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CONTENTS:

Editorial.....p. 2.

Dr. Moojan Momen (Ed), Esslemont's Survey of the Baha'i
Community in 1919-20, Part V: Germany
by Alma Knobloch.....p. 3f.

Dr. Denis MacEoin , Bahá'alláh's al-Qasida al-Warqá'iyya:
an English translation.....p. 7f.

Stephen Lambden , The Islāmo-Bahá'í Interpretation of
Deuteronomy 33:2.....p. 22f.

Dr. Moojan Momen , The Baha'i Influence on the Reform
Movements of the Islamic World in the
1860's and 1870's.....p. 47f.

Steven Scholl , More Problems...Scientific Method or
a Total Hermeneutic.....p. 66f.

Notes, Communications and Bibliographical Miscellany.....p. 83f.

This Bulletin is primarily designed to facilitate communication between those among us engaged in Baha'i Studies. It is hoped that it may evolve into the Bulletin of an Association for the Study of the Babi and Bahai Religions (or the like) and be befittingly published rather than photostatically reproduced.

The success of this Bulletin obviously depends on your support and willingness to contribute. A steady and sustained flow of scholarly contributions is vital especially since there are so few of us. The following list is intended only to serve as an indication of the nature and scope of contributions that would be welcomed:-

- a) Articles or short notes whether historical, methodological, sociological, doctrinal or theological, etc.;
- b) Bibliographical essays or notes;
- c) Copies of generally unavailable letters or tablets of the Bab, Bahā'u'llāh, 'Abdu'l-Bahā or Shoghi Effendi whether in the original language(s) or in translation;
- d) Notices of recently published books, articles and reviews, etc.;
- e) Previously unpublished notes or documents;
- f) Reports of work in progress or of seminars and conferences relating directly or indirectly to Babi-Bahai studies.

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Esslemont's Survey of the Baha'i Community in 1919-1920:

Part V: Germany by Alma Knobloch

Moojan Momen (Ed.)

Although chronologically the first Baha'i in Germany was an American dentist, Dr. Edwin Karl Fisher (arrived in Stuttgart in 1905, returned to U.S.A. in 1913, died Los Angeles 1936), most Baha'i histories seem to regard Alma Knobloch as the real founder of the German Baha'i community. It is therefore very fortunate that among Esslemont's papers, there is a history of the Baha'i Faith in Germany by Alma Knobloch. Since Miss Knobloch was not among Esslemont's fellow-pilgrims in Haifa, we may assume that Esslemont wrote to her after his return.

Alma Knobloch was born in about 1863 of German-American parentage (some of her family in Germany had been Templers). She became a Baha'i in 1903 and set out for Germany on 17 July 1907. After brief stops in Bremen and Leipzig, she joined Dr. Fisher in Stuttgart. The small nucleus of Baha'is that Dr. Fisher had built up over the previous two years was expanded during the next decade into the largest Baha'i community in Europe. Alma Knobloch contributed greatly to this travelling extensively throughout Germany and also helping to establish the Baha'i Faith in Austria and Switzerland. Miss Knobloch returned to the U.S.A. in 1920 and died on 22 December 1943.

For further information on the early history of the Baha'i Faith in Germany see:

- 1) Knobloch, Alma, "The Call to Germany", Baha'i World, Vol. 7, pp. 732-45.
- 2) Mielk, R., "Von Babismus in Deutschland", Der Islam, Vol. 13, 1923, pp. 138-44. Trans. by Lesley Zanieh in Baha'i Studies Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1982, pp. 50-56.
- 3) Remy, Charles M., Through Warring Countries to the Mountain of God, mimeographed for private distribution, Honolulu, 1915, pp. 42-61.
- 4) Roemer, Hermann, Die Propaganda fur asiatische Religionen in Abendland, Basler Missions-Studien, Vol. 36, 1910, pp. 45-56.
Die Babi-Beha'i - Eine Studie zur Religionsgeschichte des Islams, Potsdam, 1911, pp. 150-151.
- 5) Schwartz, Rosa, "Alma Knobloch" - In Memoriam, Baha'i World, Vol. 9, pp. 641-43.
- 6) Star of the West, passim including Vol. 2 (1911), No. 3, p.9; Vol. 2 (1912), No. 17, pp.6-8; Vol. 4, (1913), No. 13, p.224; Vol.5 (1914) pp. 199, 202; Vol.7 (1917), pp. 173-4.

● The first call in Germany for the Bahai teachings was raised in the year 1907 and the original of the following Tablet was written [to Ahmad Sohrab (?) (Esslemont)] with the blessed Hand of Abdul Baha. "O thou servant of the Blessed Perfection! Translate the enclosed Tablet and forward it to Dr Fisher in Germany. He has requested an assistant to teach the Truth. If in that country (America) an attracted and severed soul can be found who would go to him and assist the formation of the Cause it is very praiseworthy and acceptable. Endeavor thou to the utmost regarding the realization of this matter."

Also the following was revealed by Abdul Baha for Mirza Ahmad Sohrab, giving a clear account of the beginning of the Cause of God in this country. "Praise be to God, thou hast found a helper, and ere long Miss Knobloch will start for Germany. Truly I say the beloved maid servant of God Miss Alma Knobloch is very acceptable for this service. Thou hast done well to choose her. She is acceptable by all means. But regarding to her stay in Germany, she should stay as long as possible. I hope that the exertion of these two sisters (Miss Fanny A Knobloch) may display all encircling efforts."

The first public Address was given in October 1907 in the Womensclub at Stuttgart to a large audience - the Words from Baha'o'llah and Abdul Baha created quite a sensation; the preparatory work having been done by Dr Fisher and Miss Döring. Upon being asked if I would teach, an Assembly was organized the following February (1908) and Herrn A. Eckstein acted as chairman.

From this time on active work has been done and regular meetings held without interruptions up to the present time. Circles were formed at the various homes of the friends where the Holy Tablets and teachings from Baha'o'llah and Abdul Baha were translated. These weekly group gatherings were for this purpose, and the public meeting for giving the Bahai teachings. The first German translations, having been done by my sister Miss Fanny Knobloch upon the request of the Master.

With the kind assistance of Miss Döring we also held one afternoon and evening at home (each week? - (Esslemont)) in which we received many callers who became interest (sic) and attracted to the Bahai Cause. In the surrounding towns the people soon became interested and the Glad-tidings were spread in different directions.

It was in Sept 1909 that I was invited by Miss Köstlin who had become attracted to the Cause, to give the Bahai teachings in Esslingen, and within a few months a brilliant group of young men and women became

interested, and a Circle was formed in which each and all became active, earnest workers for the Cause of God. The charitable work done was one of the main features in bringing about success; also visiting those who became attracted to the Teachings, who in turn would invite such friends as were seekers for Truth to tea. In this way they received a better insight and knowledge of the Movement. There was little or no opposition raised; occasionally a Church Elder or a Chairman of the Y.M.C.A. would attend the Meetings and put questions. But when leaving they would always express their pleasure at having attended, and found no objections in our Faith and soon the Cause was established in Esslingen. The Bahai Feasts that were held in Stuttgart were also introduced in Esslingen in which the spiritual Fragrances of the Rose-garden of Abha rejoiced the hearts, and love and fellowship was visible. In March 1914 our Beloved Abdul Baha writes as follows in answer to their supplication.

"O ye Friends of God, and ye Maid servants of the Merciful!

Your letter has been received. All its words and expressions give proof of susceptibility of Knowledge. Praise be to God! that in that land and Kingdom the heavenly blessings have descended; that the clouds of superstition have been rent asunder, and that the beginning of the divine Dawn (has appeared) upon the horizon of significance. I turn My face towards the true Heaven! Supplicating and calling to the Lord of Hosts! Begging that these pure hearts of the friends may always be illumined with the glances of the Sun of Truth! And that their nostrils be filled with the balmy scent. May the hearts become more illumined day by day, the Spirit become more and more attracted."

Urgent invitations were received from the friends who had heard the Glad-tidings in the surrounding towns, and it was indeed a real pleasure to give the glorious Message in these gatherings.

In Leipzig, Gotha, Gera and Munich the Bahai teachings were received with great joy, and the Principles of the Bahai Movement were given in large gatherings to earnest seekers of the Truth; likewise in Nürnberg. Pastor Heydorn is active in Hamburg and doing good work for the Cause of God.

At Leipzig the city authority after having made inquiry about the Universal Bahai Movement, advised me to spread the Teachings in that city. Although this may seem unimportant, nevertheless it was of great value, owing to the fact that at Leipzig restrictions are imposed on all so-called new religious reforms.

In one of the Tablets received during my services in Leipzig Abdul Baha wrote in July 1914. "Praise be to God that the Sun of Reality has cast its splendor upon that region. In the future it will become wholly illumined."

During the five years of war all the believers were active in promoting the Cause of God, and the Glad-tidings were spread with great zeal. Very good work was done by those who were serving in the Red Cross, both by the men and women with splendid results. Through the efforts of the believers the Bahai literature found its way into many Red Cross Hospitals, also into other countries. The soldiers at the various Fronts were specially interested in this new Universal Movement, and most sympathetic (sic) and interesting letters were received, expressing their earnest wishes and longings that the Principles of His Holiness Baha'o'llah may soon be established in all countries, and that the banner of universal Peace be unfurled.

Since the close of the war greater activity has been shown by the believers, public lectures have been given in Stuttgart and other cities, and more of the important books like Mirza Abdul Fazls (sic) book, "The Bahai Proofs", have been translated and published.

There are group gatherings almost every evening during the week in Stuttgart at the homes of the believers, these meetings are held for the expounding of the Teachings, and there is one public meeting held each week. Yet Esslingen takes the lead in the training of the children, and in their yearly Childrens Day which is held in commemoration of Abdul Baha's visit to that city. This day is a reunion for all the believers from far and near; the children display quite a skill in memorizing the Holy Utterances from Baha'o'llah and Abdul Baha, and all present are rejoiced at the realization of the Dawn of the New Day; happy that the spiritual Spring has appeared; praying and supplicating that these spiritual Fragrances may soon be spread into all parts of the world, and that all mankind may become guided to the Fountainhead of Life, the Center of the Covenant.

In the different cities and towns specially in Leipzig, Gotha, Gera, Munich, Nürnberg, Ludwigshafen and Kalsruhe (sic) the friends are longing for Bahai teachers and wish that the Bahai Cause be established there also; May God grant their prayers and help us to continue in our humble efforts. The closing prayer were revealed by Abdul Baha in Sept 1919 at Haifa for the German believers.

"O Thou Loving Providence! These souls have hearkened to the call of the Kingdom, have witnesses the Light of the Sun of Truth, and have flown into the immensity of space - the refreshing region of love. They are the lovers of Thy face, are attracted to Thy characteristics, desire to attain to Thy Mount, are turning their faces towards Thee, are thirsty and seek Thy refreshing Water, are engaged in Thy praise and Thy

commemoration. Verily Thou art the Giver, the Bestower and the Compassionate."

(sig)

Alma S. Knobloch

(History of the Case
in Germany and its
present condition.)

Stuttgart March 1920

BAHÁ' ALLÁH'S AL-QASÍDA AL-WARQÁ'ÍYYA: AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

Some years ago, I penned an 'informal response' to Juan Cole's paper on 'Nabism and Maqshbandi Sufism in Iraq', which dealt with Mirza Husayn 'Alí Laha' Allah's ode entitled al-qasida al-warqa'iyya. I mentioned there that I had prepared a rough translation of both the qasida and Baha' Allah's contemporary commentary on it, and that I would forward this for distribution 'in the very near future'. In the event, that future became very distant as other commitments prevented me from completing the task of typing the text of my translation and, as a result, it has not not been made available until now.

I have, however, recently had the opportunity to return to this long-deferred task and am at last able to present readers of the Bulletin with the result. Ideally, I should like to have added a commentary of some kind to the bare translation of the ode and Baha' Allah's own notes on it, but I have decided against this for a number of reasons. Foremost among these is my nervousness about commenting on what is really a very tentative personal rendering of a difficult text for which there are no native commentaries and concerning which there is, indeed, no interpretative tradition. Nor am I so confident of my own expertise in the field of Sufi poetry (especially in Arabic) as to take the risk of compounding possible mistakes in my translation by further suggestions based on my own misinterpretations. The poem requires considerable further study before serious commentary becomes a real possibility.

For the present translation, I have used the text printed in Āthār-i qalam-i aqlā vol.3, which I have cross-checked with the variant text in Ma'ida-yi asrānī vol.4. I have preferred the former text largely because I have generally found the latter compilation to be textually unreliable in the extreme; nevertheless, the accuracy of the text remains to be determined. As will be readily apparent, I have not attempted to make this in any sense a 'poetic' rendering, preferring to retain a literal style at this stage of interpretation.

Denis MacEoin

In Praise of the Beloved, Hidden, not Revealed
The Dove Ode Concerning the Essence of a Holy Spirit

He is the Exalted, the All-Glorious

They have enraptured me, rays of light from a face
at whose revelation all suns have hidden themselves.

As if rays of the sun had appeared from the radiance of her beauty,
appeared in all the worlds and dazzled them.

The musk of the Cloud of Unknowing (al-'amā) was stirred up by her joy,
the Spirit of Exaltation was raised on high by her exaltedness.

The Trumpet of Resurrection gave forth a blast as she blew into it,
her perfume caused the shadow of the clouds (1) to move away (2).

5 The Sinai of Eternity was made manifest through her shining,
by her glory the light (3) of splendour was revealed.

To the West of her, the sun of manifestation appeared (4),
to the East, the Moon of Moons was made new once more.

From her tresses, the perfume of the left was breathed forth,
from her glances, the eye of beauty was consoled (5).

The face of guidance was shown the way by the light of her face
and the soul of the Speaker (Moses) was purified by the fire of her countenance (6).

At the arrow (7) of her eyelashes (8), the heart of hearts has turned about,
through the noose (9) of her tresses, the head of existence has been stretched out.

10 The ends of creation are the spots whereon her feet have trod,
the throne of the Cloud of Unknowing is the land whereon she walks.

Every eye that has wept in longing for union with her has fulfilled its pledge (10),
every fire that has burned in sympathy with my separation has fulfilled its pledge.

I have spread out a carpet widely for her feet to walk upon
over my heart -- this is my first desire (11).

I have sought the presence of union in every face,
I have written the letters of nearness in every piece of earth (12).

And if I have hastened to union with the light of her,
I have been stoned with the stones of separation after my being near.

15 And if I have raised my hands, stretching them forth towards union with her,
she has answered me with a sword, and that shall be the reward of them that love me. (13).

My sole concern is to cling firmly unto a strong cord.
while her (text reads 'his') aim is only to sever my connection.

I said unto her 'may my spirit be thy sacrifice and my state that of meeting thee;
have mercy on me and do not expose my degradation (14).

On my part an excess of love, on yours reunion,
it continues thus eternally from the pre-existent time (15).

By (16) the mystery of manifestation, all created things have appeared,
from her manifestation and in the origin my resurrection has come to pass.

20 By the grief of Husayn, the sphere of existence (17) has borne much
for the sake of her grief, in the universe of my pattern.

For thou art the hope of my heart and the beloved of my inner being,
the possessor of my spirit and my light and my heart's core.

I have attained unto union after separation,
he has granted me the spirit of fellowship after my grief.

From my burning the fire of ardour has been ignited, (18)
and from my moaning the light of witness was confirmed (19).

The Ocean of Unknowing (bahr al-'amā) has dried up from the heat of my thirst
and the river of majesty shall never quench even a part of my yearning.

25 In every land every act of revenge I have witnessed,
behold all tell forth concerning the blood that pours from my eyes.

Compared with my tears, the ocean is but a drop,
compared with my burning, the fire of Moses is a mere torch.

At my grief, the sea of joy froze
and at my cares the eye of anxiety flowed with tears.

My glory has fainted away, my illumination has swooned,
my light has been extinguished by the delusion (20) of whoever shows malice to me (21).

My bones have turned to dust, my body has decayed (22),
my heart has burnt up through the heat of my burning.

30 Desire for you has made me as smoke, love for you has worn me away,
separation from you has melted me, union with you is my yearning (23).

The sky has almost split open (24) from the secret of my sadness,
and the earth of the heart (has almost) torn asunder (25) from the woe of my breast.

The tears of my eyes tell the tale of the fire in my heart,
the yellow of my face shows the flame (26) in my inner being.

I lament (27) every night of the malice (28) of him that censures me (29)
I offer up supplications (30) every day because of the absence (31) of assistance
for me.

I have reached the furthest limit of degradation (32), a station
in the mention of which all tongues are afflicted with stammering (33).

35 The maiden of the palaces has put on out of sadness for my secret
a black robe in every chamber.

She has come, filled with sadness, into every heart,
she has grasped with a firm grip all that was spread open.'

She called upon me from behind me, saying 'be silent'³⁴
and hold your tongue from speaking all that you have told forth.³⁵

How many Husayns like you have sought after me,
how many ³⁶Alis resembling you have been amongst my lovers.

How many lovers above you have loved me;
how many devoted ones like unto you have belonged to the circle of my devotees.

40 Each one has cried out³⁶ at every moment and never attained
for an instant to the light of union with me or to a glimpse of me.

From my horizon, the sun of manifestation is like a star,
from my place of appearance, the expanse of light is like a flash;

From the light of my secret, the secret of existence is like an ant,³⁷
from the fire of my love, the fire of conflagration is like a torch.

From my nature³⁸ the nature³⁹ of God has come nigh,⁴⁰
from the palm of my hand the palm⁴¹ of glory was drawn near.⁴²

The command of the affair has come from the command of my outer appearance,
the justice of the decree has come from the justice of my wisdom.

45 The wave of the sea has held back from the wave of my inner reality,
the holy spirit has been stirred up by the light of my joy.

At my glance⁴³ the Moses of eternity swooned away,⁴⁴
and at a flash from me the Sinai of the mountains was levelled to the ground.⁴⁵

At the spreading abroad of my cause, the Spirit of souls was raised to new life,
at the breath of my spirit, the decayed bones⁴⁶ were set in motion.⁴⁷

The soul of the command circled around her house,
the spirit of the House rose up from the light of my countenance.

The kingdom of the highest forms of knowledge is concealed within the letter ba',⁴⁸
and the ba' of "the manifest in the mystery" fell swooning at my point.⁴⁹

50 All guidance has appeared from the dawning of my command
and all exaltation has been sent in my sending.⁵⁰

From my bounty all birds have sung as with one melody,
and from my singing the thin melody has become reverberating.

You have prescribed a law from out of your own false imaginings,
you have drunk from another law than mine through love of others than me.

You have brought attributes, you have come with a connection,
you have coveted names, regardless of my ways.⁵¹

You have employed for description a soul and its relation to my self,
this is nothing but limitation, and limitation is the greatest of sins.

55 You have in your vain imaginings hoped for union with me -- this can never be;
for it there is a condition -- if you are faithful to it, you shall be rewarded:

it is to quaff the woes of fate from every cup
and to sprinkle streams of blood from sorrow out of the blood of your heart;⁵²

to sever all hope of ever reaching any comfort
and to restrain satisfaction from the desiring of all needs;

to shed your blood in the faith of passion and love
and to burn your heart⁵³ in love from the first moment of offering allegiance to:

to remain awake⁵⁴ during the nights from the reproaches⁵⁵ of every reproacher,⁵⁶
and from uninterrupted scorn every day.

60 In my religion (sunnati), the poison⁵⁷ of destruction⁵⁸ is sweet to drink,
in my community (millati), the sorrow of fate is like compassion.⁵⁹

Either fail to meet the demands of love or obey what has passed forth --
thus has the command flowed out in the decree of my law (sunnati).

And I called to her inwardly, saying 'O my beloved,
final aim of my hopes and the purpose of my inner being,

Here am I present before your power,
here am I hoping for what you have enumerated.⁶⁰

Here am I desiring all that you love,
here am I reating on⁶¹ what you have decreed.⁶²

65 Here is my breast hoping for the spears of your authority,
here is my body longing for the swords of wrath.

Your fire is my light and your anger is my desire,⁶³
your oppression is my comfort and your decree is my longing.⁶⁴

Behold the tears of my eyes, how they have flowed,
witness the innermost portion of my heart, how it has melted away.

I have cast the spears of exhaustion every day,
I have been slain by the sword of rejection every night.

I have read the book of unbelief in every page,
and I have attained to the slandering of all men at every moment.

70 I have been cursed by the curse of infidelity (al-shirk) at every instant,
I have been pierced by the spear of banishment at all times.

It was as if the woe of fate was descending upon my soul⁶⁵
or as if the swords of wrath were made sharp for my neck.⁶⁵

The grief of Jacob⁶⁶ and the suffering of Joseph,⁶⁷
the pain of Job,⁶⁸ and Abraham's fire.

The regret of Adam and the separation of Jonah⁶⁹
and the outcry of David and the lamentation of Noah.⁷⁰

The separation of Eve⁷¹ and the burning of Mary,
the tribulation of Isaiiah and the suffering of Zechariah--⁷²

75 From the sprinkling of my sadness, there befell them all what befell them,
from the overflowing of my grief, there appeared every affliction.

Behold my journeying in the lands without a companion,
witness my association in the desert⁷³ with wild beasts.

From the opening⁷⁴ of my eye, the eye of heaven shed tears,⁷⁵
from the cleaving⁷⁶ of my heart, the cleaving of the earth met together.⁷⁷

From the spirit of my grief, the spirit of eternity was severed
and from the light of my suffering, the throne of exaltation fell in ruins.⁷⁸

The red of existence (al-wujūd) was reddened by the blood of my heart,
the branch of contemplation (al-shuhūd) grew⁷⁹ from the tears of my eye.

80 The bitterness of tribulation in the path of your love is sweetness
and the honey of eternity with other than you is bitterness.⁸⁰

On my neck the impression of iron⁸¹ is visible.⁸²
and on my leg the trace of the chain⁸³ remains.⁸⁴

Not a day passed but that I burned therein
for the allusion of a poem or the explication of a proclamation.

My spirit departed and my heart melted,
my inner reality boiled with the intensity of my tribulation.

From the elevation of my inmost self, there befell me what befell me;
would that my nature had never been raised up.

85 Thus tribulation circled me on all sides,
thus fate⁸⁵ destroyed⁸⁶ me at every moment.

I ascended to the utmost height of singleness all alone,
I attained to the essence of meeting within my inner being.

I beheld your description in the description of my eye,
sharp⁸⁷ from your eye at every glance.

If you are (talking of) limitation, limitation is manifested by you,
if you are (talking of) description, description has appeared from you.

From my dark melancholy, the darkness of nights is confirmed,
from my inner being, the light of day is made clear.

90 What does it matter if I am cast down at this moment?
I have attained to the exalted light on the day of my being raised up again.

I have associated with the holy one from the light of his familiarity,
I have emigrated with al-tā' (bi' l-tā') in the covenant of my exile.

I have believed in the light from the light of my inner essence,
I have ascended in the spirit in the secret of my inner being.

I call on thee, O spirit of life, to cause to pass
from the self what remains in it⁸⁹ of a remainder.

And, O spirit of unknowing, descend from the Throne
and take possession of a fate to the degree of my abasement.

95 I cry out, O my heart, for you to go forth
and take possession of glory in the lands of humiliation.

O my patience, be patient in all that you have witnessed
in the good-pleasure of your Beloved in hardship and ease.'

In the spirit she called to me and said, 'be patient
for I have known all that you have demonstrated.

Cast aside what you know, to which you have
adhered, for polytheism is with me like divine oneness.

The most glorious splendour of Sinai is to me mere rubbish
and the most brilliant effulgence of light is to me but shadow.

100 The verses of your description are true, but only for boys;
the traces of your account are reliable, but only for my subjects.

I have always been in a state of holiness,
I have limitlessly been in a state of enjoyment.

How many a just one has been for me a tyrant,
how many a learned one has been for me an ignoramus.

How many an eternal one has been for me merely transient,
how many a knower has not understood even a word.

How many a worshipper has been for me a rebel,
how many a devotee has never bent his knee to me.

105 The psalms⁹⁰ of the heavens are firm in the existence of my self,
the pages⁹¹ of glory have descended from my page.

From an atom of mine the sun of the universe was gathered into a sphere,
from a drop of mine the ocean of existence was spread forth.⁹²

All the songs of the people of creation have appeared
to me like the chirping of ants or the buzzing of a bee.

All minds have been enraptured⁹³ by the attraction of my mystery,
all souls have come to life⁹⁴ through the song of my spirit.

All gods⁹⁵ have become divine through a sprinkling of my command,
and all lords⁹⁶ have become lords through an overflowing of my decree.

110 The land of the spirit has walked towards me at but a command,
the Throne of Sinai has been the place of my oppression.

At my light, the star of manifestation has shone forth,
at my spirit, the sun of gladness has gleamed.

The fullnesses of signs are the shinations of my arrival,
the locations of tokens are the places of my holiness.

The essences of thoughts are the realities of my thought,
the ornaments of lights are the indications of my wisdom.

From the kāf of my command⁹⁷ the decree of all things has been passed,
and from the bounty of my mystery all new creations have appeared.

115 You turned aside from my face, imagining you had turned towards it,
and you poured forth the water of assertion in the religion of delusion.

You did not speak the truth, through the light of the unseen, in what you fashioned
in yourself, and thus you missed that which I fashioned.⁹⁸

Take hold of the cord of the command outwardly,
become familiar with the face of light in the inmost mystery.

Burn the veils of nearness away from you, that no allusions may remain,
behold the beauty of holiness within thee with no covering.

Be still, for the powers of the Throne have been disturbed,
be patient, for the eyes of the unseen have wept.

120 Meaning beyond knowledge is in you a veil
that brilliant reason is powerless to penetrate.

Enjoy close fellowship with the mystery of holiness in your inmost heart
and do not spread it about if you are trustworthy.

If you should remove the covering from the face of what you have beheld,
all assistance will vanish in an instant.

Thus has the command flowed forth from the Throne of glory,
thus has the decree flowed forth from the secret of power.

Blessed be they that attain for the beauty of their faithfulness,
blessed be they that have arrived in a new faith.

125 Blessed be the lovers in the shedding of their blood,
blessed be they that hold firmly to the cord of my affection.

Blessed be they that are sincere for having hastened
from all directions under the shadow of my lordship.'

NOTES

1. A reference to His words: 'a day whereon God shall come in the shadows of the clouds.' (No Quranic text corresponds exactly to this; it seems to be intended as a reference to 2:210. D.M.)
2. A reference to the moving of the mountains, shifting like clouds, as He has said: 'You shall see the mountains, thinking them to be solid, yet they shall move like clouds' (Qur'an 27:68). These are all signs of the Resurrection and of what shall come to pass in it.
3. Illumination (rawshanī).
4. The rising of the sun in the West.
5. That is, was illumined. From the perfumed breaths of her hair, the perfume of joy and splendour and the musk of bounty and glory are wafted and stirred from the left hand of the paradise of God's ipseity (huwīyya) that has been spread out on the right hand of the garden of His eternity (samadiyya), that perchance the dead bones of the essences of contingent beings (jawhariyyat-e mawkana't) may be endowed with eternal and everlasting life and may find pride in existence through their heart-attracting fragrances and their heart-assuring perfumes. Likewise, on beholding the vision of her, the eye of true Beauty, of which the sun of the heaven of existence is the lowest symbol, was illumined, became bright, and was filled with light. Exalted be God, her Creator, above what you mention of Him.
6. When Moses divested and sanctified the foot of the divine soul, which had been placed in the temple of humanity, of the sandals of contingent imaginings, and manifested the hand of divine power from the pocket of grandeur in the cloak of nobility, he came unto the holy, the excellent and blessed valley of the heart that is the site of the throne of eternal effulgence and the seat of the telling forth of the glory of the Lord. And when he arrived in that land of Sinai which was spread out from the right hand of the place of light, he perceived and inhaled the sweet fragrance of the spirit from the dawning-place of eternity and beheld the lights of the everlasting Lord from all directions, beyond all sense of direction. From the warmth of the fragrance of divine love and the flames of longing desire out of the fire of unity, the light of ipseity was lit within the lamp of his heart, after the veils covering the glass of selfhood (aniyya) had been removed. From the wine of union with the countenance

that has no match and the pure draught of the eternal Lord, he attained unto the valley of eternal inebriation, after the stations of opposition had been erased. From the longing desire for meeting with Him, he became aware of the city of the delight of eternity, and he entered the city while its inhabitants were unaware and came nigh unto the fire of God, the Ancient, and became illumined with the light of God, the Almighty. Even as he said to his family: 'Remain here, for I have beheld a fire' (Qur'an 20:10). And when he perceived the face of guidance unto the uncreated bounties from the tree neither of the East nor of the West (see Qur'an 24:35), he turned from the ephemeral face of unreality unto the everlasting face of eternity and discovered the hidden and wondrous face of guidance in the kindled fire concealed within the hearts of the urseen. Thus it is that he said: 'or I shall find at the fire some guidance' (Qur'an 20:10). Likewise comprehend the intention of the blessed verse in which He says: 'who made a fire for you out of the green tree' (Qur'an 36:80). Would that a hearing ear might be found that but a drop out of the depths of the ocean of fire or out of this sea that is brimming with sparks might be mentioned. Yet it is best that this pearl remain hidden in the shell in the shell of the ocean of ipseity and continue to be treasured up in the repositories of mystery in order that those that are not worthy may be shut out and those that are of the select may put on the garb of pilgrimage to the Ka'ba of glory and enter the sacred precincts of beauty. How fortunate, then, is he that burns down the cage of the body with the fire of love and becomes intimate with the spirit itself that he may attain unto the exalted mercy of contentment and be sustained by the elevated bounty of glory. All that has been mentioned concerning the stages of guidance and the stations of purification of the self in the station of Moses (upon our Prophet and upon him be peace) has for its purpose the appearance of these effulgences in the outward world. Otherwise, that holy one has ever been guided by the guidance of God and shall ever be so guided. May, the sun of guidance has risen from him and the moon of bounty has appeared from him and the fire of ipseity has been kindled from the fire of his being and the light of eternity has been illumined from the radiance of his brow. The very words of that holy one will remove those doubts, spoken at the time when Pharaoh asked him concerning the man he had slain: 'Indeed, I did (that deed) and am of those who have erred. And I fled from you since I feared you. But God has endowed me with wisdom and made me one of His messengers' (Qur'an 26: 20-21). The page is filled, otherwise the subject is one that can never be exhausted and there remains much to say.

7. They call sahm 'an arrow', that is, for the arrow of the lashes of the most exalted Beloved the shining and purified hearts have turned, and they have sought to come unto her.
8. Shafr/shufr means 'eyelashes'. (Technically, the term refers to the rim on which the lashes grow. D.M.)
9. Wahq/wahaq is from al-wahāq and means 'lassoo'. For the noose of her tresses, the head of the divine, hidden, universal existence (wojūd-e ghaybī-ye kollī-ye elāhī) sought to stretch itself forth in order to enter the noose. May the heart be deprived that attains not to that arrow (see 8 above) and may the head be destroyed that comes not within that noose. Praised be He from our description of Him, exalted be He above that which you affirm of Him.
10. That is, that the holy and exalted eyes that are hidden secretly in the worlds of the unseen and the visible eyes in the world of existence, at whatever place and whatever time they have wept and shed tears, have done so for the separation of this servant from the sight of the light of the beauty of that Beloved. This may be understood from the outward form of the poem. But its inner meaning is known to none but God, and we know of it less than a single letter. Likewise, comprehend the meaning of the second line that pleasure and yearning and attraction and distraction and love and rapture may come into existence within the world of your being, that perchance you may attain to the Lote-Tree of the extremity and the most distant Mosque of your self, which are

- submission to the decree and the command of God. Verily, thy Lord the Exalted is, in truth, a witness over you and a protector over us in justice.
11. maniyyatī, meaning 'desire'. That is, I have spread out a carpet over all lands, from the most distant regions, the lands of the heart (fu'ād) and beyond it unto infinity, which is concealed behind the veils of the unseen, down to the lowest land of existence, that perchance her foot may be placed upon the heart (qalb), which is the location of the hidden mysteries. This is among the highest yearnings of the divine and holy hearts.
 12. Tarba, meaning 'dust'.
 13. Whatever is contrary to the usages of the people is because of conformity to the conventions of poetry.
 14. That is, whatever has been permitted me of the stages of utterance and rhetoric (al-bayan wa'l-ma'ānī) and all that I have known of the conditions of names and attributes and all that God has given to me in the worlds of the unseen and the visible, I shall sacrifice that I may meet you but once and behold you but once. I ask forgiveness of you, O my God, at this moment, for what I have presented to you, but, by your glory, O my God, if I may not be thus, I hope that I may be thus through your power, for naught else shall satisfy me or set my heart at rest, even though you give me all that are in the heavens and the earth. Wherefore, I beseech you, O my God, by him that witnessed in your path that which none but he ever witnessed, to send down upon your servant some of the signs of your most great love and the tokens of your most glorious loving-kindness, that my soul may be contented in what you desire. You are powerful over all things.
 15. If 'pre-existent' is to be taken as an adjective, it does not correspond (with 'time') (this refers to the ungrammatical form of the original: fī zamān al-qadīma. D.K.); but it flowed out thus and it is true, no doubt is there in it.
 16. wa -- the wa of oath-taking.
 17. Since the sphere of the lower world relates to the earth (al-ard -- fem. D.K.), the tā indicating the feminine subject is joined to the verb 'borne' (ahmala).
 18. 'Conflagration' (wuqūd) can mean 'fuel', even as He says: 'its (the fire's) fuel is men and stones' (Qur'an 2:24), but it can also mean 'burning' or 'ardour'.
 19. tadhawat means 'confirmation' (more precisely, 'was confirmed'. D.K.).
 20. gharr means 'delusion' (ghorūr) (possibly 'foolish pride', which is closer to the Persian sense. D.K.).
 21. mushammitī means 'one who shows malice'. Most of the atoms of created beings. By God, eye has not seen, ear has not heard, nor has anyone counted or known how vain delusions have descended like a pouring rain out of the heaven of men's ignorance. O people of the earth, turn not aside from him in whose heart there is nothing but an effulgence of the lights of the moon of unknowing (al-ʿamā). Fear God and do not oppose him. If you do not love him, do not, at least, show him hate. If the love of God should exist, the absence of anything will not matter. We praise God for having rendered us independent of their love and their mention. He is God, powerful in all things.
 22. ablā means 'worn out' and 'threadbare' (kohne wa khalāq).
 23. maniyyatī -- 'desire'.
 24. Reference to the blessed verse 'the heavens are ready to split asunder from above' (Qur'an 47:5).
 25. '... and the earth to cleave apart'. (This seems intended as a continuation of the verse just quoted, but it is, in fact, a continuation of the similar verse in 19:90. D.K.)
 26. zafir -- 'flame' (sho'le). (Zafir actually means 'moaning'. D.K.)
 27. 'Complaining' and 'lamenting'.
 28. shamt -- 'malice' (shamātat).
 29. mu'adhdhil -- 'censurer'.
 30. alahhu -- 'offering up of supplications' (ilhāh).
 31. faqd -- 'absence' (foqdān).
 32. al-dhill from al-dhilla (disgrace).
 33. 'Blunt of tongue', that is, 'stammering', 'with a speech defect'.
 34. Meaning 'keep silence'.
 35. 'Tale'.
 36. Meaning to cry and wail and lament out of love and grief.
 37. Reference to the verse: 'And he said: remain here. I perceive a fire, perhaps I can bring you from it a brand' (Qur'an 20:10). (The Quranic text reads: 'And he said to his family....'; cf. note 6 above. D.K.)
 38. (Reference to) the verse: '... the natural disposition (fitra) according to which God created men' (Qur'an 30:30).
 39. (fitr) -- short form of fitra.
 40. Reference to the blessed verse 'Take correct the faith as a true believer (hanif)'. (This quotation reads أقم الدين حنيفاً, whereas the Quranic text to which it is, presumably, a reference reads أقم وجهك للدين حنيفاً 'set your face to the faith as a hanif' (Qur'an 30:30), the sentence preceding that quoted in note 38 above. D.K.)
 41. (Reference to) the verse 'white, without any injury' (Qur'an 20:22). (Identical in 27:12 and 28:32. D.K.)
 42. Reference to the verse: 'draw your hand into your pocket'. (This quotation reads فأغصم يدك في جيبك, whereas the Quranic text to which it seems to be a reference reads فأغصم يدك إلى جناحك, 'draw your hand close to your side' (Qur'an 20:22), the sentence preceding that quoted in the last note. The form of the verb used in the text of the qaṣīda for 'draw near' does not correspond to that from which the imperative in this quotation is derived. D.K.)
 43. Reference to the verse: 'and look towards the mountain' (Qur'an 7:143). (Slightly misquoted; this reads فانظروا الجبل, whereas the original reads ولكن انظروا الجبل, 'but look towards the mountain'. D.K.)
 44. (Reference to the words) 'and Moses fell down, swooning' (Qur'an 7:143).
 45. 'The mountains were levelled'. (This is possibly a reference to Qur'an 69:14. D.K.)
 46. (Reference to the words) 'he gives life to the bones, although they are decayed' (Qur'an 36:78).
 47. That is, they moved from joy and the gift of spirit.

48. Existence appeared through the bā', and the worshipper and the worshipped were distinguished by the dot. (Refer to) the tradition 'all that is in the Qur'an is in the ḥamd formula etc.' (This is a reference to a tradition generally ascribed to ^CAli, of which there are numerous variants. In most texts, it reads: 'All that is in the Qur'an is in the formula bismi 'llāh al-rahmān al-rahīm (in the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate), and all that is in this formula is in the words bismi 'llāh, and all that is in the bismi 'llāh is in the word bism, and all that is in the bism is in the letter bā' (ب), and all that is in the bā' is in the dot beneath it. I am the dot beneath the bā').
49. The meaning of the point (nugṭa) is 'it is neither numbered nor calculated' and 'it is neither limited nor does it pass away', inasmuch as the Promised One (ṭal at-e maw'ud) and the Universal Word and the Divine Temple named the most mighty Throne (which is the place of descent and enthronement for the hidden reality) by this exalted Name and this elevated Attribute (i.e. Pahā'?). This is specific to that Temple and He is a sufficient witness unto Himself.
50. Meaning descent and going down.
51. mahajja -- meaning path and disposition.
52. muhja -- means 'heart', 'heartblood', and 'spirit'.
53. al-hashā -- 'the heart'. (Lit. 'bowels', 'intestines'. D.M.)
54. 'Being awake'.
55. 'Striking and biting'. (Lit. 'burning'. D.M.)
56. The reference is to the scorpions among men.
57. samm -- 'poison'.
58. al-radā -- 'destruction'.
59. shafaqa -- from 'compassion' and 'kindness'.
60. That which has been enumerated of wrath and power.
61. Wishing for.
62. Meaning 'you have made a decree concerning'.
63. That is, 'wish'.
64. That is, 'wish'.
65. ḥid -- 'neck'.
66. (Reference to) the verse: 'and his (Jacob's) eyes became white through grief' (Qur'an 12:84).
67. (Reference to) the verse: 'And two youths entered the prison with him (Joseph) and he said, "Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what they bid me to..." etc.' (This is a serious confusion of two Qur'anic verses: 'He (Joseph) said: "Lord, the prison is dearer to me than what they (the women of the city) bid me to; unless you turn aside from me their plotting, I shall be youthful with them and be of the ignorant"' (12:33) and 'And two youths entered the prison with him (Joseph). One of the two said: "I saw myself (in a dream) pressing wine from grapes..."' (12:36). Apart from the clear mix-up of the two verses, the grammar is confused, since fatyān (two youths) cannot be the subject of either qāla (he said) or yad'unānī (they bid me). D.M.)
68. (Reference to the words): 'Lord, verily harm has touched me (Joh)' (Qur'an 21:83). (The original text does not have the word 'Lord', but reads: 'he called on his Lord: "verily...."'. D.M.)
69. (Reference to the words) 'And Dhū 'l-Nūn (Jonah) when he went away angry and imagined that we had no power over him... etc.' (Qur'an 21:84). (The original is slightly different, reading wa Dhū 'l-Nūn for wa Dhū 'l-Nūn. D.M.)
70. Noah and David wailed and lamented a great deal. The tale of Noah is well known; as for the matter of David and his crying out, it is clear from the Psalms how much vexation he endured and to what extent he was afflicted by it.
71. In her being separated from Adam for forty days or more, as is mentioned in the traditions of the past.
72. (Reference to the words): 'And we rescued him from the great affliction'. (There is, in fact, no Qur'anic text corresponding to these words, although 21:76 and 37:76 (both referring to Noah) and 37:115 (referring to Moses and Aaron) are obviously the combined inspiration for this supposed quotation. D.M.)
73. al-^Carā -- they thus call 'the desert'.
74. Reference to the blessed verse: 'And we opened the gates of heaven' (Qur'an 54:11). (The original text does not have wa ('and') at the beginning. D.M.)
75. (Reference to the words) 'with water poured down' (Qur'an 54:11). (The continuation of the verse quoted in the previous note. D.M.)
76. (Reference to the words) 'And we cleaved the earth with springs' (Qur'an 54:12).
77. (Reference to the words) 'and the water met according to a command that had been decreed' (Qur'an 54:12). (The continuation of the verse quoted in the previous note; the form talāqna used in the text does not correspond to that in the Qur'an and does not have the same meaning. D.M.)
78. tahaddat -- (equals) in^Cadamat. ('Disappeared', the form tahadda does not, in fact, have this meaning: the seventh form inhadda seems to be intended, although it strictly means 'to be demolished'. D.M.)
79. tanaffat -- to grow and flourish.
80. mirra -- bitterness.
81. An allusion to chains.
82. That is, is clear and manifest.
83. al-wathīq -- 'chain'.
84. That is, is still there.
85. Decrees.
86. That is, ruined.
87. (Reference to the words) 'we have today made thy sight sharp'. (This seems intended as a reference to Qur'an 50:22: 'and we have removed from thee thy covering and thy sight today is sharp'. D.M.)
88. That is, has been manifested.
89. In it (fihi -- masc.) is better, although it is contrary to the way of the people because of nafs. ('Self' -- a feminine word. D.M.)

- 90. From 'the Psalms', the name of the book (of David: cited in the Qur'an alongside the Torah of Moses, the Gospel of Jesus, and the Qur'an of Muhammad. D.K.).
- 91. Suhuf -- plural of sahifa (page).
- 92. (Note apparently to this word). That is, was confirmed.
- 93. From 'love' and 'desire'.
- 94. From 'hayāt'.
- 95. (al-ulūh), that is āliha ('gods').
- 96. (al-rūbūb), that is arbāb ('lords').
- 97. The meaning is 'the world of command' (as opposed to 'the world of creation'; kāf refers to the first letter of the word kun, 'be'. D.K.)
- 98. In other words, the sign of effulgence which was from the effulgences of the lights of the morn of unknowing and the appearances of the dawn of the sun of holiness and glory, which arose and was manifested from the sun of existence and the moon of the Desired One and the Worshipped Point conferred and bestowed everlasting and eternal life through the drops of the water of divine existence and sprinklings of the undying pure and limpid waters upon the realities of contingent beings and the essences of created things and all the atoms of existent entities and remembrances, and clothed and garbed them in eternal robes and exalted shirts and everlasting, imperishable garments. Yet, with such a mighty sign and most great gift and inextinguishable lights and imperishable bounty, we did not become straight, nor with this solid fashioning, this certain grace, this ancient glory, and this everlasting bounty, did we become upright; rather, we remained deprived of the holy breaths of the Holy Spirit and the sweet breezes of the light of union, to such an extent that, if a thousand Davids of existence were to sing the songs of the Psalms and the melodies of gladness in fresh and wondrous tones over the mouldered bones of men, they would never move nor stir, for the capacity to receive the descent of divine mercy from the heaven of power has been taken away from men and all have been imprisoned through selfish desire in the cage of the body and have become unconscious and have been so stricken by the thunder of ignorance that they will never again recover consciousness and will never attain to the station of union and nearness, which is their primary purpose. Alas and alack that we were not guided by the essence of guidance and did not follow the ancient reality. We neither attained to the Sinai of nearness to Him nor did we turn aside from the manifestations of His rejection; we did not seek comfort with the attractions of His holy spirit, nor did we let ourselves be guided by the lights of His joy. Among His consolations is the sacrifice of one's soul, with which we did not pride ourselves, and the putting on of the robe of steadfastness, to which we did not attain. Yea, we are seated in the heart of the ocean of existence, and yet wait for a taste of water, and we dwell in the shadows of the sun of eternity and ask for a lamp. This is the state of this servant and of all men and all that are in the world. And if a fire should be kindled within a tree, not having taken light therefrom, we make efforts to extinguish it. Blessed be he that clotheth himself with the robe of justice in this struggle. If you should be described by this attribute, you shall have attained to the most glorious bounty. This is that yellow and hidden thread through whose movement all that are in the world of existence are set in motion and through whose stillness all that are in the lands of the Worshipped One are still. Therefore, the breaths must be made clear and purified from corrupt and idle fancies, vile and worthless delusions, that the wondrous face of justice may rise up from behind the Mount of Qāf, whereupon we may comprehend the powers of eternal delights and the attractions of divine yearning from the cooing of the dove of eternity and the melodies of the spirits of glory, and

find rest and comfort upon the highest reaches of love. This is the most exalted of all aims, but its station is the lowest. Moreover, we must turn aside in all circumstances from them that turn aside from the truth and at no time consider it permissible to associate or sit with them. I swear by God that foul souls melt away godly souls just as fire burns dry wood and heat melts snow. Be not with those that turn their hearts from the remembrance of God. Verily, what has been mentioned in explanation of this verse is out of compassion for the eyes of those that turn aside and is a mercy to the vision of those in whose hearts is hatred, that they may not interpret or explain it according to their own desires. These verses were written in the days of exile in the lands of remoteness in the country of Anatolia (Rūm) and not one of the ulena or the learned (fuḍalā') of those lands objected to them or attacked them. But of these ferocious people, I believe that, after their interpretation, they will oppose it and walk after their own imaginations in the paths of delusion, vanity, error, and blindness. And God is the final destination, whether one be thankful or ungrateful, hastening to Him or fleeing from Him. Now that the seal of the vessel of musk has been opened, whosoever has a sense of smell shall perceive it, and whosoever is afflicted with a rheum shall remain deprived. And if all should be afflicted with a rheum, no fault lies with the perfume of eternity and no stain rests upon the pure musk. Praised be Thou, O my God; I call on Thee at this moment when there have descended upon me tokens of Thy sadness which, were they to flow out upon all existence, both the seen and the unseen would become as naught, in such wise that the spirit might almost be separated in its distress. By Thy glory and the mystery of Thine eternity, should I breathe them forth, the hearts of men would be burned in their inmost essences and the heavens would be split asunder with all that is in them, and the earth would be destroyed with all that is on it. Alas, alas, wherefore the breath of faithfulness shall not run over from the garden of majesty nor the perfume of eternity blow from the city of glory, nor shall the dove of Unknowing sing upon the leaves of the red tree, nor shall the bird of majesty warble within the exalted kingdom. By the glory of him whom Thou hast glorified and whom Thou hast made the manifestation of Thy divinity and the source of Thy lordship (the Rab or Subh-e Azal?), I have forgotten all mention and all that Thou hast taught me before this of the wonders of Thy knowledge and the fullness of the signs of Thy wisdom. Hey, I am a thing forgotten, forgotten quite, as if I were not visible within the earth of this world, By the life of 'Ali and the existence of Muhammad, by a pure Spirit and the mercy of a Merciful One, by the attraction of Mahmud and the love of Ahmad, by the mystery of a Beloved One and the joy of a Pure One, I do not desire to be in this world for a moment. To this, God bears witness behind me.

Translated
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 1981

THE ISLAMO-BAHA'I INTERPRETATION OF DEUTERONOMY 33:2.

Deuteronomy chapter 33 records words attributed to Moses when he blessed the "sons of Israel" (12 tribes) shortly before his death. Non-Deuteronomic sayings about the tribes (11th-8th cent. B.C.?) are framed by an archaic poem (=33:2-5+26-29) or psalm of praise celebrating God as King of Israel who gives victory to his people and destroys their enemies through his terrible epiphany (cf. also Judges 5:4, Ps. 68:7, Habb. 3:3f). It is the opening lines of the archaic and obscure poem, Deut 33:2, which have, as we shall see, provided an important prophetic proof text for both Muslims and Baha'is.¹

The difficult Hebrew text (MT) of Deut 33:2 and the RSV English translation are as follows:-²

וַיֵּאמֶר יְהוָה סִינַי נָצַח וְזָרַח מִשְׁעִיר לְסוֹן הַנּוֹפִיעַ
סֵהַר פָּרָן וְאַחַת סָרְבַּת קִדְשׁ סִיִּינֹן אֶשְׁדָּה לְסוֹן

"He [Moses] said, "The Lord came from Sinai, and dawned from Seir upon us, he shone forth from Mount Paran, he came from the ten thousands of holy ones, with flaming fire at his right hand."

A comparison of the RSV translation with other translations underlines the obscurity of the text³, which is generally taken to indicate God's emergence in theophanic splendour from the Egyptian border along the southern

1. On Deut 33:2f refer for example, I.L. Seeligmann, A Psalm from Pre-Regal Times in Vetus Testamentum (VT) XIV (1964), pp. 75-92 + Bib. p. 75. fn. 1.
2. An attempted 'literal translation' of the MT might read, "The Lord came from Sinai and dawned forth from Seir upon them. He shone forth from Mount Paran, he came from the myriads of holiness [or holy ones]; from his right hand a fiery law [?] for them." (cf. Authorised [King James] Version).
3. Without attempting to indicate the rationale behind them the following are three other English translations of Deut 33:2f:

"The Lord came from Sinai and shone forth from Seir. He showed himself from Mount Paran, and with him were myriads of holy ones streaming along at his right hand." (New English Bible).

"Yahweh came from Sinai. For them, after Seir, he rose on the horizon, after Mount Paran he shone forth. For them, he came after the mustering at Kadesh [read not קָדֵשׁ but קָדֵשׁ] from his zenith as far as the foothills." (Jerusalem Bible).

"The Lord came from Sinai and rose up from Seir to His people [read not סוֹן but סֵהַר]. He shone forth from Mount Paran and has arrived from the desert of Qadesh [read קִדְשׁ but קִדְשׁ]. At his right hand-- a fiery stream." (Seeligmann, VT XIV. p. 76).

part of Israel. Deut 33:2 is not understood in a prophetic sense by modern Biblical scholars. It is usually thought to celebrate God's role in guiding his chosen people from Mount Sinai towards the promised land in the days of Moses.

Before setting down and commenting on some of the Muslim and Baha'i interpretations of Deut 33:2 it will be convenient to note the general scholarly opinion on the location of the three (or possibly four) geographical scenes of God's epiphany.

1. Sinai

Mount Sinai has traditionally been identified with Jebel Musa in southern Sinai-- a number of modern scholars however, have rejected this interpretation though this need not concern us here.⁴ In the Old Testament Mt. Sinai which is also named Mt. Horeb (in 'E' and 'D'; 'J' and 'P' using Sinai) is the scene of the revelation of God to Israel and the place where Moses conversed with him.

2. Seir

Mount Seir is, according to A.D.H. Mayes, usually taken (by modern Biblical scholars) to refer to "the mountainous region east of the Arabah"⁵ (i.e. east of the depression through which the Jordan flows around the Dead Sea and down to the Gulf of Aqabah) though a location west of the Arabah and south of Beersheba has also been argued.⁶

3. Paran

Considerable uncertainty attaches itself to the location of the region or "wilderness of Paran" and it is generally admitted that the location of Mt. Paran is unknown. A close analysis of the Biblical references to Paran (esp. Gen 14:16, 21:21; Deut 1:22f, Num 10:11f, 13:3f, 26, I Sam 25:1, I Kings 11:18) however, clearly indicates that the "wilderness of Paran" lies south of Palestine or more precisely, "in the vicinity of its (Canaan's) S. border, and W of Edom, and N of the wilderness of Sinai."⁷ Paran has been defined as "the Biblical appellation for the main desert in the eastern Sinai peninsula."⁸ M. Noth in his The History of Israel⁹ has expressed the opinion that Mt. Paran is "almost certainly identical with the modern jebel faran on the western side of the wadi el-'araba."¹⁰ though others in commenting on Deut 33:2 (and Habb 3:3) have thought Mt. Paran to be synonymous with Mt. Sinai. The Septuagint (LXX) at Num 33:36, it is of interest to note, identifies the wilderness of Kadesh with the wilderness of Paran.

1. Refer for example, J.P. Hyatt, Exodus (New Century Bible), London 1971, p. 203ff.

2. Mayes, Deuteronomy (New Century Bible Commentary), London 1961, p. 115.

3. Refer, J.R. Bartlett, The Land of Seir and the Brotherhood of Edom, in Journal of Theological Studies 20 (1969), pp. 1-20.

4. So J.L. Miheleic in art. Paran in IIB, Vol. III, p. 657. This writer on the basis of the reference to "El Paran" (אֵל פָּרָן) in Gen 14:5-7 also states that "El Paran must be located in the neighborhood of Seir and Kadesh, "on the border of the wilderness" (ibid).

5. In art. Paran in Encyclopedia Judaica Vol. 13, col. 88.

6. Refer M. Noth, The History of Israel² (London 1960), p. 132.

4(?) Kadesh

As indicated above the words translated "he came from the ten thousands of holy ones" (so RSV. Heb.= וְעִשְׂרֵת מֵרִיבֹת קָדֵשׁ) have been read (repointed: וְעִיָּת >

וְעִיָּת = Kadesh) by some scholars so as to indicate a fourth scene of God's epiphany, namely Kadesh. The Septuagint has "with myriads of Kadesh" and some scholars have read וְעִיָּת מִמְרִיבַת-קָדֵשׁ or "from Meribath-Kadesh (cf. Num 27:14, 20:13, 24, etc).

In favour of a reading indicative of a fourth scene of God's epiphany is the unexpected reference to God's coming "from" (or "with"?) myriads of "holy ones" after clear reference to three other locations—one might, in other words, expect a fourth location to be mentioned. Whatever the correct translation or reading of this difficult clause is—certainty seems impossible—it may be noted that Kadesh (= Kadesh Barnea) is best located around the oasis ^cAin Qadis 50 miles south of Beersheba. ¹

The Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2

From the early centuries of the rise of Islām Muslim apologists found reference to the mission of the prophet Muhammad in Deut 33:2. This, in particular, inasmuch as there is reference to Mt. Paran which was early believed to be a mountain around or not far distant from Mecca and in the light of Ishmael's association with Paran (Gen 21:21). By the 9th-10th centuries Deut. 33:2 was held to foreshadow the successive divine missions of Moses and Jesus as well as that of the prophet Muhammad. It was not that God himself appeared from Sinai, Seir and Paran but that three prophets rose up or were commissioned in the regions of Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir and Mt. Paran. The reference to Sinai indicates the prophethood of Moses who received the Law on that mountain. Seir, relocated north in Galilee and identified with a mountain near Nazareth (now Nebi Sa'in just north of Nazareth Jesus' home village) alludes to the mission of Jesus who was thought to have received the Gospel (Injīl) on this relocated mountain. Mt. Paran, also relocated south some 500

1. This clause is, in fact, extremely puzzling. The verb וָיָצֵא is Aramaic (being sometimes used in Hebrew poetry, cf. Deut 33:21, Isa 21:12, etc) and has been read as (not וְעִיָּת = "and he came" but) "and with him" (וְעִיָּת) in the NEB (see below fn. p. 1.) the clause being understood to signify God's theophany with his attendant divine beings (cf. Ps. 68). The word(s) translated "flaming fire" by RSV (אֵשׁ) have been commented on by Hayes as follows: "one word in the Hebrew 'esdat, which is however, pointed by the Massoretes as two words, understood by the Vulg (ignea lex) and following that, by the A[uthorised] V[ersion], as 'fiery law'. The second of the two words, dat, is, however, a late Persian loan word in Hebrew, and, unlikely in this context; and the fact that the consonants of the alleged two words are written together as a single word suggests that the Massoretic treatment of the word is not correct. RSV seems to understand es lappidot, 'fire of flames', but this involves considerable interference in the text, and does not really result in anything credible." Hayes, op. cit. p. 399.

miles or more in the Mecca region, alludes to the mission of the Arabian prophet.

Among the earliest extant Muslim interpretations of Deut 33:2 is that of ^cAlī b. Rabban al-Tabari (fl. mid 9th cent. A.D.). In his Kitāb al-Dīn wa'l-Da'wa ("The Book of Religion and Empire") he quotes Deut 33:2-3 in what appears to be an Arabic translation of the Peshitta Syriac ¹ and comments: "Paran is the land which Ishmael—peace be with him—inhabited; for this reason God had previously mentioned it in the Torah, saying "And he [Ishmael] learned archery in the wilderness of Paran" [Gen 21:20-21]. All the people knew that Ishmael dwelt in Maccah, and his children and successors who are in it and around it know the abode of their grandfather, and do not ignore his land and his country;— and "the Lord" rose up from Paran! If this is not as we have mentioned, let them show us "a lord" who appeared from Mount Paran; and they will never be able to do so. The name "lord" refers here to the Prophet—may God bless and save him; it is a word applied by Arabs and non-Arabs to the Most High God, or to men, his servants, as if you would say "the lord of the house" and as the Syrians call the man whom they wish to exalt: Marī = "my lord," "my master," mar meaning in Syriac "lord." ²

This early Muslim exegesis of Deut 33:2 differs from the standard later Muslim interpretations in identifying the "Lord" (Heb. יהוה, the Tetragrammaton ["Yahweh"], Syriac ܝܫܘܥ) with the prophet Muhammad—

1. The Peshitta is the authorized Bible of the Syrian Church dating from the 4th-5th cent. A.D.—traditionally ascribed to Rabbula Bishop of Edessa (d. c. 435 A.D.).

2. A. Mingana's translation of the text quoted by al-Tabari is, "The Lord came from [Mount] Sinai, and rose up from Seir, and appeared from Mount Paran, with tens of thousands of saints at His right hand (وَمِنْ يَمِينِهِ) He gave them (power), and made them to be loved by nations, and called blessings on all his saints." (Deut 33:2-3). Refer, Mingana, The Book of Religion and Empire, p. 86-7

3. ST. Mingana, The Book of Religion and Empire, p. 87. al-Tabari basically argues that Paran, the dwelling place of Ishmael (see Gen 21:21), is to be associated with Mecca—since it is well known that Ishmael dwelt at Mecca and his descendants are well aware of this fact. Thus, that "the Lord" appeared from Paran must signify the rise of the prophet Muhammad in Mecca since no other prophet rose up from this place.

—the argument that "Lord" is used for men (as well as God) and may thus be applied to the prophet Muhammad is incorrect inasmuch as the Hebrew and Syriac texts use the Tetragrammaton which designates God alone.¹ Sinai and Seir are not related to Moses and Jesus and the association of Paran with Mecca is argued on the basis of scripture (Gen 21:21) and tradition rather than this identification being assumed to be an established geographical fact.²

The more developed kind of interpretation of Deut 33:2 (outlined above) is found a generation or so after al-Tabari. Ibn Qutaybah (c. 828-889 A.D.) whose interpretation has been cited by a number of later Muslim writers including Ibn Taymiyah (d. 1328 A.D., refer his al-Jawāb al-Sahīh iii.282.) expressed the following opinion: "To one who reflects there is no obscurity of any kind [in Deut 33:2]. The coming of God from Mount Sinai is his revealing the Torah to Moses from Mount Sinai, as we both (Muslims and Christians) agree. Likewise His shining from Sa'ir must be His revealing the Gospel to the Messiah, for the Messiah was from Sa'ir the country of Abraham, in a village called Nāsirah, after which his followers are called Nasārā. And as his shining from Sa'ir must refer to the Messiah, so his displaying Himself from the mountains of Faran must mean his revealing the Qur'an to Muhammad. There is no dispute between Muslims and the people of the Book about Faran being Meccah."³ The comments of al-Bīrūnī (d. 1050 A.D.) on Deut 33:2 as recorded in his al-Athār al-Bāqiyah an al-Qurūn al-Khāliyah are similar: "Does not the following passage.. of which this is the translation (Deut. xxxiii. 2), bear testimony for Muhammad: 'The Lord came from Mount Sinai, and rose up unto us from Seir, and he shined forth from Mount Paran, accompanied by ten thousand of saints at his right hand?'" The terms of this passage are hints for the establishing of the proof, that the (anthropomorphic) descriptions, which are inherent in them

1. This is pointed out by D.S. Margoliouth in On 'The Book of Religion and Empire', in FBA 16 (1930), p. 175. Later Muslim writers, as we shall see, quoted different versions of Deut 33:2 and associated the mention of the coming of "the Lord" with the divine revelation — or in various ways got round, sometimes by interpolating or rewriting the text, the problem of the Lord's appearance from Paran, etc.
2. In the article referred to in the above fn. Margoliouth draws attention to the fact that Diyārbakrī (d. 1558 A.D.) in his 'Tarikh al-Khāmīs..' records a tradition that 'Abdallāh b. Salām (a contemporary of the Prophet) attempted to relate the Paran/Faran of Deut 33:2 among the mountains of Mecca and that the geographer al-Hamdānī (d. 945 A.D.) in his al-Idrīlī (Ed. Müller, 170, 10) mentions Faran as a name for the Haram which is found in the Torah where the mountains of Faran are mentioned.
3. Cited Margoliouth, ibid, p. 175-6.

cannot be referred to the essence of the Creator, nor to his qualities, he being high above such things. His coming from Mount Sinai means his secret conversation with Moses there; his rising up from Seir means the appearance of the Messiah, and his shining forth from Mount Faran, where Ishmael grew up and married, means the coming of Muhammad from thence as the last of all the founders of religions, accompanied by legions of saints, who were sent down from heaven to help, being marked with certain badges. He who refuses to accept this interpretation, for which all evidence has borne testimony, is required to prove what kinds of mistakes there are in it."⁴ Thus for al-Bīrūnī, unlike al-Tabari, the reference to the coming of the Lord in Deut 33:2 implies an unacceptable anthropomorphism and must refer to the advent of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad with whom God (indirectly) had dealings. The "ten thousands of saints" are heavenly beings who helped the prophet Muhammad (refer Deut 33:2b).

The abovementioned Ibn Taymiyah has not only recorded the comments of Ibn Qutaybah on Deut 33:2 but made some interesting observations of his own. They have been summed up as follows: ".near Bethlehem, where the Messiah was born, is a village called Sa'ir to this day, having mountains also called by that name. The mountain Faran, of which Moses speaks, is Mount Hirā, where Muhammad's revelation commenced; there is no mountain of those round Meccah, said to be ten thousand in number, higher than mount Hirā; and the place is called Faran to this day, and the desert which is between Meccah and Mount Sinai is called the Desert of Faran."⁵ It is ^{that by this} clear^A time of Ibn Taymiyah (13-14th centuries A.D.) Mt. Paran/Farān had been explicitly identified with Mt. Hirā a hill outside Mecca where Muhammad is traditionally said to have retreated for meditation and where he is believed to have encountered the angel Gabriel at the beginning of his mission.³

1. ET. from the Ed of E. Sachau, The Chronology of Ancient Nations, London 1879., p. 23.
2. D.S. Margoliouth, art. cit. p. 176. This same writer also notes Yāqūt ibn 'Abdallāh al-Hamawī's (1179-1229 A.D.) comments on Deut 33:2. Sa'ir (Seir) is a village in Nazareth between Tiberius and 'Akka (Acre). Faran is a name of Mecca — Ibn Makūlā (11th cent. A.D., whom Yāqūt quotes) states that the mountains of Faran are the mountains of Hijaz — though the view that the mountains of Faran are situated in Palestine or south of Kirkuk is also noted.
3. It is not however, the case that all subsequent Muslim writers identify Mt. Paran/Farān with Mt. Hirā.

28.

Having set down something of the medieval Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 and before commenting on the Bahā'ī interpretation of this verse a few much later Shi'ī interpretations may be outlined and commented upon— learned Shi'ī Muslim writers were well aware of the whole range of Biblical texts applied to the prophet Muhammad and the rise of Islam and usually quote Deut 33:2 in this connection.

In the beginning of the 17th cent. A.D. the Catholic missionary Father Jerome Xavier wrote an apologetic work entitled The Truth Revealing Mirror ('A'ina-i Haqq Nama, written in Persian) which was sent to Shah 'Abbas I (1587-1629) and became well known in the court circles of the time. In a reply to this work entitled 'The Lordly rays in refutation of the Christian error' (al-Lawāmi^c al-Rabāniyya fī radd al-Shubah al-Nasrāniyya, written in 1621. A.D.) by the Persian Shi'ī writer Ahmad ibn Zayn al-'Abidīn, various prophecies, including Deut 33:2, are applied to the prophet Muhammad. The text and comments of the latter writer on Deut 33:2 are as follows:-

"A light came from Mount Sinai, and it shone upon us from Mount Seir, and it was revealed to us from Mount Paran (text quoted in Arabic). ..it is well known that the passage "A light came from Mount Sinai," alludes to the revelation received by Moses on Mount Sinai; and, that the passage, "It shone upon us from Mount Seir," alludes to the revelation received by the Messiah from Mount Seir; for by Seir is meant Galilee, in a village of which, called Nazareth, the Messiah dwelt, whence his followers have been called Nazarenes. As to the passage, "It was revealed to us from Mount Paran," the meaning is, the revelation of Mohammad received on Mount Paran, which is a mountain in the neighbourhood of Mecca, between which and Mecca there is a journey of two days. It is also well known, that Abraham made Mecca the residence of Ishmael, and that Mohammad is descended from him." 1.

It will be evident that this interpretation follows the standard earlier interpretations of Deut 33:2 though it is of interest to note that the exegetical complications that result from the occurrence of the Tetragrammaton ("the Lord came...") at the beginning of the verse are solved by the substitution of "a light" (al-nūr) which shone upon Moses, Jesus and Muhammad.

1. Text and translation in S. Lee (Ed) Controversial Tracts on Christianity and Mohammedanism. (Cambridge 1824), pp. xlv-xlvi.

29.

During part of the years 1811-12 the English missionary Henry Martyn (1781-1812) spent some time in Shirāz (Irān) working on his Persian translation of the New Testament and debating with the local Shi'ī and Sūfī notables and 'ulamā. He wrote several tracts in support of his fervently held Christian views which called forth rejoinders from a number of Shi'ī Muslim writers including one written in 1813 by Muhammad Ridā ibn Muhammad Amin Hamadānī. A large proportion of Hamadānī's reply to Martyn is taken up with the application of Biblical prophecies to Muhammad and Islam. Once again the standard Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 is set forth:

"..in the last section of the Law (Deut xxxiii.2.) there is a passage to this effect: "God was revealed from Sinai; he shone forth from Seir; and imparted his bounty from Paran." Now there can be no doubt that this relates to the missions of Moses, Jesus and Mohammad, respectively. For the place in which Moses saw the glory was mount Sinai; that of the mission of Jesus was Seir; that of Mohammad the desert of Paran: for all the Jewish commentators agree, that Paran (whether occurring in the Law or elsewhere) and Mecca are the same place.."

The "third Shaykh" of the Shaykhis Hajji Mirzā Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1818-1871) also took it upon himself to reply to one of the writings of a Christian missionary, Carl Gottlieb Pfander (1803-1865). His Kitāb-i Nusrat al-Dīn (written in Persian in 1266. A.H./1849-50) appears to be a reply to Pfander's Tarīq al-Hayāt (printed in Persian at Agra in 1847) which is largely concerned with the exposition of the evangelical understanding of sin and salvation. 2. At several points in Karīm Khan's reply

1. E. F. Lee in Controversial Tracts, pp. 278-9. Hamadānī also refers to Gen 23:1ff identifying Lahai Roi (see Gen 24:62+16:7, 14) with the well of Zamzam in Mecca— the residence of Ishmael. It is not of course true that all Jewish commentators agree that Paran and Mecca are one and the same place or region. Sa'd Ibn Mansūr Ibn Kammūna (c. 1215-c. 1285. A.D.) a member of the Jewish community of Baghdad in his Examination of the Enquiries into the Three Faiths (Tanqīh al-abhāt li-l-milal al-talāt) in criticising the Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 notes the view that Mt. Paran is in the Hejaz (attributed to Ibn al-Kūfī the author of Manāzil Makka and to [Abū Ibrāhīm Ishāq al-Fārābī, d. 961. A.D.?] the author of Diwan al-Adab) but regards this tradition as weak (refer, Ibn Kammūna's Examination of Three Faiths tr. Moshe Perlmann, London, 1971, p. 138ff.

2. In his Kitāb-i Nusrat al-Dīn (2nd Ed. printed Kirman 1329) Karīm Khān (see p. 2ff) does not clearly identify the "Padre" (a common designation for Christian missionaries) against whom he writes or the title of his book.

Biblical prophecies are applied to Muhammad and the rise of Islām (pp.293-328 are wholly devoted to this subject), including Deut 33:2. At one point Karīm Khān writes:

"Another testimony to [the truth of] our Prophet [Muhammad] in this Book [Deuteronomy] is chapter 33 verse 2 where it says: "The light of God [نور خداوند] came from Sinai and shined forth [اشراق] upon us from Seir, and was manifest from Mount Paran, and with Him were thousands of saints [هزاران باکان], from his right hand a fiery law [از دست راست او سنتی بود از آتش]. " It is clear that the light of God [نور خداوند] that was manifest from Sinai was the light of the prophethood of Moses [نور نبوت موسی], its manifestation from Seir was the light of the prophethood of Jesus which beamed forth unto him from Mt. Seir; and its manifestation from Mt. Paran is the light of the prophethood of the Prophet of the last times [Muhammad], which shone forth upon that eminent one from Mt. Paran which is a mountain in Mecca.. " 1.

Having set down the classic Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 and like (the abovementioned) Ahmad ibn Zayn al-^cAbidīn substituted the "light of God" for God himself Karīm Khān adds that the Prophet Muhammad like Ishmael appeared from the "valley of Paran" (وادی پاران)—referring to Gen 21:21. This confirms the interpretation which is partly rooted in the conviction that the Arabs are the descendants of Ishmael who dwelt in the "valley of Paran" and the "brethren" of Deut 18:18. 2. In Karīm Khān's extended discussion of the Biblical texts that apply to Muhammad and Islām (p.293ff) the same interpretation of Deut 33:2 is repeated. At this point however, he argues — being aware that the opening line of Deut 33:2 reads "God came.." — that the meaning is not that "God came" but that His amr ("cause/command") and hukm ("decree/law") shone forth from Sinai at the time of the commissioning of Moses; that His amr and His nūr (light) were manifest from Mt. Seir (upon Jesus) as upon the Prophet Muhammad from Mt. Paran. 3.

1. Kitāb-i Nusrat al-Dīn, p.88.

2. Refer, *ibid.*, p.295.

3. Refer, *ibid.*, pp.299-300. The text of Deut 33:2 quoted here by Karīm Khan differs from that translated above (from p.88) — and as it (accurately) begins "God came" he finds it necessary to get round this problem:

آمد خدا از سینا و اشراق کرد برای ما از سامیر و ظاهر شد از کوه پاران
و با او بودند ألوق الطهار در راست او سنتی بود از آتش

Such in outline are some representative examples of the Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2; interpretations which are still boldly set forth today by Muslim apologists and which have been criticised by countless Jewish and Christian polemicists. 1.

The Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2

Commenting on the Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 the 13th cent. (A.D.) Jewish writer Ibn Kammūna has written,

"If the opinion was accurate that the passages "came from Sinai," "rose from Seir", and "shined forth from Mount Paran" alluded to the prophethood of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad, respectively, then the following passage "and came from the myriads holy" would be an allusion to a fourth religion — a conclusion no Muslim has reached." 2.

This interesting observation anticipates a "conclusion" which has in fact been reached by Bahā'īs; namely that the last clause of Deut 33:2 alludes to or predicts the advent of a fourth divine manifestation in the person of Mirza Husayn ^cAlī Bahā'u'llāh who founded the Bahā'ī religion.

By the late 1880's such an interpretation of Deut 33:2b had been reached by Bahā'ī apologists who drew on and extended the Muslim interpretation of this verse in the course of their debates with Jews, Christians and Muslims whom they wished to convert to the Bahā'ī movement.

Though I am not aware of any quotation of Deut 33:2 by Bahā'u'llāh himself both ^cAbdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi have made references to it and many oriental and occidental Bahā'ī writers have commented upon it usually setting down the Muslim interpretation and applying the last clause to Bahā'u'llāh. The Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 is rooted in the Muslim interpretation being sometimes dependent on a 'rewriting' of the last clause as it is translated in the various Persian and Arabic Bibles or recorded in the writings of Muslim apologists.

1. A good example of the modern type Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 can be found in Maulana Abdul Haque's Muhammad in World Scripture Vol.II (Lahore 1975), pp.510-515. In this lengthy work an uninformed and selective use is made of the findings of modern Biblical scholarship and of the Bible itself in the comments on Deut 33:2, though the treatment is of considerable interest and ingenuity.

2. Ibn Kammūna, Tanqīh al-abhāt..tr. Perlmann (see fn 4: below), p.142.

Among the earliest expressions of the Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 is that of Mīrzā Abū al-Faḍl Gulpaygānī (1844-1914) in his Sharḥ-i Āyāt-i Muwarrrikha ('Commentary on the Chronological Proof Texts', written in Persian in Hamadan in 1888).¹ Gulpaygānī, who originally conceived many of the distinctively Baha'i interpretations of Biblical texts possibly including that of Deut 33:2, quotes Deut 33:2 in Persian² and sets down in a highly ornate style reminiscent of that of Bahā'u'llāh's Kitāb-i Iqān (written in Baghdad in 1863) the Muslim interpretation of this verse. The advent of God from Sinai signifies the coming of divine guidance through "the illumined Mosaic Tree". From Seir the "breezes of the Holy Spirit of Jesus" (نفحات روح القدس ميسوي) renewed the world which was also illumined "by the lights of the Muhammadan countenance" from Mt. Paran. Then, in connection with the fourth eschatologically understood manifestation of God Gulpaygānī paraphrases the last clause of Deut 33:2 in such a way as to teach that Bahā'u'llāh came with "myriads of holy ones" (هزار هزار مقدس) and with a fiery law (شربت آتشین — perhaps having in mind Bahā'u'llāh's Kitāb al-Aqdas, written in c.1873) so that the world may attain universal salvation and beatitude. Having paraphrased and commented in this manner on Deut 33:2 Qur'ān 14:5 is quoted as if this verse confirms the prophetic and eschatological interpretation of the words of Moses (Deut 33:2) in question. The 14th verse of the New Testament Epistle of Jude is also quoted by Gulpaygānī in confirmation of the eschatological sense of the last clause of Deut 33:2.³ Finally, he states that the Islāmic 'ulamā find but three manifestations mentioned in Deut 33:2 (Moses, Jesus and Muhammad) adding that for the "people of insight" there is clear reference to a fourth, the "glad-tidings of the Bahā'ī /glorious manifestation" (Bahā'u'llāh).

1. Refer. Sharḥ-i Āyāt-i Muwarrrikha, (Shanghai 1925), pp.27-29.
 2. The text of Deut 33:2 quoted by Gulpaygānī is as follows:-

خداوند بر آمد از سینا و تجلی فرمود از سبیر و درخشید از فاران و ظهور خواهد فرمود
 با هزار هزار مقدس از شربت آتشین ایشان خواهد رسید.

3. This clearly from the text of Jude v.14 itself which purports to be a prophecy of Enoch the "seventh from Adam" : "It was with them in mind that Enoch made his prophecy when he said, "I tell you, the Lord will come with his saints in their tens of thousands, to pronounce judgement on all mankind.." (JB). The words "the Lord will come lit. hath come with his saints in their tens of thousands" are in fact a slightly revised quotation from I (Ethiopic) Enoch (1:9. around 1st century A.D.) which itself draws on Deut 33:2b. See further below, p.13.

Elsewhere in Gulpaygānī's writings similar interpretations of Deut 33:2 are to be found. Of particular interest is his discussion of this verse in a letter in reply to questions about Biblical prophecies which apply to Muhammad addressed to Mīrzā Husayn Effendi Ruhī (1878-1940).¹ The text of Deut 33:2 is quoted in the Van Dyke Arabic translation², the Muslim interpretation outlined and the opinion expressed that there is prophetic allusion to four "manifestations" (zuhurāt). The problem posed by the fact that the verbs in Deut 33:2 express a past tense or that the alleged four epiphanies are represented as events of the past is next taken up. That Deut 33:2 concerns God's appearance to Israel at the time of Moses or in the past was underlined by Jewish critics of the Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 . Mossa Maimonides (1135 - 1204) in his "Letter to Yemen" (addressed to Jacob b. Nathaniel of Yemen in 1172.A.D.) rejected Mt. Paran as an allusion to the appearance of the prophet Muhammad on the grounds that the verb "he shined" (انزله) indicates a past event.³ Ibn Kammūna makes the same objection to the Muslim interpretation of Deut 33:2 when he writes, ".the words came, rose, shined forth all relate to a matter of the past, not to something expected in the future."⁴ Gulpaygānī thus takes up an age old objection to the Muslim type interpretation of Deut 33:2; an objection which was doubtless raised by Jews and Christians in their debates with Bahā'īs about the interpretation of this verse. His solution to the problem is ingenious.

It is of little consequence that أشرق ("shone forth"), تلاوا ("chanted forth") and أتى ("came" : so the Van Dyke Arabic Bible translation) occur in the past tense since prophetic " glad-tidings" of the Holy Books frequently occur in the past tense—though with futuristic import. In proof of this assertion Gulpaygānī quotes Qur'an 89:22 : وَجَاءَ رَبُّكَ وَالْمَلَكُ صَفًّا صَفًّا "And thy Lord cometh lit. out of context. came and the angels rank upon rank". Here the verb جاء (= to come") occurs in the past tense despite the fact that

1. Written in Arabic in Cairo on 9th June 1900 and published in Mukhtārāt min Mu'allafāt Abī al-Faḍl (Brussels 132.BE./1970), pp.251-72.
 2. The Van Dyke trans. of Deut 33:2 reads: .. جاء الرب من سيناء و انزل من سبیر و تلاوا " .. the Lord came from Sinai and descended from Seir and they chanted".
 This appears to be the version quoted by Gulpaygānī though at the end of the verse he has " فجس التبريد " not " نار شربته ".
 3. Refer. J. Sarachek, The Doctrine of the Messiah in Medieval Jewish Literature (New York 1932), p.138.
 4. Ibn Kammūna, Tanqih al-abḥāt.. tr. Perlmann, p.142.

the verse has obvious eschatological import.¹ Jude 14, it is also observed, expresses the future coming of the Lord despite the use of the past tense. Gulpaygānī quotes the Van Dyke translation of Jude 14 in which the coming of the Lord with myriads of saints is represented as a prophecy of Enoch and which is, in both the original Greek and the Arabic translation, expressed in the 'past tense' (i.e. aorist "prophetic preterite" and 'past perfect' or perfect+ particle qad).² His argument is reminiscent of that of the 2nd century Christian apologist Justyn Martyr who, in his Dialogue with the Jew Tryphon (114.1) wrote:

"Sometimes the Holy Spirit caused what was to be a type of the future to be performed openly, and sometimes he also uttered sayings about things which were to happen in the future as though they were then taking place, or had already taken place. And unless the readers know this method they will not be able to follow the words of the prophets as they ought."³

The renowned Bahā'ī poet Mīrzā Na^cīm Isfahānī (d. 1334 AH/1915-16 AD) was, like Gulpaygānī, particularly learned in the interpretation of Biblical texts. In his Istidlāliyya ("Testimonia") he proposes an interpretation of Deut 33:2 which, in part, differs from that of Gulpaygānī.⁴ He begins his discussion of this text by stating that it announces the "glad-tidings" of four manifestations and quotes the following partly rewritten Persian version:

1. cf. also Qur'ān 89:21 (كَلَّمَ إِذَا دَخَلَتِ الْأَرْضُ دُكَّاءً "when the earth is pounded to dust") the verse preceding that quoted by Gulpaygānī where the conjunction idhā implies a future sense despite the occurrence of the verb كَلَّمَ in the following verse in the perfect. cf. Bahā'u'llāh's criticisms of those Qur'ānic commentators who argued that idhā followed by a verb in the perfect/'past tense' must have futuristic import and who thereby failed to apply Qur'ān 50:20 to the mission of the prophet Muhammad (refer, Kitāb-i Iqān, ET. Shoghi Effendi [London 1961], pp. 74-5). The Bāb and Bābī writers in particular had something of a disdain for grammatical or literal-istic scriptural exegesis in favour of an allegorical or "spiritual" hermeneutic— not that the above argument of Gulpaygānī contravenes the well-known rules of Qur'ānic Arabic (surrounding the use of the 'prophetic past tense').

2. The Van Dyke translation of Jude 14 reads: "وَتَبَيَّنَتْ لِي فِي هَذِهِ السَّنَةِ مِنْ آدَمَ قَائِلًا هَذَا قَدْ جَاءَ الْزَّبَّانُ فِي رِبْوَاتِهِ. هَذَا قَدْ بَيَّنَّ"

In this translation the Arabic قَدْ جَاءَ accurately translates the original Greek ἤλθεν elthen (lit. 'has come' aorist) a "prophetic preterite" which is "intended to underline the certainty of God's action by dramatically expressing it as already accomplished" (Refer, J.N.D. Kelly, A Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and of Jude [London 1969], p. 276).

3. Justyn Martyr cited R.M. Grant, A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible (New York 1963), p. 40.

4. I have used a photocopy of this Istidlāliyya (Ed ? Mirza ^c Abdallāh Mutlaq np.nd. written c. 1907 ?) provided by the Bahā'ī World Centre, Haifa.

.. خداوند برآمد از سینا و تجلی کرد از سامیر و در حشید از فاران
و ورود نمود با هزاران هزار مقدس از تلهاى اراضى مقدسه .."

"God came from Sinai and shone forth from Seir. He beamed forth from Paran and came with thousands of saints from the hills of the Holy Land."

This peculiar Persian version of Deut 33:2 is based on an initially literal then speculative reading or re-pointing of the Arabic version known to Mīrzā Na^cīm (close to the Van Dyke version). Where the Arabic version has "من رِبْوَاتِ الْقُدْسِ" ('min ribwāt al-quds "from myriads/ten thousands of saints"), رِبْوَاتِ (ribwāt the plural of رِبْوَة ribwa) is read as رُبْوَاتِ (rubwāt) and understood to be the plural of رُبِي (rubā = a hill). A fourth manifestation is thus understood to have been predicted in Deut 33:2b, the manifestation of Bahā'u'llāh in the Holy Land or from the "holy hills".² While the reading "with ten thousands of saints" is not here rejected the Arabic translation of this phrase suggested the geographical location of the fourth Bahā'ī manifestation.³

Mirza Na^cīm sums up his interpretation of Deut 33:2 by writing,

"Briefly, in this verse the manifestation of Moses in the Mount (Tūr = Mt. Sinai), Jesus in Seir, Muhammad in Paran and the Ancient Beauty (Jamāl-i Qidām = Bahā'u'llāh) in the Mount of the Fig and the Olive and Mt. Carmel were announced."⁴

1. The Arabic version of Deut 33:2 quoted by Mirza Na^cīm reads:

.. جاء الرب من سيناء و اشراق من سامير و تلالا من جبل فاران و اتى من رِبْوَاتِ الْقُدْسِ و من يمينه نار شريعة لهم ."

2. Bahā'u'llāh in several of his writings of the late ^cAkkā period identifies the "hill of God" mentioned in the Old Testament (cf. Ps 24:3, 42:6, 68:15f, 2:6, 3:4, 15:1, 43:3, 99:9) with Mt. Carmel which he several times visited. Refer, Mā'ida-yi Asmānī, Vol. 4, p. 218, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (ET. Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette 1971), p. 145. Such an identification may have contributed to the abovementioned interpretation of the last clause of Deut 33:2.

3. In commenting on Deut 33:2 Mīrzā Na^cīm (Istidlāliyya, p. 65) also quotes the following extract from a certain "Prayer of the Signs" (Du'a-yi Simāt) attributed to Imam ^cAlī which appears to be based on Deut 33:2:

"And by Thy Glory (مجدت) which appeared on Mt. Sinai and through which you [God] conversed with your servant and your messenger Moses son of ^cImrān; and by your rising up in Seir and your manifestation on Mt. Paran; and by the myriads of holy ones (و بربروات المقدسين) and the hosts of the sanctified angels."

4. The reference here to the "Mount of the Fig and the Olive" is an allusion to

Before leaving the subject of the interpretation of Deut 33:2 Mirza Na'im makes a few interesting remarks about Seir. He does not repeat the usual identification of Mt. Seir with a mountain in Galilee but argues that Seir is a region between Egypt and the Holy Land frequented by both Moses and Jesus. Christians who say that the Messiah did not journey to Seir are mistaken. Indeed, the advent of Jesus from Seir is predicted in several of the books of the (OT) prophets. If, Mirza Na'im asks, the announcement of one from Seir does not refer to Jesus how can it be that Jesus said "Moses wrote concerning me.." (Jn 5:46).

The interpretation of the last clause of Deut 33:2 proposed by Mirza Na'im was taken up and elaborated by the late 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq Khavarī (1902 - 1972) in his massive Rahiq-i Makhtūm.² He outlines the Bahā'ī conviction that four successive messengers of God are alluded to in Deut 33:2 (identifying the fourth with Bahā'u'llāh) and notes that the Persian versions of the Bible have "کردرهای مقدسین" (kurūrahā-yi muqaddasīn = "thousands of holy ones") for the Arabic "دورات" "قدس". He then writes:

"In the estimation of this writer "دورات مقدس" in this place (Deut 33:2b) has the meaning meaning sanctified hills and mounds (tappahā va tīllihā-yi muqaddas) such that the intention is the Holy Land and the 'bridal chamber (jilwa-gāh) of the Ancient Beauty (Bahā'u'llah).³

Qur'ān 95:1f ("By the Fig and the Olive and Mt. Sinai..") in which the reference to the "Fig" and the "Olive" are thought by some Qur'ānic commentators to be allusions to two mountains in the Holy Land; and thus to Bahā'u'llāh's manifestation there. cf. al-Tibyān wa'l-Burhān, Vol. I (Beirut 1972), p. 129ff and the letters of 'Abdu'l-Bahā in Mā'ida-yi Asmānī Vol. 9, p. 8. and Vol. 2, p. 48.

1. In claiming that Jesus passed through Seir Mirza Na'im may have in mind Jesus' journey to Egypt as an infant in order to escape the persecution of Herod (see Matt 2:13ff).
2. Ishraq Khavarī's Rahiq-i Makhtūm (2 Vols. Tihiran 130-1 BE.) is a commentary on Shoghi Effendi's "Lawh-i Qarn" in which, as we shall see below, Deut 33:2b is quoted in reference to Bahā'u'llāh. His treatment of Deut 33:2 is set down in Vol. I, pp. 58-60.
3. Ishraq Khavarī, Rahiq-i Makhtūm, Vol. I, p. 58.

Ishraq Khavarī continues to argue that such an understanding of the last clause of Deut 33:2 is supported by the geographical references in the first three parts of the verse. One expects, in other words, reference to a fourth manifestation from a fourth locality-- a line of reasoning that, as we have seen, has influenced some textual critics to read Kadesh (دش) instead of (MT) "holy ones" (دش). He denies that "کردرهای مقدسین" "thousands of holy ones" (=Per. Bible trans.) is a suitable translation of Deut 33:2b seemingly unconscious of any need of consult the Hebrew (a language he did not know), and holds on the basis of (the Arabic trans.) "دورات القدس" understood as "sanctified hills" that this phrase signifies the Holy Land or, more explicitly, Mt. Carmel.⁴

Also adduced in support of a fourth scene of God's epiphany is the repeated occurrence of the preposition "من" (i.e. ".from Sinai..", ".from Seir..", ".from Mt. Paran.." + ".from _____" : so the Van Dyke Arabic trans. cited by Ishraq Khavarī [من × 4] as well as the Hebrew [ן × 4] which, at its fourth occurrence, allegedly necessitates a fourth (Bahā'ī) manifestation from the "sanctified hills" of the Holy Land.⁵

Apart from Abū al-Fadl Gulpaygānī, Mirza Na'im Isfahānī, and Ishraq Khavarī a whole host of oriental and occidental Bahā'ī writers from the late 19th. cent. up till the present day have commented on Deut 33:2 for the most part repeating interpretations on the above lines. Jibrān Sāssī (d. 1903) an early Egyptian Christian convert to the Bahā'ī movement for

1. Ishraq Khavarī also cites an Arabic dictionary to the effect that "دورة" may bear the meaning "hill" (Per. تپه) or "mound" (Per. تل) since its initial consonant (ر) bears this sense when inflected with either of the three (Arabic) vowels. An Arabic lexical source has it that al-rubwa, al-rabwa and al-ribwa each signify "what rises up from the earth" (i.e. a mound or hill) Refer Rahiq-i Makhtūm Vol. I, p. 59.
2. In confirmation of his interpretation of Deut 33:2 Ishraq Khavarī (ibid) notes that Jināb-i Hajjī Sadr al-Sudūr (d.c. 1907 a prominent Iranian Bahā'ī) in his Istidlāliyya understood "دورات القدس" to signify "mounds of the Holy Land" (تل حاران آرمی مقدس) — though this may in fact be a reference to the abovequoted Istidlāliyya by Mirza Na'im Isfahānī since (in the edition I have consulted) it was apparently edited by Mirza Abdallāh Mutlaq in a version completed by Sadr al-Sudūr.
3. I assume that the Jibrān Sāssī represented as the author of the Istidlāliyya published in Cairo (NSA of the Bahā'īs of Egypt?) around the 1940's (nd.?) is an Arabic printing of Gabriel Sacy's Du Regne de Dieu et de l'Agneau connu sous le nom de Babylone: se trouve chez l'Auteur au Caire (Cairo, privately printed June 1902 : not seen).

example, in his Istidlāliyya quotes Deut 33:2 with the following interlinear comments: "The Lord drew nigh from Sinai (= Moses), and rose up unto them from Seir (= Jesus from a mountain which is in the promised land) and shone forth from Mt. Paran (= Muhammad from the mountain which is in the Arabian peninsular) and he came from the holy hills (reading ربى القدس [!]: = in the day of God) and from his right hand a fiery law." 1.

Hajji Mirzā Mahdī Arjumand (d. 1910?; a prominent Iranian Jewish convert to the Bahā'ī movement) in his recently republished Gulshan-i Haqā'iq (early 20th cent.) interprets Deut 33:2 in a manner very similar to Gulpaygānī (in his Sharh-i Āyāt..cf. below). 2. In the course of commenting on Dan 7:9ff he holds that the phrase "...a stream of fire poured out, issuing from his presence" (7:10a Per.trans=از حضورش نهر آتشین صادر شد بیرون آید) has essentially the same meaning as "from his right hand a fiery law went out for them" (Deut 33:2b. Per.trans=از دست راستش شریعت آتشین باشان برید); the "stream of fire" (نهر آتشین) and "fiery law" (شریعت آتشین) signify the Divine Will and the Divine Word which are the means of the instruction of souls and the progress of the world of existence." 3.

A large number of Jewish, Christian and Islāmic proof texts are assembled in the well known al-Tibyān wa'l-Burhān. In the discussion of Deut 33:2 it is stated that the reference to Seir signifies the advent of Jesus from Jabal Zaytūn, the "Mount of Olives" and that Mt. Paran alludes to the coming of Muhammad from "a mountain in Mecca named Abū Qubays (Gen 21:21 and Qur'ān 2:128 are also referred to). (برات القدس), evidently understood as "holy hills" alludes to the coming of Bahā'u'llāh, being a reference to the lowland or hilly area (al-munhadarāt) between Mt. Carmel and Akkā. The author of al-Tibyān wa'l-Burhān thus makes very explicit the allegedly prophetic geographical locations mentioned in Deut 33:2. 4.

1. Jibrān Sassī, Istidlāliyya, p.15.
2. Refer Gulshan-i Haqā'iq (Kalimat Press 1982), pp.152-3.
3. Refer, *ibid*, pp.157-8.
4. Refer, Vol.I. (Beirut 1972), pp.129-131. Interesting comment is also made in this work (Vol.I. pp.130-1) on Qur'ān 95:1ff in the light of the location of Bahā'u'llāh's manifestation.

The oriental Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 was very each made known and adopted by N.American converts to the Bahā'ī movement. This partly as a result of the presence there between 1900 and 1904 of a number of oriental Bahā'īs learned in Biblical interpretation; most notably ^cAbd al-Karīm Tihranī (d. 190/1?), Mirza Assadallāh Isfahānī (d.c.1923?) and Abū al-Fadl Gulpaygānī (see above). As early as June 29th 1900 ^cAbd al-Karīm had stated in an address delivered in Chicago:

"Look at the 33rd chap. of Deut... This means four appearances of God; the first refers to the time when God appeared to Moses—in Mt. Sinai; the second, to Christ in the Name of the Son; the third to Mohammed from Mt. Paran and the fourth in Behā'u'llāh when He, God the Almighty, came with ten thousand of his saints, and of whom the Bab and all the prophets have spoken."

A little later the early American Bahā'ī Arthur Pillsbury Dodge (d. 1915) in several of his writings gives some interesting interpretations of Deut 33:2. In his The Truth of it he understands Deut 33:2 in the same manner as ^cAbd al-Karīm but adds that the "ten thousands of saints" (so AV) 2. "simply refers to those people on this earth who would become actually acquainted with and believers in the TRUTH—not to denizens of some different order or condition, ethereal or otherwise". 3. Commenting on this

1. From Addresses of Abdel Karim Effendi Tehrani..tr.A.Haddad, Chicago 1900), pp.95-6. Note here the representation of Bahā'u'llāh as "God the Almighty" — uncompromisingly asserted by George Ibrahim Kheiralla (d. 1930) in his early writings and frequently set forth in early occidental Bahā'ī literature. Indeed, that Deut 33:2 refers to the successive advent of God himself, was not such a problem for Bahā'īs as for Muslim apologists since the latter have regarded Bahā'u'llāh as the eschatological advent of Divinity.
2. Occidental Bahā'īs seem not to have been informed of the oriental Bahā'ī understanding of "برات القدس" as "from the holy hills" (or the like). They usually comment on the translation contained in the King James version (AV). It is possible, it may be noted here, that the translation "ten thousands of saints" (so AV: which corresponds with the Persian translation, هزاران هزاران or the like), has contributed to the inflated numbers of Bābī-Bahā'īs represented in Bahā'ī literature as having been martyred: the reference to the "ten thousands of saints" / هزاران هزاران مقدس having been regarded as being fulfilled by being identified with the Bābī-Bahā'ī martyrs (cf. D.MacEoin, A Note on the Numbers of Babi and Baha'i Martyrs in Iran).
3. Refer, The Truth of It..(New York, London 1901), p.50. Modern Biblical scholars usually understand "ten thousands of saints" (if this reading be accepted) to refer to the celestial members of God's "heavenly court".

verse in his Whence? Why? Whither?.. he writes,

"...that remarkable prophecy of Moses in the 33rd chapter of Deut.verse 2...has seemed meaningless these many ages for want of an adequate interpretation.Until recently,the remarkable wealth of truth contained therein,has, like an undiscovered gold mine of fabulous value,been ignored by those who have been wholly oblivious or dead to the real truth." 1.

This somewhat naive statement is elaborated at subsequent points in Dodge's abovementioned book.In his chapter on "Symbolic Words of the Bible" he comments as follows on "Saints" :

" "Saints" .True and faithful believers in God and his spiritual Truth,who are in the flesh and on earth.. [Dan 7:18 quoted].. "And He(Baha'u'llah) came with ten thousands of Saints."(Deut. 33:2).It will be remembered that this was the first time known to the world when a Manifestation [i.e. Baha'u'llah] of God came finding tens of thousands of Saints (believers) ready and waiting for Him!.." 2.

Such is an early and interesting example of the occidental Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2.Subsequent occidental Bahā'ī writers have, usually in a less fanciful manner, continued to apply Deut 33:2 to the aforementioned four 'manifestations of God' . So the highly respected and influential Bahā'ī writer George Townshend(1876 - 1957 :before his conversion to the Bahā'ī movement Canon of St.Patrick's Cathedral,Dublin and Archdeacon of Clonfert) in his Christ and Baha'u'llah.³ On the other hand ,the lesser known Bahā'ī writer R.F.Riggs in his The Apocalypse Unsealed writes:

" One interpretation of the prophecy is as follows:Moses and Jesus came from Sinai; Muhammad and the Bab rose up from Seir and shined forth from Paran; the advent of the Bab was attended by 10,000 martyrs to His Cause.(cf.Jude 14).Baha'u'llah is He from Whose right hand went forth a fiery law in the letters which he addressed to the crowned heads of the earth." 4.

1. Dodge, Whence?Why?Whither? Man, Things, Other Things, (Westwood Mass. 1907), p.26.
2. Dodge, ibid, p.98. See also pp.217-8,232.
3. Refer, Christ and Baha'u'llah (London 1957), p.32.
4. Riggs, The Apocalypse Unsealed (New York 1981), p.57. Here, doubtless based on original Bahā'ī sources, we have an explicit identification of the "ten thousands of saints" (so AV : evidently understood as 10,000) with the (supposed number) of Bābī martyrs.cf. below, p.18 fn.

Various passages in the writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi -- which are authoritative for Bahā'īs-- in general terms confirm the (Islāmic-) Bahā'ī application of Deut 33:2 to the missions of Moses, Jesus, Muhammad and Bahā'u'llāh. In a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā (early 19th cent.) which deals with various questions(posed by an American Bahā'ī) including that of the Trinity the following statement is made:

" As to the question of the Trinity, know, O advancer unto God, that in each of the cycles[religious dispensations] when the lights [of prophethood] have shone forth upon the holy ones and the Forgiving Lord hath revealed Himself on Mount Paran or Mount Sinai or Mount Seir there are necessarily three things : The Giver of the Grace[God], and the Grace [the Holy Spirit] and the Recipient of the Grace [the Messenger of God]." 1.

This partially quoted explanation of the question of the Trinity which argues that divine revelation has three aspects although not a consubstantial Trinity of three persons obviously alludes to Deut 33:2. Allusion is made in connection with Mt. Sinai, Mt. Seir and Mt. Paran to the prophetic missions of Moses, Jesus and Muhammad. The Islāmic-Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 is presupposed.

Evidently in response to a question about the problem of locating [Mt.] Seir in Galilee in connection with Deut 33:2 'Abdu'l-Bahā has, in another letter, repeated the originally Islāmic transference of the location of this region: " Thou didst write as to Seir. Seir is a locality near Nazareth in Galilee." 2.

Shoghi Effendi has, in a letter dated Dec.26th 1941, confirmed the Islāmic-Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 and certain other Old Testament texts (all quoted in connection with the mission of the Prophet Muhammad by Muslim writers) that make mention of Mt. Paran: " References in the Bible to "Mt. Paran".. refer to Muhammad's Revelation [i.e.] Deut 33:2, Gen 21:21, Num 12:16, Num 13:3 .." 3. In his Lah-i Qarn after enumerating a large number of titles of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā (some of them taken from Biblical texts) he glorifies the ' first Bahā'ī century' (understood as 1844-1944) and at one point writes:

1. From a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā quoted and (badly) translated in, Tablets of Abdul-Baha Abbas² Vol.I (Bahā'ī Publishing Committee, New York 1930), p.117.
2. From a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā quoted in Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Baha'ī World Centre, Haifa, 1978), p.207.
3. From a letter of Shoghi Effendi published in Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand: 1923-1957 (Sydney 1971), p.47.

"Blessed be this most marvellous, wonderful century in which God hath come ["] in the shadows the the clouds["] (cf. Qur'an 2:110), the Spirit [al-Ruh= Jesus] hath risen up, the Ancient Beauty [= Bahā'u'llāh] hath emerged from behind the myriad veils of light.. and the Lord hath come with ten thousands of saints (و اتى الرب من ربان القدس = Deut 33:2b). "1.

That Shoghi Effendi in the latter part of this passage understands the coming of God as the advent of Bahā'u'llāh with 10,000's or myriads of saints and probably not as Ishrāq Khavārī argues in his Rahīq-i Makhtūm (see above)" from the holy hills" (i.e. the Mt. Carmel area) may be gathered from the following passage from his God Passes By (the longer English companion volume to the Persian Lah-i Qarn also written around 1944.);

"To Israel He [Bahā'u'llāh] was neither more nor less than the incarnation of the Everlasting Father [see Isaiah 9:6] the "Lord of Hosts" come down with ten thousands of saints."2.

Such in outline are the Bahā'ī interpretations of Deut 33:2. They are, for the most part, given the milieu in which Bahā'ī apologetic originated, of considerable interest and ingenuity. From the 'modern scholarly' point of view however, it is difficult if not impossible to maintain that Deut 33:2 was originally intended as a prophecy, that Mt. Seir is located in Galilee, Mt. Paran in or around Mecca and that " دبران القدس " for صِرْبَة كَرِيم signifies "holy hills" (or the like). Taken however, as a "spiritual interpretation" of Deut 33:2 independent of a strictly scholarly methodology, the Bahā'ī interpretation of Deut 33:2 is an excellent example of the way in which Bahā'ī apologists drew upon and creatively developed the Muslim interpretation of Biblical texts.

1. Shoghi Effendi, Lah-i Qarn (Bombay .nd.), p. 4.

2. Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (Wilmette 1979), p. 94.

Additional Note: Paran and Mt. Paran in Bahā'ī-Bahā'ī scripture.

Though as noted Bahā'u'llāh does not, as far as I am aware, quote Deut 33:2 there are a not inconsiderable number of references in his writings to Mt. Paran as well as to Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai---often in his more mystical writings (especially those of the Baghdad period 1853-1863) which draw on imagery associated in the Qur'an and Muslim mystical tradition, with the epiphany of God on Mt. Sinai. In this respect Bahā'u'llāh is partly indebted to the Bāb who made considerable use of Sinai imagery and occasionally mentioned Mt. Paran and Mt. Horeb. In his Tafsīr Sūrat al-Kawthar for example (Browne Coll. MSS. Or. F.7(10), fol. 30b) the Bāb, in the course of commenting on one of the letter alifs contained in Sūra 108 writes:

"Then it [the letter alif] signifies the hidden, the treasured, the greatest, the pure, the purifying, the blessed Name of God [alif=the first letter of ism= name] unto and through which God shone forth with the lights of the tripartite name. And he made its first station in al-Bahā (the splendour), its second station in al-thana' (the praise), and its third station in Sinai (al-Sīnā') and the station of His self (nafs) in al-qadā' (the decree) and al-badā' (the origination). He it is who manifested its (or his) light upon Mt. Paran (jabal faran) in (or with) the sanctified myriads (bi-ribwat al-mugaddas) and upon Mt. Horeb in (or with) the hosts of the angels of the throne and of the heavens and the earth and upon the cupola of time (qubbat al-zamān) in (or with) the former and latter announcement (, ? or prophets?: reading nuba'ā'?) and upon the Mount (al-Thūr = Sinai) in the Blessed Tree (=the burning bush) [through the utterance]; "O Moses, God verily, is my Lord and your Lord, no God is there except him, the Lord of the worlds."

This passage is, in part, obviously rooted in, though not directly dependent upon Deut 33:2 (the Bāb shows no direct familiarity with the Old Testament) and may also be in part inspired by the "Prayer of the Signs" attributed to Imām 'Alī.¹ Sinai imagery appears to be related to the disclosure of the light of the greatest name of God in pre-existent and heavenly realms. This kind of imagery was drawn on by Bahā'u'llāh who (like the Bāb) identified himself with the divine being who uttered the Siniatic declaration of Divinity. He also associated the Siniatic disclosure of God's name (cf. Exodus 3:13f) with the greatest name understood as al-bahā' and symbolizing his own name and being and related these ideas to the notion of a pre-eternal covenant. Thus in the following Persian "Hidden Word" (from the Kalimat-i Maknūna, Per. No. 71 composed Baghdad c.1857), which may even have been inspired by the above passage from the Bāb's writings, we read:

1. See below, p. 35 fn. 3.

2. See the tablet of Bahā'u'llāh on the mission of Moses in Ishrāq Khavārī (ed), Mā'ida-vi Āsmānī, Vol. 4, pp. 38-41.

" O My Friends!

Call ye to mind that covenant (ahd) ye have entered into with Me upon Mount Paran, situate within the hallowed precincts of Zaman (= time). I have taken to witness the concourse on high and the dwellers of the city of eternity, yet none do I find faithful to the covenant. Of a certainty pride and rebellion have effaced it from the hearts, in such wise that no trace thereof remaineth. Yet knowing this, I waited and disclosed it not."¹

Here Mount Paran is the scene of a pre-eternal covenant understood as having been made with 'pre-existent' human souls and with exalted divine beings as witnesses. This covenant may concern the messianic advent of Bahā'u'llāh himself as the eschatological manifestation of the greatest name (ism-i 'azm) which he had not yet disclosed; He had not made his messianic claims known in the late 1850's when this "hidden word" was composed, and consciousness of the need to be faithful to this covenant or identify with him was, in any case, forgotten by 'heedless mankind'.² Among 'Abdu'l-Bahā's comments on this "hidden word" stands the following interesting passage in which the covenant made on Mt. Paran is associated with a timeless (cf. qubbat al-zaman in the Bāb's Tafsīr surat al-Kawthar cited above and the expression "the hallowed precincts of Zaman") covenant made with men about a future messianic disclosure and likened to the covenant made by Moses upon Sinai :

"As for the reference in The Hidden Words regarding the Covenant entered into on Mount Paran, this signifieth that in the sight of God the past, the present and the future are all one and the same—whereas relative to man, the past is gone and forgotten, the present is fleeting, and the future is within the realm of hope. And it is a basic principle of the Law of God that in every Pre-phetic Mission, He entereth into a Covenant with all believers—a Covenant that endureth until the end of that Mission, until the Promised Day when the Personage stipulated at the outset of the Mission is made manifest. Consider Moses, He who conversed with God, Verily, upon Mount Sinai, Moses entered into a Covenant regarding the Messiah [Jesus], with all those souls who would live in the days of the Messiah. And those souls, although they appeared many centuries

1. I quote here Shoghi Effendi's translation, The Hidden Words (London 1949), p. 48 in which the word zaman (= time, or here the timeless realm) is capitalized indicating a "mystic locale" or "transcendent realm".
2. This "hidden word", like other passages in the writings of the Baghdad period of his ministry (1853-1863) could be understood as providing evidence that Bahā'u'llāh already entertained messianic or epiphanic claims which he did not wish to disclose.

after Moses, were nevertheless—so far as the Covenant, which is outside time, was concerned—present there with Moses. The Jews, however, were heedless of this and remembered it not, and they suffered a great and clear loss."¹

Elsewhere 'Abdu'l-Bahā, who often gave multiple explanations to passages in Bahā'ī and other sacred writings, has stated that the covenant made on Mount Paran signifies the covenant which Bahā'u'llāh made regarding his successor (cf. his "Book of the Covenant", Kitāb-i Ahd written late 'Akkā period) i.e. his appointment of 'Abdu'l-Bahā;

"This covenant [ahd : mentioned in "hidden word" Per. No. 71] and testament is that which the Blessed Beauty [Bahā'u'llāh] made in the Holy Land with the Supreme Pen in the shade of the Tree of Life and which became known after his ascension [his passing in 1892]."²

In his Lah-i Hurūfāt al-Muqatta'a (written late Baghdad period) Bahā'u'llāh, again refers to Mt. Paran. Having outlined some aspects of the mission of Moses and his encounter with God he writes:

"And this is what was ordained for Moses the son of 'Imrān in the cupola of time (qubbat al-zaman) if you are of those who are informed. And thus beareth witness the Paran of love (Paran al-hubb) with the Paran of Fire (Paran al-nar) in the Horeb of Holiness and the Sinai of Nearness if you scan the pages of justice with the eye of God."³

Paran is similarly associated with Moses and "love" in Bahā'u'llāh's Kitāb-i Īqān

"And when his [Abraham's] day was ended, there came the turn of Moses. Armed with the rod of celestial dominion, adorned with the white hand of divine knowledge, and proceeding from the Paran of the Love of God, and wielding the serpent of power and everlasting majesty, He shone forth from the Sinai of light upon the world."⁴

1. From a letter or tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahā cited in Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Haifa 1978), p. 207
2. From a letter or tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahā, text in Ishraq Khavari (ed), Mā'ida-yi Āsmānī, Vol. 2, p. 56.
3. Text in Ishraq Khavari (ed), Mā'ida-yi Āsmānī, Vol. 4, p. 54.
4. Bahā'u'llāh, Kitāb-i Īqān (tr) Shoghi Effendi, (London 1961), p. 8.

Such are a few of the references to Parān in Bābī-Bahā'ī literature.

which, since they often occur in somewhat abstruse and mystical contexts, cannot be fully discussed here. Parān, it may finally be noted, was used by Bahā'u'llāh as a term signifying Tūm in Khurasān.¹ He wrote letters to the Bahā'īs there addressing them as the "people of Fārān" (or Parān). This perhaps, in the light of the presence in that city of active and prominent Bābīs and Bahā'īs, - from the earliest days of the rise of the Bābī-Bahā'ī movement.²

Stephen Lambden

1. See Fāḍil-i Mazandarānī, Asrār al-Athar Vol. 4, p. 430.

2. For further details see, Hasan Fu'ādī Bughrū'ī, Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Khurāsān (MSS), p. 333ff; tablet of Bahā'u'llāh cited in Ishraq Khavari (ed), Mā'ida-yi-Āsmānī, Vol. 9, p. 133.

It was in the middle of the Nineteenth Century that the Islamic world began to react to the realisation of the extent to which it had fallen behind Christian Europe in the fields of science, industry, trade and armaments. This reaction took two inter-related forms: firstly, the attempts by statesmen such as ^CAlī Pāshā, Fu'ād Pasha and Midhat Pāshā in Turkey and Mushīru'd Dawla in Iran to introduce a certain degree of reform, and secondly, the attempts by writers such as Namik Kemal, Sayyid Jamālu'd-Dīn Afghānī, Mīrzā Malkam Khān and Mīrzā Fath-^CAlī Akhūndzāda to formulate a way in which the Islamic world could come to terms with the dominance of Europe.

The decades of the 1860s and 1870s was a particularly fecund period in both of these fields. In Turkey, there were the Tanzimat ordinances and Midhat Pāshā's reforms during this period and the publication of Namik Kemal's Vatan yahut Silistre (Fatherland or Silistria) in 1873. In Iran, after Mīrzā Taqī Khān's attempt to modernize Iran in 1848-51, there were the reforms of Mushīru'd-Dawla in 1871-1873 while Mīrzā Malkam Khān's Kitābcha-yi Ghaybī (written in about 1860) was the first of many such treatises by this and other writers aimed at advising the Shah on modernizing Iran. In Egypt, in the 1870s, Sayyid Jamālu'd-Dīn Afghānī had gathered around him a group of disciples that included eminent future reformers such as Muhammad Ābdūh and Sa^Cd Zaghlūl and this group were already producing influential newspapers such as Misr and at-Tijāra. There were also Khayru'd-Dīn Pāshā's reforms in Tunisia.

The theoreticians varied greatly in their approach to the problem of reforming the Muslim world. Some such as Akhūndzāda (1812-1878) advocated the wholesale overthrow of Islam because it was a bar to progress. But Akhūndzāda was writing from the comparative safety of the Russian city of Tiflis where such views could be openly expressed without incurring serious danger. Others

More problems... Scientific method or a total hermeneutics? 1

Steven Scholl

The 'problem of method' continues to be a favorite concern of the academic world. Thus it is no surprise that it has also played a prominent role in discussions of those involved in Babi and Baha'i studies, as reflected in the Cambridge seminars on ethics and methodology held in the late 1970's, the widely circulated statement of the Research Department of the Universal House of Justice on scholarship and method, and, now, the several articles and rejoinders that have appeared in the Baha'i Studies Bulletin. Denis MacEoin has ably pointed out many of the hurdles that face a Baha'i who wishes to pursue scholarly research of his or her faith, and I, for one, find his insights extremely useful and refreshing, if somewhat exaggerated and, therefore, at times wide of the mark. With this paper, I wish to directly address but one of the issues MacEoin has raised, viz., the efficacy of an historical method which calls for a self-purging of one's subjective biases when studying religion, while taking only a side-glance at the more volatile topic of whether or not the Baha'i religion with its present-day administrative policies places an insurmountable barrier before the believing scholar. It is particularly the hermeneutical task of interpreting religious texts that I wish to concentrate

on and the tensions that exist between historians and phenomenologists in contemporary religious studies. In doing so, I hope to highlight some of the limits of MacEoin's proposed methodology for study of Babism and Baha'ism. I will also argue that in our academic work on Babism and Baha'ism we must not lose sight of their fundamental mode of being as religious phenomenon.

To refresh our memories, MacEoin, following Popper, holds that there is an "objective or absolute truth" which, however, is an unattainable goal; nevertheless our advancing scientific theories help us to formulate "approximations rather than final statements about the truth" (BSB, 1, no. 4, p. 70). And further, the scholar "must proceed by methods that are rational, critical, open to criticism, universal and as free from subjective bias as it is possible to render them" (ibid., my emphasis). Because we have all been nurtured in the modern world with its devotion to science and technology, MacEoin's statement may seem nothing more than common sense, whereas to think in other terms one must either be a hopeless romantic, or possibly an adherent to a modern sect-type religion. Furthermore, I suspect that many Baha'is with academic backgrounds will find MacEoin's statements on method generally acceptable and attempt to adopt a similar approach in their research. In what follows, I would like to direct our attention to the related problems of (1) the efficacy of a science-inspired method in the human studies, that (2) strives for the subjugation of subjective biases or prejudices, in order to (3) attain closer approximations of objective or absolute truth.

In the study of religion today there exists an inevitable tension between historians who approach their field of specialization with the scientific method extolled by MacEoin and phenomenologists who strive for a 'total hermeneutics'. Robert Parry has briefly described the phenomenological method stemming from the work of Edmund Husserl and how the phenomenological reduction (epoché), or methodological agnosticism, is inadequate for a believer to utilize when studying his or her faith (R. Parry, "Phenomenology, Methodological Agnosticism and Apologetics",

Report of the Baha'i Studies Seminar, Cambridge 1979, Appendix 1). Parry notes that there are several trends in phenomenology moving away from Husserl, and the phenomenology of religion that strives for a total hermeneutics of homo religiosus is probably the farthest away from its venerable founder. This form of phenomenology does not accept that methodological agnosticism in any of its manifestations is useful for penetrating into the essence of the symbols and myths of scripture and worship. I would suggest that it is not the reduction which is central to phenomenology, but rather the more general exhortation of 'return to the things themselves' that all phenomenologists adopt in their investigations.² For phenomenology of religion, then, 'religious facts' are not revealed in their essential nature by a historical method, which can only see them as 'merely subjective' or as 'irrefutable metaphysical God-talk'. In stark contrast to the objective study attempted by historical method, phenomenology of religion recognizes that to study religious facts--i.e. the sacred and absolute values of homo religiosus as conveyed via symbols, myths and rituals--is to open up to these facts in such fashion that a transformation occurs within the researcher. Expressions of the sacred are thus grasped by the phenomenologist as essential structures of human being-in-the-world which require a special hermeneutics. These religious facts are not simply of historical interest, revealing something of a primitive ~~or~~ superseded past, "but", remarks Mircea Eliade, "they disclose fundamental existential situations that are directly relevant to modern man" (The Quest, preface). Phenomenological study naturally leads to an inner transformation of the researcher and, hopefully, of his or her reader as well. Eliade continues by observing that "What is called the phenomenology and history of religions can be considered among the very few humanistic disciplines that are at the same time propaedeutic and spiritual techniques" (ibid.).

Similarly, W. Brede Kristensen has pointed out how in our investigations of the essence of religious facts we must make use of our own religious experience if we are to understand another's. To study religion requires more than purely logical

and rational methods since to penetrate into an alien religious worldview we must rely on intuitions and anticipations derived from our own experience. Phenomenological study, notes Kristensen, "does not take place outside our personality. And the reverse will also prove to be the case: the study exerts an influence on our personality. This gives a personal character and value to the research...An appeal is made to our feeling for the subjects which we want to understand, a feeling which gives...a sureness to our touch...There is simply no doubt that we grow during our scientific work; when religion is the subject of our work, we grow religiously" (The Phenomenology of Religion, ed. Joseph Dabney Bettis, pp 45-46).

One of the most persuasive rebuttals of an historical method based on the natural sciences comes from Hans-Georg Gadamer. Gadamer's work is hermeneutic phenomenology firmly rooted in the philosophical adventure initiated by Husserl and Martin Heidegger. In Truth and Method, he develops at length his views on the shortcomings of modern historical studies and the need for a less scientific approach, yet one that is grounded in rigorous thinking whose goal is understanding of truths. Thus he shifts our focus away from techniques and methods of interpretation which assume that interpretation is a scientific process aimed at exhaustive analysis of texts as objects/artifacts towards the clarification of interpretation as a dialogical event that in its very nature is episodic and non-objective. Episodic because every 'act' of interpretation is a moment embedded in a tradition of which neither the text nor the interpreter has a complete view. Non-objective because it is not satisfied with making explicit what is merely already in the text, but seeks to recapture the perspective within which the text emerged and then to have a dialogue with it so that there is a fusion of horizons or perspectives. Method is simply incapable of revealing all the possible implications of a text; it only renders explicit the kind of understanding already implicit in the method. That is to say, the tendency of method is to prestructure the individual's way of seeing and leads to a situation where the inquirer controls and manipulates the

the text. (Here, we might well consider a basic principle from the 'new physics': the scale creates the phenomenon.) In contrast, the dialogical situation of hermeneutics strives to create a situation in which the interpreter both questions and is questioned by the text. One attempts to see the text under study as 'spoken language' and to develop a discussion with it.

What is involved here is the refusal to see the past as 'finished' or 'surpassed' by our advancing theories and the insistence that historical understanding is not found in the process of subjectivity purged of all biases (in other words, purged of our own historicity). Rather, understanding is found in opening ourselves and our biases to the truth claims of the text. This makes the task of determining what "the text actually states", to use MacEoin's phrase, superseded by the goals of a total hermeneutics.

This is not to say that the efforts by science-dominated scholars in the Geisteswissenschaften are without positive issue. Sociologists, historians, anthropologists and psychologists who strive to purge themselves from their studies in order to obtain 'objective' results no doubt contribute to the development of their respective disciplines as well as providing the essential information-base on which hermeneutical activity must rest. In studying religion, we cannot deny that every religious fact is always a historical, social and psychological phenomenon and is thereby existentially conditioned by the web of interacting forces within which it is situated. This multiple conditioning by empirically demonstrable facts, does not mean, however, that once these facts are set before us we have satisfactorily explained the religious phenomenon be it sacred text or the beliefs and behaviour of believers. We cannot fully explain, e.g., the Bab's or Baha'u'llah's writings by elucidating the Islamic background relevant to the text in question, by analysis of the author's class-background and life-history, by bringing out the circumstances surrounding the creation of the text (who received it and what questions were being addressed), important though all such endeavors are. Beyond this, there must be a more sophisticated application of hermeneutical insight which attempts to understand the truth claims of the given text as mediated through

tradition towards us and our prejudices.

MacEoin stresses the need for setting the goal of adoption of a method which is, among other criteria, as "free from subjective bias as possible". This prevalent attitude in the human studies appears to be a most influential heritage of the Cartesian and Enlightenment ideal of the autonomous subject who strives to renounce all prejudices which inhibit understanding. Such methodological alienation is criticised by Gadamer for not recognizing the essential and positive role of prejudices in all understanding. He recalls how 'prejudice' prior to the Enlightenment is not merely a negative factor, but is also based on a positive value judgement which then has "an adverse effect" or "disadvantage" towards its recipient in law. With the Enlightenment and its critique of religion and authority, prejudice comes to mean almost exclusively "unfounded judgement" (see, Truth and Method, pp. 240ff). In contrast to the slavish effort to renounce one's biases, Gadamer upholds that we must recognize that "the historicity of our existence entails that prejudices, in the literal sense of the word, constitute the initial directedness of our whole ability to experience. Prejudices are the biases of our openness to the world" (Philosophical Hermeneutics, p. 9).

The hermeneutical task, then, is to place our prejudices in the open before the truth claim of a text. Heidegger points to this in Being and Time when he argues that the hermeneutic circle of interpretation consists in "working out" our fore-conceptions "in terms of the things themselves" (p. 153). In interpretation it is necessary to keep the text ever before one's gaze. This is not as simple as it may sound, for we are constantly 'distracted' in interpretation by our personal views which we impose on the text. Consequently, a person trying to understand a text is simply unable to subjugate his or her biases. To interpret is to project a meaning for the whole text as soon as some initial meanings emerge. And these initial meanings only emerge because one "is reading the text with particular expectations in regard to a certain meaning. The working out of this fore-project, which is constantly revised in terms of what

emerges as he penetrates into the meaning, is understanding what is there" (Truth and Method, p. 236). The type of historical inquiry which exalts the researcher's ability to bracket his or her personal horizon by an effective historical method may also be regarded in terms of spoken language and dialogue. But in this case the dialogue is more akin to a doctor ~~asking of~~ her patient's health or my attempt to simply acquaint myself with the views of a political candidate introduced to me at a local town meeting. Certainly information is being passed and received, but no depth understanding comes of such talk.

An important revelation of Gadamer's studies on the 'event of interpretation' is that it is impossible to recover the mens auctoris, the author's actual intentional meaning. Unfortunately, this is often what historians seek when they place themselves before a religious text. In his study of Babism and Baha'ism, MacEoin seems to be particularly concerned with uncovering what the Bab or Baha'u'llah 'really taught' in contrast to the subsequent distortions advanced by Baha'is. I have no doubts that there has been more than a little bit of willful tampering and distortion on the part of 'pious' Baha'is in their attempt to make the past conform to their present beliefs. Indeed, the Universal House of Justice's recent insistence on purging the translation of the memoirs of Ustad Muhammad ^CAli-yi Salmani of a number of passages shows us that the goal of making Babi and Baha'i history fit neatly with orthodoxy is very much alive today. And in matters such as this it is extremely valuable for historians, be they Baha'i or not, to bring such acts into the light and to set the record straight. However, I believe MacEoin has overstepped the mark when he tries to demonstrate that the Baha'i faith is essentially authoritarian, or that Baha'u'llah did not, in fact, teach sexual equality, etc. by marching out a highly selective number of quotations. Here, he seems to hold the belief that the interpretation which recovers and reveals the author's true meaning is the correct one whereas all others are necessarily incorrect. This way of looking at texts is like regarding interpretation as being similar to working out a math problem

which has but one answer. From this perspective, the author's original intention, in our case, say, Baha'u'llah's, constitutes a solid fact, a meaning-in-itself, which all unbiased and detached persons will be able to reproduce. If one adopts this stance, then, yes, they might be led to say, e.g., that ^CAbdu'l-Baha either misunderstood the Kitab al-Aqdas or was simply a genial but manipulative religious salesman playing the Western market when he advocated a much more feminist platform for Baha'ism and ~~espoused~~ espoused more liberal measures for the treatment of criminals, to name but two obvious points of difference.

I would argue that a more realistic view is to see things more fluidly than either MacEoin or the defenders of Baha'i orthodoxy, who both seem keen to establish a correct version of Babism and Baha'ism. The point to be emphasized here is that reflection on the hermeneutical event shows us that a definitive or canonical interpretation of a text is an illusory goal. Every text, and particularly scripture, always goes beyond the author's explicit and implicit intentions. Every age, according to Gadamer, must understand a transmitted text in its own way,

for the text is part of the whole tradition in which the age takes an...interest and in which it seeks to understand itself. The real meaning of a text, as it speaks to the interpreter, does not depend on the contingencies of the author and whom he originally wrote for. It certainly is not identical with them, for it is always partly determined also by the historical situation of the interpreter and hence the by the totality of the objective course of history...Not occasionally only, but always, the meaning of a text goes beyond its author. That is why understanding is not merely a reproductive, but always a productive attitude as well....It is enough to say the we understand in a different way, if we understand at all (Truth and Method, pp263-264).

It is not only that there is divergence on 'significance' of what an established text says, but rather that when persons bring themselves before a text they actually see it differently.

The hermeneutically trained mind does not focus its gaze on the ephemeral mens auctoris, but looks instead with the author at what is being communicated. Here there is true

dialogue as the interpreter opens up to the text and lets it assert its own viewpoint. This is seen as the most effective means of revealing one's own fore-concepts or biases and thereby taking them into consideration when seeking to understand a text. Hence there is recognition that the fore-concepts and prejudices in the mind of the interpreter are not merely standing still and susceptible to subjugation by an act of will. We are not able to know in advance which of our prejudices are productive ones that make understanding possible from those that hinder and lead to misunderstanding. This is an essential dimension of the 'working out of fore-concepts in terms of the things themselves' spoken of above. It is the encounter with the fundamental concern of the text that lays bare what the text is capable of revealing. Hermeneutics is therefore a way of bringing the text into the present, renewing it, and preserving it from the death which modern historians usually condemn it.

The general thrust of Gadamer's observations may lead one to think that this way of interpreting is arbitrary and thus only a lapse into relativism, or worse, plain distortion of the text. We should note, however, that in true hermeneutical work meanings cannot be understood in an arbitrary way. We cannot hold blindly to our fore-concepts if we are truly attempting to understand the meaning of another, in the same way that we cannot continually misunderstand the use of a word in a text without distorting the meaning of the whole. To reiterate, what is called for is our openness to the fundamental concern conveyed through the text, an openness which always includes situating the other's meaning in relation with the whole of our meanings. We have stressed throughout this paper that the hermeneutically trained scholar is prepared for the text to address him or her personally; they are sensitive to the texts quality of newness. This sensitivity, asserts Gadamer, "involves neither 'neutrality' in the matter of the object nor the extinction of one's self, but the conscious assimilation of one's own fore-meanings and prejudices. The important thing is to be aware of one's bias, so that the text may... be able to assert its own truth against one's own fore-meanings" (Truth and Method, p. 238).

At this point, I feel the urge to anticipate the charge that I have introduced Aunt Sally to the discussion by painting a false picture of historical method. Indeed, I may have been somewhat unfair in the above by not pointing out that part of the inevitable tension between historians and phenomenologists arises because each camp is looking for different things when examining historical documents. Historians do the crucial task of deciphering historical documents just as much for what they 'betray' as for what they explicitly state. Historical method is an effective way to understand the changes and modifications that occur in human groups and it gives us insight of the 'stamp of identity' which any segment of social history bears. Also, the phenomenologically oriented scholar must certainly admit that there are countless tasks of historical scholarship that have no relation to our present and to the depths of its historical consciousness. These countless tasks relate to what MacEoin, following Cantwell Smith, describes as the empirical facts of religion in contrast to faith related matters (op. cit., p. 71). Yet, I wonder if the dichotomy of empirical facts of religion open to scrutiny vis-a-vis faith related matters relegated to the sloppy domain of the "open question" is an adequate model. Phenomenology shows us that we are indeed able to examine how persons experience the world without reducing the objective data of consciousness to sense perception or, as Popper does, limit the field of meaningful human knowledge to that of rational understanding. Phenomenology seeks to register and utilize the intentionality of all acts of consciousness and supraconsciousness. The studies of Henry Corbin, for example, show how imagination, love, sympathy or any other sentiment induces knowledge of objects appropriate to the sentiment. Obviously these objects are not as manageable as your run of the mill empirical facts. However, homo religiosus consists of the total person and we cannot simply write off the invisible, sacred dimensions of human being as being beyond critical study. Phenomenology insists that scripture must not just be deciphered; it must also be approached as a cipher, revealing absolute values and truths of the human spirit in its sacred dimension.

The noncumulative truths so richly documented in religious literature are the ones that touch us as individuals in our deepest experiences of self. They are not susceptible to more definitive explanation by "our advancing scientific theories". They may, however, be experienced more deeply. As absolute values of the human spirit they are inexhaustable and will be taken up anew by each soul. The religious scholar must remain sensitive to the fact that scripture's mode of being keeps it open to the future via application in each new situation. (Here, it would be well to recall Parry's emphasis on religion as performance as it bears on the study of religious texts.) Scripture does not exist primarily for the sake of historians who do not feel addressed by the text, since it is merely another artifact of history to be manipulated for what it may reveal. No, scripture is first and foremost a call to the conscience of the individual with a goal to exercise its soteriological function. And this means that in our academic efforts to reach a comprehensive understanding of Babi and Baha'i scripture there must be greater use of phenomenological insight than has to date been observed.

Creative hermeneutics leads naturally to the explanation of the sacred text towards its farthest limits: to the unveiling of new meanings and cultural values which spring forth from the text as latent expressions of the "center" which every religion has. In this regard, I believe that MacEoin has failed to adequately correlate his personal views to the "center" of Baha'ism, which is undoubtedly belief in the oneness of God and

humanity and not a rigid scriptural authoritarianism which his highly selective quotations would seem to indicate. For example, in his response to Momen, MacEoin quotes Baha'u'llah on conforming one's words to the most literal sense of the Word of God. Why does this particular passage carry greater weight than the much more numerous references by Baha'u'llah to the need for the individual to penetrate both the outer (zāhir) and inner (bātin) dimensions of the Word of God and to live according to the insights found in this illuminative process?

Similarly, his quotations from 'Abdu'l-Baha on the need for Bahais to turn to the Center of the Covenant rather than voicing personal interpretations is a moot point since the Baha'i faith no longer has an "authoritative interpreter" to turn to. I would think that the well known encouragement of 'Abdu'l-Baha that in Baha'i discussions the spark of truth is best seen through the clash of differing opinions is a more faithful to the essence of Baha'i belief and practice.

These reflections have run a course some distance away from their source: MacEoin's observations on problems of scholarship in a Baha'i context. They were triggered by MacEoin's insistence on the supreme efficacy of the methodology he has adopted for deciphering the true nature of Babism and Baha'ism and I have attempted to point out some of the limits of this method. At times MacEoin actually sounds more orthodox than the orthodox Baha'is he condemns. Or should I say that both sides seem to have a strange fixation on holding fast to the book in ways that are ultimately unsatisfactory. On the one hand, we have MacEoin trying to reach back to what the Bab or Baha'u'llah 'really taught'-as opposed to later Baha'i rearrangements and distortions of doctrine and history. On the other, we have fundamentalist Baha'is clinging to the 'authoritative' interpretations of Shoghi Effendi as the final word as to what true Shaykhism or Babism was and what Baha'ism is and will be. Both approaches, it seems to me, fail to take us too far in grasping the complex phenomena of the Babi and Baha'i religions.

I therefore trust that it is obvious that the distinctions I have drawn between a science based historical method and hermeneutic phenomenology is something different from the dichotomy of scholarship produced by Baha'is vs. their nonbelieving colleagues. I am sure that many Baha'is in high administrative places will feel uncomfortable with the insights that are bound to emerge as believing and nonbelieving scholars apply the phenomenological touch to Babi and Baha'i scripture, since these interpretations will, no doubt, differ from those of Shoghi Effendi and the vision of the Baha'i faith which the Universal House of Justice seems determined to maintain. As I have emphasized above, to understand is to understand differently.

Finally, I do not wish to make the gulf between historians and phenomenologists sound unbridgable. I share the hope of Raffaele Pettazzoni that the two disciplines will compliment each other and broaden their respective horizons (see "The Supreme Being: Phenomenological Structure and Historical Development", in History of Religion, ed. Eliade and Kitagawa, p. 66). Hopefully, in the not too distant future we will see a greater diversity of approaches being utilized in Babi and Baha'i studies by all interested parties, complimenting and enriching our understanding of this significant expression of the human spirit.

¹This is a revised version of a presentation at the Bābī-Bahā'ī Studies Seminar, Newcastle-upon-Tyne, 10-11 September 1983. Hence the spoken style. The few comments added in the following footnotes were sparked by the discussion of the paper by the seminar participants--D. MacEoin, S. Lambden, M. Momen and P. Smith--and with R. Parry.

²This sentence now appears troublesome to me, and here I would like to argue from both sides of the fence: for and against the reduction. When I wrote this section, I had in mind the great diversity found among phenomenologists. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, e.g., notes that phenomenology can be regarded as a style of thinking and not just a method developed by Husserl. Also, the case of Heidegger is instructive, since he abandoned the epoché in his own hermeneutic phenomenology. Heidegger's position stems from the nature of the phenomenon he studied, Being. Since the reduction consists of suspending, at least temporarily, the question of whether the phenomenon has being, Heidegger queried, how can such a method help in explaining the nature of Being? Thus my point that to be phenomenologically oriented, generally speaking, one need not utilize the reduction. On the other hand, it is questionable to equate the phenomenological reduction to methodological agnosticism as the latter term is usually understood, and Parry rightly notes the "misleading" use of "agnosticism" in terms of the phenomenological reduction (see Parry, "Phenomenology, Methodological Agnosticism and Apologetics", p 16). Still, I wonder whether the epoché--as distinct from methodological agnosticism--is, in fact, inadequate as a method for a Baha'i to adopt (see Parry's conclusion to this end, *ibid.*, pp 17-19). As I understand the epoché, it is not an end but an initial approach to the religious phenomenon. Spiegelberg, e.g., speaks of five stages in phenomenology: 1) an intuitive grasp of a phenomenon through the epoché, i.e. pure description; 2) the determination of its essence, its essential characteristics and relations (essential phenomenology); 3) the study of its ways of appearance in consciousness (phenomenology of appearances); 4) the study of the constitution of the phenomenon in consciousness (constitutive

phenomenology); and 5) the hermeneutic interpretation of its meaning (hermeneutic phenomenology) (Herbert Spiegelberg, "Movements in Philosophy: Phenomenology and its Parallels" Philosophy and Phenomenological Research 44 (1983), pp 284-85). Henry Corbin, e.g., is probably the last person one would accuse of adopting methodological agnosticism in his studies of Shi'ism, Sufism and Western mystics. Yet Corbin, as a phenomenologist, strove for the "intuitive perception of essences (wesensschau)". As he himself observes, "the term [wesensschau] belongs to the vocabulary of... strict observation phenomenology of Husserl rather than the existential phenomenology of Heidegger" (Henry Corbin, "The Question of Comparative Philosophy" Spring (1980), p 2). Now, Corbin surely broke out into a non-Husserlian way of phenomenology, but he found the epoché a useful tool for reaching-back-to the religious facts, and I see no compelling reason why a Baha'i should be apprehensive concerning use of the reduction. I shall explore this path further in a forthcoming study, "Symbol and Metahistory in the Writings of Baha'u'llah".

Here, it is important to emphasize another distinction between cumulative and noncumulative truths. A problem often found in this area is the conflating of the terms 'objective' and 'absolute' when discussing 'truth'. By this persons usually mean that in the world there are objects which cannot be known in every aspect of their being, yet they exist and therefore they must be accepted as having a real or objective or absolute nature which we attempt to describe scientifically. An obviously praiseworthy goal for science. But if religion is the object of study, the phenomena under scrutiny can be of a completely different order than empirical facts. Such religious phenomena exist in a vertical dimension which leads us beyond thinking dominated by recourse to sense data. Thus I prefer to speak of the absolute truths of the vertical, trans-rational dimension of human experience and of objective truth when dealing with empirical facts. To take the obvious example, God, then, is not an objective truth but an absolute truth whose existence in the world is only a possibility waiting for persons capable of creating the Transcendent Being as a truth-quality of their own being-in-the-world. Consequently,

there is more than a little truth to the old accusation that we humans have created God in our own image. I would rather say that persons create God(s) in the Images of their soul. This creative activity is a primordial intuition, an unfolding and unveiling of Deus absconditus, whose unknowable Essence hides from human thought in the very act of revelation through the symbols, or Images, of consciousness (cf. Henry Corbin, Face de Dieu, Face de l'Homme, Paris: Flammarion, 1983, pp 237-310 and Martin Heidegger, An Introduction to Metaphysics, New York: Anchor Books, 1961, ch 4). Contrary to the doctrine that God is a Supreme Being (ens supremum)-- a fatal flaw in most of Jewish and Christian thinking for it makes God merely the greatest being (ens) in the horizontal order of existents--we need to recognize that God is solely Being (Esse); that there is an ontological break between Being and beings. Through our passion for Being, we plunge into the symbols of religious consciousness which simultaneously reveal and hide God. The symbols of religious and philosophic expression may then act as signs pointing beyond, or over the threshold, from the horizontal order to the vertical.

⁴See Parry's discussion of 'Concept and Experience' in "Rational/Conceptual/Performance--The Baha'i Faith and Scholarship-- A discussion paper", BSE, vol 1, no 4 (March 1983), pp 18-20. In this paper, Parry discusses the limits of representation in language of the intentional significance of religion, because "religion (as the deepest example of the concept/experience dichotomy) is grounded in this experiential and non conceptual dimension [i.e. spiritual and moral transformation of believers]; religion requires enactment rather than varying degrees of analysis...I am certainly not denying the need for conceptual analysis, but we need to be aware of its irreducible limits with respect to a phenomenon that is primarily experiential" (ibid., p 19).

NOTES COMMUNICATIONS AND
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY

A NOTE ON THE NUMBERS OF BABI AND BAHAI MARTYRS IN IRAN

Denis MacEoin

Peter Smith's excellent short article on the problem of determining the size of the Iranian Babi and Baha'i populations in Iran (Bulletin 1:4) prompts me to examine in some detail a related problem which has hitherto received little attention, namely the numbers of Babis and Bahais killed there. The problem is one of some importance at the moment, in view of the current Baha'i situation in Iran, since much attention is being paid to the question of how far the persecution of Bahais under the Islamic Republic represents a fresh departure and how far a continuation of earlier attitudes and actions. As I propose to demonstrate, the figures quoted in various Baha'i publications for the numbers of martyrs (whether Babis, Bahais, or Babis and Bahais together) tend to exhibit extreme confusion, but I suspect that this confusion has, in fact, penetrated only the thinking of a small number of those who look twice at information presented to them. The result is, I think, unfortunate in a number of ways, since it has, in particular, led to an exaggeration of the historical dimension of the problem of ongoing persecution and encouraged unclear and perhaps even dangerous thinking about the subject. This will, I hope, become clearer once I have gone over the facts at our disposal. Let me begin by looking at what information we possess as to the actual numbers of martyrs.

As far as I can estimate, the number of Babis killed during the main clashes between them and government forces between 1848 and 1850 was not very high. Baha'i sources speak of the involvement of from 540 to 600 individuals on the Babi side at Shaykh Tabarsi, of whom some 300 were actually killed or died from illness or other causes in the course of the siege.¹ Estimates of the numbers of Babis who took part in the Neyriz fighting of 1850 vary a great deal,² but a figure of almost one thousand (1,000) would, I think, be about right,³ of whom rather less than 500 were killed in the struggle or afterwards.⁴ Zaranidi states that a total of about 350 Babis died during or after the Neyriz disturbances of 1853.⁵ Larger numbers than these were involved in the Zanjan episode from 1850 to 1851, and between one thousand (1,000) and one thousand eight hundred (1,800) of these were put to death.⁶

The Tehran executions of 1852, following the attempt on the life of the Shah, claimed the lives of only about 37 known individuals.⁷ The total number of Babis put to death in Tehran between 1847 and 1863 amounted to no more than 62.⁸ Even when we add to the above numbers the figures for Babis killed in isolated incidents during this period (which cannot amount to more than a few dozen all told -- higher numbers would introduce the problem of major incidents going completely unrecorded by either side), we are left with a total of little more than three thousand (3,000) at the outside or, if we take the lower figure for the numbers involved at Zanjan, just over two thousand (2,000) altogether.

There are difficulties in computing the numbers of Bahais killed in Iran from the 1860's through to the present day. Most deaths occurred in small-scale outbreaks of violence involving most often only one or two individuals. There were no further incidents comparable to those which characterized the later Babi period. As far as I can tell, by adding together the figures for all the separate incidents, it would be accurate to speak of about 300 in all.⁹

When, however, we turn to statements in Baha'i publications about the total number of martyrs, the accuracy of references to individual incidents is replaced by widely inaccurate and diverging figures. The normal tendency is to make use of a single, rounded figure (usually 20,000). This is sometimes applied to the entire Babi-Baha'i period, at other times to the Babi period alone. Naturally, the common Baha'i practice of conflating Babism and Baha'ism into a single phenomenon (usually referred to as 'the Faith') tends to blur distinctions and to make references to figures somewhat vague. Thus, for example, it is often implied (but not stated) that a figure such as 20,000 applies to the Babi-Baha'i movement as a whole, but that the majority of martyrdoms took place in the Babi period. At other times, however, it seems to be suggested that the numbers of martyrs were fairly evenly distributed

between the two periods.

The earliest 'official' figure known to me is that of 'more than four thousand' given by 'Abd al-Baha' as the number of Babis killed in 1266 and 1267 (1850-1851), following the death of the Bab.¹⁰ 'Abbas Effendi also spoke of 20,000 Babi martyrs in all as early as 1871¹¹, but in his later writings and talks he became extremely inconsistent on the issue. Thus, he gives alternative figures of 'thousands',¹² 'twenty thousand',¹³ 'more than 20,000',¹⁴ and 'twenty or thirty thousand'¹⁵ martyrs in all (Babis and Bahais to the time of writing). Elsewhere, he refers to 'ten thousand, possibly twenty thousand'¹⁶ or 'over twenty thousand'¹⁷ Babi martyrs alone. It is somewhat unclear what he means when he speaks of 'twenty thousand Bahais' killed in the reign of Nasir al-Din Shah (1848-1896).¹⁸

There are examples of similar confusion in other Baha'i references to martyr numbers made during this period. In 1911, Amin Farid spoke of 'hundreds' of Babi martyrs,¹⁹ and Diya' Allah Baghdadi referred seven years later to '24,000 or more' Babi and Baha'i martyrs together (adding the figure of 4,000 from Traveller's Narrative to the more popular figure of 20,000?).²⁰

In view of his general eagerness to systematize, it might have been expected that Shoghi Effendi would have made some effort to reduce this confusion to some order, but he also seems to have been unable to make up his mind as to what was the correct figure. At the beginning of God Passes By, he refers to 'above ten thousand' martyrs during the first nine years of the Babi period,²¹ while, towards the end, he speaks of 'a world community (i.e. the Baha'i community of 1944)... consecrated by the sacrifice of no less than twenty thousand martyrs'.²² This would seem to imply that Shoghi Effendi thought there had been ten thousand Babi martyrs followed by a further ten thousand Bahais: it certainly has the element of symmetry that would have appealed to his orderly mind. Nevertheless, he himself contradicts such a conclusion when he writes of 'twenty thousand of his (i.e. the Bab's) followers' being put to death²³ or, in the opposite sense, when he translates 'Abd al-Baha's reference to 'thousands' who had 'shed streams of their sacred blood in this path' (i.e. overall) by the phrase 'ten thousand souls'.²⁴

The broad consensus of Baha'i writing since Shoghi Effendi has favoured the figure of twenty thousand, although there is evidently great confusion as to what it includes. Thus, we read of around 20,000 martyrs 'during the lifetimes of the Bab and Baha'u'llah',²⁵ or 'in the Heroic Age of His (i.e. Baha' Allah's) Cause',²⁶ or simply for 'the Baha'i Faith',²⁷ or even during the pogrom of 1852.²⁸ In some cases, writers suggest that the number of those killed was even higher than this or actually give higher (but, significantly, never lower) totals, such as 'tens of thousands'²⁹ in all, or nearly 'thirty thousand' during the later part of Baha' Allah's lifetime.³⁰

It is difficult to know exactly what conclusions we may reach from all this. I have discussed some of the implications of the evident confusion of the Baha'i sources in an article due to appear next year in Religion and will not try to repeat myself at any length here. What is surprising is that the topic of martyrdom is of considerable importance for Bahais, as it is for Shis, and yet no-one seems to have become aware of the numerous discrepancies in the various accounts of the overall numbers of martyrs. It does not take a mathematical mind to see the problem almost at a glance (I represent living proof of this), so one must not, I think, seek explanations of this general lack of awareness in the nature of the material itself. Of course, I think a few Bahais with a wide grasp of historical information are, in fact, to a greater or lesser extent conscious that there is a problem, but very few seem to have brought the topic to the forefront of their minds, to the extent that they might be impelled to look more closely at the evidence. Or, if they have, they do not appear to have made any effort to encourage greater accuracy in official Baha'i publications.

To some extent, of course, we are here involved with the common tendency not to look too closely at information, to take at their face value broad concepts -- in this case something like '20,000 martyrs', leaving aside any further details. More particularly, it is possible to see the influence of

modern Baha'i conflation of Fabism and Baha'ism, in which an undifferentiated phenomenon called 'the Faith' dominates the popular consciousness. I would imagine that most Baha'is, if pressed, would accept that the vast majority of martyrdoms took place in the Babi period, but in everyday thought and discourse, this does, I think, become a little attenuated until there is a broad sense of '20,000 martyrs for the Faith' mingled with a rather vague sense of countless persecutions in Iran which are somehow recorded in books in Persian not yet available to western Baha'is. I have looked in some detail at the question of conflation in my forthcoming article referred to above.

There is also, I think, manifested here an increasing tendency to place both Babi and Baha'i (or, more usually, 'Baha'i', that is both Babi and Baha'i) Martyrs (and saints in general) in a remote, idealized realm in which they may serve as undifferentiated but crucial figures in a wider historical myth. Even though the Babis were not martyrs for Baha'ism in any sense and even though their militancy was, in fact, rejected in early Baha'i writing, they are absolutely essential to the creation of a sense of a dramatic past. And the matter of numbers is quite important in helping establish the credentials of Baha'ism as a 'major world faith'. Twenty thousand martyrs sound much more impressive than 'about three hundred' (or even, admitting the Babis to this number, 'from two to three thousand'). This, of course, goes hand in hand with the tendency to describe the Babis killed in Zanjan or wherever as innocent victims rather than armed combatants.

In a way, the historical facts have ceased to be important here. I cannot really see how modern Baha'is can easily get rid of their 'twenty thousand martyrs' or their heroic Babi antecedents without losing something extremely vital to their sense of identity and even community. The sense of solidarity gained through vicarious participation in the current events in Iran only serves to underscore this point. Baha'ism is deeply rooted in Shi'i ideals, is, in a sense, a sort of 'neo-Shi'ism' universalized through contact with the West, and participation in shahadat as an ideal and an image has wide implications for Baha'i religious experience. At the same time, it is evident that the 'twenty thousand martyrs' myth has its dangers. By distorting the Baha'i (or Babi-Baha'i) experience in Iran in the way that Baha'i histories have done, it has become increasingly difficult for Iranian Baha'is in particular to confront the historical realities of their situation. The perpetuation of myth creates attitudes that issue in concrete developments -- Ireland is a compelling example of myth feeding on itself in each generation. In such situations, the historian can, I feel, be of more value than the hermeneut, in that he can try to reduce the potency of the myth and, in so doing, help introduce a more sober attitude on all sides.

NOTES

1. For a detailed discussion of the problem of the numbers involved at Shaykh Tabarsi, see E. Komen 'The Social Basis of the Babi Uprisings in Iran (1848-53): A Preliminary Analysis', International Journal of Middle East Studies 15 (1983), pp.161-166. Muhammad Ali Malik Khusravi gives the names of 367 individuals (Tarikh-i shuhada-yi amr, 3 vols. (Tehran, 130 badi^c /1974-75), vol.2, pp.316-17), fifty-three of whom he names as survivors (ba'iyat al-sayf: see ibid, vol.1, pp.416-49). Zarandi names only 173 martyrs (Dawn-Breakers, pp.414-26).
2. See Komen, 'Social Basis', pp.166-169.
3. See ibid, p.169; Muhammad Shafi^c Rawhani Mayrizi Lama'at al-anwar, 2 vols. (Tehran, 130-132 badi^c /1974-77), vol.1, pp.63, 72.
4. Ibid, vol.1, pp.73, 95, 96. This figure is made up of some 60 killed in an engagement in mid-Rajab 1266 (early June 1850), 350 put to death on the capture of the fort of Khaja on 18 Sha'ban/29 June, and 50 afterwards.

5. Dawn-Breakers, p.644; see also Komen 'Social Basis', pp.167-68.
6. Zarandi gives both 1,000 and 1,800 (Dawn-Breakers, p.580).
7. See Malik Khusravi Tarikh-i shuhada, vol.3, pp.6-8, 129-332. See also Komen 'Social Basis', pp.171-72. This incident has been much exaggerated in Baha'i literature. Shoghi Effendi describes it as 'a blood-bath of unprecedented severity' (Citadel of Faith, p.100), 'a holocaust reminiscent of the direst tribulations undergone by the persecuted followers of any previous religion' (Messages to the Baha'i World, p.34), and as 'the darkest, bloodiest and most tragic episode of the Heroic Age of the Baha'i (sic) Dispensation' (ibid p.39). This exaggerated image seems to have originated with a number of European accounts, including that of Cobineau (see Komen 'Social Basis', pp.171-72 and notes 55, 56); for further details, see idem Babi and Baha'i Religions, pp.128-45.
8. Tarikh-i shuhada, vol.3, pp.6-9.
9. The following figures, though not exhaustive, provide a rough guide: 5 in Tabriz, Zanjan and Tehran in 1867; 4 in Najafabad in 1864; 2 in Isfahan in 1879; 7 in Sidih in 1890; 1 in Ashkhabad in 1889; 7 in Yazd in 1891; 5 in Turbat-i Haydari in 1896; 2 in Isfahan and about 100 in Yazd in 1903; 8 in Jahrum in 1926. For details, see Komen, Babi and Baha'i Religions, pp.251-54, 268-69, 274-77, 284-88, 296-300, 301-304, 376-85, 385-98, 405-06, 465-72. There were also 7 martyrs in Hurmuzak in 1955 (see Muhammad Labib The Seven Martyrs of Hurmuzak, trans. M. Komen (Oxford, 1981)) and some 100 between 1979 and 1982 (see Roger Cooper, The Baha'is of Iran, Minority Rights Group Report no.51 (London, 1982) and G. Nash Iran's Secret Pogrom (Sudbury, 1982)). For further details on earlier persecutions, see Hajj Muhammad Tahir Palmiri Tarikh-i shuhada-yi Yazd (Cairo, 1342/1923-24), Sayyid Muhammad Tabib Manshadi Sharh-i shahadat-i shuhada-yi Manshad (Tehran, 127 badi^c /1971-72); Mirza Jawad Qazwini 'Epitome of Babi and Baha'i History' in E.G. Browne, Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion, pp.35-43; E.G. Browne 'Persecutions of Babis in 1808-1891' in ibid, pp.291-308; A.L.K. Nicolas Massacres de Babis en Perse (Paris, 1936); W.K.C. Miller The Baha'i Faith: its History and Teachings (South Pasadena, 1974), pp.214, 230. 'Abd al-Baha' gives the high figure of 'almost two hundred' for the martyrs of Yazd in 1903 (letter in Makatib-i 'Abd al-Baha', vol.1, p.427).
10. A Traveller's Narrative, vol.1, p.60; vol.2, p.47.
11. Letter from Dr. T. Chaplin to The Times, 5 October, 1871, quoted Komen Babi and Baha'i Religions, pp.210-12. Chaplin refers to the killing of 20,000 individuals before the Baghdad exile; he later states that 'Abd al-Baha' 'gave us the information here detailed' in the course of an interview in Acire.
12. 'Alwah-i wasaya' in 'Abd al-Hamid Ishraq Khavari ed. Ayyam-i tis'a, 5th. printing (Tehran, 129 badi^c /1973-74), p.457; trans. Shoghi Effendi as 'The Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Baha' in anon. comp. The Covenant of Baha'u'llah (London, 1963), p.90 (but see later on the inaccuracy of the translation of this passage). Cf. idem, letter in Makatib, vol.1, p.385.
13. Address to Fourth Unitarian Church, Brooklyn, 16 June, 1912, in Star of the West III:10 (8, September, 1912), p.31.
14. Address to the Theosophical Society, Liverpool, 14 December, 1912, in ibid III:17 (19 January, 1913), p.4.
15. Letter to 'Aqa Bihruz' in London, in Ishraq Khavari Pa'ida-yi asmani, vol.5, p.45.
16. Address at the Brotherhood Church, Jersey City, 19 May, 1912, in Star of the West III:9 (20 August, 1912), p.9. Cf. letter in Makatib, vol.1, p.344 ('ten or twenty thousand').

- 88.
17. Address to the New York Peace Society, 13 May, 1912, in Star of the West III:8 (1 August, 1912), p.15.
 18. Address to the Central Congregational Church, Brooklyn, 16 June, 1912, in ibid, III:10 (8 September, 1912), p.23.
 19. Address at Los Angeles, in ibid, II:13 (4 November, 1911), p.8.
 20. Address to the Tenth Annual Convention of the Baha'i Temple Unity, in ibid, IX:5 (5 June, 1918), p.69.
 21. God Passes By, p.xiv.
 22. Ibid., p.402.
 23. 'The Faith of Baha'u'llah' in Guidance for Today and Tomorrow, p.5.
 24. See note 12.
 25. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the U.K., Baha'i (London, n.d.), p.10.
 26. Marzieh Gail, Introduction to Baha' Allah Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, trans. Shoghi Effendi, p.iii.
 27. Anon., foreword to Baha' Allah and 'Abd al-Baha' Baha'i Revelation, p.xiv.
 28. Mash Iran's Secret Pogrom, p.22; cf. p.42 ('the most vicious pogrom of all -- the 1852 massacre of Babis'), but cf. also pp.133, 144.
 29. Ibid, p.18.
 30. H.M. Balyuzi 'Abdu'l-Baha, p.45.
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THE LOS ANGELES BAHAI HISTORY CONFERENCE

5TH - 7TH AUGUST, 1983

Held at the University of California, Los Angeles under the sponsorship of the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahais of Los Angeles and the Baha'i Club of UCLA.

An Informal Report by Peter Smith.*

Primarily designed as a forum at which Baha'i historians could present and discuss their research, the Los Angeles Baha'i History Conference, also provided an opportunity for a wider circle of American Baha'is to encounter and question the work of academic historians of the Baha'i Faith. Overall, this latter objective did not detract from the more academic purposes of the conference. About fifty persons were in attendance.

The conference itself was divided into four panel presentation and discussion periods, three concerned with substantive issues in Babi-Baha'i history in, respectively, the Middle East, the West, and the Third World, and one concerned with methodology. The conference was opened by Prof. Amin Banani of UCLA.

Outlining the purposes of the conference, Prof. Banani introduced some of the concepts of historical thinking to the non-historians present, in particular, expressing the view that there were no criteria by which "Baha'i history" could be distinguished from general history or "Baha'i historians" from any other historians. History is a multi-faceted and developing discipline in which no single approach can claim a monopoly on truth. Ultimately, all historians purport to be expressing what they perceive to be "the truth" of the historical situations which they study, and they are all similarly constrained by the inevitability of their own subjectivity.

* Where copies of papers were available (Momen (1), Stiles (3), Smith (6), Ewalt (7), I have based my summaries on those, for the rest I have had to rely on my notes. I have not reported on the lengthy discussion periods which followed each presentation.

Beyond recognition of the individual subject's spiritual dignity, the historian who was a Baha'i was bound by the same standards of scholarly accuracy and dispassionate enquiry as his non-Baha'i colleague. To theologize history into dogma was not the task of the historian and could form no part of his labours.

I. THE MIDDLE EAST PANEL

Moojan Momen being unable to attend, his paper "The Baha'i influence on the reform movements of the Islamic world in the 1860s and 1870s" was presented on his behalf.

Noting the great surge of interest in the notion of political and social "reform" amongst Middle Eastern writers during the 1870s and 1880s, Dr. Momen sought to relate Abdu'l-Baha's Risali-yi-Madaniyyih to these general currents of thought. Some possible basis for mutual influence was identified, for, although often limited in scope, there were contacts at various times between the Baha'i leaders and such reformers as Afghani, Malkam Khan, Mushiru'd-Dawlih, Mihdat Pasha, Muhammad Abduh and Safvet Pasha. More generally, the Risalih was at first circulated in Iran anonymously and may thus have attracted a readership well beyond the Baha'i community. In the absence of more definite evidence such issues of influence remained problematic, however.

What was more readily discernible was the distinct difference in emphasis given by Abdu'l-Baha as compared with the other reformist thinkers. Advancing many of the same general principles of legal, political and economic change as the other thinkers, Abdu'l-Baha diverged from them in the importance attached to mass education (but c.f. Tahtawi); to constitutional democracy -- as opposed to the "enlightened despotism" favoured by many of the reformers; to the codification of legal procedure; and to religion as a means of bringing about a mass reformation in attitudes without which all institutional reforms would be unsuccessful.

Juan Cole (UCLA) "The attack on Karbala of 1843".

Drawing upon British diplomatic sources, Shaykhi references, and

letters from the Iraqi ulama to their Indian coreligionists, Mr. Cole presented a detailed account of the events leading up to the Ottoman occupation of the Shi'i holy city of Karbala in 1843, during which events the Shaykhi leader Sayyid Kazim Rashti was a prominent participant. Forced by Usuli enmity into political isolation, Rashti had become allied to the Arab faction of the local "mobsters" (i.e. lutis) who dominated the town. This political influence notwithstanding, Rashti had been unable to convince his fellow townsmen to submit to the Ottomans. The resultant blood bath and deliberate sacrilege against the Shi'i shrines carried out by the Ottomans may well have generated or reinforced the millenarian expectations which formed such an important theme in the early rise of Babism from 1844.

Susan Stiles (Arizona), "The Conversion of Religious Minorities to the Baha'i Faith in Iran: Some Preliminary Observations".

During the period 1877 - 1921, significant numbers of Iranian Jews and Zoroastrians converted to Baha'i. According to Ms. Stiles, this development was "essential to the emergence of the Baha'i Faith as an independent religion possessing a distinct identity apart from Islam". Although already possessing a distinct identity from the envioning Shi'ism, the membership and ideational paradigms of the Baha'i Faith remained Islamic even after Baha'u'llah had inculcated the attitude of tolerance towards non-Muslims and provided the basis for Baha'i missionary outreach amongst these minorities. Actual conversions had to occur before any significant change was to come about. Rejecting existing conversion theories, devised in relation to conversions of Iranian Jews, Stiles argued that Jewish and Zoroastrian conversions should be seen in terms of the particular self-images generated by their relationship to the wider Iranian society. The ignorance and backwardness of their own clergy, together with the kindness and tolerance of Baha'i missionaries may well have influenced conversions, but failed to win any comparable response amongst the Iranian Christians. What distinguished the non-converting Christians was their existing sense of superiority to the Muslim majority, their relative freedom and their nationalist and western self-identities. By contrast, the Jews and

Zoroastrians shared the images of themselves generated by the Shi'is who dominated and oppressed them. Moreover, they identified themselves as Iranians and empathized with the Shi'i paradigm of persecuted sanctity. Combining an appeal to Persian identity (and the use of the Persian language) with the example of its own martyrs, Baha'i proved attractive to those who were no longer satisfied with their existing religions but were unwilling to convert to the alien religion of Christianity: Baha'i was less culturally dissonant. ("If Baha'u'llah was not more Jewish than Christ, he was at least more Persian"). Such alienation from their own religious traditions was most pronounced amongst the socially upwardly mobile members of the Jewish and Zoroastrian communities who constituted such a prominent element amongst the new Baha'i converts.

Diane Taherzadeh, "The leadership role of Bahiyyih Khanum".

Ms. Taherzadeh emphasized the importance of the role played by Bahiyyih Khanum in the stressful transitions in Baha'i leadership in 1892 and 1921 - 1924. Thus, in 1892, her support helped ease the stresses of opposition to Abdu'l-Baha's accession to headship of the Faith, whilst in the early twenties her own effective leadership of the Faith provided stability during the several years in which Shoghi Effendi came to terms with the role of Guardian so unexpectedly thrust upon him. During this period of her own effective leadership, Bahiyyih Khanum sought to implement the policies already established by her brother and later by her grand-nephew. Although making no innovations in policy, she made strong responses to the various situations which arose (such as the activities of the Muhammad Aliites in Palestine and America), and, despite the tendency of many American Baha'i women to elevate her to a religious station comparable with those of Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha, firmly refused to establish her own power, instead leading the Baha'is to adherence to Shoghi Effendi.

* * * * *

II. BAHAI'S OF THE WEST PANEL

Richard Hollinger (UCLA), "Ibrahim Kheiralla and The American Baha'i Community".

From his study of recently unearthed archival sources Mr. Hollinger presented a detailed account of Kheiralla's early leadership of the American Baha'i Community. In contrast to earlier accounts (my own included), Hollinger stressed the derivative nature of many of Kheiralla's teachings, both from his own teacher and fellow practitioner of the occult sciences, Abdu'l-Karim Tihrani, and from the psychic healing/New Thought circles from which he drew his following in America. Thus, his distinctive classes and teachings were developed not just by Kheiralla, but by his leading converts, such as Chase, Miller, McNutt, and the Getsingers. This collaboration eased the "Americanization" of the teachings, whilst the effectiveness of propagandists such as Dealy and Lane greatly aided the rapid expansion of the movement. Despite his attempts to impose his own authority on the fledgling movement, Kheiralla felt himself increasingly challenged by the subordinate teachers even prior to the first pilgrimage to Abdu'l-Baha in 1898-99. Again, after his return, Kheiralla had already begun to alienate members of the Chicago community from himself by his innuendoes against Abdu'l-Baha prior to the formal schism which followed his public announcement in support of Muhammad Ali. Believing Kheiralla to be the reincarnation of St. Peter, some American Baha'is expected Kheiralla's return to the community to occur only after he had denied Abdu'l-Baha three times. Although Kheiralla was highly successful in attracting Americans to his teachings, the transient nature of much of the resultant Baha'i membership also needed to be stressed.

Peter Smith (Lancaster), "Emergence from the Cultic Milieu: The Baha'i Movement in America, 1894-1936".

Outlining two variant types of attitude towards religious authority, Dr. Smith described the developing role of such attitudes in the early American Baha'i Community. The initial

Baha'i expansion in the West was concentrated in the cultic milieu of the metaphysical movements, the resultant converts retaining a strongly "cultic" attitude towards authority, in that the individual adherent rather than any institution or group was regarded as authoritative. Although modified by the new Baha'is' devotion to Abdu'l-Baha, this attitude was more or less prevalent in the community until at least 1917, Abdu'l-Baha's own permissive style of leadership and the constraints imposed by his geographical isolation facilitating its continuance. The prevalence of this attitude disfavoured the development of any fixed doctrine or organization within the community, a situation which was resented by those new Baha'is with a more "sectarian" attitude towards authority. Emphasizing the need for structure and an authoritative definition of membership and belief, these more "sectarian" Baha'is readily dominated the various local and national administrative bodies which came into being from 1909 onwards. In 1917, cut off from Abdu'l-Baha by the war, the most determined advocates of structure embarked on what was effectively a crusade against deviation from what they perceived as orthodox attitudes towards authority and belief. Although limited in their success by Abdu'l-Baha's attempts at reconciliation after the war, their venture marked a decisive change in the balance between the two attitudes within the community. Henceforth, "sectarian" authority was to become dominant, a change reinforced by Shoghi Effendi's emphasis on Baha'i administration. After a period of apathy and passive resistance to this growing dominance during the twenties, changes in community membership and attitudes stabilized the new orthodoxy by the mid-1930s. Against this emerging orthodoxy, the overt attacks mounted by Dyer, White and Sohrab were remarkably ineffective. Although the more "sectarian" community lacked access to the fertile and volatile conversion field of the cultic milieu, it possessed far greater stability, and provided a ready basis for a renewed (but slower) expansion from the 1930s onwards.

Don Ewalt, Jr., "Abdu'l-Baha's Station During the Guardian's Ministry".

As Shoghi Effendi had both read and given approval to the first

(1923) edition of Esslemont's "Baha'u'llah and the New Era", and had later encouraged the use of that book as a basic Baha'i text, Mr. Ewalt suggested that it was reasonable to suppose that it had initially possessed some quasi-authoritative status amongst the Baha'is. If this was so, then a clear development in Shoghi Effendi's thinking concerning Abdu'l-Baha's religious station could be discerned. Thus, whilst the 1923 New Era text explicitly rejected the early American Baha'i belief in Abdu'l-Baha's Christhood, and proposed that some "mystic unity" existed between Abdu'l-Baha and Baha'u'llah (pp. 67-69), Shoghi Effendi, in turn, later (1934) firmly rejected the "mystic unity" concept. The various theological implications of this development were also discussed, and the contemporary absence of any authoritative source of Baha'i doctrinal definition noted.

A paper by Dr. John Paul Vader, "Professor August Forel in Defence of the Persecuted Persian Baha'is, 1925 - 1927" was circulated, but in Dr. Vader's absence was not presented.

III. THIRD WORLD PANEL

William Garlington (formerly of the Australian National University), "The Baha'is of India".

Dr. Garlington presented an overview of his work on the Baha'is of India, detailing the early penetration of the Faith amongst a small Iranian-oriented minority; its subsequent Indianization and administrative consolidation (during the inter-war period); the undertaking of systematic plans of expansion and consolidation (c.1940 - c.1961); and the upsurge of mass conversions amongst rural Hindus from 1961 onwards. In investigating the nature of these conversions various issues presented themselves: cultural adaptation as demonstrated in the Indianization of Baha'i language and symbols (and the failure to so indianize); the meaning of these conversions for the converts themselves -- especially as no radical changes in patterns of behaviour as regards caste boundaries occurred; and the "compartmentalization" of meaning and practice by these converts by which "Baha'i" and "non-Baha'i" contexts were carefully distinguished and the

appropriate patterns of behaviour adopted (e.g. inter-caste commensality and non-commensality). Similarities were noted between the compartmentalization of Baha'i practice and that associated with bhaktic sects, and between the Baha'i conversions amongst scheduled castes and the modern neo-Buddhist conversions. Sociologically, it was stressed that there was a need to abandon the concept of a fixed and universal "Baha'i Faith", there were rather a multitude of variant and particularistic Baha'i communities.

Peter Smith, "The Baha'i Movement in the Third World".

In a second, ad hoc presentation, Smith described the development of the Babi and Baha'i religions in terms of a series of "cultural breakthroughs" by which the movement expanded successively beyond the limits of its cultural milieu, that is, from Shaykhism to Iranian Shi'ism in general, to other Middle Eastern religious communities, to the West, to Western-oriented enclaves throughout the world, and to the Third World. Of the three main geo-historical areas of this growth, two -- the Middle East, and the West -- were at present extremely restricted in their potential for further Baha'i expansion, the first through the general hostility of its wider environment, the second through the pervasive process of "secularization" which tended to erode all but the most fundamentalist forms of belief. Only the "Third World" -- including such similar constituencies as the rural blacks of the southern United States -- showed the present potential for rapid growth; such growth being amply reflected in the world distribution of Baha'i Assemblies and localities. The expansion of Baha'i in these Third World areas displayed a strong uniformity of pattern, with mass teaching having particular effect amongst culturally marginal groups such as peasants and tribal minorities and in areas which lacked strongly established religious institutions. Although many of these new Baha'is were poor and illiterate, there was insufficient evidence to suggest that poverty as such was a factor underlying conversion, indeed, the importance of patronage relations with higher status converts was sometimes noted, and, more generally the middle class and well-educated

converts often provided much of the dynamic^{for}/expansion. Successful integration of the rural converts was impeded by the difficulties of resocializing remote and illiterate populations and by the occurrence of conversions to more than one religious movement at a time. The importance of linguistic and cultural translation and of the establishment of a rural institutional infrastructure was stressed. The growing politicization of the peasantry and the increasing totalitarianism of many Third World regimes were indicated as major potential impediments to future Baha'i growth.

Anthony Lee (UCLA), "The Establishment of the Baha'i Faith in West Africa".

In his case study of early Baha'i expansion in West Africa in the 1950s, Mr. Lee contrasted the evident success of Baha'i missionary endeavour in other parts of Africa with the low rates of conversion achieved in West Africa. The prime reason for this lack of success appeared to be the inflexibility of the American pioneers involved, in their pursuit of highly legalistic goals. Thus, all stress was on Assembly formation rather than on the building of Baha'i communities, and all meetings were dominated by legalistic and administrative considerations rather than more explicit religious or spiritual matters. Where explicitly religious concerns were presented by African Baha'is, the American administrators typically failed to respond. Consequently, in areas of West Africa which were dominated by American pioneers, Baha'i growth was extremely limited, those successes which did come being in areas where the pioneers had lost control. Those Africans who converted tended to be mission educated and often unemployed "marginal men" and were commonly alien migrants from other parts of West Africa who were uncommitted to local politics. Subsequent to their conversion many of these men "made good", and several migrated to America or Europe. The historical records at present available reflected almost entirely the views of the pioneers rather than of the indigenous believers.

In his absence, the projected paper by Don Addison on "Enoch Olinga in West Africa, 1953 - 1963" was not presented.

IV. METHODOLOGY PANEL

Explicitly theological in its concerns, the final panel of the Conference addressed questions related to the place of modern academic historiography within the Baha'i community. After two short formal presentations, a lengthy discussion ensued which raised many of the issues already familiar to British Baha'is concerned with academic research.

David Piff

The writing of history is constantly changing. Hitherto Baha'i historiography has been primarily inspirational or propagandistic. The present emergence of an alternative academic historiography has been experienced as threatening by many "fundamentalist" Baha'is. Such apprehension was not absolutely necessary in that a healthy historical revisionism did not necessarily clash with religious commitment. At the same time, academic Baha'i historians would undoubtedly be concerned with moral questions relating to the dignity of their subjects and their world-mindedness. Two ideal typical Baha'i approaches to history were outlined:

	"A" (Theologically grounded)	"B"	"C" (Academically grounded)
World View	Scriptural or institutional absolutism	?	Historical relativism
Methodology	Restate scripture	?	Agnostic
Caricature	"Fundamentalists"	?	"Reductionists"
Tendency	To censor "C"	?	To correct "A"

Anthony Lee

"Fundamentalist" Baha'i objections to the academic approach to history were based on misconceptions relating to what history was. There could be no unique "Baha'i approach" to history, which

transcended the possibilities and limitations of historiography. Academics did not (as was popularly supposed) reject values when they wrote history, rather they both recognized the integral and legitimate nature of such values in their writing and sought to observe the basic "rules of the game" with regard to the honest study of their sources. They were not impelled to abandon belief or subscribe to methodological agnosticism. There was no "Baha'i methodology" in history. Values do not admit to historical proof or verification. The actual workings of any divine plan can not be discerned by the historian in his study of the historical record of human actions. There was no need to perceive the Baha'i writings in "fundamentalist" terms. As the central figures of the Baha'i Faith themselves pointed out, revelation and authoritative interpretation often made use of metaphor, contained different levels of meaning and was adapted to the limited understanding of those addressed. The authorised interpreters of the Faith were not claimed to be infallible in matters relating to history or science. Creative imagination rather than "fundamentalist" rejection of academe or "reductionist" rejection of the Faith was the necessary response to the contradictions thrown up by these various approaches.

15 October 1983

REALITY MAGAZINE

I am currently conducting research on the early American Baha'i magazine, Reality, and would be grateful for any assistance which anyone could give me concerning the following matters:

1. Copies. I would be pleased to receive any spare copies of this magazine. Specifically, I have not yet been able to see the following issues: October/November 1919; August 1921; August 1924; March 1927; and almost all of the issues from March 1928 onwards. The loan of these particular issues would be particularly welcome. The last issue I have seen is that for April 1929, has anyone seen any later issues?
2. New York and Washington, D.C. Reality's coverage and support was concentrated in New York City and Washington, D.C. I would appreciate corresponding with any researcher who has materials or has done work with respect to these two Baha'i communities for the years immediately after the first World War, say 1918-c.1926.
3. Individuals. I have collected information concerning some of the most well-known individuals involved in the production and activities of the magazine, but would welcome any additional information which anyone could add. In the following list, I am particularly interested in those marked with an asterisk.

Adams, G. Loraine	Frost, Mabel A.	Phellan, Dr. Ludla F.
Baker, Dr. Alice	Goldzier, Julia	Phillips, Catherine
Belluse, Sebastian	Heller, Flora	Randell, [William?]
Bicket, Rev. Wilhemena Bertha	*Holley, Bertha	Reipp, Maxfield
Bigelew, Dr. Frank S.	*Holley, Horace	*Robinson, Herold S.
Blair, Edward	Hubbard, Charles Hine	*Robinson, Laura
*Bolden, Dr. Richard Manuel	Hubbard, Rev. Milicent	Schumacher, Winifred
*Boylan, Ann T.	*Irvine, Edward J.	Seton, Dr. Julia
Brittell, Leon	*Jenkins, Cora (Bethesda, O)	Sohrab, Ahmad
Brown, Baretta	Johnson, A. Geary	Stone, Ailene
Brown, W.H.J.	Keeler, Mrs. G.A. Hosmer	Tassin, Smith
Cake, Rev. J.C.	Kerfoot, Nell	Vail, Albert
Chandler, S.B.	*Ledoux, Urbain	Vercenius, Rev. Nannie
*Death, Eugene	Lewis, Anne K.	Warsaw, Dr. Alfred R.
*Death, Wandeyne	Lewis, Jessie L.	*Watson, Marie
*Dyar, Aseyeh Allen	Lisemer, Louis	Wendell, Helen
*Dyar, Harrison Gray	MacNutt, Howard	Weston, Walter N.
Elmore, Rev. Loe F.	Mathews, L.A.	Williams, Harriet
Fehr, Carl D.	Moore, Capt. George A.	
*Fernald, Dr. Edward L.	Newman, M.D.	
*Ford, Mary Hanford	Osgood, Bethalin	
	*Pease, Dr. Charles C.	

In the case of the most well-known Baha'is, it is only their involvement in Reality which I am at present investigating. Many on the above list undoubtedly were not Baha'is.

Many thanks for any assistance which you can provide. Please contact me at the above address.

Peter Smith

p.s. 1921 Cable. Can anyone provide details of the situation described by Roy Wilhelm in his cable to Abdu'l-Baha in November 1921, "Chicago, Washington, Philadelphia agitating violation. Centering Fernald, Dyer, Watson. New York Boston refused join." (Star 12:232).

In the last issue of the Bulletin, Stephen Lambden gave a most enlightening commentary and translation of the Lawh-i Hirtik. Readers of this Bulletin may be interested to know how the Tablet came to be identified. For many years, each successive volume of The Baha'i World had listed the Lawh-i Hirtik in the section "Alphabetical List of Baha'u'llah's best-known Writings." But beyond the reference to it in a Tablet to Mirza Haydar 'Ali (quoted in Ishraq Khavari's Ganj-i Shavigan; see Lambden's article, pp. 32, 35) nothing more was known of the Tablet and it was assumed to have been lost. When I forwarded to Haifa Zeller's letter and his garbled translation of a letter of Baha'u'llah to Hardegg, the staff at the Research Department (I believe it was Mr. Mesbah) realised that this might be the missing Lawh-i Hirtik. The reason for the strange transliteration being that "g" is pronounced "k" in South Germany (and the Templars were from Wurttemberg in South Germany). It was only about a year later that it was realised that Zeller's garbled translation resembled one of the Tablets of Baha'u'llah that were already held at Haifa and so the identification was complete.

Moojan Momen, 20th August 1983.

EARLY AMERICAN BAHAI BIBLIOGRAPHY PROJECT

Peter Smith is currently preparing an updated version of his biography of early American Baha'i literature. All references to items not listed in the bibliography in Studies in Babi and Baha'i History I (Kalimat Press 1982) should be sent to him at the Dept. of Sociology, University of Lancaster, Bailrigg, Lancaster U.K.

Peter Smith.

RECENT PUBLICATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY

Bahā'u'llāh, Kalimat-i Maknunih-The Hidden Words, Baha'i-Verlag, Hofheim-Langenhain, 1983.

Calligraphy of original text by Mishkin Qalam together with the English translation of Shoghi Effendi. 70pp of English text; 67 pp of original text. Also available in Persian translation.

Shoghi Effendi, The Light of Divine Guidance-The Messages of the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith to the Baha'is of Germany and Austria, Baha'i-Verlag, Hofheim-Langenhain, 1982, 316pp, no index. English text.

- James Heggie (comp.), An Index of Quotations from the Bahá'í Sacred Writings, George Ronald, Oxford, 1983., pp. 824. £21 (Hardcover); £13, 50p (Softcover). Contains some 50,000 entries under 4,000 headings.
- David Hofman, A Commentary on the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Revised and Expanded Edition, George Ronald, Oxford., 1983, 56pp. Softcover £1.10.p
The epilogue gives an account of the interregnum (1957-1963) between the Guardianship and the election of the Universal House of Justice.
- _____ , The Renewal of Civilization, George Ronald, Oxford, 1983, Rev. Updated Ed (9th reprint), 144pp. Softcover £1.25.p.
- O. Z. Whitehead, Some Bahá'ís to Remember, George Ronald, Oxford, 1983, 304pp. Hardcover £7.95.p. Softcover £3.95.p.
A collection of biographical sketches of some of the western Bahá'ís of the earlier years of this century including: A.P. Dodge, M.V. Thornburgh-Cropper; A. Parsons, Kanichi Yamamoto, G. Augur; G. Coy; H. Holley; H. Ober; M. Hanford-Ford. C. Greenleaf, J. Hyde Dunn.
- Helen Hornby (comp.), Lights of Guidance, A Bahá'í Reference File, Baha'í Pub. Trust, New Delhi, 1983, 54Opp + Index.
An extremely useful compilation of extracts from Baha'í sacred writings on a wide range of subjects.
- Hisám Nuqabá'í, Bisharát-i Kutub-i 'Asmānī va Isharāt-i digarām dar bāriy-i zuhur-i Amr-i Bahá'í, 2nd. Ed (with additions); np.nd. 304pp.
- F[arzīn] Doustdar (Ed), Rawzanikhā-va Umīd-Gulchīnī az Athār-i Gūnāgūn, Payama Doosty-Missagh Group, Trier 1983, 312pp.
"A collection of articles from various sources by various authors, including Farzīn Dūstdār, Farah Dūstdār, Jamshīd Fanā'iyān, Mahmud Majzhub, Amīn Khamsī, 'Alī Murād Davūdī, Ramalū'd-Dīn Baichtavar, Shapur Rasikhās well as extracts from the writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi." [Moojan Momen].
- Rūhullāh Māhrabkhānī, Qisiy-i 'Ishq-Mirza Muhammad 'Alī Zunūzī, np.nd. 81pp.
- Mīrzā Mahmūd Zargānī, Badā'i'ul-Āthār, 2 Vols. Baha'í-Verlag Hofheim-Langenhaim, 1982. Reprint of original edition (Bombay 1921).
- Haji Mīrzā Haydar 'Alī, Ehīat al-Sudur, Baha'í-Verlag, Hofheim-Langenhaim, 1982. Reprint of the original edition (Bombay 1912).
- 'Abd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, Risāla-va Tasbīh va Tahīlī, Baha'í Publishing Trust, India, 1982. Reprint of the Tihra Ed. 1972.
- Hugh Adamson, Revelation in Islam and Baha'í. MA. thesis, Sir George Williams University, Montreal, 1974 (? cannot supply details).

- 'Abdu'l-Baha, Mifāyadāt. [Some Answered Questions], 2nd Ed. Cairo. Reprint, Baha'í Publishing Trust, New Delhi 1983.
Khitābāt-i Hadrat-i 'Abd al-Bahā fī Ūrūbā wa Amrīkā, Vol. 1. Reprint of Cairo Ed. Karachi 135 BE [1978].
Āiyah-i Vasāyā-va Mubāraka-va Hadrat-i 'Abd al-Bahā Reprint of Cairo Ed. NSA of the Bahá'ís of Pakistan, 1960.
- Irene Ertugrul, The Flight of a Troubled Minority, in The Middle East No 102 (April 1983), pp. 35-7.
- Moojan Momen, Shades of Conflict [Letter] in The Middle East No 104 (June 1983), pp. 3+5.
- NSA of the Bahá'ís of the U.K., Beyond Disarmament, Statement by the NSA of the Bahá'ís of the United Kingdom, [written April 1983], np.nd. 22pp.

Request for miscellaneous Bahá'í publications

- I should be most grateful if anyone could loan or supply me with photocopies (cost obviously refunded) of any of the following items:-
- Muhammad Nātiq Isfahānī, Tarikh-i Amri-va Kashaan (MSS comp. 1309 Sh) [= Iran Nat. Bahá'í Archives Lib. MSS. No 2016D, pp. 75].
- 'Abd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, Tarikh-i Amri-va Hamadan (MSS).
- Baha'u'llah, Kitāb-i Badī'
- Wilhelm Herrigel, Die Zeichen unserer Zeit im Lichte der Bibel und der Baha'u'llah, Stuttgart 1916.
- Shaykh Muhammad Husayn, Fadl-i Tihra'nī, Kitāb-i Munadarāt al-Dīniyya Cairo nd.
- 'Abd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khāvarī, Muhadarāt (BPT. Tihra 1963?) 2 Vols.
- Haji Mīrzā Haydar 'Alī, Dalā'il al-'Irfān (Bombay + Cairo c. 1312 AH).
- Mīrzā 'Alī Ashraf Lahijānī, Andalib, Risāla written for E.G. Browne (MSS).

Stephen Lambden [Ed].

Robert Balch, Gwen Farnsworth and Sue Wilkins, "When the bombs drop: Reactions to disconfirmed prophecy in a millennial sect". Sociological Perspectives 26 (1983), pp.137-58.

Seeking to replicate Festinger's classic study of prophetic disconfirmation, Robert Balch and his associates engaged in participant observation of the small group of "Baha'is Under the Provisions of the Covenant" (BUPC). A Remyite splinter group led by "Doc" Leland Jensen, the BUPC developed from 1971 onwards on the basis of Jensen's claims to be the high priest Joshua (Zech. 3), the returned Christ who, following Armageddon, would establish the Kingdom of God on earth. From the outset adopting a strongly millenarian stance, Jensen prophesized that a nuclear holocaust would destroy one-third of mankind on 29 April 1980. Although the numbers of Jensen's followers is uncertain, approximately 150 people prepared to heed his warning and many of these continued to follow Jensen after the dramatic disconfirmation of his prophecies on 29 April. Festinger et al. had suggested that such disconfirmation produced "cognitive dissonance" which was resolved by group members undertaking an evangelistic campaign to justify the group's beliefs. By contrast, Balch et al. found no evidence for this in this case, instead, laying stress on the variable nature of the social situation experienced by various millenarian groups. In the BUPC case, Jensen's failure to promptly provide a plausible explanation for the disconfirmation, together with the absence of any strong public display of group identity in the aftermath, greatly exacerbated the resultant cognitive crisis. Nevertheless, whilst most of the more isolated BUPC adherents in Arkansas, Colorado and Wyoming defected, many of the central group in Missoula, Montana remained committed, restructuring their central beliefs so as to lay greater stress on "living the life" than on millenarianism and retaining the strong social inter-

relationships of the group. The availability of a coherent and all-embracing body of (Baha'i) religious thought aided this restructuring, giving members a religious focus beyond the particular teachings and leadership of Doc Jensen.

Peter Smith

THE NEWCASTLE BABI-BAHA'I STUDIES SEMINAR

As announced in previous issues of this Bulletin a Babi-Baha'i Studies Seminar took place over the weekend of September 10th-12th 1983 at the Catholic Chaplaincy of the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. The programme was oriented around the presentation and discussion of the following papers:-

Dr. Moojan Momen, The Baha'i Influence on the Reform Movements of the Islamic World in the 1860's and 1870's. [Reproduced below].

Dr. Denis MacEoin, Talismanic Knowledge in Late Babism.

Dr. Peter Smith, Emergence From the Cultic Milieu: The Baha'i Movement in America 1894-1936 [See below Los Angeles Baha'i History Conference Report].

Stephen Lambden, The Islamo-Baha'i interpretation of Deuteronomy 33:2 [Reproduced below in slightly revised form].

Steven Scholl, More Problems..Scientific Method ora Total Hermeneutic [Reproduced below in slightly revised form].

(Dr. Denis MacEoin's as yet unpublished paper From Babism to Bahaism: Militancy and Conflation in the Creation of a New Religion was also read and discussed).

Unfortunately no detailed report of the discussion which followed the presentation of papers was made.

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Beveridge, Kent and MacEoin, Denis

(1983) Seven manuscripts attributed to Baha'u'llah. 1/4 : 33 - 56

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(1982a) "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" or "My God, my God, how thou hast glorified me!" 1/1 : 27 - 42

(1982b) Antichrist - Dajjal: Some notes on the Christian and Islamic Antichrist traditions and their Baha'i interpretation. 2 pts. 1/2 : 14 - 47; 1/3 : 3 - 43.

(1982c) Dr. MacEoin's "Problems of scholarship": Some thoughts. 1/3 : 69 - 80

(1983) An episode in the childhood of Siyyid Ali Muhammad the Bab. 1/4 : 22 - 32

MacEoin, Denis

(1982a) Some Baha'i and Shaykhi interpretations of "the mystery of reversal". 1/1 : 11 - 23

(1982b) Problems of Scholarship in a Baha'i context. 1/3 : 44 - 68

-- See also Beveridge and MacEoin (1983) and Momen and MacEoin (1983)

Nielck, R

(1982) On Baha'ism in Germany. German Baha'i Literature. 1/2 : 50 - 56. Trans. by Lesley Zanich from "Vom Bahaismus in Deutschland. Deutsche Baha'i Literatur. Der Islam 13 (1923), 138 - 44

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(1982 - 83) Esselmont's survey of the Baha'i community in 1919 - 1920. Pt I: Iran, by Ibn-i-Asdaq and Azizu'llah Varqa, 1/1 : 2 - 10; pt II: Turkistan, by Ibn-i-Asdaq, 1/2 : 3 - 6; pt III : America, by Albert Vail, 1/4 : 8 - 13.

Momen, Moojan (and MacEoin, Denis)

(1983) A response to MacEoin's "Problems of Scholarship" 1/4 : 57 - 80 (MacEoin's reply, pp. 66 - 80)

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(1982) Not weighing God's book with standards current amongst men:

One perspective, provisional theological discussion notes. 2 pts. 1/1: 24 - 26; 1/2: 7 - 13.

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(1983) A note on Babi and Baha'i numbers in Iran. 1/4: 3 - 7

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Yerrinbool (9 - 12 April, 1982) 1/2: 60 - 61

Lancaster Baha'i Studies Seminars (1977 - 80), 1/4: 92 - 93 (PS)

Northill, at the Nomens (26 - 27 January, 1983) 1/4: 94 - 97 (SL)

Baha'i Societies Conference, Warwick (19 - 20 February, 1983) 1/4: 98 - 110 (SL)

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Afnan Library Trust. 1/1: 48

West African Centre for Baha'i Studies 1/4: 91

COMPILATIONS

Extracts from the Baha'i writings relating to scholarship (from the Haifa Research Department via Moojan Momen) 1/1: 43 - 48

LETTERS OF ABDU'L-BAHA, SHOGHI EFFENDI AND THE UNIVERSAL HOUSE OF JUSTICE

1/2: 57 - 59; 1/3: 80 - 88; 1/4: 81 - 90.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

C. Duck on Jesus's cry from the Cross. 1/4: 111 - 13.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1/1: 48; 1/2: 61; 1/3: 89 - 90; 1/4: 114 - 17

like Mīrzā Malkam Khān and Sayyid Jamālu'd-Dīn who wrote from within Islamic states had to be more circumspect. Malkam Khān (1833-1908) whose main line of approach was the wholesale importation of European ideas and technology was careful to avoid a confrontation with the religious authorities by maintaining that his ideas were (1838-1897) compatible with Islam. With Sayyid Jamālu'd-Dīn/also, it is very difficult to discern his true opinion of Islam since he was aware of its powerful appeal and its potential usefulness in achieving his ultimate goal of strengthening the Islamic world against Western encroachment.¹

In this great ferment of political thought, there was much cross-fertilization of ideas and the details of the contacts between the various reformers are only now in the process of being worked out. One element in this cauldron of ideas in the 1860s and 1870s that has hitherto been ignored by Western scholars is the contribution to this debate made by the Bahā'īs (as distinct from the Azalī Bābīs²), and in particular, by the Bahā'ī leaders who were in Edirne and, after 1868, in ^CAkkā. This paper is an attempt to demonstrate that the Bahā'ī leaders could have had a significant impact on this debate as well as indicating, through an analysis of the Risāla-yi Madaniyyat of ^CAbdu'l-Baha (1844-1921) what were the main points that were being advanced from this direction.

It is very difficult to obtain firm evidence of the influence of the Bahā'īs on Nineteenth-Century Iran mainly because of the fact that those so influenced would never admit to this since any degree of association with what was regarded as a heretical and religiously-obnoxious sect would be a bar to one's advancement in public life or the acceptance of one's views. *Therefore* we can expect the reformers to have been careful to conceal their contacts with the

Bahā'īs. And so it was that when ^CAbdu'l-Baha's Risāla-yi Madaniyyat was written in 1875, it was distributed anonymously and is said to have achieved a wide readership among the Iranian intelligensia, particularly after its printing in 1882. But later when its authorship became known, no one would admit to having read it.

But there is much evidence for contacts between the Bahā'ī leaders and many of the prominent Nineteenth-Century reformers of the Islamic world. It is, of course, very difficult to determine to what extent such contacts exerted an influence on these reformers but the absence of substantial references to the Bahā'īs in the works of these reformers should not, for the reasons stated above, be taken as evidence of no significant impression having been made. It was difficult enough for them to make any headway with their ideas in the Islamic world without the additional encumbrance of being considered to be tainted by heretical views.

It has been suggested that Sayyid Jamālu'd-Dīn Afghānī was in contact with the Bābī exiles in Baghdad in the 1850s³. Certainly he was very familiar with the movement and provided the information on this subject that went into Buṭrus al-Bustānī's Arabic Encyclopaedia.⁴ He appears to have wanted to remain in contact with the Bahā'ī leaders in ^CAkkā since he sent them copies of his newspaper, ^CUrwatu'l-Waqthā, from Paris in the 1880s.⁵ It would appear from Afghānī's writings that he felt a great deal of antipathy for the Bahā'īs⁶ whom he saw 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.

The evidence for Mīrzā Malkam Khān's close association with the Bahā'īs is much stronger. Malkam Khān was exiled from Iran to Baghdad in 1861 and came into contact with Bahā'u'llāh there⁷ before his further exile in April 1862 to Istanbul where he again had the opportunity of

contacting Bahā'u'llāh and his followers when they were exiled there in May 1863. Both at this time and earlier in Tihran, Malkam Khān had had such close contact with the Bābīs that when Ernest Renan met him in Istanbul in June 1865, Malkam Khān represented himself as being knowledgeable about Bābism to such an extent that we find Renan in 1866 encouraging Malkam Khān to write on the subject.⁸

The third prominent Iranian reformer of this period that we will briefly consider here is Mīrzā Ḥusayn Khān Mushīru'd-Dawla (1827-81). As the Iranian minister at the Sublime Porte, he had been instrumental in bringing about the various stages of Bahā'u'llāh's exile from Baghdad to Istanbul, to Edirne and finally to Akkā and he had used all his influence to restrict the activities of the Bahā'īs. But, it is reported that, in 1870, after reading the petitions addressed to Bahā'u'llāh that had been taken when Shaykh Salmān was arrested in Aleppo, he altered his attitude and, from that time on, he is reported to have been sympathetic.⁹ Certainly there were no persecutions of the Bahā'īs during the time he was Prime Minister. One of his close relatives, Mīrzā Muḥammad 'Alī, Kad-khudā of Qazvīn, was a Bahā'ī¹⁰ and this may have been one way in which information about the Bahā'īs reached Mushīru'd-Dawla but probably more important was his close association with Malkam Khān both in Istanbul and Tihran.

Outside Iran, several other prominent Muslim reformers had links with the Bahā'īs in Akkā. Miḍhat Pāshā (1822-83), while Governor of Syria invited 'Abdu'l-Bahā to Beirut in 1879. On a subsequent visit, to that city, 'Abdu'l-Bahā became closely acquainted with Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh (1849-1905) who in later years was to become a leading reform figure in Egypt. In his memoir of his conversations with Muḥammad 'Abduh, Rashīd Ridā has documented 'Abduh's very high regard for 'Abdu'l-Bahā and the Bahā'īs. (the memoir is dated 1897 when Rashīd Ridā first came to Egypt to study under 'Abduh):

'Abduh: This sect [the Bahā'īs] is the only one that strives so that sciences and arts might be acquired by the Muslims. There are learned and wise men among its adherents...¹¹

Ridā [about 'Abbās Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Bahā]: I hear that he excels in religious and political science (as-siyāsa), and that he is wise enough to satisfy all who seek his company...

'Abduh: Yes, 'Abbās Effendi transcends all that. He is, in fact a great man; he is the man to whom it is right to apply that epithet.¹²



Safvet Pasha, the Ottoman minister of education during this period, who advocated a Westernization of Turkish education, was in communication with 'Abdu'l-Bahā.¹³

Having demonstrated that the Bahā'ī leaders in Edirne and later in 'Akkā in the 1860s and 1870s had extensive contacts with the most prominent reformers in the Muslim world during this period and were part of the reform debate that was going on, it now remains to consider in what directions, the Bahā'ī leaders influenced the reformers. Unfortunately, the direct evidence for this, letters written by Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā to these reformers, do not appear to have survived, but we have one very valuable piece of information as to what were the political opinions of the Bahā'ī leaders at this time, the treatise known as Risāla-yi Madaniyyat¹⁴ by 'Abdu'l-Bahā which was written on the express instructions of Bahā'u'llāh (1817-1892).¹⁵ The evidence for the date of its composition, 1875, is contained in the text itself.¹⁶ The book was first published anonymously for the reasons discussed above. The importance of this book in the eyes of the Bahā'īs can be judged from the fact that it was only the second Bahā'ī book to be printed.¹⁷

'Abdu'l-Bahā states at the beginning of the book that its composition had been inspired by the reforms recently initiated by the Shah. This is presumably a reference to the reforms undertaken by Mushīru'd-Dawla during his ministry, 1871-73. This ministry began with confident expectations from the reformers that it would signal a new era for Iran, a return to former glories through modernization.¹⁸ The courts were reformed, individual rights guaranteed, a consultative council set up, finances and the army reformed and steps taken against bribery and corruption.¹⁹ 'Abdu'l-Bahā praises these reforms and states that his treatise has been written in order to set down "a brief statement on certain urgent questions."²⁰ He states that he is

withholding his name as author because he does not wish to curry favour or gain material benefit from the suggestions that he is putting forward.

'Abdu'l-Bahā starts his line of argument by referring to Iran's former glories. Now, he states, Nāsiru'd-Dīn Shāh has taken the initiative and is exerting an effort towards progress and justice "hoping that his reign will rival the glorious past."²¹

The specific reforms listed by 'Abdu'l-Bahā in this treatise are as follows:

- 1) Extension of education throughout the country.
- 2) Systematization of court procedure and in particular a definite limit to the appeal procedure for litigation.
- 3) Development of useful arts and sciences.
- 4) Promotion of industry and technology.
- 5) Extension of foreign relations and expansion of trade.
- 6) Guaranteeing of individual rights such as security of property and equality before the law.
- 7) Restriction of the absolute authority of provincial governors and review of their sentences by the Shah and higher courts in the capital.
- 8) Elimination of bribery and corruption.
- 9) Reform of the Army with proper provisions, armaments and training.
- 10) The setting up of councils and assemblies of consultation.

Many of these reforms had been suggested in the writings of other writers previously nor indeed does 'Abdu'l-Bahā give much importance to the list itself. He merely sets them out without elaborating on any of the measures although he does state his intention, should there be interest of producing a further treatise in elucidation of this one. What 'Abdu'l-Bahā gives over most of the book to and what, indeed Mushīru'd-Dawla and his supporters found by bitter experience to be the critical problem, is the question of how to

bring about the social conditions in which these reforms will be accepted and can effectively be applied. For the whole lesson of Mushīru'd-Dawla's two-and-a-half year ministry was that it is easy to propose far-reaching reforms and to promulgate decrees but quite another matter to put these into effect and produce a change in society.²² Thus, for example, after stating that the setting up of councils and assemblies of consultation is the "very foundation and bedrock of government"²³ and is the way "to bring about justice and righteousness,"²⁴ 'Abdu'l-Bahā goes on to say, however, that if the members of these assemblies be not "righteous, God-fearing, high-minded, incorruptible,"²⁵ then the whole exercise will have negative results and be meaningless. 'Abdu'l-Bahā is one of the earliest of the reform writers to advocate elected representatives on these assemblies for the very practical reason that "elected representatives will on this account be somewhat inclined to exercise justice, lest their reputation suffer and they fall into disfavour with the public."²⁶

'Abdu'l-Bahā's major thesis in this book, however, is that reform and progress can only be brought about if the individual members of a society are motivated towards justice and high-mindedness. Religion, he states, is the most powerful instrument for bringing about such a change among human beings for it provides the motivation for individuals to disregard their own advantage in the cause of justice and the public interest.²⁷ Furthermore, progress and civilization are dependent on unity and agreement between the individual members of society and religion is also the best means of achieving this.²⁸ The example of the Israelites is cited and how each time they turn towards religion they would become prosperous and reach the heights of civilization and when they turned away from religion, they would suffer dissension, decline and defeat.²⁹ And when the Christian world reached its nadir in the Middle Ages, it was through Islam that culture and the sciences were revived and through the Crusades and

the medium of Andalusia that this learning was transmitted to Europe thus bringing about the Renaissance.³⁰ 'Abdu'l-Bahā refutes Voltaire's assertion that religious faith defeats progress as being the result of looking to the acts of the Popes and other religious leaders rather than at the "true significance of the sacred Scriptures."³¹ 'Abdu'l-Bahā regards the revival of the religious instinct in man as the very core and foundation of progress and reform, the "very basis and root-principle of culture and civilization."³²

Next to the central role of religious faith, 'Abdu'l-Bahā appears to consider education as being the most important matter for concern.³³ Lack of education impedes justice in society³⁴ and prevents the realization of reforms. Attention needs to be given to the curriculum since at present too much time is taken up with the study of useless subjects.³⁵ Schools must be established in the towns and even in the villages and children taught to read and write. Education should be compulsory if necessary for it is through education that the nation can be roused from its torpor. With these two instruments, religious faith and education, in the hands of the people, then the nation has the ability to raise itself toward reform, progress and the establishment of a just society.

Unlike many of the reformers of the Middle East, 'Abdu'l-Bahā does not advocate wholesale importation of European ideas and values and he does not hold up Europe as an example to be emulated in all respects. While allowing that European science and social administration have certain lessons for the Islamic world, he condemns European society as being essentially a superficial culture which is morally bankrupt. 'Abdu'l-Bahā considers true human happiness to derive from a drawing nearer to God and securing the peace and well-being of every individual member of society. The European powers, while paying lip-service to peace, are, in fact, engaged in piling up weapons and perpetrating pointless wars such as the Franco-Prussian War of 1870

which caused great bloodshed and destruction with no discernible cause or results.³⁶ 'Abdu'l-Bahā considers European civilization "morally uncivilized."³⁷ True civilization will only arrive when the rulers come together to consult with a genuine desire for peace; they should forgo their ambitions for territorial expansion, limit their armaments and resolve that if any state violated the territory of another then they would all arise to subdue that state.³⁸

Rather than denigrate the ulama as being an impedance to progress, 'Abdu'l-Bahā takes up a large part of this treatise with enumerating the positive qualities to which the men of learning should aspire. This, of course, follows from his contention that all these councils and consultative assemblies can only function well and lead to benefit and progress if their members are high-minded and incorruptible. These qualities are listed as follows:

- 1) That they/ should acquire spiritual and material perfections: obtaining religious, scientific and cultural knowledge, justice and impartiality, sincerely trying to counsel and educate the masses; mildness, compassion, resolution, courage, etc.³⁹
- 2) That they should be defenders of the Faith: not merely in terms of the strict application of religious law or the observance of forms of worship but in terms of promoting the Word of God and increasing the number of believers. This objective is not achieved by violent means. The example of spiritual qualities will attract and inspire men's hearts while the sword "will only produce a man who is outwardly a believer, and inwardly a traitor and apostate."⁴⁰ Fanaticism and avoidance of unbelievers is also to be condemned since this repulses the unbeliever and prevents his conversion. Unfortunately, among the people, fanaticism and bigotry have become mistaken for marks of religious virtue.⁴¹
- 3) That they should oppose their passions: for it is from this

basis that men are enabled to be just, to be of benefit to others and to become a means for the progress of the whole of society.⁴²

- 4) That they must be obedient to the laws of God: 'Abdu'l-Bahā rejects the view that man has an innate sense of dignity which can prevent him from committing evil since he regards even this sense of dignity as being derived from the education provided by the Prophet of God which is the real source of true civilization.⁴³

One of the most important tasks of the reformers was to neutralize the opposition of those who maintained that these reforms were foreign methods unsuitable for Iran or were contrary to the teachings of Islam so that adopting them was tantamount to abandoning Islam. Such arguments by stirring up the people's natural fear of change, were often very powerful in the hands of those who opposed reform.

To those who considered that reforms learned from infidel foreigners would contravene Islam, 'Abdu'l-Bahā answered with arguments both from the Islamic texts and from Islamic history. From the hadith, 'Abdu'l-Bahā cites: "Seek knowledge even unto China."⁴⁴ With specific reference to the idea of consultative assemblies, he quotes the Qur'anic phrases: "and whose affairs are guided by mutual counsel"⁴⁵ and "consult them in the affair."⁴⁶ as justification for this measure. From Islamic history, 'Abdu'l-Bahā quotes the example of the Battle of the Trench where Muhammad did not refuse to utilize the military tactic of digging a trench which was borrowed from the Persians through Salman. Moreover, 'Abdu'l-Bahā points out that many of the Laws of Islam itself, such as the Pilgrimage to Mecca, the ceremonies of the Pilgrimage, the months of religious truce, etc. were derived from the customs of the idolatrous pre-Islamic Arabs while the greatest of the Muslim theologians and philosophers did

not hesitate to borrow ideas from the Greeks. And so, if, as the evidence of the Islamic traditions and histories show, it was permissible to borrow ideas from the idolatrous Chinese and Magians and from the Greek infidels, how much more permissible it is to borrow ideas from Christian Europe; for Christians are at least People of the Book and it is even in the Qur'an that: "Thou shalt certainly find those to be nearest in affection to the believers who say 'we are Christians.'"⁴⁷

To those who maintained that foreign ways are unsuitable for Iranians and that it would be more appropriate for Iran to evolve its own techniques, 'Abdu'l-Bahā replied that all knowledge, whether in the scientific or the social field is the common legacy of all men. One should no more ignore the social advances made by another nation than one should refuse to obtain the benefits of foreign scientific advances such as steam-power and the telegraph. If it has taken another nation a thousand years to evolve certain advances, what benefit is there in keeping back the people of Iran for one thousand years before they make the same advances.⁴⁸

And as for those who advise caution and the need to advance slowly and patiently, if they are genuine, then it is certainly true that that these reforms must be introduced in an orderly manner so that society evolves step by step and is not thrown into chaos. But if their statements are merely an excuse for laziness and inertia then this is inexcusable and unacceptable. A start has to be made and the matter pursued. In Iran, the greatest need is for education and this matter must be pursued vigorously and systematically.⁴⁹

These then, in summary, are the main themes that 'Abdu'l-Bahā pursues in this treatise. We have already discussed the way in which these ideas may have had an influence on the growing body of reformers in the Middle East in the 1860s and 1870s. It is also pertinent to ask to what extent the works of these reformers may have had an

influence on 'Abdu'l-Bahā's writing of this treatise and to what extent the ideas contained in the treatise are original to 'Abdu'l-Bahā. Certainly the structure of the treatise resembles in many ways the writings of other reformers many of which predated this treatise. There is the same broad appeal to Muslims to shake themselves from their lethargy and face the challenge of the modern world, the reference back to Iran's former glories,⁵⁰ the almost obligatory attempt to make the reforms out to be compatible with the highest ideals of Islam,⁵¹ and the reference to certain European writers who have spoken favorably of Islam.⁵² 'Abdu'l-Bahā was not the first to present reforms anonymously⁵³ (nor was this to be the only occasion on which 'Abdu'l-Bahā used this device⁵⁴). But 'Abdu'l-Bahā's motive in withholding his name is only in order to allow the book to be circulated and read which it would not have been if its Bahā'ī authorship had been known. The list of reforms that 'Abdu'l-Bahā presents in this treatise is not in itself original nor very thorough. Mirzā Malkam Khān's Kitābcha-yi Ghaybī (c. 1860) presents much more detailed proposals.⁵⁵

But 'Abdu'l-Bahā's emphasis on education as the first priority in the reform measures and his concern with the codification of the legal procedure (and particularly civil litigation) seem, however, in the priority given to them, to be original contributions of 'Abdu'l-Bahā.⁵⁶ Moreover, at a time when most of the Iranian reformers, such as Malkam Khān still envisaged that consultative assemblies and ministerial councils should be appointed by the Shah and proposed that the Shah model himself on the absolutism of Russia, Prussia or Austria,⁵⁷ 'Abdu'l-Bahā is already putting forward the idea of elected representatives, thus predating (and possibly influencing) the first Iranian reformers to suggest this by over a decade.⁵⁸

As we have demonstrated, however, 'Abdu'l-Bahā's concern is not so much with the reform measures themselves as with the way to

transform society in order to bring these changes into effect. In this respect, ^cAbdu'l-Bahā was probably more realistic than most of the other reformers in discerning that even if one of the Islamic rulers was to try to put these reforms into effect (as was attempted during Mushīru'd-Dawla's ministry in Iran, by Khayru'd-Dīn Pāshā in Tunisia and Midhat Pāshā in Turkey), Muslim society was not yet in a state that would be able to absorb them and so they would be rejected. What was needed first was a revolution in attitudes and morality. ^cAbdu'l-Bahā is virtually unique among the writers on reform in this period in advocating so central a role to religion. Even those writers, such as Malkam Khān and Afghānī, who allocated some role to religion in their writings were more interested in utilising the religious fervour of the masses as a means of introducing reforms. But their private opinion was almost certainly very sceptical of religion if not atheistic and regarded Islam as a bar to progress.⁵⁹ Indeed, ironically/^{it may} be argued that in giving such a central importance to religious renewal as a precondition to reform and progress, ^cAbdu'l-Bahā was being more genuinely an Islamic reformer than many of the other prominent figures of the reform movement who used Islam cynically (and only because they could see no alternative means of getting reforms adopted) and should therefore more accurately be described as Middle East reformers.

By giving lengthy examples from history of the manner in which a new religious impulse (such as Jesus' message or Muhammad's mission) was able to regenerate and ennoble decadent and stagnant civilizations,⁶⁰ ^cAbdu'l-Bahā's unexpressed conclusion is that only a fresh religious impulse (which for ^cAbdu'l-Bahā is, of course, the religion founded by his father) can revivify the Islamic world.

M. MOMEN

NOTES

- 1) With respect to their/opinions of Islam; for Malkam Khān, see Hamid Algar, Mīrzā Malkam Khān, Berkeley, 1973, pp. 9-15, 89-90; Shaul Bakhash, Iran: Monarchy, Bureaucracy and Reform under the Qajars: 1858-1896, London, pp. 15-16; Mangol Bayat, Mysticism and Dissent: Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran, Syracuse, New York, 1982, pp. 149-152. For Afghānī, see Nikki Keddie, Sayyid Jamāl al-Dīn "al-Afghānī", Berkeley, 1972, pp. 2, 16-17, 91; Elie Kedourie, Afghani and ^cAbduh, London, 1966, pp. 14-20; Bayat, Mysticism, pp. 143-8.
- 2) The Azalī contribution to the reform movement has received some attention; see Mangol Bayat, "Mirza Aqa Khan: A Nineteenth Century Persian Nationalist" Middle Eastern Studies Vol. 10 (1974), pp. 36-59 and *idem*, Mysticism, pp. 140-142, 157-161.
- 3) Keddie, Afghani, pp. 20-22.
- 4) Da'irat al-Ma^carif, Beirut, 1881, Vol. 5, "Babis"; see also Keddie, Afghani, p. 20n.
- 5) See Bahā'u'llāh's reference to this in Lawh-i Dunyā, Tablets of Bahā'u'llāh - revealed after the Kitāb-i-Aqdas, 1978, p. 25.
- 6) This is confirmed by Bahā'u'llāh in Lawh-i Dunyā, see previous note. There is some evidence of Afghānī having been influenced by Bahā'ī teachings in the fact that he is said to have considered Islam, Judaism and Christianity to be in perfect agreement, see Kedourie, Afghānī, p. 15.
- 7) Hasan M. Balyuzi, Bahā'u'llāh, King of Glory, Oxford, 1980, pp. 151-2, 153.
- 8) Ernest Renan, Oeuvres Completes (ed. H. Psichari), Paris, n.d., Vol. 10, p. 453.
- 9) See Ḥājī Mīrzā Haydar ^cAlī quoted in Balyuzi, Bahā'u'llāh, pp. 441-444.
- 10) Shaykh Kāzīm Samandar, Tārīkh-i Samandar, Tīhrān, 131 badī^c, p. 268-70.

- 11) At this point they converse about Mīrzā Abu'l-Faql Gulpāyganī, a prominent Bahā'ī then resident in Egypt.
- 12) Muḥammad Rashīd Ridā, Ta'rikh al-Ustādh al-Imām ash-Shaykh Muḥammad 'Abduh, Cairo, 1931, Vol. 1, pp. 930-931. Translation by Juan R. Cole with minor alterations by myself. It is of interest to note that 'Abduh, while in Beirut, is credited with having favoured a union of Islam, Christianity and Judaism. The essential unity of all religions being a major Bahā'ī principle, this may be a further evidence of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's influence on 'Abduh.
- 13) 'Abdu'l-Bahā wrote a Commentary on the Hadīth qudsī, Kuntu kanzan makhfiyan (I was a Hidden Treasure...) for Safvet Pasha.
- 14) References in this paper are to a second edition printed in Bombay, 1892, with the title: Kitāb-i Asrār-i Ghaybiyya li Asbāb al-Madaniyya. Translated in English firstly by Johanna Dawud with the title The Mysterious Forces of Civilisation, London, 1910 and later by Marzieh Gail with the title Secret of Divine Civilization, Wilmette, Ill., 1957. References hereinafter are cited as SDC followed by page number of the 1892 text and then Marzieh Gail's translation.
- 15) Muḥammad 'Alī Fayḍī (Hayat-i Hadrat-i 'Abdu'l-Bahā, Tīhrān, 128 Badī'/1971, p.42) quotes a statement written by Mīrzā Āqā Jān Khādisu'llāh on behalf of Bahā'u'llāh to this effect.
- 16) SDC pp. 81/62
- 17) In 1882 in Bombay. The first book printed was the Kitāb-i Iqān
- 18) See comments by Mustashāru'd-Dawla, Akhūndzāda and Malkam Khān's father in Bakhsh, Iran, p.81.
- 19) For details of these reforms, see Bakhsh, Iran, pp. 83-101.
- 20) SDC p. 8/6.
- 21) SDC p. 15/11.
- 22) See, for example, Mustashāru'd-Dawla's disillusioned words in Bakhsh, Iran, pp.90-91.

- 23) SDC p. 25/17. The two words that have been translated by Marzieh Gail as "parliaments" and "assemblies of consultation" and by myself as "council" and "assemblies of consultation" are "majālis" and "mahāfil-i mashvarat". The correct translation of these terms in the contemporary setting is somewhat problematical. Between 1859 and 1872, Nasīru'd-Dīn Shah set up a number of council with names such as Majlis-i Shawrā-yi Dawlati (Government Consultative Council) and the Majlis-i Darbār-i A'zam (Supreme Court Council). For details see Bakhsh, Iran, see under "Majlis" in index. In his book, Kitābcha-yi Ghaybī (Majm'ā-yi Athār-i Mīrzā Malkam Khān, Tīhrān, 1327/1948, pp. 24-25), Mīrzā Malkam Khān envisages the setting up of a legislative Majlis-i Tanzimāt (Council for Ordinances) and an executive Majlis-i Vuzarā. In all these contemporary uses of the word Majlis there is no implication of an elective element (as distinct from later when this term became used for Iran's elected parliament). Therefore it is perhaps inadvisable to use the term "parliament" to translate the word "majlis" at this time. Nevertheless, as will be mentioned shortly, 'Abdu'l-Bahā clearly envisages the introduction of an elected membership onto these bodies.
- 24) SDC p. 33/23.
- 25) SDC p. 25/17.
- 26) SDC p. 34/24
- 27) SDC pp. 127-8/96-7.
- 28) SDC p. 97/73.
- 29) SDC pp. 102-107/77-81.
- 30) SDC pp. 114-121/86-91, 122-125/92-94.
- 31) SDC pp. 96/72-3, 98/75.
- 32) SDC p. 98/75.
- 33) SDC p. 144/109. "The primary, the most urgent requirement is the promotion of education."
- 34) SDC pp. 26-7/18.

- 35) SDC pp. 139-140/105-6.
- 36) SDC pp. 79-84/60-63.
- 37) SDC p. 83/63.
- 38) SDC pp. 84-6/64-5.
- 39) SDC pp. 46-54/34-40.
- 40) SDC p. 62/46.
- 41) SDC pp. 54-77/41-59.
- 42) SDC pp. 77-8/59.
- 43) SDC pp. 94-7/71-3, 128-9/97-8.
- 44) SDC p. 36/26.
- 45) SDC p. 132/100; Qur'an 42:36.
- 46) SDC p. 132/100; Qur'an 3:153.
- 47) SDC pp. 25-31/36/42; Qur'an 5:85.
- 48) SDC pp. 149-153/112-115.
- 49) SDC pp. 142-5/107-110.
- 50) Cf. Akhūndzāda who in his writings (see Maktūbāt-i Kamālu'd-Dawla, 1860) also frequently refers to Iran's past glories. But whereas Akhūnzāda's purpose in referring to this theme is to attribute Iran's present degradation to the evils of Islam, 'Abdu'l-Bahā merely appears to use this as a means of encouraging and exhorting Iranians to greater efforts towards progress and as evidence that Iran is not inherently incapable of greatness.
- 51) Cf. the writings of Mīrzā Yūsif Khān Mustashāru'd-Dawla (Yik Kalama, 1870) and of Kayru'd-Dīn Pāshā, (Aqwam al-Masalik fi Ma'rifat Ahwal al-Mamalik, Tunis 1284/1867, pp. 82-4)
- 52) Cf. Khayru'd-Dīn Pāshā, see Albert Hourani, Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, Oxford, 1962, p. 89.
- 53) Mirza Malkam Khān withheld his name from his Kitābcha-yi Ghaybī. Algar postulates that "possibly the device was intended to impress Nāṣir-ad-Dīn Shāh with the disinterested nature of his proposal" which Algar describes as a "typical display of chalanry";

Algar, Malkum Khān, p. 27.

- 54) 'Abdu'l-Bahā's Maqāla-yi Sayyāh (A Traveller's Narrative) was also published anonymously.
- 55) Malkam Khān, Majmū'a-yi Athār, pp. 24-50; although as mentioned previously 'Abdu'l-Bahā does mention his intention of elaborating on this work in a further treatise and did indeed produce a further work, Risāla-yi Siyāsīyya (Treatise on Politics) in 1893.
- 56) Of the reformers of this period, perhaps only Ṭaḥṭāwī, writing at about the same time, gives education anything like the importance that 'Abdu'l-Bahā does; see Ṭaḥṭāwī, Al-Murshid al-Amīn li'l-Banāt wa'l-Banīn, Cairo, 1289/1872. Khayru'd-Dīn Pāshā in Tunisia did try to establish a codification of the Islamic law at about this time but was unable to do so; see Hourani, Arabic Thought, p. 93.
- 57) Malkam Khān, Kitābcha-yi Ghaybī in Majmū'a-yi Athār, pp. 15-16. See also Bayat, Mysticism, p. 163.
- 58) 'Abdu'l-Bahā was himself almost certainly influenced by Bahā'u'llāh's own clearly-expressed preference for democracy; see Tablet to Queen Victoria (dated circa 1868) in The Baha'i Revelation, London, 1955, p. 10.
- 59) See note 1.
- 60) 'Abdu'l-Bahā's conception of religion as the generating impulse of civilization is clearly inspired by Bahā'u'llāh's writings; see, in particular the Kitāb-i Īqān (Langenhain, Germany, 1980; translated by Shoghi Effendi, London, 1946).