā*] and the summit of its *Mi’rāj*. Verily, that is the remedy that is the remedy, that is the remedy and peace be upon whosoever shall follow the guidance.

## APPENDIX II

*Muḥammad ‘Abduh’s Letter to ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’,  
29 of Muḥarram, 1305 (October 17, 1887)*

Perfect master and energetic savant, proof that the latter generation surpasses its forebears, may God support you. Praise be to God, the beginning of perfection and its end, and peace and blessings be upon the essence of existence [Muḥammad] and his wisdom and his family and the inheritors of his exalted station and his companions, those who preserve his guidance and are the lodestars of his command.

Peace be upon your lofty station, O spirit of peace. And beneath your beauty, O high-minded one, the rulers bow their heads. If God could make concrete form to encapsulate the mystic spirit or expression to relate the conditions of the inmost heart, I would tell you the best of stories and recount unto you the grandest of narratives so that I might express my longing for you and lament your absence. However, no narrative can encapsulate the feelings I have for you in my soul and no story can relate the place I hold for you in my heart. I trust that the brilliance of your vision will bring them to light and I am content that the radiance of your soul will illumine them.

My longing for you is the longing of souls for perfection and my preoccupation with you is the preoccupation of hearts with their aspirations. But what am I to do? Obstacles are erected and barriers force me to remain far from you. When I returned to Beirut, I found a letter [*kitāb*] from you awaiting me that contained an abundance of chapters and sections. In it, you clothed me in the beauty of your thoughts and placed the collars of your grace around my

neck by the descent of your good pleasure. I am nothing like what you mentioned. Rather, you illumined your own attributes by mentioning these things. That is how God uplifts the perfect people, so they become even more exalted, and how He teaches them through his grace, so they become humble. May God increase your loftiness and exaltedness and upraise your high rank, sinless [*ʿiṣma*] and invincible.

As for coming to ‘Akkā, my longing for you draws me unto it and my need to be illumined by your light impels me to come. I will make every effort and do whatever is in my power to realize this desire. I ask God to facilitate it and not to make us satisfied with hope over actual measures. In your love, He bestows a blessing upon me and with nearness He eliminates my sorrow at your remoteness. He, verily, is the Lord of the truthful and the Protector of the pure in heart.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- June 18, 1896. “al-Firqa al-Bābiyya,” *al-Ahrām*.  
 ‘Abduh, Muḥammad 1972–1974. *al-ʿAṣmāl al-Kāmilah* (The Complete Works). Muḥammad ‘Imāra, ed., 6 vols. al-Mu’assasāt al-‘arabiyyah li’l-dirāsāt wa an-nashr, Beirut.  
 ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ c. 1903. “Letter to Ḥājī Mīrzā Ḥasan-i-Khurāsānī,” provided by the Bahā’ī World Centre.  
 Afghānī, Jamāl ad-Dīn. 1973. *ar-Radd ‘ala ad-dahriyyān*, translated into Arabic from the Persian by Muḥammad ‘Abduh [and Abī Turāb], Cairo, Dār al-Hilāl.  
 ———. 1968. “The Truth about the Neicheri Sect and an Explanation of the Neicheris,” *An Islamic Response to Imperialism*, trans. Nikki Keddie and Hamid Algar. Berkeley, University of California Press.  
 Afshār, Iraj and Asghar Mahdavi eds. 1963. *Majmūʿeh-yi asnād va madārik-i chāp nashudeh dar bāreh-yi Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn mashhūr bi Afghānī*, Tehran, Chāpkhānah-yi Dīnīshgāh-i Tihirān.  
 Bahā’u’llāh. 1982. *Bahā’ī Prayers*. Wilmette, Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.  
 ———. 1988. *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, translated by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani. Bahā’ī Publishing Trust, Wilmette.  
 ———. 1995. *Kitāb-i Aqdas* (Arabic). Haifa, Bahā’ī World Centre  
 ———. 1970. *The Kitāb-i-Īqān*, translated by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani. Wilmette: Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.  
 ———. 1987. *Prayers and Meditations*, translated by Shoghi Effendi Rabbani. Wilmette, Bahā’ī Publishing Trust.  
 Balyuzi, H.M. 1980. *Bahā’u’llāh: The King of Glory*. Oxford, George Ronald.  
 Blunt, Wilfred. 1921. *My Diaries: Being a Personal Narrative of Events, 1888–1914*. 2 vols. New York, A.A. Knopf.  
 Bustānī, Buṭrus. 1876. *Dā’ir Ma’ārif al-Qarn al-ʿAsharīn*, vol. 2, Beirut.  
 Cole, Juan R.I. 1998. *Modernity and the Millennium: The Genesis of the Bahā’ī Faith in the Nineteenth-Century Middle East*. New York, Columbia.

- . 1981. “Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā: a Dialogue on the Bahā’ī Faith,” *World Order*, vol. 15, nos. 3–4 (Spring/Summer 1981): 7–16.
- . “Rashīd Riḍā on the Bahā’ī Faith: A Utilitarian Theory of the Spread of Religions.” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 5, 3 (Summer 1983): 276–29.
- Keddie, Nikki R. 1972. *Sayyid Jamāl ad-Dīn “al-Afghānī”: A Political Biography*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Kedourie, Elie. 1966. *Afghani and Abduh: An Essay on Religious Unbelief and Political Activism in Modern Islam*. London.
- Kerr, Malcolm. 1966. *Islamic Reform: The Political and Legal Theories of Muḥammad ‘Abduh and Rashīd Riḍā*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Kuhn, Michael F. 1993. “The Practical Apologetic of Muḥammad ‘Abduh with a View Toward His Approach to Christianity.” M.A. thesis. American University in Cairo.
- Mīrzā Faḍlu’llāh al-Īrānī. 1896. “al-Bāb wa’l-Bābiyya,” *al-Muqtaṭaf*, 20, No. 9 (September): 650–57.
- Qab’īn, Salām. 1932. *‘Abdu’l-Bahā’ wa’l-Bahā’iyya*, Cairo.
- Riḍā’, Muḥammad Rashīd. 1931. *Ta’rīkh al-‘Ustādh al-‘Imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad ‘Abduh*, vol. 1, Cairo, al-Manār Press; vol. 2 1906, 1925.
- as-Sāwī, Aḥmad Ḥusayn. 1954. “Muḥammad ‘Abduh and al-Waqā’i‘ al-Miṣriyah,” Master’s thesis. McGill University.
- Stendardo, Luigi. 1985. *Leo Tolstoy and The Bahā’ī Faith*, translated from French by Jeremy Fox. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Wahba, Murād. 1994. *Madkhūl ilā at-Tanwīr*. Cairo, Dār al-‘Ālam ath-Thālith.

*This page intentionally left blank*

BAHĀ'Ī AND THE HOLY LAND:  
RELIGIOGENESIS AND SHOGHI EFFENDI'S  
*THE FAITH OF BAHĀ'U'LLĀH: A WORLD RELIGION*

Zaid Lundberg

Three of the great world religions Judaism, Christianity and Islam have all long historical and intimate relationships with the Holy Land (Wilken 1992; Williamson, 1992; Kofsky and Stroumsa 1998; Stemberger 2000). But what is the relationship between Bahā'īs and the Holy Land? Since the Bahā'ī Faith is of a relatively recent date (1844/1863), its relationship to the Holy Land has also been brief, starting in 1868 when Bahā'u'llāh (1817–1892) the prophet-founder of the Bahā'ī Faith was finally banished from Adrianople to the city of 'Akkā.

The purpose of this paper, however, is not to elaborate on the early history of Bahā'ī in the Holy Land but to focus on a subsequent event that took place in 1947. In that year the Swedish judge Emil Sandström (1886–1959) the appointed head of the United Nation's "Special Committee on Palestine" (UNSCOP) sent a letter to Shoghi Effendi (1897–1957) the appointed head of the international Bahā'ī Community in Haifa. In his letter Emil Sandström writes:

I should appreciate it if you would advise me whether you wish to submit evidence in a written statement on the religious interests of your Community in Palestine (Rabbanī 1969: 286).

Shoghi Effendi responds that he is grateful "for affording me the opportunity of presenting to you and your esteemed colleagues a statement of the relationship which the Bahā'ī Faith has to Palestine." Such a statement is partly expressed in the letter, but Shoghi Effendi continues to write that:

I am enclosing with this letter, for your information, a brief sketch of the history, aims and significance of the Bahā'ī Faith . . . (Rabbanī 1969: 287)

The specific purpose of this paper therefore, is to analyze Shoghi Effendi's eight-paged "brief sketch," better known as *The Faith of*

*Bahāʾuʾllāh: A World Religion* (1947). More precisely, the objective is not only to explore how he depicts the relationship between the Bahāʾī Faith and the Holy Land in this document, but also to study it as an example of Bahāʾī self-definition. It is argued that such investigation will demonstrate that Shoghi Effendi employs the doctrine of progressive revelation to normatively define the Bahāʾī Faith as a world religion (Lundberg 2000, 2001b).

A few Bahāʾī scholars have, over the years, discussed the problem of defining Bahāʾī (MacEoin 1974; Dean-Diebert 1978; Momen 1981; Schaefer 1988; Fazel 1991; Numrich 1993). There are works that specifically discuss whether the Bahāʾī Faith is a world religion (Chouleur 1977; Hatcher and Martin 1989; Fazel 1994) and, more recently, a group of Bahāʾīs and a non-Bahāʾī discussed on the Internet whether the Bahāʾī Faith qualifies as a world religion or a NRM “new religious movement” (Bahāʾī 1997).

The theoretical framework of this paper is to understand a phenomenon of religion referred to as *religiogenesis*, here defined as “the emergence (birth, rise and development) of a religion” and where Bahāʾī is a case study. Etymologically, the term “genesis” can mean “creation, source, or origin” (Skeat 1984: 210) but its connotation in the present context is rather the “creation,” “construction,” or “reification” (Smith 1964: 1991) of a religion, and as such it should not be confused with the 19th century’s Darwinian quest for the primitive “origins” of religion (Sharpe 1986). Although the academic search of the latter ultimately proved futile, a vast array of modern religious movements did originate in that century in various parts of the world e.g., the Latter Day Saints (1830), the Adventists (1830s), and the Theosophical Society (1875) in the USA; Tenrikyo (1837) in Japan; the Bābī-Bahāʾī religions (1844/1863) in Iran/Iraq; the Arya Samaj (1875); and the Aḥmadiyya (1889) in India. Any one of these modern religious movements could be studied as phenomena of religiogenesis. In the present context of Bahāʾī it is therefore relevant that V. Elvin Johnson (1976: 39) writes that:

The Bābī-Bahāʾī movements provides the historian of religion with invaluable sources for studying its origin and development as with no other religion. . . . The Bahāʾī Faith is important not only for its own significance but for the insights it may provide in *understanding the manner in which other religions are born and develop*. (Italics added)

Ordinarily, the study of such a development is understood as a *unilinear progression* from Y → Z, i.e., how Y (e.g., Shīʿism, the Bābī reli-

gion) *historically developed and transformed* into Z (e.g., Bahā'ī) (Berger 1954; Smith 1987). Similarly, such a perspective may explain *how* Bahā'īs came to the Holy land (Balyuzi 1980; Ruhe 1983) since it predominantly looks at *external causes/factors* of religiogenesis. Yet, both Berger (1954) and, in particular Smith (1987), look at the concept of "motifs" (polarism, legalism, social reform, esotericism, universalism, liberalism, and holy war) which, according to Smith (1987: 3) "represent fundamental patterns of religious experience which *interact* and change in the overall development of a religious movement." Thus, it is argued that one also has to understand the reverse relationship  $Z \rightarrow Y$ , i.e., how Z (e.g., Bahā'ī) *retrospectively defines and understands itself* in relation to Y (e.g., the Bābī religion, Shī'ism, Islam etc). Such perspective may explain *why* the Bahā'īs came to the Holy Land where their relationship is viewed with hindsight (Shoghi Effendi 1974: 183–184). One example will suffice to illustrate this:

This enforced and hurried departure of Baha'u'llah from His native land [Iran], accompanied by some of His relatives, recalls in some of its aspects, the precipitate flight of the Holy Family into Egypt; the sudden migration of Muḥammad, soon after His assumption of the prophetic office, from Mecca to Medina; the exodus of Moses, His brother and His followers from the land of their birth, in response to the Divine summons, and above all the banishment of Abraham from Ur of the Chaldees to the Promised Land, a banishment which, in the multitudinous benefits it conferred upon so many divers peoples, faiths and nations, constitutes the nearest historical approach to the incalculable blessings *destined to be vouchsafed, in this day, and in future ages, to the whole human race, in direct consequence of the exile suffered by Him Whose Cause is the flower and fruit of all previous Revelations.* (Shoghi Effendi 1974: 107, italics added)

In this passage Shoghi Effendi does not portray the *external causes/factors* of Bahā'u'llāh's exile and banishment but compares it with the exodus of Abraham, Moses (Judaism), "the Holy Family" (Christianity), and Muḥammad (Islam). The comparison with Abraham is particularly emphasized, probably because the journeys of Abraham and Bahā'u'llāh are geographically similar (from Ur/Baghdad to the Promised Land/Holy Land). Moreover, Abraham's banishment was not only "destined" but also it is seen as related to "this day" and "future ages" and it is "in direct consequence" to Bahā'u'llāh's banishment. Such a perspective principally looks at *internal causes/factors* of religiogenesis and this area of research is better known as self-definition, self-identity, or self-understanding of religion (Sanders



1981–83; Meyer 1986; Hawkin and Robinson 1990; Sterling 1992). With a few exceptions (Warburg 1995; Piff and Warburg 1998), self-definition has received very little attention in Bahā'ī research.

*Some Methodological and Theoretical Considerations*

The theme of this conference is on modern religious movements that emerged during the 18–20th centuries, and it is noteworthy that the *scientific* study of religion (*Religionswissenschaft*) dated to either 1869 or with Max Müller's (1873) *Introduction to the Science of Religion* (Sharpe 1986) co-emerged with some of these movements. There has, however, been some fascinating “paradigm shifts” (Kuhn 1962) in the field of religious studies, and it is argued that since these shifts are relevant to the very problem of defining, describing, and explaining a religion, they also affect the study of religiogenesis. Accordingly, the study of religiogenesis is not only seen as a historical, sociological, and philological issue (although these are certainly valuable), but it is a methodological and theoretical problem as well.

In very broad terms one could say that the scientific study of religion historically has gone through two major methodological paradigm shifts, and there are indications that it has moved into a third, and that it may eventually move into a fourth. The first paradigm can be labeled “the armchair approach” where grand theories of religion were constructed by indirect and often biased information inspired by travelers (e.g., E.B. Tylor, William Robertson Smith, Andrew Lang, James Frazer, R.R. Marett). The second paradigm can be labeled “the fieldwork approach” where the armchair scientists (especially anthropologists and sociologists of religion) rose out of their chairs and became participant-observers of specific and often “primitive” or “primordial” religions (e.g., Bronislaw Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Franz Boas). In the study of the Bābī-Bahā'ī religions, the 19th century Cambridge orientalist, E.G. Browne (Momen 1987), may be seen as one such pioneering example. In both of these paradigms, however, the researcher is still more an observer than a participant. In other words, the observer is “an outsider looking in.”

According to some researchers (Ekstrand and Ekstrand 1986; Craffert 1995; McCutcheon 1999), one useful and important methodological distinction is that between the *emic* and *etic* perspectives. Hence, a religion could be approached and defined from two major,

but fundamentally different, perspectives. For example, linguist Kenneth L. Pike (Headland 1990: 49) defines *etics* as:

an approach by an outsider to an inside system, in which the outsider brings his own structurehis own emicsand partly superimposes his observations on the inside view, interpreting the inside in reference to his outside starting point.

The third paradigm may be called “the *emic* approach” where the researcher rather tries to go inside the individual participant’s head so to speak, and consequently take into account the religious participant’s point of view. According to anthropologist Marvin Harris (Headland 1990: 76):

the final test of the *emic* status of any description of human thought and behavior is some manifestation, however indirect, that the participants regard the observer’s account as appropriate and meaningful.

Although the terms *etic* and *emic* has been used in very ambiguous ways (Ekstrand and Ekstrand 1986; Craffert 1995), they can, for the sake of simplicity, be translated as the “outsider” and “insider” perspectives respectively (Headland et al. 1990; McCutcheon 1999). Closely related to these terms are Ninian Smart’s (1999) “intra- and extra-religious explanations,” Clifford Geertz’ (1999) “far- and near descriptions,” John Hick’s (1993) “non-religious and religious understanding of religion,” and James Thrower’s (1999) “naturalistic and religious theories of religion.” Yet, it should be clearly stated, that although the technical terms *etic* and *emic* are relatively new in scientific research, the idea of an insider/outsider dichotomy is not novel to religious studies. The most notable person in this context is perhaps Wilfred Cantwell Smith. Besides his repeated emphasis of the significance of empathy, he wrote in particular about the importance of understanding and validating the insider’s perspective. For example, Smith (1959: 42) stated emphatically that:

no statement about a religion is valid unless it can be acknowledged by that religion’s believers [i.e., the “insiders”] . . . by “religion” here I mean as previously indicated the faith in men’s hearts. On the external data about religion, of course, an outsider can by diligent scholarship discover things that an insider does not know and may not be willing to accept. But about the meaning that the system has for those of faith, an outsider cannot in the nature of the case go beyond the believer; for their piety is the faith, and if they cannot recognize his portrayal, then it is not their faith he is portraying. (clarification added)

Moreover, Smith (1981: 98) puts the very challenge and aim of academic scholarship of religion in the same vein:

An academic statement about a religious community must be simultaneously intelligible to that community [insiders] and to the academic community with its non-participant observers [outsiders]. In comparative religion, the intellectual task is to construct statements that will be simultaneously intelligible within two religious communities as well as in the academic world. (clarifications added)

Another scholar of religion, E.J. Sharpe (1983: 63), refers to a similar dichotomy when he states that “Believer and non-believer, ‘insider’ and ‘outsider’, look at precisely the same phenomena, and may up to a point enjoy similar experiences, but in the end arrive at totally different interpretations of their meaning and source.”

One may evaluate these three paradigms as a move from trying to understand the universality of religion *in toto*, to trying to grasp a particular religion *sui generis*, to finally understand religion from the religious participant’s point of view. This move can be evaluated as a transfer from the exterior, seeing religion as a monolithic object, to the interior, seeing religion as having reflexive subjects. This is in a way similar to what Smith (1991: 156–157) describes as the difference between “the cumulative tradition” and “faith”. The former is described as:

the entire mass of overt objective data that constitute the historical deposit, as it were, of the past religious life of the community in question: temples, scriptures, theological systems, dance patterns, legal and other social institutions, conventions, moral codes, myths, and so on; anything that can be transmitted from one person, one generation, to another, and that an historian can observe.

The latter is described as “an inner religious experience or involvement of a particular person; the impingement on him of the transcendent, putative or real.”

Finally, Russell T. McCutcheon (1999: 289) argues for what could be a fourth approach “the reflexive approach:”

In recent years there has been a virtual revolution in the way in which scholars conceive of themselves in relation to the people they write about. This revolution has entailed rethinking the very opposition between insiders and outsiders, between subjects and objects . . .

Smith (1981: 60), once again, seems to have foreseen such a reflexive stance that he labels “corporate critical self-consciousness”:

there is a third position [to the subjective/objective polarity], which subsumes both of these and goes beyond them; and that it is this that we should posit as our goal in the humane field, man's knowing of man. I call it corporate critical self-consciousness. In the 'corporate' concept here is subsumed and transcended a third element in the objectivity outlook. It is the point that an observer's knowledge of a given object is in principle available also and equally to any other observer . . . By 'corporate self-consciousness' I intend knowledge that is in principle apt both for the subject himself or herself, and for all external observers; or, in the case of group activities, for both outside observers and participants . . . (clarification added)

Besides the methodological points discussed here, one could also note theoretical problems such as various *definitions* e.g., substantial, functional, essence/family-resemblance, civil, invisible/private, high/low religion (Clarke and Byrne 1993; Idinopulos and Wilson 1998; Platvoet and Molendijk 1999); *factors*, the *multi-dimensionality*, and *reification* of religion. This paper will only briefly discuss the latter three.

Regarding *factors* of religion, James A. Beckford (*ER* "New Religions" 394) writes that in the study of new religious movements "their dynamics is central to an understanding of the place of religion in all societies." Such dynamics have long been recognized by historians-, sociologists-, and psychologists of religion in that there is a multitude of non-religious, external, or exogenous factors involved in the emergence of religion. However, the religious, internal, or endogenous factors, have unfortunately not received nearly as much attention. Bryan Wilson (1987: 31) refers to five such factors as "ideology; leadership; organization; constituency; and institutionalization." In the present context of Bahā'ī one could, for example, study the relationship between the Bahā'ī *ideology* of a "world religion" (as portrayed in normative self-definitions and doctrine) and the organization/institutionalization of Bahā'ī as a "world religion" as seen in various missionary activities such as global campaigns (Hassall 1994–95; Manning Thomas 1997), the number of adherents, and the geographical spread. It is therefore noteworthy that Rodney Stark (1987: 11–29), who has developed a model "How New Religions Succeed," also states that his "model needs greater development in terms of ideological or theological elements" (Lundberg 2001a). Stark (1987: 26) goes on to say that "some ideologies are more plausible; some are more easily and effectively communicated; some are more able to satisfy deeply felt needs of large numbers of people; indeed, some probably are inherently more interesting, even exciting than others."

Hence, it is significant that Beckford (*ER* "New Religions" 393) further writes, "Very rarely have new religious movements been seriously analyzed for the metaphysics, morality, or motivation that they offer." It is therefore argued that although endogenous factors such as metaphysics, morality (ethics) and motivation are inherent in a religion's theology/ideology, these, in turn, are most clearly expressed in its *doctrinal* dimension.

Regarding the *multi-dimensionality* of religion, Ninian Smart (1983) portrays religion as ranging from the concrete (ritual, social and material) to the more abstract (experiential, mythical, doctrinal and ethical) dimensions. This paper regards the *doctrinal* dimension as being of prime importance since one essential function of doctrines is that they normatively define the religious community, i.e., they function as self-definitions (Smart 1983: 97–100; McGrath 1997: 37). George Lindbeck (1984: 74, 85), for example, defines doctrines as "communally authoritative teachings regarding beliefs and practices that are considered essential to the identity or welfare of the group in question," and that "doctrines may legitimately function as norms of belief and practice."

Finally, in a passage regarding the *reification of religion*, Smith (1964: 486) implicitly elaborates on the idea and phenomenon of religio-genesis, although he does not use this term:

Through the centuries of man's religiousness in general, and particularly *within the development of each of the individual world religions*, there seems discernible a long-term trend towards *self-conscious systematization*. What begins as active practice and faith gradually becomes, or is thought to become, definable pattern. The personal experience, behaviour, or belief of individual or group is abstracted and generalized, is conceptualized and an independent entity. Religions in general, and particularly the great religions, have been undergoing an historical process of reification. (*Italics added*)

As has been argued above, this internal development of "self-conscious systematization" is most explicitly found in a religion's doctrinal dimension.

Consequently, religiogenesis may be evaluated from two perspectives (etic/emic) and two factors (exogenous/endogenous). One endogenous factor and dimension is doctrine, and one important function of doctrine is that it serves as defining the religious community in terms of other religious systems (self-definition). As such the process of doctrinalization can be evaluated as an effort of "self-conscious systematization."

*An Emic Approach*

Shoghi Effendi regarded the relationship between the Bahā'ī Faith and the birth of the United Nations (UN) in 1945 as important. This can be seen not only by judging his efforts put into the above-mentioned letter and document, but also that he states that such a collaboration marked:

an important step forward in the struggle of our beloved Faith to receive in the eyes of the world its just due, and be recognized as an independent *World Religion*. (Rabbanī 1969: 304, italics added)

Thus, we have Shoghi Effendi's own testimony that such association would give credence to Bahā'ī as a "world religion." Yet, it should be noted that the event of 1947 was not the first involvement of the Bahā'ī Faith with the UN. Such collaboration was preceded, e.g., by an International Bahā'ī Bureau established at the League of Nations headquarters in Geneva in 1926, and with Bahā'ī representatives present when the UN Charter was signed in San Francisco in 1945. One year after the event of 1947, the Bahā'ī International Community (BIC) was accredited as an international non-governmental organization (NGO) at the UN and the Bahā'ī communities of the United States and Canada were recognized by the UN Department of Public Information (DPI). In 1970 the BIC was granted consultative status (see Bahā'ī and UN 2002).

What is especially relevant in the above-discussed context of self-definition and doctrinalization is that *The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh: A World Religion* was 1) prepared approximately 80 years *after* the arrival of Bahā'īs to the Holy Land, and that it was 2) written for *outsiders* (Emil Sandström/UNSCOP). With regards to the first point, it gives room for a *retrospective* stance, and with regards to the second point, it could be seen as an attempt of *normative* Bahā'ī self-definition since the appointed head of the Bahā'īs wrote it.

A few relevant points of this document will now be analyzed to illustrate how Shoghi Effendi, from an emic perspective (normatively and doctrinally), describes the relationship between Bahā'īs and the Holy Land and how he ultimately defines the Bahā'ī Faith as a world religion.

Shoghi Effendi's choice for the title (*The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh*) of this document clearly states that what is described is Bahā'ī. This message is also conveyed through the opening sentence of the first paragraph "The Faith established by Bahā'u'llāh." Being written for the

UNSCOP it is significant that the first paragraph summarizes Bahā'u'llāh's successive geographical banishments from Persia (Iran), and ends with a sentence which mentions "its permanent spiritual centre in the Holy Land." As such Shoghi Effendi not only explains the reason why the Bahā'ī are located in the area but he also describes it as "the Holy Land." Similarly, in his letter Shoghi Effendi refers to the area as "this sacred and much disputed land" and claims that the "position of the Bahā'īs in this country is in a certain measure unique." He continues and gives the following reasons for this:

For it is in the soil of Palestine that the three central Figures of our religion [the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahā'] are buried, it is not only the centre of Bahā'ī pilgrimages from all over the world but also the permanent seat of our Administrative Order, of which I have the honour to be the Head. (Rabbanī 1969: 287, clarification added)

Here the idea of a *world* religion is implied in that "the soil of Palestine" represents the *axis mundi* of Bahā'ī on three intimate and hierarchical levels:

- 1) *Holy Land*: Palestine/Israel is *holy* since three of its central figures (the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahā') are buried there.
- 2) *Pilgrimage*: the statement "Bahā'ī pilgrims *from all over the world*" clearly suggests that the Bahā'ī Faith is a *worldwide* religious movement.
- 3) *Administration*: the Head (Shoghi Effendi) and the "permanent seat" that administers the *international* Bahā'ī community from there.

The second paragraph of *The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh* is especially revealing because it is here where Shoghi Effendi states:

Alike in the claims unequivocally asserted by its Author [Bahā'u'llāh] and the general character of the *growth* of the Bahā'ī community in *every continent of the globe*, it can be regarded in no other light than a *world religion*. (clarification and italics added)

Here Shoghi Effendi associates the emic/endogenous (claims) with the etic/exogenous (the growth and geographical spread of the Bahā'ī Faith). Taken together, these two perspectives are employed to give credence to defining the Bahā'ī Faith as "a world religion."

In the next section, entitled *Restatement of Eternal Verities*, one may note how Shoghi Effendi delineates Bahā'ī religiogenesis:

Though sprung from Shī'ih Islām, and regarded in the early stages of its development, by the followers of both the Muslim and Christian Faiths, as an obscure sect, an Asiatic cult or an offshoot of the Muḥammadan religion, this Faith is now increasingly demonstrating its right to be recognized, not as one more religious system superimposed on the conflicting creeds . . .

In the continuing sentence one can readily see the interrelationship between the above emic description of religiogenesis and the shift towards the doctrinal dimension:

. . . but rather as a restatement of the eternal verities underlying all the religions of the past . . .

This becomes even clearer in the next paragraph that expresses the Bahā'ī doctrine of progressive revelation:

The fundamental principle enunciated by Bahā'u'llāh, the followers of His Faith firmly believe, is that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine *Revelation is a continuous and progressive process.* (italics added)

This is not only an explicit statement of progressive revelation, but this doctrine also is implicit and further elaborated upon, in the immediate and following sentence:

That all the great religions of the world [i.e., the world religions] are divine in origin, that their aims and purposes are one and the same, that their teachings are but facets of one truth, that their functions are complementary, that they differ only in their non-essential aspects of their doctrines, and that their missions represent successive stages in the spiritual evolution of human society. (clarification added)

In the next section, entitled *To Reconcile Conflicting Creeds*, the idea that the Bahā'ī Faith is the fulfillment of at least three world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam) is unambiguous:

The aim of Bahā'u'llāh, the Prophet of this new and great age which humanity has entered upon He whose advent fulfils the prophecies of the Old [Judaism] and New Testaments [Christianity] as well as those of the Qur'ān [Islam] regarding the coming of the Promised One in the end of time, on the Day of Judgment is not to destroy but to *fulfill* the Revelations of the past . . . (clarifications and italics added).

The latter part of this passage is reminiscent of Matt. 5: 17 "Think not that I came to destroy the law or the prophets: I came not to



destroy, but to fulfill.” Consequently, although Shoghi Effendi defines and portrays the Bahā’ī Faith as *a* world religion, he claims ultimately, that it *fulfills* the prophecies of at least three world religions. As such, the Bahā’ī Faith is not only depicted as *a* world religion *on par* with these world religions, but is rather seen as *the* world religion. What seems to be implied here is two intimately related Bahā’ī principles, or doctrines: 1) the “oneness of religion” or “religious unity” and 2) progressive revelation (May 1993, 1997; Lundberg 1996, 2000).

After this comes a new section, entitled *Oneness of the Human Race*, which is another Bahā’ī principle (Hatcher and Martin 1985: 74–84), and then follows a more elaborate emic description of religiogenesis of the “three central Figures”: the Bāb (the Herald), Bahā’u’llāh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahā’.

Subsequently, a section on the *Administrative Order* is included and here it is significant that Shoghi Effendi stresses three global themes:

- 1) the geographically *world-wide* and global nature of Bahā’ī: “The Administrative Order of the Faith . . . has already extended its ramifications to every continent on the globe, stretching from Iceland to Chile, has established in no less than eighty-eight countries of the world”;
- 2) the *inter-racial* nature of the Bahā’ī Faith: “has gathered within its pale representatives of no less than thirty-one races”; and
- 3) the *inter-religious* nature of the Bahā’ī Faith: “numbers among its supporters Christians of various denominations, Muslims of both Sunnī and Shī‘ih sects, Jews, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians and Buddhists.”

What is implied here is three basic Bahā’ī principles or doctrines: “the oneness of the earth,” “the oneness of humankind,” and “the oneness of religion” (see e.g., Hatcher and Martin 1985: 74–84). Thus, in a few paragraphs, Shoghi Effendi not only defines the Bahā’ī Faith in terms of the doctrine of progressive revelation, but he also gives three interrelated motivations why it should be regarded as a *world* religion.

It should be remembered that Shoghi Effendi’s initial task in his document to Emil Sandström was to clarify “the relationship which the Bahā’ī Faith has to Palestine.” In his letter and document he does this in two major ways. On the one hand he explicitly and

implicitly states that the Bahā'ī Faith is, or more precisely, *the* world religion. On the other hand, he describes Palestine/Israel as *the* Holy Land.

The document finally ends with a section, entitled *Tributes by Leaders* e.g., Queen Marie of Rumania (1875–1938) and Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910). The third to last tribute, however, is the most significant in this context since it is here where Shoghi Effendi, once again, utilizes the twofold stroke of simultaneously claiming that the Bahā'ī Faith is a world religion and that it is intimately related to Palestine (implicitly understood as the Holy Land):

‘Palestine,’ is Professor Norman Bentwich’s written testimony, ‘may indeed be now regarded as the land of not three but of four faiths, because the Bahā'ī creed, which has its centre of faith in ‘Akkā and Haifa, is attaining to the character of *a world religion*.’ (Italics added)

Norman Bentwich (1883–1971) was the only Jew among the first appointments to the first British Mandatory Administration of Palestine under General George Allenby. He was appointed Attorney General for Palestine between 1920–31.

Although Shoghi Effendi’s document is clearly written from an *emic* perspective, it is seen as significant that he concludes it with various quotations from various *etic* perspectives to give further impetus to his claim that the Bahā'ī Faith is a world religion.

### *An Etic Approach*

One important difference between the *emic* and *etic* perspectives is that the former tend to be more homogenous than the latter. Another important distinction is that the former portrays itself in a favorable light whereas descriptions of the latter may range from antagonistic, neutral to positive. In other words, there are a greater variety of *etic* definitions of Bahā'ī than *emic* ones. Consequently, *etic* perspectives have defined and described the Bahā'ī Faith as, e.g., an Islamic heresy (Noori 1360 A.H.), a cult or sect (see Schaefer 1988), a syncretistic religion (see Stockman 2001), or a NRM (see Bahā'ī 1997).

In the context of this paper, however, the focus of the *etic* perspective here is solely on definitions that see the Bahā'ī Faith as a world religion. Thus, although Shoghi Effendi above *emically* defined the Bahā'ī Faith as a world religion, he ended his document by including various *etic* perspectives. A few other such perspectives will

show that Shoghi Effendi's claim does not stand unparalleled. More importantly, such definitions have been made both prior and subsequent to Shoghi Effendi's document in 1947.

E.G. Browne (1892: 407, 408), for example, writes that "Whatever its actual destiny may be [the Bābī-Bahā'ī religion] is of that stuff whereof world religions are made" and he also refers to it as "this new world-religion." In 1912 two articles were published which explicitly stated that the Bahā'ī Faith was a world religion "Bahaism: The Birth of a World Religion" by Harrold Johnson, and "A Ray From the East: Bahaism, A World-Religion" by C. Johnston. In 1951 Sir Herbert Samuel published an article entitled "The Bahā'ī Faith, a World Religion: Their Spiritual Centre is Haifa." Incidentally, Sir Herbert Louis Samuel (1870–1963) was titled "Viscount Samuel of Carmel" and was appointed as the first High Commissioner of Palestine under the British Mandate (1920–25). He knew 'Abdu'l-Bahā' (1844–1921), Shoghi Effendi's grandfather, and visited him in his home and attended his funeral. He also corresponded with Shoghi Effendi (Shoghi Effendi 1974: 306, 312; Rabbanī 1969: 52, 218, 282, 283).

In 1959 historian Arnold Toynbee implied that the Bahā'ī Faith is a world religion when he writes that:

Bahaism is an independent religion on par with Islam, Christianity, and the other recognized world religions. Bahaism is not a sect of some other religion; it is a separate religion, and it has the same status as the other recognized religions. (Hatcher and Martin 1989: xiii)

Similarly, V.E. Johnson (1976: 38) writes that:

To focus today on the birth and rise of a world religion which is so close to one's own day at such an early stage in its development may provide in no small way important insights into the origins and development of the religions of the past.

It should be noted once again that Johnson argues that by studying the Bahā'ī Faith one may also understand the phenomenon of religiogenesis. More recently, David V. Barrett (1998: 30) writes that:

Although this [the Bahā'ī Faith] is a relatively new religion, and although it had its origins in Islam, the Bahā'ī Faith claims to be no more a Muslim sect than Christianity today is a Jewish sect. It is a new worldwide religion, the next in order after Judaism, Christianity and Islam, worshipping the same God as they do. (clarification added)

Finally, Harold G. Coward (2000: 85) states, "Of the new religious movements in the modern world, the Bahā'ī Faith is sufficiently independent and widespread in its international membership of about six million people to be regarded as a world religion."

*Bahā'ī, Religiogenesis and World Religion*

What is the relationship between Bahā'ī, the phenomenon of religiogenesis, and the claim to world religion? To paraphrase the Thomas Theorem ("Situations that are defined as real become real") one could in the present context state that "Religious movements that normatively define themselves *as* world religions may very likely *become* world religions," or more precisely, "Religious movements that normatively define themselves as world religions are more likely to become world religions than religious movements that do not." E.G. Browne (1892: 407) seems to have noted such a possibility when he wrote that in the Bābī-Bahā'ī religion the student of religion "may witness, in a word, the birth of a faith which may not impossibly win a place amidst the great religions of the world." More recently, Denis MacEoin (1984: 476) states that the "central focus of interest" of Bahā'ī "lies in the conscious promulgation of an alternative religion, not primarily as an outgrowth of an existing major tradition, but as a potential new religion." More succinctly, he states that "What we are witnessing . . . is the planned construction of a 'world religion'." In this vein it could be argued that The Bahā'ī Faith is a modern religious movement that defines itself as a "world religion" (self-definition, claim), while it tries (through conscious planning, mission) to grow and expand worldwide in order to achieve and legitimize its status as a "world religion" (aim). One could, without any pun intended, say that such a process follows the pattern of a "self-fulfilling prophecy" (Lundberg 2001a).

With approximately 5–7 million adherents, Bahā'ī is to date numerically a relatively *minor* modern religious movement. Yet, it has during its brief history (ca. 150 years) been established in 205 sovereign countries and dependent territories. Thus, among the classical world religions it is more geographically spread than Islam and is surpassed only by Christianity. However, of all the modern religious movements, it is the *most* spread (*Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1992). It there-

fore stands to reason that in order to understand such an apparent global success (Lundberg 2001a), one has to understand not only the exogenous factors and context (historical, political, economic, geographic etc.) but also their *interaction* with the endogenous factors and contexts (ideology, theology and doctrines).

### *Conclusions*

This paper has aimed to understand the phenomenon of religiogenesis in general and Bahā'ī as a case study in particular. It has argued that religion, and thus religiogenesis, can be approached from two major perspectives: the etic (outsider) and emic (insider). Bahā'ī religiogenesis could also be studied from these two perspectives. Various aspects of religiogenesis were also briefly reviewed and it was argued that this phenomenon could be understood in terms of factors (exogenous/endogenous), dimensions, and reification of religion. The route taken here was that reification of religion could be evaluated in terms of the doctrinal dimension (especially the doctrine of progressive revelation) that, in turn, could be seen as part of the endogenous factors of religiogenesis. It was further seen that the claim of the Bahā'ī Faith as a world religion could be approached from both emic and etic perspectives.

By analyzing an important and relevant document written by Shoghi Effendi *The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh: A World Religion* (1947) two things could be concluded about the relationship between the Bahā'ī Faith and the Holy Land:

- 1) Bahā'ī is emically and normatively defined and portrayed through the doctrine of progressive revelation not only as *a* world religion but as *the* world religion, and
- 2) the geographical area known as Palestine/Israel is upheld as sacred. In other words, it is *the* Holy Land since it is the place where the three central figures of the Bahā'ī Faith (the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh, and 'Abdu'l-Bahā') are buried. As such it is also a place for pilgrimage (to "Bahā'ī Holy Places"), and it is also the administrative world centre (see Bahā'ī World Centre 2002)

The document *The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh: A World Religion* can therefore be evaluated as an example of Bahā'ī self-definition where Shoghi

Effendi claims that the Bahā'ī Faith has at least the same status as other world religions (Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in particular), and that, despite its relatively brief history, it is, like them, historically and indissolubly linked to the Holy Land.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bahā'ī 1997. "Bahā'ī: NRM or World Religion?" [www.bahai-library.org/essays/nrm.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/essays/nrm.html).
- Bahā'ī Holy Land 2002. <http://workshops.prohosting.com/holyland/>.
- Bahā'ī and UN 2002. <http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/>.
- Bahā'ī World Centre 2002. <http://www.bahai.org/>.
- Bahā'u'llāh 1983. *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh*. Wilmette, IL, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Balyuzi, H.M. 1980. *Bahā'u'llāh: The King of Glory*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Barrett, D.V. 1998. *Sects, 'Cults' and Alternative Religions: A World Survey and Sourcebook*. London, Blandford.
- Berger, P.L. 1954. *From Sect to Church: A Sociological Interpretation of the Bahā'ī Movement*. Ph.D. dissertation. NY, New School for Social Research.
- Browne, E.G. 1892. "Bābīsm," in W. Sheowring and C.W. Thies (eds.) *Religious Systems of the World, a Contribution to the Study of Comparative Religion*. London, Swan Sonnenschein and Co.
- Chouleur, J. 1977. "The Bahā'ī Faith: World Religion of the Future?" *World Order*, 12.1.
- Clarke, P.B. and Byrne, P. (eds.) 1993. *Religion Defined and Explained*. NY, St. Martin's Press.
- Coward, H.G. 2000. *Pluralism in the World Religions: A Short Introduction*. Oxford, One world.
- Craffert, P.F. 1995. "Is the Emic-Etic Distinction a Useful Tool for Cross-cultural Interpretation of the New Testament?" *Religion and Theology* 2(1).
- Dean-Diebert, M. 1978. "Early Journalistic Reactions to the Bahā'ī Faith." *World Order* (summer).
- Ekstrand, G. and Ekstrand, L.H. 1986. "Developing the Emic and Etic Concepts for Cross-cultural Comparisons." *Educational and Psychological Interactions*, 86.
- Encyclopaedia Britannica* 1992. *Encyclopaedia Britannica Book of the Year*.
- ER. Eliade, Mircea (ed.) 1987. *Encyclopedia of Religion*. NY, Macmillan.
- Fazel, S. 1991. "The Bahā'ī Faith Seen Through the Eyes of Major Encyclopedias." *The Journal of Bahā'ī Studies*, 4(3).
- . 1994. "Is the Bahā'ī Faith a World Religion?" *The Journal of Bahā'ī Studies*, 6(1).
- Geertz, C. 1999. "From the Native's Point of View": On the Nature of Anthropological Understanding, in R.T. McCutcheon (ed.) *The Insider/ Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London, Cassell.
- Hassall, G. 1994–95. "Bahā'ī History in the Formative Age: The World Crusade, 1953–1963." *The Journal of Bahā'ī Studies* 6(4): 1–22.
- Hatcher, W.S. and Martin, J.D. 1989. *The Bahā'ī Faith The Emerging Global Religion*. San Francisco, Harper and Row, Publishers.
- Hawkin, D.J. and Robinson, T. (eds.) 1990. *Self-Definition and Self-Discovery in Early Christianity: A Study in Changing Horizons*. NY, Edwin Mellen.
- Headland, T.N., Pike, K.L., and Harris, M. (eds.) 1990. "Emics and Etics: The Insider/Outsider Debate." *Frontiers of Anthropology*, vol. 7. London, Sage Publications.

- Hick, J. 1993. "A Religious Understanding of Religion: A Model of the Relationship between Traditions," in J. Kellenberger (ed.) *Inter-Religious Models and Criteria*. NY, St. Martin's Press.
- Idinopulos, T.A. and Wilson, B.C. (eds.) 1998. *What is Religion? Origins, Definitions, and Explanations*. Leiden, Brill.
- Johnston, C. 1912. "A Ray From the East: Bahaism, A World-Religion." *Harper's Weekly*, 56.
- Johnson, H. 1912. "Bahaism: The Birth of a World Religion." *Contemporary Review*, 101.
- Johnson, V.E. 1976. "The Challenge of the Bahā'ī Faith: A Non-Bahā'ī Assessment of Reasons for Studying the Bahā'ī Religion." *World Order*, 10.3.
- Kofsky, A. and Stroumsa, G.G. (eds.) 1998. *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land: First-fifteenth Centuries CE*. Jerusalem, Yad Izhak Ben Zvi.
- Kuhn, T.S. 1962. *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. Chicago, University of Chicago Press.
- Lindbeck, G.A. 1984. *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Post-liberal Age*. London, SPCK.
- Lundberg, Z. 1996. *Bahā'ī Apocalypticism: The Concept of Progressive Revelation*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, Lund University.
- . 2000. "The Bedrock of Bahā'ī Belief: The Doctrine of Progressive Revelation," in I. Ayman (ed.) *Lights of Irfān*, Book One. Wilmette, IL.
- . 2001a. "When a New Religion Succeeds: Religious Pluralism and Globalization in the Bahā'ī Doctrine of Progressive Revelation." London School of Economics, INFORMS.
- . 2001b. "Global Claims, Global Aims: Shoghi Effendi's Role in Making Bahā'ī Global." Bahā'ī and Globalisation Conference, University of Copenhagen (conference paper).
- MacEoin, D. 1974. "Oriental Scholarship and the Bahā'ī Faith." *World Order* (summer).
- . 1984. "Bahā'ism," in J.R. Hinnells (ed.) *A Handbook of Living Religions*. London, Allen Lane.
- Manning T. J. 1997. "Shoghi Effendi's Plans for Progress: Practical Lessons." *The Journal of Bahā'ī Studies*, 7(4).
- May, D. 1993. *The Bahā'ī Principle of Religious Unity and the Challenge of Radical Pluralism*. Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of North Texas.
- . 1997. "The Bahā'ī Principle of Religious Unity: A Dynamic Perspectivism," in Jack McLean (ed.) *Revisioning the Sacred: New Perspectives on a Bahā'ī Theology*. *Studies in the Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, vol. 8. LA, Kalimāt Press.
- McCutcheon, R.T. (ed.) 1999. *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London, Cassell.
- McGrath, A.E. 1997. *The Genesis of Doctrine: A Study in the Foundations of Doctrinal Criticism*. Grand Rapids, Michigan, Eerdmans.
- Meyer, B.F. 1986. *The Early Christians: Their World Mission and Self-Discovery*. Wilmington, Delaware, Michael Glazier.
- Momen, Moojan 1981. *The Bābī and Bahā'ī religions, 1844–1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- , (ed.) 1987. *Selections from the Writings of E.G. Browne on the Bābī and Bahā'ī religions*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Müller, Max 1873. *Introduction to the Science of Religion*. London.
- Noori, Yahya 1360 A.H. "Finality of Prophethood and a Critical Analysis of Babism, Bahaism, Qadiyanism." *Majma'-'i-Ma'ārif-i Islām*, Tehran.
- Numrich, P.D. 1993. "The Bahā'ī Faith in World Religions Textbooks." *World Order*, 25(1).

- Piff, D. and Warburg, M. 1998. "Enemies of the Faith: Rumours and Anecdotes as Self-Definition and Social Control in the Bahā'ī Religion," in E. Barker and M. Warburg (eds.) *New Religions and New Religiosity*. Aarhus, Aarhus University Press.
- Platvoet, J.G. and Molendijk, A.L. (eds.) 1999. *The Pragmatics of Defining Religions: Contexts, Concepts and Contests*. Leiden, Brill.
- Rabbani, Ruhhiyyih 1969. *The Priceless Pearl*. London, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Ruhe, D.S. 1983. *Door of Hope: The Bahā'ī Faith in the Holy Land*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Samuel, H. 1951. "The Bahā'ī Faith, a World Religion: Their Spiritual Centre is Haifa." *India and Israel* 3.
- Sanders, E.P. (ed.) 1980–83. *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition*. Philadelphia, Fortress Press.
- Schaefer, Udo 1988. "The Bahā'ī Faith Sect or Religion?" *Bahā'ī Studies*, 16.
- Sharpe, E.J. 1986. *Comparative Religion: A History*. London, Duckworth.
- Shoghi Effendi. 1947. *The Faith of Bahā'u'llāh: A World Religion*. <http://www.bic-un.bahai.org/47-0701.htm>
- . 1973. *Directives from the Guardian*. New Delhi, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1974. *God Passes By*. Wilmette, IL, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- . 1991. *The World Order of Bahā'u'llāh—Selected Letters*. Wilmette, IL, Bahā'ī Publishing Trust.
- Skeat, W.W. 1984. *A Concise Etymological Dictionary of the English Language*. Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- Smart, Ninian. 1983. *Worldviews: Crosscultural Explorations of Human Beliefs*. NY, Charles Scribner's sons.
- . 1999. "Within and Without Religion," in R.T. McCutcheon, (ed.) *The Insider/Outsider Problem in the Study of Religion: A Reader*. London, Cassell.
- Smith, Peter. 1987. *The Babi and Bahā'ī Religions: From Messianic Shi'ism to a World Religion*. Oxford, George Ronald.
- Smith, W.C. 1959. "Comparative Religion: Whither—and Why?" in M. Eliade and J. Kitagawa (eds.) *The History of Religions: Essays in Methodology*. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press.
- . 1964. "The Historical Development in Islam of the Concept of Islam as an Historical Development," in B. Lewis and P.M. Holt (eds.) *Historians of the Middle East*. London, Oxford University Press.
- . 1981. *Towards a World Theology: Faith and the Comparative History of Religion*. Philadelphia, The Westminster Press.
- . 1991. *The Meaning and End of Religion*. Minneapolis, Fortress Press.
- Stemberger, Günter 2000. *Jews and Christians in the Holy Land: Palestine in the Fourth Century*. Edinburgh, T and T Clark.
- Sterling, G.F. 1992. *Historiography and Self-Definition: Josephus, Luke-Acts and Apologetic Historiography*. Leiden, E.J. Brill.
- Stockman, Robert 2001. *The Bahā'ī Faith and Syncretism*. (unpublished document) [www.bahai-library.org/articles/rg.syncretism.html](http://www.bahai-library.org/articles/rg.syncretism.html)
- Thrower, James 1999. *Religion: The Classical Theories*. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press.
- Warburg, Margit 1995. "A Multi-Dimensional Approach to Religious Self-Definition in the Bahā'ī Community." Unpublished paper presented at the International Conference of Sociology and Religion. Quebec, 26–30 June.
- Wilken, R.L. 1992. *The Land called Holy: Palestine in Christian History and Thought*. New Haven, Yale University Press.
- Williamson, Roger (ed.) 1992. *The Holy Land in the Monotheistic Faiths*. Uppsala, Life and Peace Institute.



*This page intentionally left blank*

# INDEX

(Prepared by Sivan Lerer)

- ‘Abbās Effendī *s.v.* ‘Abdu’l Bahā’  
‘Abbās Qulī Khān-i Lārījānī 189,  
191–92, 207–208  
‘Abd al-Bāsiṭ 277  
‘Abdu’l Bahā’ 8, 28, 31, 35,  
106–107, 114, 120, 144, 155,  
157–61, 166, 173, 240, 248, 253,  
256–60, 266–67, 269–71, 275–94,  
310, 312, 314  
*abjad* 32, 33  
Abraham (Biblical figure) 127–28, 301  
Abraham of Pohrebisht, R. 64  
Abū Turāb 280  
Abu’l-Ḥasan Mīrẓā “Shaykh al-Ra’īs”  
263  
Abulafia, Abraham 48–51, 54, 61,  
65–70, 131  
Acre 153, 157–62, 164, 166, 167,  
170, 172, 234, 242, 255, 256,  
260–63, 266, 278, 287, 296, 299,  
311  
Adam 10  
Ādharbāyjan 181, 183, 186, 196, 200  
Adrianople *s.v.* Edirne  
Adventist Movements 3–4, 7, 10,  
17–18, 34–35, 108, 300  
Aharon Kohen of Apta, R. 59, 61,  
68–70  
*ahl al-majāz* 152  
Aḥmadiyya 4, 7, 300  
Ahmed Mīdhat 255  
Aḥsā’ī, Shaykh Aḥmad al- 27–28,  
30–31  
‘Akiva, R. 71  
‘Akk, *s.v.* Acre  
*Aleph* (letter) 29, 31, 33  
Alexander II, Czar 145, 160, 163–65,  
167  
Algar, Hamid 195, 264  
‘Alī b. Abū Ṭālib 31–32, 156  
‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī, Sayyid  
*s.v.* Bāb  
Ālī Pasha 254–55  
‘Alī Qulī Mīrẓā I’tiḍād al-Salṭana  
221  
‘ālim 32  
Allenby, Gen. George 311  
Alphabet 19, 25–27, 29–30, 32–33,  
127–28  
Amīr Kabīr *s.v.* Mīrẓā Taqī Khān  
Amīr al-Shu‘arā’ *s.v.* Riḍā, Qulī Khān  
Hidāyat  
Amru’llāh 230  
Amulets 23–24, 33  
Āmulī, Shaykh Sayyid Ḥaydar 31  
Angels 20  
Apocalyptic Prophecy 48–49, 56, 62,  
72, 75  
Apocalypticism 41, 56, 97, 106,  
108–109, 114, 117–18, 151  
Āqā ‘Azīzu’llāh “Jadhdhāb” 144,  
150  
Āqā Buzurg Nīshāpūrī “Badī’” 160,  
162–63  
Āqā Jān 149  
Āqā Ḥusayn Āshchī 246  
Āqā Sayyid Ḥusayn-i Kātib 188  
Āqā Sayyid Muḥammad Riḍā,  
Shāhmīrẓādī 215, 218  
Āqā Sayyid Yaḥyā-yi Dārābī “Wāḥid”  
205  
*Arba’ah Turim* 52  
Aristotle 5  
Armageddon 106, 108  
*Arpilei Tohar* 86  
Arslan, Amīn 266  
Arya Samaj 300  
‘Atabāt 187, 199, 201  
Avivi, Yoseph 80–81  
Āwāra, ‘A. 200  
Azālī Movement 180–81, 227–28,  
257, 262–63, 281  
*Bā’* (letter) 28–33  
Ba’al 64  
*Ba’al Shem* 25  
Ba’al-Shem-Tov, R. Israel 13, 19–20,  
56–61, 63–64, 66, 71–72, 77  
Bāb, ‘Alī Muḥammad Shīrāzī 4, 7–9,  
12–13, 17, 19, 21, 27–29, 31–35,  
102–103, 121, 144, 146–47, 156–57,  
161, 179–85, 187–88, 196–98,

- 200–201, 203, 208–210, 227–31,  
236, 239, 243–45, 248, 250, 259,  
267, 276, 278, 280–81, 290, 308,  
310, 314  
Babel 128, 134–35  
Bābī Faith 3, 7–8, 12, 17–18, 32,  
102, 104, 118, 145, 155–57, 161,  
179–225, 227–29, 232, 238, 247–50,  
253, 255, 257, 259–60, 263–67,  
272, 281, 288, 302, 312  
*Bābīyyat* 34, 187  
Badasht 181, 185, 200, 210  
Badī<sup>c</sup> *s.v.* Āqā Buzurg Nishāpūrī  
Baghdad 145–46, 229–31, 237, 259,  
264  
*bahā'* 29–30, 32–33, 156, 283, 286  
Bahā'ī Faith 3, 7–8, 12, 17–18, 21,  
29, 32, 97–118, 120–21, 127, 143,  
147, 149, 161, 180–81, 227, 253,  
259–60, 263, 267–68, 270–72,  
280–82, 284, 288–89, 291, 299–300,  
302, 305, 307–15  
Bahā'u'llāh, Mīrzā 'Alī-yi Nūrī 8–9,  
12–13, 17, 21, 28–29, 32, 35,  
104–106, 114, 118, 120–22, 143–73,  
181–82, 213, 217, 227–50, 253,  
256–57, 260–62, 264, 266–67, 269,  
276, 278, 280–84, 290, 301, 308–10,  
314  
Bahīyyih Khānum 158, 166  
*bā'ith* 30  
*bajad* 32  
Balch, Robert 111  
Balyuzi, Ḥasan M. 149, 170, 232,  
260, 271, 278–79  
Barrett, David V. 312  
Barukh of Kosov, R. 63  
*barzakh* 35  
*Basmallah* 28, 31–32  
*Bayān* 9  
*Bayān-i Fārsī* 146, 196, 215  
“Beautiful Names” 27  
Beckford, James A. 305–306  
Bektaşis 258–59  
Bentwich, Norman 311  
Bereketzade İsmail Hakki 255, 261  
Berkes, Niyazi 264–65  
*Bereshit* 19  
Besht *s.v.* Ba'al-Shem-Tov  
*Beth* (letter) 19, 28–29, 31  
Bible 9–12, 14, 22, 48, 100, 106, 119,  
127–28, 133  
*bid'a* 190, 280–81  
*Bihjat aṣ-Ṣudūr* 233, 246  
*Bism* 32, 152  
Blunt, Anne 289  
Blunt, Wilfred 289  
Book of Alma 10  
Book of Daniel 48  
Book of Ether 10  
Book of Mormon 9–10, 118–19  
Book of Revelation 151  
Book of Splendour *s.v.* *Ẓohar*  
Brigham Young 8, 13  
Browne, Edward G. 97, 144, 160,  
161, 163, 168, 170, 172, 189, 195,  
212, 214, 216, 220, 233, 302,  
312–13  
Bruce, Rev. Robert 168–69  
Buddha 98  
Buddhism 157  
al-Būnī, Aḥmad b. 'Alī 24  
  
Cahun, León 258–59  
Canavarro, Madam M.A. de S. 158  
Carmel 154  
Caro, R. Joseph 136  
Catafago, Khājlīh Louis 166  
Cevdet, Abdullah 265, 267–71  
*Chahār Vādī* 146  
Chahrīq 200  
*Chāwush-khwānī* 198–99  
Chase, Neal 111  
Christ 9, 34, 101, 119–20, 144, 146,  
150, 153, 155, 169  
Christianity 5, 10, 14–15, 17, 22,  
34–35, 55–56, 73, 97, 101, 117,  
119–20, 127, 144–45, 151–54, 166,  
299, 301, 309  
Church 5, 9  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day  
Saints 7–8, 117–24, 300  
Cockerell, Sydney “Kūkūrīl” 289  
Cole, Juan R. 164, 257, 262, 280,  
282, 291  
Collins, William P. 118  
Comforter 144, 149, 151, 168  
Constantinople 165  
Corner, Lord 276  
Cottrell, Count Henry E. Plantagenet  
159  
Coward, Harold G. 313  
Croce, Benedetto 4–6  
  
*Dāl* (letter) 33  
*Dalā'il-i Sab'a* 188, 196  
al-Damīnī, Musfir 24, 25  
Daniel (Biblical figure) 128

- Dār al-Islām* 147  
*Dār al-ḥarb* 147  
 Darvīsh Šidq-ʿAlī 230  
 Dastur Dhalla 147  
 David (Biblical figure) 64, 119  
 David Hacohen “Hanazir”, R. 84–85  
 David of Makow, R. 64  
*Dawn-Breakers* 172, 217–18  
*debeqūt (devequt)* 20–21, 61–62, 84  
 Demons, Demoniac Powers 22–23  
 Derrida 130  
 Descartes 5  
 Devil 99  
*dilugim* 128–29  
*din* 33  
 Dinur, Benzion 45–46, 56  
 Divestment (of the soul) 51–54, 63, 68–70  
 Divine Being 14, 16, 27, 31  
 Divine Justice 11  
 Divine Kingdom 17, 107. See also: Kingdom of God  
 Divine Names and Attributes 18–19, 24–33, 63, 136, 152, 156, 164, 244  
 Divine Spirit 50, 61  
 Divine Unity 26, 27  
 Divine Will 51, 107, 168  
*Divrei Moshe* 63  
 Dolgorukov, Prince 186, 222  
 Dorn, Bernard 221–222  
 Douglas, Mary 227, 247, 250  
 Dwyer, John 123  
  
 Edirne (Adrianople) 157, 160–61, 165, 170, 229–30, 232–39, 246, 248, 253, 283, 299  
*ehad* 26. See also: One  
*ein sof* 16, 26  
 Eleazar Tzvi of Komarno, R. 71  
 Eliezer (Biblical figure) 127  
 Elijah (Biblical figure) 60  
 Eliade, Mircea 123  
 Elimelekh of Lisansk, R. 63  
*Elohim* 127, 136. See also: God  
 Elyashiv, Shalom 85  
*Emic* 302–303, 306, 307–11, 314  
 Emin Āli 267  
 Engels, Friedrich 4  
 Enoch (Biblical figure) 60  
*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf* 170  
 Eschatology 102, 104, 118, 121, 124, 143, 154–55, 179, 187, 199, 280, 284  
  
 Ethical Prophecy 48–49, 56–58, 72, 75  
*Etic* 302–303, 306, 311–14  
 Etkes, Immanuel 57  
 Eve 10  
  
 Fāḍil-i Māzandarānī 200, 218, 247  
*faraj* 188  
*farāmūshkhāna* 263–64  
 Faris Effendi the Physician 151–52  
 Faṭḥ ʿAlī Shāh 229  
 Fichte 93  
 First book of Nephi 9  
*fitna* 187  
 Four (number) 28  
 Freemasonry 259  
 Fuad Pasha 254  
  
 Galileo 5  
 Gamazov, M. 163  
*Gan Naʿul* 50  
 Geertz, Clifford 303  
 Geiger, Abraham 11  
 Gematria 22, 32–33, 127–39  
 Gershon of Kutov, R. 56, 72  
*geʿulah* 74  
 Gikatila, R. Yoseph 131, 136  
 Gilān 200  
 Globalization 143, 172–73  
 Gnosticism 15  
 God 6, 8–9, 11, 13–17, 19–20, 22, 25–26, 28, 30, 33, 43, 50, 60, 81–82, 89–90, 104, 118–19, 121, 127–28, 156  
 Gospels 100, 122, 149, 171  
 Great Maggid, the 61–63, 66  
 Great Peace 105  
 “Greatest Name” 28–30, 32, 171  
 Greek Philosophy 5, 12, 22, 35  
 Greussing, Kurt 193–95  
*Gzerah Shavah* 132, 135  
  
*Hāʾ* (letter) 28, 146, 295  
 ḤaBaD 4, 129, 137  
*al-ḥabīb* 156  
 Ḥadīth 24, 32–33, 103, 145, 188, 198  
*Haggadah* 135  
 Haifa 153, 164, 166, 260, 267, 278, 287, 299, 311  
 Ḥājī Elyahu Kohan ʿAbduʾl-Ḥusayn 150  
 Ḥājīr ʿAbd al-Majīd-i Nīshābūrī 214, 217

- Ḥājīrī Mīrzā Āqāsī 182–83, 186  
 Ḥājīrī Mīrzā Ḥasan-i Khurāsānī 214, 288  
 Ḥājīrī Mīrzā Jānī 216  
 Ḥājīrī Naṣīr-i Qazvīnī 198, 203, 213–14, 219  
*Halakhah* 134–36, 139  
 Hamadān 149  
 Ḥamawayh, Saʿd ad-Dīn 31  
 Hanioğlu, Şükrü 265–67, 271  
 Hanotaux, Gabriel 289  
*Ḥaqāʾiq al-akhbār-i nāṣiri* 221  
 Hardegg, Georg David 153–54  
 Harris, Marvin 303  
 Hasan 32  
 Ḥasan Āqā Salmāsī 236, 239–41, 245, 247–48  
*hashbaʾot* 63  
 Ḥasidic Movement 6–7, 18, 77–78, 81  
 Ḥasidut 3, 6–7, 16, 18–21, 25–26, 41–75, 82–85, 137  
*Ḥavuraʾ Qaddishaʾ* 44, 57–58  
*haykal* 33, 154, 168  
*hayy* 27  
*Ḥayyei ha-ʿOlam ha-Baʾ* 65–70  
*He* (letter) 128  
 “He Whom God shall Make Manifest” 12, 144–45, 147, 156, 182, 215, 231, 243, 250  
 Hegel 93  
 Heidegger 130  
 Heiler, Friedrich 73  
*heshbon* 136  
 Hick, John 303  
 Hidden Imām 3, 35, 179, 184, 210, 278  
*hijrah* 3  
 Hinduism 157  
*hitbodedut* 51–52, 63  
*hitpashetut* 52, 63  
 Hinduism 48  
*hitnabʾut* 47  
 Hoca Sadık Efendi 262  
 Holy Land 10, 144, 154, 299–301, 307–308, 311, 314–15  
 Holy War 103, 105, 179–80, 182, 187, 192, 195–97, 204–206, 301  
 Holy Writ 7, 9, 13, 19, 23. See also: Scriptures  
*hotamot* 50  
 House of Justice 105, 111–13, 165  
 Ḥujjat *s.v.* Mullā Muḥammad ʿAlī-iy Zanjānī  
 Hume, David 130  
*hūrqaḡyah* 35  
 Hurşid Paşa 246  
 Ḥusayn 28, 32, 144, 154–56, 204  
*Husayniyya* 154  
 Ibn al-ʿArabī 18, 31  
 Ibn Ezra 131–32  
 Ibrahim Kheiralla 107  
 Idel, Moshe 78, 83  
*ʾIggeret ʿAliyat ha-Neshamah* 56  
*ʾIlanaʾ de-Hayyei* 62  
 Imāms 11, 27, 29–32, 35, 144, 155, 196, 204, 246  
 ʿImārah, Muḥammad 290  
*ʾImrei Shefer* 70  
 India 3–4, 147, 157  
*al-insān al-kāmil* 18  
 Iran 102–104, 147, 149, 157, 168, 181, 193–94, 201, 204, 213, 217, 228, 230, 248, 255, 262, 264–65, 308  
*irtidād* 147  
 ʾIsā 34, 144  
 Isaac Aiziq Yehudah Safrin, R. 71  
 Isaac ben Jacob ha-Kohen, R. 49  
 Isaac ben Shmuel of Acre, R. 48, 51–54  
 Isaac Meir Alter, R. 68  
 Isaac Shani, R. 67  
 Isaiah (Biblical figure) 121, 168  
 Islam 3, 7, 10–14, 16, 21–23, 55, 97, 101, 104, 127, 145, 147, 154–56, 179, 181, 196, 299, 301, 309  
 Ismāʿīliyyah 28, 195  
 Israel of Ruzhin, Rabbi 19, 31, 64  
 Istanbul 230, 237, 242, 253, 255, 258–60, 263–64, 266, 270  
*al-ʾisyān* 168  
 Italy 81  
 Ivanov, M.S. 193–94  
 ʿIzzat Āqā 232, 237, 247  
 Jacob (Biblical figure) 10  
 Jacob ben Asher, R. 52  
 Jacob Isaac Horowitz, R. (Seer of Lublin) 71  
 Jacob Tzvi Yalish, R. 67  
 Jadhhdhāb *s.v.* Āqā Azīzuʾllāh “Jadhhdhāb”  
*jalāl* 33  
 Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī 240  
*jamāl* 33, 156

- Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī 263–66,  
 275–76, 279–81, 286–87  
 Jamal Effendi 157  
 al-Jawād, Aḥmad ‘Abd 25  
*Jawāhir al-Asrār* 151  
*jaysh* 200  
 Jensen, Leland 111  
 Jeremiah 128  
 Jerusalem 9–10, 133, 153, 287–88  
 Jessup, Rev. Henry H. 153  
 Jesus 10, 17–18, 34–35, 100, 121–22,  
 144, 151, 155–56, 164, 168–69, 243,  
 268  
*jihād s.v.* Holy War  
*Jim* (letter) 33  
 John the Baptist 146, 150, 168  
 Johnson, V. Elvin 300, 312  
 Joseph (Biblical figure) 10–11  
 Judaism 6, 12, 14, 16, 20–22, 25, 33,  
 41–75, 77–96, 100–101, 117,  
 127–39, 144–45, 147, 149–51, 299,  
 301, 309  
 Judgment Day 101–103, 284, 309  
  
 Ka‘ba 103  
 Kabbalah 16–18, 20, 25–26, 42–43,  
 46, 49–53, 55, 60, 65, 69, 71, 74,  
 79–87, 93, 129–30, 139  
 Kalki Viśnuyasas 157  
 Kant 5, 130–31, 139  
 Karbalā’ 187, 199, 204, 212, 258  
 Karo, R. Joseph 53  
 Kāshān 149, 216  
*kavvanah* 26, 52, 59, 83  
 Kedourie, Elie 286  
*Keter Nehora’* 69  
 Khādimu’llāh *s.v.* Mīrzā Āqā Jān  
 Kāshī  
 Khānlar Mīrzā 201  
 Khurāsān 103, 186–88, 195–96,  
 198–99, 204, 211  
*khurūj* 187, 200  
 Khusraw-i Qādī-Kalā’ī 189, 203, 213  
 “King of Kings” 119  
 Kingdom of God 101, 107–108, 118,  
 122, 167, 293–94  
 Kirman 147–48, 183  
*Kitāb al-‘Ahdī* 155  
*Kitāb-i Aqdas* 9, 159  
*Kitāb-i Badī‘* 156  
*Kitāb-i Īqān* 9, 120, 147, 154, 283  
*Kitāb-i Mubīn* 167  
*Kitāb-i Nuqtatu’l-Kāf* 198–99, 208,  
 216–17  
*Kitāb-i Zuhūr al-Haqq* 218  
 Kook, R. Abraham Isaac Hacoheh  
 77–96  
 Kūkūrīl *s.v.* Cockerell, Sydney  
  
 Lambden, Stephen 150, 153  
 Land of Israel 91, 134–35  
*al-Lawḥ al-Aqdas* 151  
*Lawḥ-i Dunyā* 282  
*Lawḥ-i Haft Purshish* 148  
*Lawḥ-i Hirtik* 153  
*Lawḥ-i Maqṣūd* 234  
*Lawḥ-i Mubāhalih* 232–33, 240–41,  
 242, 248  
*Lawḥ-i Nasīr* 155  
 Lchi 10  
 Lesser Peace 105–106, 171  
 Letters 22, 25–29, 32–34, 50, 54, 65,  
 127  
 “Letters of the Living” 180, 185  
 Levy, Habib 149  
 Liberty 4–6, 262  
 Liebes, Yehuda 78  
 Liener, Mordechay of Izbica 90  
*liqā’ Allāh* 154  
 Liṣān al-Mulk *s.v.* Mīrzā Muḥammad  
 Taqī-yi Sipīhr  
 Lubavitch Ḥasidism 61, 68, 70, 129,  
 137  
 Lublin 66  
 Luria 71  
 Lurianic system 41, 62, 81, 87, 89,  
 92  
 Luṭf ‘Alī Mīrzā Shīrāzī 198–99,  
 201–203, 206–207, 211–12, 214–15,  
 218  
 Luzatto, Moshe Ḥaim (Ramḥal)  
 79–83, 85, 91  
  
 MacEoin, Dennis 179, 195–97, 201,  
 207, 214, 313  
 Maggid of Mezerich 71  
 Maggid of Zlotchov *s.v.* Yeḥiel Mikhal  
 of Zlotchov, R.  
 Magic 24–26, 33, 238  
 Mahdī 3, 101–103, 144, 155, 179,  
 181, 184–85, 187–88, 198–200, 204,  
 209–10  
 Mahdī Qulī Mīrzā 190, 193, 207,  
 220, 223  
 Mahjūr-i Zawāra’ī, Sayyid Muḥammad  
 Husayn-i Zawāra’ī 198, 211,  
 214–15, 217–18  
 Maḥmūd, ‘Abd al-Ḥalīm 25

- “Maiden of Heaven” 146  
 Maimon, Solomon 64  
 Maimonides 55, 127  
*Majma‘ al-Baḥrayn* 33  
 Mākī 183, 200  
 Malik-Khusrawī, Muḥammad ‘Alī-yi 212, 215, 218  
*Man yuḡḡiruhu Allāh* *s.v.* “He Whom God shall Make Manifest”  
 Maneck, Susan 148  
 Mānī 145  
 Manifestation 12, 17–19, 27, 29, 35, 120–21, 157, 169, 278  
 Mann, Thomas 9  
 Mark, Tzvi 57  
 Martyrdom 188, 203, 204  
 Marx, Karl 4  
 Masefield, Peter 98  
 Mashhad 144, 149, 185, 198–200, 206, 215  
 Māzandarān 179–81, 183–86, 188–90, 193, 195–201, 203–205, 207, 209–210, 212–13, 215, 221  
 McConkie, Bruce R. 124  
 McCutcheon, Russell T. 304  
*Me‘ah She‘arim* 67  
 Mecca 103, 187, 199, 236, 301  
 Mehmed Bey 259  
*Mei HaShiloah* 90  
 Meir, R. 135  
 Menaḥem Mendel of Rimanov, R. 62  
 Menapirzade Nuri Bey 255, 261  
*Merkavah* 71  
 Messiah 34, 56, 74, 87–91, 100, 129, 137, 143–45, 148, 155, 247  
 Messianism 3, 41–43, 46, 78, 80, 102, 104, 117, 143–78, 215, 230  
*Middot ha-Sefirot* 50  
 Midhat Pasha 253, 256, 260, 278  
 Midrash 11, 20, 129, 133, 135, 137–39  
 Miller, William 4, 13, 34  
 Millennialism 97, 106, 112, 117–26  
 Millennium 107, 117–19, 125  
 Millerism 4, 7  
 Mīr Abī Ṭālib-i Shāhmīrzādī 198–99, 212–15, 217–18  
 Mīr Muḥammad Mukārī Shīrāzī 236–40, 242–45, 247–49  
*mīrāj* 295  
 Mīrzā Abbās “Buzurg” Nūrī 229  
 Mīrzā Abū’l Faḍl Gulpāygānī 106, 149, 281–82  
 Mīrzā Aḥmad Azghandī 103  
 Mīrzā ‘Alī-yi Nūrī *s.v.* Bahā’u’llāh  
 Mīrzā Āqā Jān Kāshī “Khādimu’llāh” 159, 233–39, 242, 244–46, 248  
 Mīrzā Āqā Khān Kirmānī 263, 266  
 Mīrzā Ghulām Aḥmad Qādyānī 13  
 Mīrzā Hādī Shīrāzī 241  
 Mīrzā Ḥaydar ‘Alī-yi Ardīstānī 214, 217  
 Mīrzā Ḥaydar ‘Alī Isfahānī 233, 238, 240, 244–48  
 Mīrzā Ḥusayn-i Hamadānī 216  
 Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī 232–33, 237–39, 241, 245–47  
 Mīrzā Malkum Khān 263–64  
 Mīrzā Muḥammad Ja‘far Khān-i Khurmūjī 221  
 Mīrzā Muḥammad Kāzīm 214  
 Mīrzā Muḥammad Kāzīrūnī 235  
 Mīrzā Muḥammad Qulī Nūrī 229, 237, 239, 247  
 Mīrzā Muḥammad Taqī-yi Sipīhr “Lisān al-Mulk” 205, 220  
 Mīrzā Mūsā “Kalām” Nūrī 229  
 Mīrzā Muṣṭafā (Mullā Ismā‘īl-i Ṣabbāgh-i Sidihī) 212  
 Mīrzā Rīqā Kirmānī 265  
 Mīrzā Sa‘īd “Basīr” Hindī 228  
 Mīrzā Taqī Khān “Amīr Kabīr” 186, 192  
 Mīrzā Yaḥyā Nūrī *s.v.* Ṣubḥ-i Azal  
 Mishkīn Qalam 257–58  
*miṭnabbē‘im* 64  
*Mītzvōt* 18, 20–21, 133  
 Momen, Moojan 153, 194, 222  
 Monotheism 8–9, 13, 21–22, 26, 35  
 Morgenstein, Aryeh 83–84  
 Mormons 4, 7–8, 10, 117–26  
 Moronī 10  
 Moses (Biblical figure) 26, 51, 56, 68, 89, 121, 123, 132, 138, 236, 238, 242–44, 248–49, 284, 301  
 Moses ben Jacob Cordovero, R. 53–54, 62  
 Moshe ben Naḥman, Rabbi *s.v.* Naḥmanides  
 Moshe Shoham ben Dan of Dolina, R. 63  
 Most Great Peace 106–107, 109, 113, 171  
 Mount Sinai 15, 132–33, 144, 164, 166, 293  
*al-Mu‘awwidhatān* 23  
*al-mu‘azzī* 149, 168. See also: Comforter

- mubāhalih* 236–37, 240, 247, 249  
 Muḥammad, the Prophet 11, 15, 23, 28, 32–33, 147, 150, 154, 156, 193, 239, 243, 248, 268–69, 279, 282, 285, 301  
 Muḥammad ‘Abduḥ 271, 275–97  
 Muḥammad Aḥmad b. ‘Abdallāh 3  
 Muḥammad ‘Alī Salmānī 230, 233, 235–36, 239–40, 242, 244–45  
 Muḥammad Bākīr-i Ṭīhrānī 212  
 Muḥammad Shāh 182–86, 188–89, 195, 200–203, 210  
 Muḥammad-Valī Khān Sipahdār-i A‘zam 162  
 Mullā ‘Alī Bastāmī 259  
 Mullā Ḥusayn-i Bushrū‘ī 181, 185, 188–89, 191, 195, 198–200, 202–210, 212, 214, 220  
 Mullā Mīrzā Muḥammad-i Furūghī 217  
 Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī-iy Bārfurūshī “Quddūs” 186, 189, 191, 193, 206, 208, 215  
 Mullā Muḥammad ‘Alī-iy Zanjānī “Huḡjat” 205  
 Mullā Muḥammad Maḥallātī 214  
 Mullā Muḥammad Ṣādiq-i Muqaddas-i Khurasānī 217  
 Mullā Muḥammad Taqī-y Baraghānī 181, 183  
 Müller, Max 302  
*mumkin* 31  
 Murad Pasha 255  
*muṣliḥ al-‘ālam* 144–45, 172  
 Muṣṭafā Kāmīl 282  
*Mutanabbī’* 221  
 Mystical Prophecy 48–49, 52, 54, 58, 68–70, 72, 74–75  
 Mysticism, Christian 25  
 Mysticism, Islamic 16, 25, 28  
 Mysticism, Jewish 16, 25–26, 28, 41, 47, 50–52, 55, 61, 71, 73–74, 78, 82  
 Nabil Zarandī, Yār-Muḥammad-i Zarandī 160, 198–200, 213, 217–218, 233, 236, 240, 248  
 Naḥman of Braslav, R. 55, 71  
 Naḥman of Kosov, R. 44, 57–58  
 Naḥmanides 25–26, 131–32, 135, 138  
*najāsāt* 228, 249  
 Names of God *s.v.* Divine Names and Attributes  
 Namık Kemal 255–59, 262  
 Na’or, Bezalel 70  
 Napoleon III 145, 157, 160, 165–66  
*Nāsiḥ al-Tawārīkh* 220–21  
 Nāṣir al-Dīn Shāh 157, 160–63, 184, 186, 190, 206–209, 212, 220–22, 229, 262, 264–65  
 Nathan ben Sa’adya Harar, R. 48, 51–54  
 Nathan Neta’ of Helm, R. 64  
 Nathan of Gaza 48  
 National Mysticism 84, 93  
 Nationalism 79, 87, 89–90, 92–93, 254  
*navi’* 45  
 Nayrīz 180, 195, 205  
 Nazif, Süleyman 256–60  
*n-b-’* 47  
 Necib Pasha 259  
*nefesh* 88  
*nequddot* 67  
*nevi’ut* 44, 47  
*nevu’ah* 47, 51  
 New Jerusalem 121  
 New Testament 10, 151, 153, 309  
*nigleh* 19  
 Nineteen (number) 27–28  
*nistar* 19  
*nitzotzōt* 17  
 Niẓām al-‘ulamā’ 184  
 Noah (Biblical figure) 119, 128  
 North Africa 3  
 North America 3  
 Numerology *s.v.* Gematria  
*nuqtah* 31. See also: Point  
*Nuqtah-i-‘ulā* 12  
 Occultation 4, 102  
 Old Testament 8, 10, 309  
 One 26–29  
 Oneness 27, 82–83, 153, 310  
*’Or ha-Ganuz le-Tzaddiqim* 68–69  
*’Or ha-Me’ir* 61  
*’otiyot* 50, 67  
 Ottoman Empire 8, 229, 253–74, 277  
 Paradise 163, 167, 283  
 Paul 124  
*pegimah* 89  
 “Perfect Man” 17–18. See also: *al-insān al-kāmīl*  
 Phelps, Myron 158  
 Piff, David 114  
 Pike, Kenneth L. 303



- Pilgrimage 308, 314  
 Pinḥas Elijah Horovitz of Vilna, R. 67  
 Pius IX, Pope 145, 157, 160, 166–69  
 Plato 5  
 Point 12, 19, 31  
 Poland 65–66  
 Progressive Revelation 300, 310  
 Promised One 143, 155, 230–231, 309  
 Prophecy 41–75, 90, 97, 99, 103, 106, 128, 151, 199  
 Prophets 12, 15–17, 29–30, 35, 45, 50, 54, 62–65, 74, 89, 104, 121–22, 124, 143, 183  
  
 Qa'bin, Salām 282  
*qā'im* 155, 195, 198  
 Qalonimus Qalman Epstein of Cracow, R. 70–71  
*Qayyūm al-Asmā'* 156, 182, 187, 196  
 Qazvin 147, 166, 181, 187, 237  
*Qehilat Ya'aqov* 67  
*qitāl* 187  
*qiyāma* *s.v.* Resurrection  
 Quddūs *s.v.* Mullā Muḥammad 'Alī-iy Bārfurūshī  
 Queen Marie 311  
 Queen Victoria 122, 144–45, 157, 160, 169–72  
 Qur'ān 10–11, 19, 22–24, 27–29, 33–34, 147, 149, 154, 261, 278, 282–84, 289, 309  
 Qurrat al-'Ayn “Ṭāhira” 185  
  
*rabb al-arbāb* 167  
*ra'fat* 243, 248  
 RaMBaN *s.v.* Naḥmanides  
 Ramḥal *s.v.* Luzatto, Moshe Ḥaim  
 Rashi 129, 134  
 Rashīd Riḍā 271, 277, 279–82, 285–91  
 Rashtī, Sayyid Kāzīm 33  
*Rawdat al-Ṣafā-yi Nāsirī* 220–21  
 Redemption 5, 42–43, 82–85, 91  
 Reformation 5  
 Reines, R. 78  
 Religious Zionism 77–78, 80, 83, 85  
 Remey, Charles Mason 107, 110–11  
 Resh Lakish 133  
 Resurrection 102–103, 118, 120, 154, 185  
 Revelation 15, 144, 167, 284  
 Ribek, Tzvi 93  
  
 Riḍā, Qulī Khān Hidāyat “Amīr al-Shu'arā'” 200, 220  
*Risālāt al-Miṣbāḥ* 31  
 Rīza, Ahmed 265  
 Rome 5, 100–101  
 Rosen, Baron Victor 163  
 Rothschild, Baron 150  
*Ruah ha-Qodesh* 47  
*rūḥ* 156, 285  
  
 Sa'adiah Gaon 33  
 Sabbatai Tzevi 57, 77  
 Sabbateanism 41, 43–47, 49, 56–57, 70, 72, 74, 77–78  
 Safed 46, 81  
*saḥāb* 164, 167  
 Sa'īd al-'Ulamā' 202, 213  
 Saiedi, Nader 145  
*Salafiyya* 282  
 Salvation 99  
 Samandar-i Qazvinī *s.v.* Shaykh Kāzīm Samandar-i Qazvinī  
 Samuel (Biblical figure) 57  
 Sandström, Emil 299, 310  
 Sarug, R. Yisrael 81  
 Satan 23, 183  
*sayyād* 169  
 Sayyid Miḥdī Dahajī 231–32  
 Sayyid Muḥammad Isfahānī 234–36, 241–42, 244–45, 247  
 Scholem, Gershom 41–46, 73–74, 78  
 Scriptures 22, 33–34, 104, 124  
 “Seal of the Prophets” 147  
 Sears, William 113  
 Second Advent 34  
 Second Coming 35, 101, 118, 144  
 Seer of Lublin, *s.v.* Jacob Isaac Horowitz, R.  
*Sefer ha-Berit* 67  
*Sefer ha-Peli'ah* 50, 67  
*Sefer Hayyei ha-Nefesh* 50  
*Sefer Razi'el ha-Ma'pakh* 65  
*Sefer Sha'arei Tzedeq* 51  
 Selim II, Sultan 236  
*Sepher Yetzirah* 33  
*Sephirot* 16–17, 20, 26, 42, 51, 89  
 Seventh-Day Adventists 17, 34  
*Sha'arei Qedushah* 51, 54, 67–68  
 Shāh Bahrām Varjavand 144, 148  
 Shakīb Arslān 277, 279, 288  
*Shams al-Ma'arīf al-Kubrā* 24  
 Sharpe, E.J. 304  
 Shatz-Uffenheimer, Rivka 86  
 Shawqī Effendī Rabbānī *s.v.* Shoghi Effendī

- Shaykh Aḥmad Rūhī 263, 266  
 Shaykh al-‘Ajam 202, 218, 220–21  
 Shaykh ‘Alī Yūsuf 288–89  
 Shaykh Kāzīm Samandar-i Qazvīnī 166, 200, 218  
 Shaykh Ṭabarsī 103, 179–81, 184, 187, 188–200, 203–205, 207–18, 220–22  
 Shaykhiyya 17, 29, 32, 35, 118, 217, 264  
*Shekhūnah* 16, 52, 70–71  
*Shem ha-Meforāsh* 25  
*Shem ha-Shem* 136  
*Shemonah Kevatsim* 79  
 Shaykh Ahmed Effendi 257  
 Shīr‘ī Islam 3–4, 10, 12, 27–29, 31–33, 102, 144–45, 147, 155–56, 184, 187, 190, 196, 198, 204, 217, 227, 279, 309  
 Shimeon bar Yohai, R. 71  
 Shīrāz 179, 278  
*Shivḥei ha-Besht* 44, 57–58, 72  
 Shlomo of Lutzk, R. 66  
 Shneur Zalman of Ladi 4, 70  
 Shoghi Effendi, Shawqī Effendī Rabbānī 8, 12, 108–114, 121, 152, 155, 160, 166–67, 169–70, 172, 217, 244–45, 247, 299–301, 307–308, 310–312, 314  
*Shulḥan ‘Arukh* 53, 60, 136  
*al-sidra al-rabbīniyya* 283, 292  
*sidratu’l-muntahā* 283  
*siḥr* 24  
 Sinai *s.v.* Mount Sinai  
 Sinan 236  
*Siyāh-Chāl* 146  
 Smart, Ninian 303, 306  
 Smith, Joseph 4, 7, 13, 118, 120–22  
 Smith, Peter 301  
 Smith, Wilfred C. 303–304, 306  
*Sod ha-Yihūd* 26  
*Some Answered Questions* 163  
 St. John’s Revelation 117, 120  
 St. Peter 121  
 Stark, Rodney 305  
 Steinthal, Hermann 93  
 Stone, Jacqueline 112  
 Subḥ-i Azal, Mīrzā Yahyā Nūrī 181–82, 227–50, 256–58, 262–63, 281  
 Suchat, Raphael 80–81, 83  
 Sudan 3  
 Sūfism 21, 31  
 Sūkuyi, Ishak 266  
 Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār “Ṣāḥib Ikhtiyār” 192, 201  
 Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār-i Ṣā’in-Qal‘a’ī 200–201  
 Sultan Abdūlazīz 254, 255  
 Sultan Abdūlhamid II 254, 263–68  
 Sultan Mahmud II 258  
 Sultan Murad V 254  
*Sūrat al-Haykal* 160, 163, 165  
*Sūrat al-Mulūk* 160, 170–71  
 Tabrīz 8, 102, 161, 181, 184  
*tafsīr* 32–33  
 Taherzadeh, Adib 149, 160, 249  
 Talmud 131–32, 135  
 Tanzimat 229, 253–54  
*Tā’rikh-i Jadīd* 216–17, 219  
 Taylor, Isaac 285–87  
 Tehran 149, 162, 186, 192–93, 200, 204–205, 216  
 Temo, Ibrahim 265, 268  
*Tempelgesellschaft* 153–54  
 Tenrikyo 300  
*Tetragrammaton* 19, 25, 28  
 Tefvik, Ebūzzīya 255  
*The Faith of Bahā’u’llāh* 299–300, 307–308, 314  
*The Promised Day is Come* 108, 114, 152  
 Thrower, James 303  
*tiqqūn* 26  
 al-Ṭirihī, Fakhr ad-Dīn 33  
 Tishby, Isaiah 46  
 Tolstoy, Count Leo 144, 276, 289–91, 311  
 Torah 19, 25, 28–29, 149  
*Torat ha-Shem Temimah* 132  
 Tower of Babylon 10  
 Toynbee, Arnold 312  
*Tur* 53, 59, 61–62, 69  
 Twelfth Imām 4, 34, 102  
*tzadiq* 14, 16, 18, 44, 63–64, 70–71, 84, 137  
 Tzadok Hacohen of Lublin, R. 90  
*tzeruf* 67, 128  
*tzimtzūm* 82  
*tz’on* 67  
 Tzvi Yehudah Hacohen Kook, R. 78–79, 84–86, 93  
 ‘ulamā’ 183–84, 187, 190–91, 194, 206, 262, 279  
 Unity 5–6, 145, 250  
*urim ve-tummim* 50  
 Ustād Ja’far-i Bannā-yi Iṣfahānī 214

- Ustād Javān-Mard 148  
 Utah 8  
 ‘Uthmān Amīn 289–90  
  
 “Verse of the Throne” 24  
 Vilna Gaon 79–83, 85, 87, 91, 93, 132  
 Vital, R. Ḥayyim 51, 54, 67–69  
  
 Wahba, Murād 289–90  
 Wahnābiyyah 3, 7, 277  
*wāḥid* 27. See also: One  
 Wāḥid *s.v.* Āqā Sayyid Yaḥyā-yi Dārābī  
*Waqā’i-i Mīmiyya* 214  
*warqā’* 283, 292  
 Weber, Max 48, 72–74  
 Weiss, Joseph 44–47, 49, 56–57  
 Werses, Shmuel 64  
 Wessinger, Catherine 99, 103  
 White, Ellen G. 13  
 Williams, Peter 123  
 Wilson, Bryan 305  
 Witchcraft 23  
  
 Wojcik, Daniel 114  
 Wright, Dr. Austin 185, 201  
  
 Yazd 147–48, 205, 288–89  
 Yehiel Mikhal of Zlotchov, R. 61, 65, 71  
 Yehudah Albutini, R. 48  
*yesod* 89  
 Young, Brigham 122  
 Young Ottomans 253–55, 258–60, 262, 267  
 Young Turks 253–54, 258, 262–68, 271, 278  
 Yudel, R. 57  
  
 Zachner, Robret Ch. 73–74  
 Zanjān 180, 186, 195, 205  
 Ze’ev Wolf of Zhitomir, R. 60, 71  
 Zera, R. 134–35  
 Zionism 78, 80–81, 83, 85, 87–88.  
     See also: Religious Zionism  
 Ziya Pasha 258  
*ẓohar* 25, 41, 67, 129  
 Zoroastrianism 144–45, 147–49

## BIBLICAL CITATIONS

Genesis 6:8	128	Jeremiah 23:29	89
Genesis 11:7–9	10	Jeremiah 27:22	134
Genesis 35:29	137	Joel 3:5	88
Leviticus 25:13	133	Zech. 2	133
Kings I 1:5	88	Psalms 145:18	14
Isaiah 6:7	135	Proverbs 8:34	89
Isaiah 9:6	144, 151, 168	Job 28:23	136
Isaiah 62:2	87	Daniel 7–8	34

## QUR’ĀNIC CITATIONS

2:216	293	20:59–72	242
2:255	24	33:40	147
7:142	28	33:44	147
11:103	284	41:35	293
12	11	50:16	15
16:60	293	56:30	293
17:20	294	79:16	284
18:94	201	113	23
19:98	294	114	23
20:12	284		

NEW TESTAMENT CITATIONS

Matthew 5:17	309	John 14–17	144, 151
Matthew 24:34	101	Rev. 1:16–17	151
Mark 13:30	101	Rev. 21:22–23	150
Luke 21:32	101		