

# BAHÁ'Í STUDIES BULLETIN

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## CONTENTS

<u>Editorial</u> .....	p. 2.
Mr. Stephen Lambden, <u>Antichrist-Dajjāl: Some notes on the Christian and Islamic Antichrist traditions and their Baha'í interpretation, Pt. II</u> .....	p. 3 f.
Dr. Denis MacEoin, <u>Problems of Scholarship in a Baha'í context</u>	p. 44 f.
Mr. Stephen Lambden, <u>Dr. MacEoin's 'Problems of Scholarship..': Some Thoughts</u> .....	p. 69 f.
<hr/>	
<u>Notes, Reviews and Communications</u> .....	p. 80 f.

## Baha'i Studies Bulletin

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 Baha'i religions (or the like), include contributions from both Baha'i and non-Baha'i academics, and be befittingly published rather than photostatically reproduced.

The success of this Bulletin, which has the blessing of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United Kingdom ( though they are not responsible for any of the views expressed within it ), 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 which would be welcomed:-

- a) Articles or short notes and studies whether, historical, philological, sociological or theological, etc.
- b) Bibliographical essays or notes.
- c) Copies of generally unavailable letters or "tablets" of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh, 'Abdu'l-Bahā or Shoghi Effendi whether in the original language(s) or in translation.
- d) Notices of recently published books or articles or reviews, etc: it would be particularly useful to receive notice of the now numerous publications in English, French, German, Persian and Arabic, etc., that are becoming available in many countries of the world.
- e) Previously unpublished notes or documents.
- f) Reports of work in progress or of seminars and conferences relating directly or indirectly to Baha'i studies.

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### Editorial

May I take this opportunity to apologize for the delay in issuing numbers 2 and 3 of Volume 1 of this Bulletin. The reasons for the delay have basically been that I have waited to receive articles promised but which never materialized and the time involved in 'throwing together' something of a 'space-filler' article on Antichrist-Dajjal in two parts.

Despite the enthusiasm with which this Bulletin has been received there has been a lamentable lack of support in terms of contributions. Many of us, I know for a fact, are in possession of many texts and documents of great importance which should be shared. There has always been a tendency among Baha'i intellectuals to covet unpublished-- and even published-- materials of importance for Baha'i studies. This is a great pity inasmuch as Baha'i scholarship cannot flourish unless there is a real sharing of important primary sources. We may all be busy but it does not take much time to post off a few pages that might have been lying around and which could well be of interest at least to some readers of this Bulletin.

Stephen Lambden (Ed).

\* Please note that it has been found necessary to raise the price of the Bulletin. Postal costs have gone up and the length of each issue has tended to increase. Each issue has so far cost more to produce and mail than the earlier subscription rates. Subscribers when renewing their order should pay according to the following rate: U.K. £2.00. Europe. £2.50.p. Rest of world/ USA. £3.00 ( or equivalent ) per issue.

## The Bahā'ī interpretation of the Antichrist-Dajjāl traditions.

Having sketched some aspects of the Antichrist-Dajjāl traditions in (largely) Christian and Islāmic sources we may now turn to their (Bābī-) Bahā'ī interpretation. <sup>138.</sup> Firstly, those Biblical texts that relate to the Antichrist tradition may be commented on along with a few notes on the figures thought to be referred to in them and who are believed by Bahā'īs to be manifestations of the Antichrist idea.

### Mīrzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad; the Son of Perdition and the Antichrist.

Mīrzā Yahyā who was entitled Subb-i Azal (The morn of eternity, c.1830-1912) was one of the half-brothers of the founder of the Bahā'ī movement, Mīrzā Hueayn 'Alī Bahā'u'llāh. The son of one of the concubines of Mīrzā Buzurg-i Nūrī (d.1839) he was only 13-14 years old when Siyyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bāb 'declared his mission' in Shiraz (Iran) in 1844.A.D. He, like his half-brother Bahā'u'llāh, became a Bābī (follower of the Bāb) and, though not one of the 'Letters of the Living' (Huruf-i Hayy) or prominent disciples of the Bāb, was generally recognized as being the nominal head of the Bābī community after the execution of the Bāb in Tabriz in July 1850. His leadership of the Bābī community proved to be largely ineffective for, on receipt of the news of his master's martyrdom he, at least in Bahā'ī sources, is said to have fled in disguise from Tihiran to Mazandarān and to have remained for several years in a state of marked dissimulation. <sup>139.</sup> Assuming various names and disguises he eventually joined Bahā'u'llāh and his close companions at Kirmanshah in 1853 journeying with them to Baghdad <sup>140.</sup> where they had been exiled after the Bābī attempt on the life of the Shāh in 1852.

Shortly after his arrival in Baghdād Mīrzā Yahyā assumed the name Hajj 'Alī-i Lāsh-Furūsh (implying that he was a silk dealer) and forged links with Siyyid Muhammad Isfahānī (d. 1872) a Bābī then resident in Karbilā. <sup>141.</sup> Siyyid Muhammad is represented in Bahā'ī sources as being, even at this early stage, antagonistic towards Bahā'u'llāh. He is represented as an evil schemer who fanned Mīrzā Yahyā's jealousy of his half-brother's growing prestige. <sup>142.</sup> While Mīrzā Yahyā as head of the Bābī community apparently elevated Siyyid Muhammad to the rank of 'First Witness of the Bayān' (Bābī movement) Bahā'u'llāh as we shall see, later excommunicated him (sometimes between 1863 and 1866). For Bahā'īs Siyyid Muhammad has come to be regarded as one of the most notorious manifestations of the Antichrist idea.

Due in large measure to the dissension and corruption within the Bābī community in Baghdād and elsewhere in the early 1850's Bahā'u'llāh decided to withdraw to Kurdistan, initially contemplating no return:

"In the early days of our arrival in this land (Irāq) when We discerned the signs of impending events, We decided, ere they happened, to retire. We betook Ourselves to the wilderness, and there, separated and alone, led for two years a life of complete solitude. By the righteousness of God! Our withdrawal contemplated no return, and our separation hoped for no reunion." 143.

During Bahā'u'llāh's absence from Baghdad (1854-1856) Mīrzā Yahyā failed to exercise an effective or charismatic leadership. That this was so may perhaps be highlighted by the fact that some 25 prominent Bābīe, including Mullā Muhammad Zarandī (d.c.1892) the Bahā'ī poet and historian, claimed to be divine incarnations or aspired to special leadership. 144. The erudite Mīrzā Asead Allāh of Khūy named Dayyān by the Bāb is, in certain sources, said to have made such a claim and to have written a treatise in support of it which he had presented to Mīrzā Yahyā. The latter, whose ability to answer doctrinal questions had for some proven to be inadequate, wrote in response a work entitled Mustayciz ('Sleeper Awakened') in which Dayyān was denounced in the strongest terms. Then, shortly after Bahā'u'llāh's return from Baghdad at the bidding of the "Mystic Source", Mīrzā Yahyā had Dayyān executed by his servant Mīrzā Muhammad Mazandarānī. Again, around the same time, Mīrzā Yahyā is said in Bahā'ī sources to have been the instigator of the murder of a cousin of the Bāb named Mīrzā 'Alī Akbar and to have prompted Mīrzā Āqā Jān to make (another) attempt on the life of the Shāh. 145. He is thus pictured in Bahā'ī sources as an immoral murderer or one whose main concern was to consolidate his position in the Bābī hierarchy— a position he was to occupy in order to divert hostile attention away from Bahā'u'llāh.

The Bāb, during his stay in Isfahan in 1846-7 took a second wife by the name of Fātima, the sister of Mullā Rajab 'Alī. He forbade marriage to either of his wives after his passing. Mīrzā Yahyā however, married the Bāb's second wife in about 1853 and gave her a very short time later to his accomplice Siyyid Muhammad. These forbidden marriages are regarded by Bahā'īs as the abominable acts of two men who were satanic in character. Such deeds are catalogued in detail in a good many of the writings of Bahā'u'llāh and his followers in which the evils of Mīrzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad are exposed. 146.

Having returned to Baghdad in March 1846 Bahā'u'llāh set about attempting to spiritually regenerate the confused and decadent Bābī community. He wrote, as he had done since 1853 when he had a mystical experience in Tihiran, sometimes lengthy "tablets" (alwāh) containing thinly veiled epiphanic claims. Many prominent Bābīs were attracted to him until in late April 1863 on the outskirts of Baghdad on route to Constantinople where he and other Bābīe had been exiled, he claimed the specific allegiances of a small group of his close companions— exactly what his claims were at this stage is not entirely clear though it is likely that he claimed to be the expected 'Him whom God would make manifest' (Man Yuzhiruhu'llāh) mentioned

in the Bāb's Persian Bayān and elsewhere. Mirza Yahya, who may not have been in Baghdād when Bahā'u'llāh made his claims slightly more explicit to his admirers, joined his half brother at Mosul and, like Siyyid Muhammad, journeyed with him to the Sublime Porte. At this time or in 1863 and for another three years or so, Bahā'u'llāh's claims do not appear to have been widely known or understood by the majority of Bābīs. Though there was widespread disillusionment with Mīrzā Yahyā's leadership it was not until 1866 that it became widely known that Bahā'u'llāh had condemned his half-brother and claimed to be Man Yuzhiruhu'llāh. Only later did Mīrzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad come to be fully recognized by the Bahā'īs as the Yājūj (Gog) and Mājūj (Magog) or the twin evil manifestations of the emergent Bahā'ī phenomenon. <sup>147.</sup>

In 1863 Bahā'u'llāh and his companions were again exiled to Adrianople where they remained for almost 5 years and where the intrigue of Mirza Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad came to assume critical proportions. Bahā'ī sources maintain that during the early Adrianople period (1863-1868) Mirza Yahyā made several attempts to poison or have Bahā'u'llāh killed. As Bahā'u'llāh's charismatic leadership and claims became more and more explicit his half-brother's dwindling prestige appears to have led him to adopt desperate measures in order to reassert his authority. In his Sūrat al-Aḥeāb (c.1864-5) Bahā'u'llāh represents himself as the one whose coming was predicted in both the Qur'ān and the writings of the Bāb. Such claims were specifically communicated to Mīrzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad in a letter of Bahā'u'llāh known as the Sūrat al-Amr (c.1865). They were rejected and Bahā'u'llāh withdrew to the house of Ridā Big where he remained completely cut off for several months (about March-May 1866). The goods of what became the Bahā'ī and Azalī factions were separated during a period referred to by Bahā'u'llāh as the "most great separation" which took place during the "days of stress" (ayyām al-shidād). <sup>149.</sup>

Bahā'u'llāh, in most of his major letters ("tablets") written after the "most great separation" (1866) makes explicit reference to the corruption and ungodliness of Mīrzā Yahyā and the "detestable Siyyid (Muhammad)". A veritable interior "battle of Armageddon" ensued as may be gathered from a perusal of Bahā'u'llāh's lengthy apologia the Kitāb-i Badī' (c.1867) and his Lawh-i Sirāj (c.1867). <sup>150.</sup> A little more than a year after emerging from his self-imposed "occultation" in the house of Ridā Big Siyyid Muhammad and a certain Mīr Muhammad-i Mukārī (who frequented both the Azalī and Bahā'ī camps) arranged a confrontation (mubāhila) between Bahā'u'llāh and Mīrzā Yahyā. The latter however, failed to appear at the mosque of Sultan Selim at the appointed hour (around August-September 1867), being thus discredited in the estimation of many. This episode is referred to by Bahā'u'llāh in a number of his writings, most notably (as its title suggests) a letter addressed to Mullā Sādiq-i Khurāsānī known as the Lawh-i Mubāhila. <sup>151.</sup>

Instead of confronting his half-brother whose ascendancy was by 1867 becoming more and more obvious Mirza Yahyā sent petitions to high ranking officials in Adrianople and elsewhere with the intention of discrediting him. He apparently accused Bahā'u'llāh of appropriating his government allowance to the extent that his (now separate) family were on the verge of starvation. Such representations along with those of Siyyid Muhammad and Āqā Jān Big-i Khamsā'ī an Azalī ex Turkish artillery officer and the marked hostility of Haji Mirzā Husayn Khan (the Persian ambassador at Constantinople) succeeded in evoking from Sultan 'Abd al-Azīz yet another decree of banishment. In 1868 Bahā'u'llāh and his companions were exiled to 'Akkā in Ottoman Syria and Mirza Yahyā and others were sent to Cyprus.

The banishment of Bahā'u'llāh and Mirzā Yahyā to separate places did not put a stop to the Bahā'ī - Azalī controversy. A number of Azalīs, including Siyyid Muhammad and Āqā Jān Big, were exiled to 'Akkā with Bahā'u'llāh and the Bahā'īs just as a few Bahā'īs, among them the famous Bahā'ī calligrapher Mishkīn Qalam, accompanied Yahyā and his family to Cyprus. Some two and a half years after their arrival the 'Akkā exiles were released from strict confinement inasmuch as the citadel of 'Akkā was taken over for military purposes in 1870. The Azalīs began feeding malicious reports to their captors and tensions started to erupt. Bahā'u'llāh attempted to restrain his followers but did not succeed in preventing about 7 of them banding together and murdering at least three Azalīs. Siyyid Muhammad Āqā Jān Big and a brother-in-law of Mirzā Yahyā named Mirzā Ridā-Quliy-i Tafriḡhī were slaughtered in January 1872. This episode not only endangered Bahā'u'llāh's life and stained the annals of Bahā'ī history but served to increase that Bahā'ī - Azalī controversy which, though the Azalīs are practically non-existent, continues to the present day. 152.

Mirza Yahyā remained in Cyprus until his death in 1912. Though he had written a great deal and appointed an Azalī hierarchy and successor his support had dwindled to such an extent that he was buried according to the Muelim rite. Shortly before his own passing Bahā'u'llāh in his Lawh-i ibn-i Dhī'b (c. 1890-1) bemoaned the actions of his half-brother in the following terms:

"Alas, alas, for the things that have befallen Me!  
By God! There befell Me at the hands of him whom I  
nurtured (Mirzā Yahyā), by day and by night, what hath  
caused the Holy Spirit, and the dwellers of the  
Tabernacle of the Grandeur of God, the Lord of this  
wonderous Day, to lament." 153.

Bahā'u'llāh claimed to be the return of Christ in many of his writings composed during the Adrianople (1863-8) and 'Akkā (1868-1892) periods of his ministry. On the other hand Mirzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad came to be seen by Bahā'īs as manifestations of the Antichrist idea whose appearance was predicted in the Bible.

More specifically, Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian of the Bahā'ī Cause from 1921-1957 whose exposition of Bahā'ī scripture is regarded by Bahā'īs as infallible, has identified Mīrzā Yahyā with the "son of perdition" mentioned in II Thess. 2:3f and named Siyyid Muhammad the Antichrist of the Bahā'ī Dispensation. <sup>154.</sup>

Shoghi Effendi's identification of Mīrzā Yahyā with the "son of perdition" of II Thess. 2:3ff agrees with that of the Bahā'ī post and writer Mīrzā 'Alī 'Ashraf of Lāhījān known as 'Andalīb. He had met the orientalist E.G. Browne in Yazd (Iran) in 1888 whom he not only encouraged to visit Bahā'u'llāh at 'Akkā but for whom he wrote a Persian tract shortly before Bahā'u'llāh's passing in 1892. <sup>155.</sup> In this apologetic work 'Andalīb applies a large number of Biblical texts to the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh and thinks it obvious that II Thess 2:3ff refers to the evil of Mīrzā Yahyā. He wondered how Christian missionaries (whom he incidentally thought were the false prophets mentioned in Matt 24:24) could fail to discern this specific prophetic allusion. Was not the evil Yahyā, the "man of sin", destroyed by the "breath" (= creative word of God/Bahā'u'llāh) of his half-brother's mouth? (refer II Thess 2:8). So both 'Andalīb and Shoghi Effendi maintained. <sup>156.</sup>

Though it is not as obvious as 'Andalīb imagined that II Thess. 2:3ff refers to Mīrzā Yahyā (we shall see below that this pericope was referred to Karīm Khān Kirmānī by 'Abd al-Karīm Tehrānī) the following alleged correspondences probably contributed to the identification:-

- 1) Since Bahā'u'llāh was the return of Christ who is to destroy the "son of perdition" by the breath of his mouth Mīrzā Yahyā as the arch enemy of the returned Christ must be the "son of perdition". Bahā'u'llāh defeated his half-brother Mīrzā Yahyā by condemning him in his writings or (as 'Andalīb pointed out) through the breath of his mouth. cf. the Lawn-i Mubāhila.
- 2) According to II Thess 2:4 the "son of perdition" is to "exalt himself against every so-called god" and "eat himself" "in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God". This might suggest to the Bahā'ī exegete Mīrzā Yahyā's epiphanic pretensions and his condemnation of other claimants to divine status including Bahā'u'llāh himself. That the evil one should eat himself in the temple of God, could also be taken to predict Mīrzā Yahyā's usurpation of Bahā'u'llāh's claim to divinity: the word templ as haykal (as it is in certain Arabic translations of II Thess 2:8) suggesting not Jerusalem but the physical body of the manifestation of God (mazhar-i illāhi). cf. Bahā'u'llāh's Sūrat al-Haykal c.1873? <sup>157.</sup>
- 3) The "lawless one", according to II Thess 2:9, is to appear by the "activity of Satan" just as Mīrzā Yahyā was thought to have been deceived and prompted by the satanic Siyyid Muhammad.

Modern Biblical scholars have identified a number of OT texts that (though Paul does not directly quote them) seem to lie behind II Thess 2:1ff. i.e. Ezek. 28:2ff, Isa 14:12ff, Dan 11:36. The passage has been thought by some to have been influenced by Caligula's attempt to set up an effigy of himself in the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem (destroyed in 70 A.D.) and it is of interest to note that Isa 14:12ff (which the author of II Thess drew on and which is identified as a funeral lament or mashal over the king of Babylon—perhaps Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus) has been applied by a few of the church fathers to the Antichrist and by a few Bahā'ī writers to Mīrzā Yahyā. <sup>158.</sup>

"How art thou fallen from heaven, O Day Star, son of the Dawn!  
(Heb =  $\text{בֶּן־בֹּקֶר} \text{ שֶׁנִּפְלַח מִן־הַשָּׁמַיִם}$ ). How are you cut down to the ground, you  
who laid the nations low! You said in your heart, 'I will  
ascend to heaven; above the stars of God I will set my throne  
on high..I will make myself like the Most High ( $\text{כְּדֹמְיָיו}$ ).'" 159.

What in this text evidently led to its application to Mīrzā Yahyā was the  
phrase "Day star, son of the Dawn" ( the Hebrew  $\text{בֶּן־בֹּקֶר}$  ) suggests the morning  
star and  $\text{בֹּקֶר}$  the dawn; cf. LXX eosphoros and Vulg. Lucifer ) for dawn or  
morn, Arabic subh, suggests his title Subh-i Azal, 'the morn of sternity'

cf. for example, the Arabic translation of the OT published by Richard  
Watts in 1831 where Isa 14:12a reads: كيف سقطت من السماء كوكب الصبح  
الشرق في الصباح 160.

Though Bahā'u'llāh does not, as far as I am aware, himself apply either II Thess.  
2:3ff or Isa 14:12ff to his half-brother he does, in at least two of his writings,  
refer Amos 4:13 ( which describes the majesty and omnipotence of God as judge and  
controller of nature) to the circumstances of his own mission and to his eclipse  
of Subh-i Azal.

In a lengthy Persian "tablet" of the <sup>c</sup>Akkā period perhaps written in the late  
1880's Bahā'u'llāh, after applying various passages from the Bāb's writings to  
himself as the concealed yet "most great announcement" (cf. Qur'ān 78:2 ) and quoting  
and commenting on a number of Biblical texts ( Mk 13:32/Matt. 24:36, Joel 2:11b, Jer.  
30:7a, Psalm 108:90 and Isaiah 40:9-10a ), refers to Amos 1:2 and 4:12b-13. <sup>161</sup>. The  
translation of the latter text which is quoted in Arabic is as follows:

"Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel, For, lo, He that formeth the  
mountains and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what is  
his thought, that maketh the morning darkness (يجعل الفجر  
ظلاما) and treadeth upon the high places of the earth (مشرف  
الارض) the Lord (ربهم), the God of Hosts (اله الجنود)  
is his name." 162.

Bahā'u'llāh comments on this text in Persian. He states that it refers to his  
disclosure of his hidden majesty around the year 80 (thamānīna) or 1863-4. A.D.  
(= 1,260. A.H.) The " high place of the earth" ( glossed in Persian as بلندیهای  
ارض) signifies the " great city" (مدینه کبیره) or Constantinople (Istanbul)  
and " these regions" (این اطراف) or the area around <sup>c</sup>Akka and Mt. Carmel/  
Haifa in Syria (Palestine). The "Lord of hosts" is Bahā'u'llāh himself who  
after 1863 or 1,260. A.H. made Mīrzā Yahyā the " false dawn" (صبح کاذب)  
darkness. The Arabic of Amos 4:13b, يجعل الفجر ظلاما is evidently taken to be  
an allusion to Subh-i Azal for Bahā'u'llāh understands الفجر to imply صبح  
in terms of his "spiritual defeat" of Mīrzā Yahyā during the Adrianople and <sup>c</sup>Akkā  
periods of his ministry.



In his last major work the Lawn-i ibn-Dhi'b (c.1890-91) Bahā'u'llāh again quotes Amos 4:12b-13 in (identical) Arabic translation and adds some comments in Persian:

" He (Amos) saith that he maketh the morning ( فجر ) darkness ( تاريك ) By this is meant that if, at the time of the Manifestation of Him who conversed on Sinai ( ظهور مكرم طور , i.e. Bahā'u'llāh's proclamation of his mission) anyone were to regard himself as the true morn ( صبح صادق ), he will through the might ( قوت ) and power ( قدرت ) of God be turned into darkness ( تاريك ). He truly ( i.e. Mīrzā Yahyā ) is the false dawn ( صبح كاذب ), though believing himself to be the true one ( صادق ). Woe unto him, and woe unto such as follow him ( i.e. the Azalīs ) without a clear token from God, the Lord of the Worlds." 163.

After quoting a few passages from the book of Isaiah Bahā'u'llāh goes on to state that these Biblical texts, which he has quoted in illustration of his own greatness and divinity and the falsity of such other claimants as Mīrzā Yahyā, stand in "no need of commentary" being as "shining and manifest as the sun". 164. The allusion to Subh-i Azal can readily be discerned. Then, underlining the fact that Biblical ( and other ) texts he has quoted point to his own exalted station and not to the pretensions of Mīrzā Yahyā and the Azalīs Bahā'u'llāh exhorts mankind to fear God and give no heed to the breakers of God's covenant:

" Say: Fear God, O people, and follow not the doubts of such as shout aloud, who have broken the covenant of God and his Testament, and denied His mercy that hath preceded all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth." 165.

Bahā'u'llāh thus himself applies Biblical texts to the matter of his eclipse of Subh-i Azal the nominee of the Bāb. Though he does not apply such texts to the person of Siyyid Muhammad he does condemn him in a large number of his writings. It is of interest to note that though Bahā'u'llāh rebuked those Bahā'īs who murdered Siyyid Muhammad and other Azalīs in Akkā in January 1872 (see below) he, in his al-Kitāb al-Aqdas (c.1873) not only refers to Mīrzā Yahyā as the "dawning place of deviation" ( مطلع الأعراض ) but appears to speak of Siyyid Muhammad's death as an act of God. He writes in the latter connection: " God verily, hath taken the one who led you [ Mīrzā Yahyā ] astray" ( قد أخذ الله من أغوال ). 166. Many of Mīrzā Yahyā's evils are, in Bahā'ī scripture and by Bahā'ī writers, attributed to Siyyid Muhammad the Antichrist of the Bahā'ī dispensation. Abdu'l-Bahā has described the relationship between them as like that which exists between the "sucking child" ( Mīrzā Yahyā ) and the "much prized breast" ( Siyyid Muhammad ) of its mother. 167. Similarly, Shoghi Effendi in his book God Passes By (1944) refers to Siyyid Muhammad's manipulation of Mīrzā Yahyā in the following terms:

" The black-hearted scoundrel who befooled and manipulated this vain and flaccid man [ Mīrzā Yahyā ] with consummate skill and unyielding persistence was a certain Siyyid Muhammad.. notorious for his inordinate ambition, his blind obstinacy and uncontrollable jealousy.. that living embodiment of wickedness, cupidity and deceit.. " 168.

The ( proto-) Antichrist and associated imagery in the Apocalypse.

Though Bahā'u'llāh was, as will have been evident, familiar with the Bible and not infrequently quoted it he only rarely refers to the Revelation of John. <sup>169.</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahā however, held the Apocalypse to be a truly inspired work and, often in response to questions from occidental Bahā'īs, wrote detailed commentaries on many of its verses. <sup>170.</sup> Indeed, one of his earliest communications to the Bahā'īs of America consists of a "rewritten midrash" on Rev 21:1-7 in the course of which he writes, "This is the truth and what truth is greater than the Revelation of St. John the Divine?" <sup>171.</sup> Shoghi Effendi similarly, in a letter to R.J. Moffett expressed his conviction that, "The Book of Revelation is a very important book and very important in teaching the interpretation of Biblical passages to Christians." <sup>172.</sup>

As Shī'ī theosophists and divines fostered an esoteric and at times qabbalistic Qur'ānic exegesis which may be traced back in Imāmī circles to the learned sixth Imām, Ja'far Sādiq (d.c.765.A.D.) so have many Shaykhīs, Bābīs and Bahā'īs given great importance, especially when dealing with eschatologically oriented materials, to an allegorical or 'spiritual' hermeneutic. The Bahā'ī interpretation of the Apocalypse is not infrequently almost as abstruse in its allegorically oriented exegesis (or one might say eisegesis) as the fantastic imagery of the seer of Patmos is bewildering. During his tour of the West 'Abdu'l-Bahā summed up his own approach to the Book of Revelation (and indeed the Bible as a whole) when he said: "The Revelations of St. John are not to be taken literally but spiritually." <sup>173.</sup> Every word of the Apocalypse has profound significance and, in 'Abdu'l-Bahā's opinion, enshrines cryptic prophecies of events in (for the most part) Islāmic and Bābī-Bahā'ī history. Though certain texts are given a non-literal "outer" as well as an esoteric or "inner" interpretation others allude to concrete historical events associated with the rise of Islām and the missions of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. <sup>174.</sup> The Bahā'ī interpretation of the Apocalypse overrules those texts that imply its imminent (1st-2nd century) fulfillment or realization in favour of a mystic, qabbalistic and futuristic interpretation that at times calls to mind the Biblical exegesis of the Qumran sectaries. <sup>175.</sup>

It will not be possible to discuss here the details of the Bahā'ī interpretation of the Apocalypse— even with respect to those images or texts of interest in connection with (proto-) Antichrist imagery. The source materials are in fact widely scattered and to some extent unpublished. Many oral statements about the significance of verses or chapters within the Apocalypse were made by 'Abdu'l-

Bahā and Shoghi Effendi. They were sometimes noted down but remain for the most part in MSS and unavailable. <sup>176.</sup>

From at least as early as the 1890's such oriental Bahā'ī writers as Mīrzā Abū al-Fadl Gulpāygānī (1844-1914) the father of the Bahā'ī interpretation of the Bible and Haji Mīrzā Haydar 'Alī (d. 1921) were "unsealing" the mysteries of the Apocalypse. <sup>177.</sup> American converts to the Bahā'ī movement have from the beginning shown a great interest in the interpretation of the Book of Revelation. In this they were much encouraged by Ibrahim George Kheir-  
-alla (1849-1930) their first teacher who may be regarded as the father of western Bahā'ī Bible speculation—Kheiralla was much influenced by Abū al-Fadl who himself had a great effect on Bahā'ī Bible speculation when he visited America during 1901-1904 at the command of 'Abdu'l-Bahā. <sup>178.</sup> Though during most of the ministry of Shoghi Effendi (1921-1957) interest was centered in missionary success and administrative efficiency rather than creative Biblical interpretation or detailed study of Bahā'ī doctrine and history the last twenty years or so have witnessed something of a rebirth of interest in the Apocalypse among American Bahā'īs. E. Marssilla's Quest for Eden <sup>179.</sup> paved the way for the publication of R.J. Moffett's New Keys to the Book of Revelation <sup>180.</sup> and most recently R.F. Rigg's complete commentary on the Apocalypss entitled The Apocalypse Unsealed. <sup>181.</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahā's hope that Bahā'īs would become sufficiently spiritually mature to be able to fathom the mysteries of the Apocalypse for themselves has, one might say, found something of a realization. <sup>182.</sup>

What now follows is a summary, based on the abovementioned sources, of the Bahā'ī interpretation of those parts of the Apocalypse that have been thought to contain (proto-) Antichrist imagery or which relate in their Bahā'ī interpretation to aspects of Bahā'ī understanding of the Antichrist-Dajjāl traditions. <sup>183.</sup>

1) The two witnesses and the beast from the bottomless pit (Rev 11:1-14).

'Abdu'l-Bahā delivered, during his "tired moments" at table during the years 1904-6, a large number of discourses some of which were recorded and (at least) two of which interpret chapters 11 and 12 (: 1-6) of the Apocalypse. <sup>184.</sup> Though there are earlier and sometimes conflicting Bahā'ī interpretations of these central chapters of the Apocalypse 'Abdu'l-Bahā's interpretation has determined their subsequent Bahā'ī exegesis—'Abdu'l-Bahā appears to have drawn on such interpretations of the Apocalypse as may be found in the writings of Mīrzā Abū al-Fadl and other early oriental Bahā'ī apologists. <sup>185.</sup> Rev 11:1ff, taken as a prophecy of events within (for the most part) Islamic and Bābī-Bahā'ī history, may be summed up as follows:

The measuring of the Temple (11:1-2) signifies the determination of the true condition of the "mystery of those holy souls who dwell in the Holy of Holies in purity and sanctity". Not measuring the outer court of the Temple which is given over to the nations for 42 months indicates the gentile or Islamic occupation of Jerusalem in the 7th century A.D. for 1,260 years (42 months = 1,260 days = 1,260 years; one day = one year on the basis of Ezek. 4:6) or from 622 A.D. until the time of the "manifestation" of the Bāb in 1844 A.D. (= 1,260 A.H.). Alternatively, or in a deeper sense, Rev. 11:1-2 indicates the eternal spiritual validity of the essence of religion (= the Holy of Holies) as opposed to the abrogation or modification of the outer form or social laws of religion (= the Holy City). 186.

The two witnesses (11:3-6) are the prophet Muhammad and Imām <sup>°</sup>Alī (d. 661.) whose religious cycle, the "cycle of the Qur'ān", lasted for 1,260 years (cf. above)—they are also the "two olive trees" and the "two lampstands" (11:4). The "fire" that came out of their mouths and consumed their enemies signifies their teaching and law the rejection of which results in destruction for "all their enemies were vanquished, put to flight and annihilated". That they have the power to stop the rainfall, turn water into blood and smite the earth with plagues is indicative of the exalted sovereignty of Muhammad and <sup>°</sup>Alī; their control over the dispersal of the bounty of their laws and teachings, their power to destroy nations and their right to educate the ignorant masses by force. 187.

The beast which rose out of the bottomless pit and which waged war on and slew the two witnesses (11:7f) is the Umayyad dynasty of Caliph which rose out of the bottomless pit of error against the "religion of Muhammad and the reality of <sup>°</sup>Alī" (i.e. against Shi'ī Islām as Bahā'īs understand it). This beast or these Caliphs waged a "spiritual war" against the "love of God" by flouting the divine laws and teachings. As a result the "religion of God" became as a "lifeless body without spirit". The corrupt Umayyad "beast" gained control of Jerusalem and Syria or "Sodom and Egypt" where true religion ceased to be practiced or where "our Lord was crucified" (11:8). It remained as a "lifeless body" until the advent of Bābism after 1,260 years (3 1/2 years = 42 months = 1,260 days, = 1,260 years = 1,260 A.H. or 1844 A.D. cf. above) when the "two witnesses" Muhammad and <sup>°</sup>Alī (spiritually) returned in the persons of the Bāb and his leading disciple Hāji Mullā Muhammad <sup>°</sup>Alī Bārfurūshī (Quddūs). Though brought back to life again the two witnesses were summoned by a "loud voice" to come up hither or attain the glory of martyrdom (11:11., there were both in fact martyred). Even "their enemies" testified to the greatness of their perfection. The "great earthquake" is that which took place in Shirāz after the Bāb's martyrdom in July 1850. In it many people suffered and were killed. Thus came to an end the "second woe" of Bābism which followed the "first woe" of Islām. The "third woe", the mission of Bahā'u'llāh, occurred shortly after the "second woe" of Bābism (11:14. cf. Ezek. 2:3). 188.

## 2) The woman, the man-child and the great red dragon (Rev. 12:1ff).

<sup>°</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā's explanation of the first six verses of the 12th chapter of the Apocalypse is again largely oriented around the Umayyad oppression of Shi'ī Islām: 189.

The woman clothed in the sun (12:1-2) is "that bride, the Law of God that descended upon Muhammad" (cf. Rev. 21:1ff). Her being clothed in the "Sun" and the "Moon" signifies the kingdoms of Persia and Turkey which were under the shadow of Qur'ānic law. The "crown of twelve stars" on her head symbolizes the twelve Imāms of Ithnā Asharī Shi'ī Islām who promoted the "law of Muhammad" like "stars shining in the heaven of guidance". The anguished cries and birthpangs of the "woman" are indicative of the affliction or agony of the law or reality of Shi'ī Islām the perfection of which came about with the advent of the Qā'im or the

Bāb. Due to Umayyad and neo-Umayyad suppression of Shī<sup>c</sup>īsm the Bāb or the Man-child of the woman and the twelfth Imām remained in a state of occultation (ghaybā) until the proclamation of Bābism aimed at the destruction of the "great red dragon" (see below) of neo-Umayyad corruption (this at least appears to have been what <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā had in mind when he commented on Rev 12:2 despite the Bahā'ī denial of the existence of the twelfth Imām as the son of the eleventh Imām al-Hasan al-Askarī). 190.

The great red dragon (12:4ff) symbolizes, as indicated, the dynasty of the Umayyads "who dominated the Muhammedan religion". Its "seven heads" and "ten crowns" signify seven countries and dominions controlled by the Umayyads: (1) the Roman dominion around Damascus, (2) Persia, (3) Arabia, (4) Egypt, (5) the dominion of Africa around Tunis, Morocco and Algeria, (6) the dominion of Andalusia or Spain and (7) the dominion of Turkistan and Transoxania. The "ten horns" of the "great red dragon" are the names of the Umayyad Caliphs counted without repetition and including, though not actually an Umayyad Caliph, Abū Sufyān ibn Ḥarb (d. c. 653 A.D.) a bitter enemy of the prophet Muhammad and father of Mu'āwīya I who is usually counted as the first of the Umayyad Caliphs. i.e. (1) Abū Sufyān, (2) Mu'āwīya I (661-680) + Mu'āwīya II (683-684), (3) Yazīd I (680-683) + Yazīd II (720-724) + Yazīd III (744), (4) Marwan I (684-685), Marwan II (744-750), (5) <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Malik (685-705), (6) al-Walīd I (705-715) + al-Walīd II (743-4), (7) Sulaymān (715-7), (8) <sup>c</sup>Umar (717-720), (9) Hishām (724-743) and (10) Ibrahīm (744). That the "great red dragon" slew a third of the "stars of heaven" means that the Umayyads from Mu'āwīya I to Marwan II slew a "third part of the lineage of Muhammad who were like the stars of heaven" for the second to fifth Imāms (Imām Ḥasan [d. 669], Imām Ḥusayn [d. 680], Imām <sup>c</sup>Alī Zayn al-<sup>c</sup>Abidīn [d. c. 712] and Imām Muhammad al-Bāqir [d. 731]) were their contemporaries (omitting that is, the first Imām, Imām <sup>c</sup>Alī who was assassinated by a Khājirite in 661, A.D., and bearing in mind that Shī<sup>c</sup>ī sources attribute the death of most if not all of the Imāms to the intrigues of the Umayyads and <sup>c</sup>Abbasids). Its standing before the woman about to deliver indicates the Umayyad effort to suppress Shī<sup>c</sup>īsm or put the Imāms to death in the light of their fear that the Messianic al-Qā'im bi'l-jihād or "Twelfth Imām" would arise and terminate their rule. 191.

The man-child (12:5f. cf. above), as we have mentioned, signifies the Bāb who claimed to be the Qā'im or "twelfth Imām" borne of the "Law" or the pure tree of Shī<sup>c</sup>ī Islam. His "rod of iron" is a sign of his "divine power and might" (not his sword) by means of which (presumably mystically speaking) he will "shepherd all the nations of the earth". That the man-child is to be "caught up" to the "throne of God" is taken as a prophecy of the Bāb's martyrdom. The fleeing of the woman into the wilderness where she had a place prepared and was nourished for 1,260 days means that the "Law of God" was fostered or became centered in the Arabian peninsula until the emergence of Bābism in 1844, A.D. (again 1,260 days = 1,260 years taken as 1,260, A.H. or 1844, A.D.). 192.

### 3) The beast which rose out of the sea (Rev 13:1-10).

No detailed exposition of the 13th chapter of the Apocalypse written by or attributed to <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā or Shoghi Effendi appears to exist though there are written and oral traditions or "pilgrim notes" about the two beasts of this chapter that have been expanded by Bahā'ī commentators. The significance of the first beast which arose out of the sea may be summed up as follows:

First beast (Rev 13:1-10) = Mu'āwīya I (? personifying the Umayyads). Its "mortal wound" which was healed indicates an assassination attempt on his life. 193.

Or, the first beast = the Umayyads personified by Abū Sufyān whose empire was reminiscent of that of Alexander the Great (= "like a leopard"), with its strength in Media-Persia (= "feet like a bear's") and its throne within the confines of ancient Babylonia (= "mouth like a lion's mouth" : refer Rev. 13: 2). The "wounded head" which was healed signifies Andalusia (Spain) where the Umayyad ʿAbd al-Rahmān I (d. 788 A.D.) who was the grandson of the tenth Umayyad Caliph Hisham (d. 743), established a Cordovan dynasty of Amīr that lasted for more than 300 years. 194.

4) The beast which rose out of the earth (Rev. 13:11ff).

The significance of this particular beast has been understood in different ways by different Bahā'ī writers who drew on the writings of ʿAbdu'l-Bahā and certain (unpublished) "pilgrim notes" which contain some interpretations of the Apocalypse attributed to Shoghi Effendi. It is generally agreed that the second beast symbolizes the ʿAbbasīd dynasty of Caliph (reigned 750-1,258 A.D.) though ʿAbdu'l-Bahā's explanations of the number of the beast (666) suggest otherwise.

Second beast = the ʿAbbasīd dynasty with its 36 Caliphs (+ the Ottoman Sultans) That this beast rises out of the "earth" indicates that the ʿAbbasīd came to power on the ruins (= the "earth") of the Umayyads. Its two "horns" are the titles Caliph and Sultan; Or, the fact that this "beast" has "two horns like a lamb" but spoke "like a dragon" signifies the initially pro-Shīʿī orientation of ʿAbbasīd propaganda (being "like a lamb") which subsequently took on a neo-Umayyad or anti-Shīʿī dimension (being "like a dragon"). Just as the second "beast" exercises all the authority of the first "beast" so did the ʿAbbasīds mirror the "image" of the Umayyads. They produced "great wonders", the glory of medieval Islamic civilization, but were inwardly corrupt. Indeed, the "mark" of the beast on the "right hand" and the "mark" of the beast on the "forehead" which restrict the livelihood or trade of the faithful symbolize the corrupt ʿAbbasīd administration of the kharāj or land tax (= the mark on the right hand) and the jizya or poll-tax (= the mark on the forehead). 195.

The number of the beast, 666 (Rev 13:18):

- a) "Regarding the Apocalypse of St. John, the beast, the numerical value of whose name is 666: the intent is the year, inasmuch as that beast who is the Umayyad king, appeared in the year 666 of the Christian era. This prophecy relates to the Holy Land" (ʿAbdu'l-Bahā). 196.

It is clear that the Umayyad ruler alluded to by ʿAbdu'l-Bahā in this letter is Mu'āwīya I whose Caliphate lasted from 661-680 A.D. He is evidently understood to be the second "beast" of Rev 13. The number of this "beast", 666, is taken to be the six hundredth and sixty-sixth year of the Christian era. Counting from the (supposed) date of Jesus' birth around 4-5 B.C. the year 661 results: the date of Mu'āwīya's usurpation of Imām Hasan's (supposed) position as Shīʿī Imām. On the other hand it has been thought that the number 666 refers to 666 A.D. when Mu'āwīya is said to have attempted to make Damascus the centre of the Muslim world and to have desecrated the twin holy cities Mecca and Medina. 197. Exactly what ʿAbdu'l-Bahā meant by the year 666 C.E. (?) is unclear. It seems probable that he had in mind the proclamation of Mu'āwīya as Caliph at Iliya' (Jerusalem) in the Holy Land (in 661 A.D.) and the subsequent consolidation of Umayyad power (around 666 A.D. [?]).

- b) "Six hundred and sixty-six in one sense refers to Napoleon" (ʿAbdu'l-Bahā).

This statement was made by ʿAbdu'l-Bahā in reply to a question put to him in 1920 by Dr. Lutfu'llāh Hakīm on behalf of the Bahā'ī writer E.T.

Hall (c.1880-1962) of Manchester (England) and written in a notebook. The latter was probably aware of the common identification of Napoleon Bonaparte (d.1821) with the beast whose number is 666 ( Napoleon was made by gematria to yield this number) or may possibly have wondered whether this were true as a result of reading or being informed of such speculations as are contained in I.G. Kheirall's Beha'u'llah (1st.Ed. 1900 ).<sup>199.</sup> Napoleon then, becomes yet another candidate for the position of the second beast though 'Abdu'l-Bahā, who often gave sympathetic answers to all manner of questions put to him, may not have taken this identification too seriously.

c) "As to the beast referred to in the Apocalypse, he was a soul who sought with his utmost power to destroy the Cause of God. He was the King of Persia, that is, one of the early kings" ('Abdu'l-Bahā ). 200.

It is obviously not clear whether this extract from a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā refers to the "second beast" of Rev 13 — though this would seem to be likely. Which "early" king of Persia is intended is also unclear though it is most probable that the "beast" who was an enemy of the Bāb-Bahā'ī movement is to be thought of as either Muhammad Shāh (d.1848) or, more likely, Nāsiri'd-Dīn Shāh (reigned 1848-1896) conceived as a neo-Umayyad type ruler. Perhaps 'Abdu'l-Bahā, in the light of Rev 13:15 (or less probably Rev 12:7ff) where we are informed that the "second beast" revives the "image" of the "first beast" and the Shī'ī, Bābī-Bahā'ī notion of the return (ra'ja) of the evil Umayyads and their like, thought of Nāsiri'd-Dīn Shāh as the eschatological appearance of the Beast. We shall have occasion below to note the sometimes marked hatred exhibited by certain groups of Bābīs towards the Qājārs whom they saw as manifestations of the Antichrist-Dajjāl or as neo-Umayyads.

A "pilgrim note" attributed to Shoghi Effendi, it is worth noting at this point, has it that the revived "image" (refer Rev 13:15 which to the Bahā'ī reader might suggest the notion of ra'ja or "return" ) of the first beast (= the Umayyads, etc ) represents anti-Bābī measures taken by a corrupt Shī'ī clergy at the time of the Bāb.<sup>201.</sup> If the Shī'ī clergy can be thought of as the "image" of the revived Umayyad beast then such a Qājār ruler of Nāsiri'd-Dīn Shāh might be thought of as the "beast" (that is the revived beast) itself.

On a visit to 'Akkā and Haifa in 1909 (?) an English Bahā'ī lady named Ethel J. Rosenburg ( 1858-1930) noted down 'Abdu'l-Bahā's explanation of the 16th chapter of the Apocalypse. These notes, summarized below along with certain other suggested interpretations, throw further light on the above. 'Abdu'l-Bahā all but identifies the Qājārs as evil manifestations despite his careful avoidance of being labelled anti-royalist or his efforts to put across a politically neutral stance ( hence perhaps also the vagueness of the phrase "one of the early kings" in the passage quoted above).<sup>202.</sup> The seven angels

who pour out their seven vials or bowls (Rev 16:lff) are "seven powers" or the unleashing of various forces around the time of or at the time of the rise of the Bābī-Bahā'ī movement. The pouring out of the seven vials signifies various manifestations of Islāmic corruption and Bābī-Bahā'ī oppression.

Vial 1 (16:2) which is poured upon the "earth" signifies the corruption of earthly rulers (= the "earth") in Islāmic lands around the time of the rise of Bābism. Those who bear the "mark of the beast" are the evil hypocrites.

Vial 2 (16:3) which is poured upon the "sea" indicates the corruption of the ulamā<sup>c</sup> and the learned (= the bloody sea) which was the cause of spiritual "death".

Vial 3 (16:4-7) which is poured upon the "rivers" and the "fountains of water" alludes to the corruption of lesser divines and teachers.

Vial 4 (16:8-9) which is poured upon the "sun" and which is allowed to scorch those who curse the name of God signifies the oppressive and ungodly rule of the Islāmic kingdoms of the East (= the sun; in particular the Ottoman Empire [ or one of its Sultans? ] or Persia (?) [ or one of its Shāhs? ]). 203.

Vial 5 (16:10-11) which is poured upon the "seat of the beast" whose kingdom is in darkness and whose subjects curse God indicates Persia and its corruption ( or Constantinople-Istanbul the seat of the Ottoman Sultan whose Empire was in darkness). 204.

Vial 6 (16:12-16) which is poured into "the great river Euphrates" which was dried up to prepare the way of the kings of the East refers to the opposition of the Ottoman and Persian people to the Bābī-Bahā'ī movements (?) (or the triumph of Bahā'u'llāh and his successors [= the "kings of the east"] over a corrupt Bābism in the region around Baghdad, Irāq from the 1850's onwards [= the dried up Euphrates region]). 205.

The dragon ( or mouth of the dragon= neo-Umayyad Qājārs?) is Haji Mīrzā Āqāsī the corrupt vizier of Muhammad Shah ( see further below ).

The false prophet = Haji Mīrzā Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmanī ( see further below ) who claimed to be subject to divine revelations or said, "My words are revealed from above" ( or possibly Mīrzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muḥammad [ see above ] ). 206.

The (three) foul spirits like frogs= the evils ( anti-Bābī-Bahā'ī activities ) of the Persians ( or evil principles and false teachings ). 207.

The battle of Armageddon= the troubles at "Roumelia and Macedonia" ( very likely as noted [ see fn. 150 below ] Bahā'u'llāh's confrontation with Mīrzā Yahyā and the Azalis at Adrianople from 1866 onwards; or those inner and outer conflicts and wars [ particularly the first world war of 1914-1918 ] that have troubled mankind since the advent of Bahā'u'llāh ). 208.

Vial 7 (16:17-21) which is poured into the "air" ( thus permeating all things ) predicts a great or world war to come ( ? .i.e. W.W.I ) in which "small kingdoms" (= "islands" and "mountains", v.20) will suffer (= "fled away") and be bombed (= ( have "great hailstones" fall on them from heaven, v.20 ). 209.

The great city or great Babylon divided into three parts by a great earthquake= the ( coming? ) rule of Babylonia (= Irāq, etc ? ) by three nations, or kings, the English, the Persians and the Turks as a result of ( coming? ) upheavals ( ? ) ( or the earthquake or irreligious doubts which will divide corrupt human civilization into those who give allegiance to the "three false gods" of Nationalism, Racialism and Communism [= Babylon in three parts ] ). 210.



5) The harlot and the Scarlet Beast (Rev. 17).

The Bahā'ī writers Marsella, Moffett and Riggs, who each drew heavily on the written or oral exposition of the Apocalypse attributed to <sup>C</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi (often without indicating their sources), have all to some extent commented on the 17th chapter of the book of Revelation. The following notes set out a few of their remarks of interest in connection with our theme:-

The harlot or great whore = the corrupted Word of God (the Umayyad and neo-Umayyad corruption of pure Shi'ī Islam) seated upon the "many waters" of humanity and resident in the "wilderness" of spiritual desolation or a symbol of Persia. Her glorious royal attire symbolizes her clientele, namely the corrupt priesthood and temporal rulers. 211.

The scarlet beast on which the great whore sits = the Umayyads and <sup>C</sup>Abbāsids who were their "image" (cf. on 12:3ff below and the comments of <sup>C</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā on the 7 heads and 10 horns of the first beast). That this beast "was" signifies that it existed as the empire of Alexander the Great which did not exist in the 1st century A.D. or "is not" but did exist or "is" in the form of the Umayyads and neo-Umayyads (17:11). It ascended out of "the bottomless pit of error" in the 7th century A.D. to the wonderment of "they that dwell on the earth" whose names are not written in the "Book of Life" or who are not firm in the Shi'ī (proto-Bābī-Bahā'ī) covenant.

The 7 heads or 7 mountains on which the harlot sits are 7 dominions (cf. below on Rev 12:3f) symbolized by 7 kings who are the Umayyads and their dominions. That 5 of them are fallen means that 5 of the 7 (previously mentioned) Umayyad dominions were under the control of foreign powers before the Umayyads rose from the "bottomless pit" of error. i.e. (1) the Byzantine dominion around Damascus (Syria, Palestine) dominated by the "Romans"; (2) the Arabian dominion, dominated by the Romans, Byzantines, Abyssinians and Persians; (3) the Egyptian dominion, dominated by Romans and Byzantines; (4) the African/Libyan dominion, dominated by Romans, Vandals and Byzantines; (5) the Andalusian/Spanish dominion, dominated by the Romans, Vandals, Visigoths and Byzantines. Persia is the dominion that "is" in that it was under the dominions of the Selucids, Parthians and Sassanids up until the rise of the Umayyads. The dominion that is to come or "has yet to come" and "remain only a little while" was the dominion of Turkestan-Transoxania the home of mere nomadic pastoralists and sedentary cultivators until the region became Turkish in the 6th century A.D. This latter dominion, it is further thought, was conquered in the 1st 7th-8th centuries A.D. remaining only a "little while" until it ceased to exist after the invasion of the region by Genghis Khan in the 13th century A.D.

The 8th king which "belongs" to the 7th and goes to perdition is the institution of the Ottoman Caliphate which was abolished by the Turkish Grand National Assembly in 1924.

Furthermore, the 10 horns or 10 kings, the Umayyads, are said to have received power for "one hour" or part of a day taken as a year of 360 days transformed into years roughly indicating the period of Umayyad supremacy. i.e. the 89 years from Mu'āwiya I until Marwan II or 661-750 A.D. is alluded to as an "hour" or part of a "day" of 360 years.

Finally, the Umayyad-<sup>C</sup>Abbāsid beast personified as the Ottoman Caliph(ate) and representing the corrupt Islamic dominions "shall make war on the lamb" or the Bāb and his followers. The latter however, will gain "spiritual victory" over the "beast". 212.

We may conclude this partial synopsis of the Bahā'ī interpretation of the (proto-) Antichrist imagery in the Apocalypse by briefly noting the way in which passages of interest within the 19th and 20th chapters of the book of Revelation have been interpreted. <sup>213.</sup>

The figure on a white horse whose name is "The Word of God" (Rev 19:11ff) = Bahā'u'llāh who rides the steed of divinely inspired doctrine or "true theology" and whose secret name, written on the "white stone" of the covenant of God, is Bahā the mystery of the "Greatest Name" ( al-ism al-a'zam ; Bahā = splendour; Mirza Husayn 'Alī came to be known as Jinab-i Bahā around the time of the Bābī conference at Badasht in 1848 ). His "vesture dipped in blood" symbolizes his sufferings or was a red robe which he wore (cf. Isa 63:1ff) and his "heavenly army" are the people of Bahā, the Bahā'īs who are the "hosts" of the "Lord of Hosts" ( Bahā'u'llāh ). <sup>214.</sup>

The angel standing in the sun who calls the fowls of heaven to feast on the flesh of kings, captives, mighty men, horses and their riders, and of all men = Bahā'u'llāh (?) whose followers (= the "fowls of heaven") will "feast on" or overcome the tyranny of corrupt rulers, military leaders, false theology, war, economic injustice and ungodliness ( the latter four evils being the 4 horsemen of Rev. 6:2ff ). The Bahā'īs or "hosts" of the "Lord of Hosts" will also overcome the corrupt ulamā or Muslim clergy and the "false prophet" who is probably to be thought of as Karīm Khān Kirmānī or Mirzā Yahyā ( see below and cf. Rev 19:18-20 ) as well as the "beast" ( Rev 19:19-20 ) who is apparently to be identified in this instance with those 19th century Islamic divines who opposed the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh. <sup>215.</sup>

The angel with the key to the bottomless pit who bound the dragon/ serpent/ devil/ satan for 1,000 years = Bahā'u'llāh (?) in whose "Day" the souls of those righteous ones ( Christian martyrs, etc ) who were not seduced by the Umayyad/neo-Umayyad beast will "return" or be "resurrected" ( mystically speaking ) and reign with the returned Christ (= the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh ) for 1,000 years. ( Rev 20:4ff ). Those pious ones who sit on thrones may be the members of the Bahā'ī Universal House of Justice ( first elected in 1963 ) and those who will be spiritually "resurrected", apart from true Christians, will include members of non-Christian religions ( in other words, the true spirituality manifested by true believers in the past great religions will, in the "Day" of Bahā'u'llāh, be manifested by the Bahā'īs who are their "return" ). The wayward souls who are not "resurrected", the Umayyad type "rest of the dead" who rejected Bahā'u'llāh or the Bāb (?) as the returned Christ, suffered the (implied) 'first death' for they had no part in the "first resurrection" or the advent of the Bābī (+ Bahā'ī ) spiritual regeneration which occurred 1,000 years after the death of the 11th Imām, Imām Hasan 'Askarī ( 260.A.H. / 874.A.D. ) or the birth or occultation of his (supposed) son the 12th Imām a millenium before the year of the Bāb's "declaration of his mission" in 1,260.A.H. or 1844.A.D. Those who did not reject Bahā'u'llāh or fall prey to the "second death" will have truly attained millennial beatitude in the new age ( 20:5 ). <sup>216.</sup>

Satan and Gog and Magog who will surround the camp of the saints but be devoured by heavenly fire = corrupt individuals with evil characteristics who, after the first millenium or so of the Bahā'ī dispensation ( ? roughly 1844 + 1,000 years ), will reject Bahā'u'llāh's successor ( another 'manifestation of God' ) or fail to be numbered among those souls who will attain the "second resurrection" despite another outpouring of the love of God. ( 20:7f ). <sup>217.</sup>

As has been indicated at various points in the above synopsis, the Bahā'ī interpretation of much of the eschatological imagery within the Apocalypse has its roots in the Shī'ī notion of the "return" of Umayyad type oppression or <sup>218.</sup> oppressors who become "Antichrist" figures in the sense of being anti-Bābī-Bahā'ī. We have seen that it is either explicitly stated or implied that

certain Qājār rulers and statesmen, most notably Nāsiri' d-Dīn Shāh and Hajji Mīrzē Āqāsī, or such opponents of the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh as the Shaykhī leader Karīm Khān Kirmānī and Mīrzā Yahyā, were "beasts" in the sense of being the return of Umayyad oppressors. The Bahā'ī interpretation of the (proto-) Antichrist imagery in the Apocalypse thus mirrors the Bābī application of those Shī'ī eschatological traditions that speak of the return of the hated Umayyads or their like on whom vengeance was expected to be taken by the Mahdī/Qā'im or returned Imām Husayn with some 72 or 313 or more true Shī'itee.

From around the time of the death of Muhammad Shāh in 1848 the Bābīs, inspired by such traditions as that handed down by al-Mufaddal ibn 'Umar from Imām Ja'far Sādiq, manifested a marked anti-Qājār hostility and came to raise the "black standard" of revolt in the name of the Qā'im (and/) or the returned Imām Husayn.<sup>219</sup> Those Bābīs who participated in the struggle that took place around the shrine of Shaykh Abū 'Alī al-Fadl Tabarsī in Māzandarān (Irān) from September 1848 appear to have thought of themselves as situated in (the new) Karbalā, led by the returned Imām Husayn (identified at times with Mullā Husayn Bushrū'ī) and constituting the 313 companions of the Qā'im (thought by some to be either Mullā Husayn Bushrū'ī or Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Quddūs) engaged in a holy war (jihad) against royalist and evil forces seen as the "family of Abū Sufyān" (Tehran being identified with Damascus). The scene depicted in such traditions as the following were thought to have been realized by Bābīs who imagined themselves "involved in the final jihad against the forces of the Antichrist",<sup>220</sup>

"When al-Qā'im will rise in Khurasan, he will proceed to Kufa and thence to Multan, passing through the jazira of Banu Kawan; but al-Qā'im among us will rise in Jilan among the people of Daylam and there will be for my son the Turkish flags.." <sup>221</sup>

In some of the eschatological Shī'ī traditions (which are far from consistent) the characteristics of the Dajjāl mentioned in the Sunnī traditions are associated with various hated Umayyads, most notably Mu'awiya I and Yazīd I who, along with al-Sufyānī (a Syrian/Umayyad "Messiah figure" who in Shī'ī traditions becomes as Anti-Mahdī/Qā'im"/Imām Husayn to appear in the last days) are to reappear and be defeated in the eschatological struggle or jihad.<sup>222</sup> Developed Shī'ī apocalyptic it might be said, exhibits a highly complex "Antichrist" (or more accurately though clumsily Anti-Mahdī/Qā'im) tradition which was creatively interpreted by the early Bābīs and which contributed to the Bahā'ī interpretation of the (proto-) Antichrist imagery in the Apocalypse. <sup>223</sup>

The Antichrist(s) of the Johannine Epistles.

As noted below the Johannine Epistles are the only Biblical writings that explicitly mention the Antichrist figure which is 'demythologized' in the sense of signifying the eschatological appearance of a plurality of heretics or 'antichrists'. Despite the fact that Bahā'ī writers have at times 'demythologized' the mainstream Antichrist tradition like the author(s) of 1 and 2 John these texts are seldom quoted by them. <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā was however, asked about the meaning of 1 Jn 4:3 in February 1909 by an American Bahā'ī couple, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph H. Hannan. In their record of their pilgrimage to <sup>c</sup>Akkā and Haifa entitled Akka Light they note that they asked <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā the following question:

"Question- 2 Cor., 11:14-15. St. Paul says: Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness: and in 1 John 4:3, St. John speaks of Anti-Christ as the spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. What is the application of these teachings to this day, and how may the spirit of Anti-Christ be identified to-day?" 224.

<sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā's reply is of considerable interest. He begins by stating that these NT texts refer to the "great disturbance" that is to occur in the latter days. Exalted souls will be abased and lowly souls will attain great glory in these times just as Caiphas was abased and Peter and Mary Magdalene were elevated in the time of Christ. Thus, at the time of Bahā'u'llāh even Mirzā Yahyā became "the lowest of men, whereas remote souls became the nearest to the throne". The spirit of Antichrist which denies the bodily incarnation of Jesus in these days, <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā continues, signifies Haji Mirzā Muhammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī (see further below) who rejected the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh:

"The spirit of Anti-Christ was identified at the day of the Manifestation in the person of Haji Mohammed Karim Khan, who did not confess that the Christ-spirit had become manifest in the flesh in this day." 225.

Virgie Viola Vail stands among the few Bahā'ī writers who have commented on the Antichrist/s of 1 and 2 John. She wrote a now extremely rare and little known book entitled The Glorious Kingdom of the Father Foretold which was one of the major contributions to the Bahā'ī interpretation of the Bible in the light of the mission of Bahā'u'llāh. 226. In her treatment of the meaning of the "return of Christ" she argues that Christians and others who hold that Christ will not come again as another divine man "in the flesh" (i.e. as Bahā'u'llāh) are the eschatological manifestation of the "spirit" of the Antichrist or the "antichriste". 227.

Then, in her chapter on False Christs, she quotes 1 Jn 4:1-3 and 2 Jn 7 and stresses that Bahā'u'llāh has appeared as Christ come again "in the flesh" and "in like manner" (cf. Acts 1:11). She teaches that the Antichrist/s of the Johannine Epistles are "atheists who do not acknowledge the power of God to send His word (Bahā'u'llāh) into the human realm by manifesting in human form."<sup>228</sup>. While then, hypocritical religionists are the false teachers or prophets mentioned in Matt 24:5, atheists and others become latter day docetists in that they deny the incarnation of the Word of God in the person of Bahā'u'llāh who is the return of the spirit of Christ "in the flesh".

It is possible that Virgie Vail was influenced in her interpretation of the "spirit" of the Antichrist by earlier speculations of Mason Remey (1874-1973) who championed a Bahā'ī "orthodoxy" in America and elsewhere when "covenant breaking" (conceived as indulgence in → quasi-Bahā'ī metaphysical speculation or occult theosophy contrary to the teachings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā or association with his declared enemies) threatened the unity of the Bahā'ī community.<sup>229</sup> From around the time of the first world war, Remey, who was a prolific writer and zealous Bahā'ī, had managed to establish himself as the leading occidental exponent of the Bahā'ī philosophy of the covenant.<sup>230</sup> Writing from Hawaii to an American Bahā'ī assembly in 1913 he expressed his conviction that there is a "natural human force" in man that resists the "religion of God" and which has "ever been the spirit of the Anti-Christ". This "spirit of Anti-Christ" is "the spirit of denial of the Word manifest" which serves to quicken those souls who are "steadfast in the Kingdom."<sup>231</sup>

At the time of the Chicago 'Reading Room affair' of 1917-18 which was partly triggered by the supposedly heterodox occult philosophy of a Boston metaphysician named W.W. Harmon who had been encouraged to write by 'Abdu'l-Bahā,<sup>232</sup> Remey and his associates initiated what was practically a Bahā'ī inquisition. A remarkable set of observations designed to foster "firmness in the Bahā'ī covenant" (privately circulated in limited mimeographed edition) entitled The Protection of the Cause of God (approved by the "Committee of Investigation") were circulated by Remey in 1918. At one point Remey writes:

"It is found in this day that many people unawakened spiritually naturally resent the doctrine of the "Manifested Word" or the "Incarnate Christ". In other words the spirit of the anti-Christ is abroad everywhere. Some people when questioned, who perhaps may bear the name Christian, are often found to be vague upon this point which is the very foundation of God's religion, for it has been found that while the Manifestation of God is the point of guidance to the believer after one is confirmed, the

Manifestation of God is also the point of the greatest test to those who are yet in doubt..Of all the religious movements in the world, I know none upon which the people place more stress than do the Bahais upon the Revealed Word, and there is no body of people who take a stronger stand against the spirit of anti-Christ than they do. Basically speaking, the spiritual war which the Bahais are now waging against the spiritual darknesses of this world is the struggle of the Christ against the anti-Christ spirit in its many forms." 223.

This passage speaks largely for itself. Remy saw the spirit of the Antichrist everywhere and believed that Bahā'ī doctrine as he and his associates conceived it constituted the true recognition of the "Manifested Word" or person of Bahā'u'llāh. He imagined himself to be engaged in a veritable "battle of Armageddon" against the spirit of the Antichrist at a time when Bahā'ī "covenant breaking" and world unrest and war threatened the recognition of the second Christ and the true understanding of the station of 'Abdu'l-Bahā.

At this point it may be noted that 'Abdu'l-Bahā in his Risāla-yi Siyāsiyya ("Treatise on Politics" written in 1892-3) which was primarily addressed to the Bahā'īs of Iran identifies the (human) Dajjāl with Bahā'ī hypocrites who are the cause of discord or who inwardly violate the Bahā'ī covenant. 234. He writes:

"O Beloved of God! Give ear, consider attentively and endeavour to guard yourselves against violation [ فادى or sedition]; and if you smell the odour of corruption from anyone, even if he appear to be a person of great importance and incomparably learned, know that he is the [human (manifestation of the)] Dajjāl and the enemy of the Glorious One ( al-Jalāl )." 235.

Bahā'ī writers, it will be evident, do not exactly restrict the significance of the eschatological appearance of the Antichrist/ Dajjāl to any single individual of an infamous nature. Certain individuals are however, singled out as being, as it were, supreme incarnations of the Antichrist idea. Such a perspective has been expressed by Shoghi Effendi who probably had in mind the following points:- 1) the Bahā'ī denial of the supernatural or real existence of Satan, or the Devil, ( frequently mentioned by 'Abdu'l-Bahā ) and 2) the fact that various Bābī and Bahā'ī writers have identified a plethora of anti-Bābī-Bahā'ī individuals as manifestations of the Antichrist/ Dajjāl idea. Conscious of the need to refute the Christian idea that the Antichrist would be a single supernatural eschatological adversary he wrote,

"We [Bahā'īs] do not believe in Anti-Christ in the sense the Christians do. Anyone who violently and determinedly sought to oppose the Manifestation could be called an "anti-Christ", such as the Vazir in the Bah's days, Hajji Mirza Aqa'ei." 236.

Haji Mirzā Āqāsī the "Antichrist" of the Bābī Dispensation.

"[Muhammad Shāh'e] evil genius, the omnipotent Haji Mirzā Āqāsī, the power behind the throne and the chief instigator of the outrages perpetrated against the Bāb..the Antichrist of the Bābī Revelation" (Shoghi Effendi). 237.

A great deal has been written by Bābī and Bahā'ī writers about Mirzā Abbās Iravānī or Haji Mirzā Āqāsī (1784-1849) the notorious grand vizier of Muhammad Shāh whose accession to the throne he is said to have predicted. Both his manipulation of the sovereign and his marked hostility to the Bābīe are well known. Eugene Flandin's description of him calls to mind the physiognomic characteristics of the Dajjāl though this theme, as we shall see, is more important in connection with the Shaykhī leader Karīm Khan Kirmanī,

"Haji Mirza Aqasi.. Imagine a nose, very long and curved, over an edentulous mouth and surmounted by badly dyed hair, bloodshot but lively eyes, a brusque gesture, a subtle or rather sly appearance, and one has the exact portrait of this singular personage. This little old man, still vigorous, was like all Persians, vain to excess.. his conversation was scarcely of a nature to destroy the prejudices, little favourable to his person, which had been in our minds before this presentation.." 238.

Bābī and Bahā'ī sources have it that Haji Mirzā Āqāsī constantly incited the fears of Muhammad Shāh in terms of the Bābīs. He is said to have prevented the Bāb from communicating directly with or meeting him.<sup>239</sup> As early as the first year of his mission the Bāb had, in his Qayyūm al-Asmā (commentary on the Qur'ānic sūrat al-Yūsuf, 1844), called upon Haji Mirzā Āqāsī to resign his position and in a subsequent letter to Muhammad Shāh referred to him in the following terms:

"Dost thou [Muhammad Shāh] imagine him whom thou hast appointed Chancellor in thy kingdom to be the best leader and the best supporter? Nay, I swear by thy Lord. He will bring thee into grievous trouble by reason of that which Satan instilleth into his heart, and verily he himself is Satan..He comprehendeth not a single letter of the Book of God..Indeed, in the estimation of the people he is naught but manifest darkness.." 240.

Haji Mirzā Āqāsī was responsible for the Bāb's incarceration in Adhirbayjan at a time when he might have been able to meet Muhammad Shāh. He engineered the examination of the Bāb at Tabriz in 1848 at which the now self-confessed Qā'im was condemned and bastinadoed.<sup>241</sup> From Chihriq shortly after the latter humiliation the Bāb sternly admonished Haji Mirzā Āqāsī in a letter known as the Khutba-yi Qahriyya.

A year or so later he, having fallen from grace in the estimation of the notablees of Tihran and the young Nāṣiri'd-Dīn Shāh, died in Karbilā (in 1849 before the Bāb'e execution in July 1850.). 242.

We have seen that Hajji Mīrzā Āqāsī was mentioned by ʿAbdu'l-Bahā in connection with the beast imagery of the Apocalypse and that Shoghi Effendi has referred to him as the Antichrist of the Bābī period. It will therefore come as no surprise to learn that certain early Bābīs thought of him as a manifestation of the Dajjāl. Mirza Muhammad ʿAlī Zunuzī for example, in a dialogue with a learned Shaykhī written before his martyrdom (along with the Bāb) in 1850, not only identified Karīm Khān Kirmānī (see below) as the manifestation of Sufyān (zuhūr-i Sufyān) but saw Hajji Mīrzā Āqāsī as the evil Dajjāl. 243. Calling to mind Shoghi Effendi's identification of Hajji Mīrzā Āqāsī as the "Antichrist of the Bābī Revelation" the author of the Nuqtat al-Kāf (c.1852?) expressed the opinion that, "The point of unbelief of the age and the Antichrist of the dispensation is [Hajji Mīrzā] Āqāsī." 244.

Hajji Mīrzā Muhammad Karīm Khan Kirmānī, the "one-eyed Dajjāl".

Shaykh Ahmad Ahsā'ī (d.1826) the founder of the Shaykhī school was succeeded by Siyyid Kāzīm Rahtī (d.1843) whose passing precipitated something of a crisis in that he appears to have made no clear statement as to the identity of his successor. Karīm Khān Kirmānī (1810-1870) who had studied under the second Shaykh in Karbilā and who was the son of a cousin and son-in-law of Fath ʿAlī Shāh, made a strong bid for the leadership of the Shaykhī community. From Kirmān in the mid 1840's he was able to gradually attract to himself the majority of Persian Shaykhīe who did not become Bābīs. By the end of his days he had "so consolidated his own position..that the succession passed, after a brief dispute, to his second son Haj Muhammad Khān.. descending in the same family to the present day". 245.

Karīm Khān was not only possessed of considerable political influence through his links with the ruling Qājārs but was an influential and prolific writer on most aspects of the religious sciences of his day. It has been estimated that he wrote some 278 books in Arabic and Persian which cover, "not only the field of philosophy and Shī'ite theosophy, the spiritual hermeneutics of the Qur'ān and the hadīth but also an encyclopedia of the sciences: medicine, physics, optics, astronomy, theory of light, of colour, of music, including alchemy, and related sciences.." 246.



The polymathic erudition of Karīm Khān made him a formidable opponent of the Bāb and his disciples many of whom came from a Shaykhī background. As early as July 1845 he had penned the first of a number of weighty refutations of Bābism entitled Ishāq al-Bātil ('The crushing of falsehood').<sup>247</sup> This polemical treatise was followed less than a year later by his Tir-i Shihāb.. ('The Shooting Star', March 1846) and subsequently supplemented by such anti-Bābī works as his al-Shihāb al-Thāqib.. ('Piercing Star', January 1849).<sup>248</sup> To the end of his life Karīm Khān remained a bitter enemy of both the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh who not only had him formally acquainted with their claims but vehemently denounced him.

In his article The Babism of Persia(II) E.G. Browne records a tradition to the effect that the Bāb, on receiving a treatise written in refutation of his claims by Karīm Khān, identified its author with the athīm (sinful one) mentioned in the 44th sūra of the Qur'ān, the sūrat-al dukhān. He wrote the letters Hā' Mīm (sura 44 is the 5th of 7 Qur'ānic sūras which begin with these detached letters) on its opening page in which Karīm Khān had written: "Thus says the sinful (athīm) servant, Muhammad Karīm, son of Ibrahim". This for the Bāb evidently called to mind Qur'an 44:43/8, "Verily (the fruit) of the tree of al-Zaqqūm [the infernal tree] shall be the food of the impious (athīm).. Taste (this); for thou art that mighty (and) honourable (karīm) person".<sup>249</sup> Karīm Khān had unwittingly condemned himself:

"Eat ye your punishment for your unbelief. This is the tree of Zaqqūm.. And we have warned the sinful (athīm) of a painful punishment, of the burning and the flames, and the fire of Hell. Now hath the decree come to pass. Eat then, O thou mighty and honourable one (al-karīm)".<sup>250</sup>

As already mentioned Karīm Khān Kirmānī has been identified with the Antichrist or Dajjāl. This identification, in the light also of the physiognomic characteristics of the Dajjāl, most notably his being 'one-eyed', was made by Bābīs from at least as early as 1847 and even, somewhat unconvin-  
-gently, attributed to Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī the second Shaykh of the Shaykhīs.

In 1887-8 the apostle of Bahā'u'llāh Mullā Muhammad Zarandī, Nabil-i A<sup>C</sup>zām completed a lengthy history of the Bābī-Bahā'ī movements which contains some traditions of considerable interest in connection with our theme.<sup>251</sup> He notes that Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī had frequently mentioned that the promised Qā'im

would be of "pure lineage" or "illustrious descent" of the "seed of Fātimih" and be "free from bodily deficiency": a notion doubtless rooted in the physiognomic descriptions of the expected Mahdī/Qā'im (as opposed to those of the Dajjāl) and the Shī'ī notion that the prophet-Imām is not only guarded from sin (ma'cūm) but a physically perfect human being ever free of bodily infirmity or disease.<sup>252</sup> Zarandī then reports that, for Shaykh Abū Turāb and other Shaykhīs, Siyyid Kāzim's mentioning the bodily wholeness of the expected Qā'im pointed to the shortcomings of certain leading Shaykhīs. Karīm Khān was "one eyed" and "sparsely bearded", Mīrzā Hasan Gawhar "exceptionally corpulent" and Mīrzā Muhīt-i Shā'ir-i Kirmānī "extraordinarily lean and tall".<sup>253</sup> These three Shaykhīs were in other words, thought to exhibit Dajjāl-like physical characteristics.

We have seen how, in the Christian as well as the Islāmic physiognomic Antichrist-Dajjāl traditions, the eschatological adversary was often thought to be characterised by having peculiar eyes or being "one-eyed" or either lean or tall or huge or corpulent. The attribution to or the highlighting of the actual or supposed physical deficiencies of the enemies of the Bābī-Bahā'ī movements is a not uncommon feature of Bābī-Bahā'ī historiography and polemic influenced by the Antichrist-Dajjāl traditions. Mullā Muhammad-i Mamaqānī for example, a leading Shaykhī who made a leadership bid (from Tabriz) after the passing of Siyyid Kāzim and who played a leading role in the first examination of the Bāb in Tabriz (in August 1848) whose death-warrant he subsequently signed, has been described by Shoghi Effendi as a "one-eyed and white bearded renegade."<sup>254</sup>

Zarandī's abovementioned report of Shaykh Abū Turāb's narration continues and focuses upon Siyyid Kāzim's supposed attitude towards Karīm Khān. Shaykh Abū Turāb, who eventually became a Bābī and married Mullā Husayn's sister, relates that a disciple of Karīm Khān presented the second Shaykh with a treatise written by his master who desired approval of its contents. Siyyid Kāzim read a few portions of the treatise but declined to pass judgement on its acceptability. Then, when Karīm Khān's disciple left Siyyid Kāzim's presence, he is said to have stated in a sorrowful voice:

"Accursed be he [Karīm Khān]! For years he has been associated with me, and now that he intends to depart, his one aim, after so many years of study and companionship, is to diffuse, through his book, such heretical and athiestic doctrines as he now wishes me to endorse. He has covenanted with a number of self-seeking hypocrites with a view to establishing himself in Kirman, and in order to assume, after my departure, from this world, the reigns of undisputed leadership. How grievously he erred in his judgement! For the breeze of divine Revelation wafted from the dayspring of guidance, will assuredly quench his light and destroy his

influence. The tree of his endeavour will yield naught but the fruit of bitter disillusion and gnawing remorse. Verily, I say, you [ Shaykh Abū Turāb ] will behold this with your own eyes.

My prayer for you is that you may be protected from the mischievous influence which he, the Antichrist of the promised Revelation, will in future exercise." 255.

This narration, which may tell us more about Bābī-Bahā'ī anti-[Kirmānī] Shaykhī polemic than the actual sentiments of Siyyid Kāzīm clearly identifies Karīm Khān with the Antichrist of the Bābī period. 256.

Among the early Bābī apologetic tracts that dwell upon the physiognomic characteristic of Karīm Khān as a neo-Umayyad or Dajjāl-like opponent of Bābism is the Risāla in refutation of the latter written by al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbālā'ī in Karbilā in 1847. 257. The author of this brief treatise (a one time pupil of Siyyid Kāzīm), after quoting and commenting on various traditions believed to predict the date and circumstances of the Bāb's mission, poses a question. Is it more likely he asks, whether Karīm Khān, who in various letters had claimed to be the promised Qā'im who would fill the earth with justice (al-Qa'im bi'l-Amr), or the Bāb be the promised one? How can Karīm Khān make such claims in the light of the fact that he is "one-eyed" ( واحد العين ), "sparsely bearded" ( الكوج ) and "short-statured" or has Dajjāl-like characteristics? Is not Karīm Khān one given to smoking or whose "inside" is "filled with smokes" ( دخان ); a shoot from the Umayyad tree who busied himself opposing the law of the Prophet for no less than 15 years? 258. For ibn al-Karbālā'ī the very appearance of Karīm Khān and his company call the Umayyads, Sufyānide and the company of Mu'āwiya to mind. 259. Indeed, the third Shaykh resembles Mu'āwiya with respect to his beard, Iblīs (the Devil) in his blindness and calls to mind the "well of Eden" ( بئر عدن ) in having his inside filled with smoke. All are startled at the sight of this evil one who is of abhorrent countenance ( كراهة الوجه ), short-stature ( قصر القامة ) and who is of despicable birth and lineage ( خبائة المولد والنسب ). 260.

Following earlier Bābī tradition, Bahā'u'llāb in his Kitāb-i Iḡān (c. 1862) condemned Karīm Khān and applied the verse quoted above from the Qur'ānic sūrat al-dukhān to him noting how "clearly and explicitly he hath been described in God's incorruptible Book". 261. He believed that

the very title of his Irshād al-<sup>c</sup>Awām or "Spiritual Directives for the [Ignorant] Masses" underlined in itself the pride and folly of one whose erudition veiled him from that supernatural and God-given inspiration that is characteristic of the true Bābī gnostic. The "Samiri of ignorance" he had rejected the "Mosee of knowledge" (the Bāb). 262.

It also appears that Bahā'u'llāh alludes to Karīm Khān's being (supposedly) "One-eyed" in his Kitāb-i Igān for at one point, in the course of entreating the learned among the Bābīs not to rely on their limited intellects in seeking the coming divine manifestation, he writes:

"And yet, notwithstanding all these admonitions, We perceive that a one-eyed man ( شخصِ اعمور ) who is himself the chief of the people ( رؤسای قوم ), is arising with the utmost malevolence against Us. We foresee that in every city people will arise to suppress the blessed Beauty. We can discern one who is reputed for such devoutness and piety that men deem it an obligation to obey him, who will arise to assail the very root of the divine Tree." 263.

Though it is not absolutely certain that it is Karīm Khān who is here alluded to— though he wielded some political influence and had consolidated his position by 1862 when the Kitāb-i Igān was written he had been explicitly named and condemned earlier in this book—a number of Bahā'ī writers have expressed this opinion. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Hamid Ishrāq Khavari (1902-1972) for example, in his massive though disordered Qāmūs-i Igān in the course of commenting on the line, "We foresee that in every city people will arise to suppress the blessed Beauty", states that the "one-eyed" person is most probably Karīm Khān. He adds, it is of interest to note, that Karīm Khān had "white scales" ( لکه های سفید ) on one of his eyes; they grew such that though he endeavoured to cut them off he was unable to attain clear vision. 265. The implication is that Karīm Khān was not exactly or literally one-eyed but possessed one diseased eye. His photograph seems to bear this out for we do not see evidence of a missing eye. 266.

Among the major letters or "tablets" of Bahā'u'llāh, one, probably dating from the early <sup>c</sup>Akkā period of his ministry and known as the Lawh-i Qina<sup>c</sup> ("Tablet of the Veil", c.1869-70?) was specifically addressed to Karīm Khān. The third Shaykh had been sent a book which made Bahā'u'llāh's claims known to him but rejected them as he had rejected the claims of the author of the Qayyūm al-Asmā. In consequence the Lawh-i Qina<sup>c</sup> condemned him being addressed to one who "has a reputation for knowledge" but who stands on "the brink

of the pit of error".<sup>267</sup> At one point in this condemnatory epistle Bahā'u'llāh indicates that Karīm Khān was present at the time of the mission of the prophet Muhammad under or with "another name" (باسم دیگر).<sup>268</sup> It is possible that this application of the notion of (eschatological) "return" (ra<sup>c</sup>ja) is related to our theme. It has been noted below that the one-eyed Dajjāl, most notably as Ibn Saiyād, was believed to have lived at the time of the prophet Muhammad. On the other hand, if Bahā'u'llāh had in mind a specific even possibly 'one-eyed' Dajjāl-like individual, Abū Sufyān ibn Harb would be appropriate as the previous manifestation of Karīm Khān. This especially since Abū Sufyān was for many years a fierce opponent of the prophet Muhammad as chief of the Umayyad clan of <sup>c</sup>Abd Shāms and one who is said to have lost an eye in battle.<sup>269</sup> His portrait was in fact, like that of Karīm Khān, assimilated to the physiognomic description of the Dajjāl as the following note makes perfectly clear:

" [The eschatological Sufyān]: His name is 'Othmān the son of 'Ataba of the children of Yazīd ibn Mu'āwiya ibn Abī Sofyān. He is a thick-set man with an ill-countenance, a face pitted with small pox, a large head and blue eyes. He has never rendered service to God, nor seen Mecca or Medina, and his eyes seem to squint.. a man shall come forth from the direction of Mecca whose name is Sofyān ibn Harb. Perhaps he may be that Sofyān who has been previously mentioned.."<sup>270</sup>

Whether or not the passage from Bahā'u'llāh's Lawh-i Qinā<sup>c</sup> referred to above was inspired by Karīm Khān's early identification with the one-eyed eschatological opponent, the fact remains that the third Shaykh has, for both Bābīs and Bahā'īs, been seen as one of the most infamous manifestations of the Antichrist-Dajjāl. For them at least the physiognomic descriptions of the Antichrist-Dajjāl find something of a literal fulfillment.

<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm Effendi Tihirānī, it may finally be noted, has, in the course of a lecture delivered in the United States on June 3rd 1900, not only applied II Thess 2:4 to Karīm Khān but explicitly identified him as "the Sofyani" mentioned "in the Mohammedan books..who will appear before the real Mahdi".<sup>271</sup> From his home in Egypt he, as the teacher of I.G.Kheiralla, had journeyed to the United States in 1900 at the command of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in order to guard the American Bahā'īs from the propaganda of Mīrzā Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Alī (the half-brother of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā who, in the 1890's had contested his being the head of the Bahā'ī community) whom Kheiralla supported from 1899. The faction headed by Mīrzā Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Alī had accused <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā of claiming

Divinity or being an independent "Manifestation of God" ( mazhar-i illāhi ).<sup>272.</sup>  
 It appears that they quoted II Thess 2:4 in connection with these supposed claims of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in order to underline their accusations. Consequently, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karim at one point in the abovementioned address specifically directed against the "Nakizeen" ( "covenant breakers" or in this instance supporters of Mirzā Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Alī ) writes:

" Some of these Nakizeen, in order to make things agree with their own interests and desires, are endeavouring to mislead the hearts of others through some insinuations thrown to them every now and then; and in order to strengthen their position at the present time and corroborate their false statements, they have invented, according to their own ideas and imaginations, a new interpretation of some passages of the Holy Books which refer to the appearance of a false one before the real God; claiming for others what they do not claim for themselves. But, alas, they read the Books and do not understand; rather they warp its meaning to suit their own designs in order to enable them to skillfully concoct their contrived themes. That prophecy which is mentioned in the Bible, as well as in the Koran and other books, regarding the appearance of the false God [i.e. II Thess 2: 4 ], first, has not the slightest connection with the well known present conditions, but in reality it refers to the time of the Manifestation [ Bahā'u'llāh ], and the false one, Manifestation, who appeared before him, "showing himself as God" [ II Thess 2:4 ]." <sup>273.</sup>

Thus, in order to refute the accusation that <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā claimed Divinity as indicated in II Thess 2:4 and elsewhere, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm denies that such texts have anything to do with the period of the ministry of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā; rather, " these emblems and signs, as mentioned in the Books, were not connected with any other appearance save that of the Manifestation, Beha'U'llah." <sup>274.</sup>  
 The false claimant to Divinity should appear at the time of or before the appearance of the true manifestation of Divinity. Indeed, <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā never claimed Divinity <sup>275.</sup> and the one predicted in such texts as II Thess 2:4 is Karīm Khan Kirmānī the evil Sufyānī who " showed himself as God". Perhaps influenced by that passage in Bahā'u'llāh's Lawh-i Qina <sup>c</sup> mentioned above <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karim continues thus:

" Before the appearance of the Bab, a man by the name of Karim Khan, of the city of Karman [sic], Persia, appeared [fn reads, 'See II Thessalonians], "showing himself as God" [II Thess. 2:4, — Karīm Khān almost certainly never made any such claim], and persuaded the people to believe in him and thus succeeded in bringing to him a great number of followers; and some of his disciples have recognized him to be God. The name of Karim Khan is known throughout the country there and elsewhere. He claimed a great mission and wrote many books which can be procured by anyone who wants them. The Manifestation [ Bahā'u'llāh ] sent him two Tablets, but he did not believe. His followers are many and they are known by the name of the Sheikhyist [ Shaykhī ] Sect. The Beloved Perfection hath said that the one who is mentioned in the Mohammedan books as Sofyani, who will appear before the real Mahdi, is this one, Karim Khan." <sup>276.</sup>

Appendix I. The 7 Angels with the 7 Trumpets (Rev. 8,9,11:15f).

These chapters of the Apocalypse are, in various unpublished Bahā'ī "pilgrim's notes" held to predict events within Christian, Islāmic and Bābī-Bahā'ī history. The opinions of the previously mentioned Bahā'ī writers on the Apocalypse (see fn's 179-181 below) based in large measure on unpublished (and non-authoritative) utterances of Shoghi Effendi may be summarized as follows:-

1st Angel with trumpet (8:7) = Anti-Christian persecutions by the Roman authorities up until 238.A.D. or the mission of Imām 'Alī (d. 661.A.D.) and his struggle for the Caliphate.

2nd Angel with trumpet (8:8) = Anti-Christian persecutions from 249.A.D. under the Emperors Decius and Diocletian or the mission of Imām Hasan (d. 669.A.D.) and the suppression of his partisans by Mu'āwīya I (661-680.A.D.).

3rd Angel with trumpet (8:10-11) = The confusion and corruption of the Church on the conversion of Constantine (c. 311.A.D.), the "fallen star" named "Wormwood" or the mission and martyrdom of Imām Husayn (d. 680.A.D.) whose enemy Mu'āwīya is the "fallen star" named "Wormwood".

4th Angel with trumpet (8:12-14) = The invasion of western Rome beginning with that of the Visigoths under Alaric the Bold in 408.A.D. and followed by that of the Vandals and Huns before the rise of Islām or (?) the oppression of Shi'ism under the twelve Imāms from 'Alī until the death of the 11th Imām al-Hasan al-'Askari (d. 260.A.H. = 874.A.D.) or the "occultation" (ghayba) of the (supposed) 12th Imām Muhammad al-Muntazar (the Imām Mahdī).

5th Angel with trumpet (9:1-11) = The Muslim invasion of African and Asian Christendom under the "rightly-guided Caliphs" and the Umayyads and the suppression of Shi'ism. The "locusts" which emerged from the "smoke" (= false teachings) are the Umayyad troops and their leaders whose "king", the "angel of the bottomless pit" called Abaddon and Apollyon, is Abū Sufyān father of Mu'āwīya I the fountainhead and symbol of Umayyad and neo-Umayyad oppression.

6th Angel with trumpet = The unleashing of the Sunnī Muslim forces (symbolized by the "four angels" or four major Sunnī schools of jurisprudence: the Hanafī, Malikī, Shāfi'ī, and Hanbalī schools) beyond the Euphrates resulting in the fall of Constantinople (Byzantium) in 1453.A.D. and in the slaying or cutting off of one third of Christendom.

7th Angel with trumpet = A man qualified with heavenly attributes or Bahā'u'llāh (?) enthroned in divine majesty and surrounded by the 24 elders or the Bāb and the "Letters of the Living" (Hurūf-i Hayy) and certain prominent Bahā'īs.

Appendix II

مولانا الاكرم مرحوم حاج محمد كريم خان كرماني  
(۱۲۲۵ - ۱۲۸۸ قمری)



138. The pages to follow will set down only a fraction of passages in the extraordinarily voluminous Bahā'ī Scripture that bear upon our theme. (The footnotes to follow will also note only a few of those works which record the historical events mentioned in this part of this essay).
139. Refer, for example, <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in [E.G.Browne Ed. & Tr.], A Traveller's Narrative (Vol.II.Cambridge 1891, Henceforth TN), p.51ff; Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By (=GPB, Wilmette 1974), p.114ff; H.M.Balyuzi, Edward Granville Browne and the Bahā'ī Faith (= EGB&BF., London 1970), p.3ff; idem, Bahā'u'llāh King of Glory (=BKG Oxford 1980), p.107ff; A.Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh, Vol.I (= RB.I. Oxford 1974), p.53ff; W.Mc E.Miller, The Bahā'ī Faith: Its History and Teachings (South Pasadena Calif., 1974), p.70ff.
140. Refer, Shoghi Effendi, GPB.p.114.
141. Refer, Balyuzi, EGB&BF.p.3; idem, BKG.p.107; Shoghi Effendi, GPB.p.112ff. On Siyyid Muhammad see further below.
142. Refer (as fn.39, also), A.Taherzadeh, The Revelation of Bahā'u'llāh Vol.II (= RB.II. Oxford 1977), p.152ff. See Further below.
143. Bahā'u'llāh, Kitāb-i-Iḡān [written c.1862] (ET.Shoghi Effendi, London 1961), p.160. cf. also Bahā'u'llāh's "Tablet" to his aunt of the <sup>c</sup>Akkā period known as the Lawn-i Maryam (refer Ishraq Khavarī, Ganj-i Shayḡan, Tihiran 124.B.E./1966 A.D., p.184) parts of which are translated in E.G.Browne's Materials for the Study of the Bābī Religion (Cambridge 1918/Rep.1961), p.8, and in Shoghi Effendi's GPB.p.120.
144. Refer, for example, on the epiphanic claims of the Bābīs after the martyrdom of the Bāb (there were such claims before his martyrdom as well), Shoghi Effendi, GPB.p.125, Balyuzi, EGB&BF.p.43; idem, BKG, pp.120-132.
145. Refer, for example, Bahā'u'llāh, Lawn-i Sirāj [c.1867] in Ishraq Khavarī (Ed), Mā'idiy-i Asmānī (=MA [9 Vols. Tihiran 1963-1964]), Vol.7.p.61ff; the Azalī work Hasht Bihisht ("The Eight Paradises") ET (in part) in TN.p.357 (on this work refer, Balyuzi, EGB&BF.p.18ff); Balyuzi, EGB&BF.p.43f; idem, BKG.p.124; Taherzadeh, RB.II.p.250ff. While Balyuzi (EGB&BF.p.43. cf. BKG.p.124) and other Bahā'ī writere, it may be noted here, imply that Dayyān made an exalted claim for himself Taherzadeh (RB.I.p.250) states that Bahā'u'llāh in his Kitāb-i Badi (c.1867 ; this work though printed is now difficult to obtain) teaches that Dayyān merely circulated some prayers which he had written (without making any exalted claim) the perusal of which made Mirzā Yahyā jealous such that he determined to have him killed. On other assassination plots attributed to Mirzā Yahyā refer, for example, Shoghi Effendi, GPB.p.124f.
146. Refer, Bahā'u'llāh cited MA.Vol.4.p.151; <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā cited MA Vol.5.p.290; Balyuzi, EGB&BF.p.34. fn.3.; Taherzadeh, RB.I. pp.248-9.
147. Refer, Bahā'u'llāh, (One of the) Lawn-i Zayn al-Mugarrabīn cited in MA.Vol.4.p.99. In his Lawn-i Ibn-i Dhi'b (c.1890, = "Epistle to the Son of the Wolf," ET.Shoghi Effendi, Wilmette, 1971), Bahā'u'llāh writes, "Wherever this Wronged One went Mirzā Yahyā followed him.. The Siyyid of Isfahān.. surreptitiously duped him. They committed that which caused the greatest consternation" (p.168). Bahā'ī sources maintain that Mirzā Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad followed Bahā'u'llāh (despite their enmity) in order to have the benefit of his protective charismatic leadership.

148. The text of Bahā'u'llāh's Sūrat al-Ahsāb is printed in Āthār-i Qalam-i A'liā Vol.4. (Tihran 1968), pp.1-22. On it cf. Taherzadeh, RB.II.p.65ff. His Surat al-Amr is contained in, Alvāh-i Bahā'u'llāh. (Bombay 1308.A.H., 1892-3.A.D.), pp. 242-245. cf. Ishraq Khavari Ganj-i Shavigan, pp.73-4 (date given here is 1864. A.D. [which may be a year or so too early?]), Taherzadeh, RB.II, pp.161-2, Shoghi Effendi, (ET in part), Gleanings from the Writings of Bahā'u'llāh (np. [London], 1949) pp.130-2; "Mirza Jawad's Historical Epitome", ET in E.G. Browne, Materiale. (see fn.143 below), p.21 (here also the Surat al Amr is dated 1,280.A.H. or 1863-4.A.D.).
149. On these events refer, for example, Bahā'u'llāh, Lawn al-Ruh ("Tablet of the Spirit", apparently written during his withdrawal in the House of Ridā Big around March-May 1866) printed in Āthār-i Qalam-i A'liā .Vol.4 (see fn.148 above), pp.123-154. cf. Ishraq Khavari, Ganj-i Shāyigan, p.85ff, Taherzadeh, RB.II.p.181ff., also Balyuzi, BKG.p.217ff, Taherzadeh, RB.II.p.162-170.
150. I use the phrase "Battle of Armageddon" (See Rev 16:16. cf. 19:17ff, 20:7f) since <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā according to some unpublished "Pilgrim Notes" has associated Armageddon with Roumelia and Macedonia probably having in mind Bahā'u'llāh's spiritual battle with Mirza Yahyā and the Azalīs in Adrianople (though there are other interpretations of Rev 16:16 which cannot be discussed in detail here). Bahā'u'llāh's Lawn-i Sirāj [Sarrāj], a lengthy letter addressed to <sup>c</sup>Alī Muhammad Sirāj [Sarra] of Isfahan in c.1867, replies to a number of questions (among other things) about the status of Mirza Yahyā. Despite his receipt of this letter <sup>c</sup>Alī Muhammad (a Babi who was the brother of the Bāb's second wife whom both Mirza Yahyā and Siyyid Muhammad had married) remained an Azalī-Bābī like his brother Mullā Rajab <sup>c</sup>Alī. The text is printed in MA.Vol.7. pp.4-118.
151. Refer, Bahā'u'llāh, Lawn-i Mubāhila in MA.Vol.4. pp.277-81., cf. also Shoghi Effendi, GPB.p.168f, Taherzadeh, RB.II.p.291ff.
152. On the episode of the Bahā'ī murder of Azalīs in <sup>c</sup>Akkā refer for example, E.G. Browne, The Bābīs of Persia. I. in Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society (= JRAS., Vol. XXI [1889]), p.517., idem., The Bābīs of Persia. II in JRAS Vol. XXI. [1889], pp.995-6., idem., TN. Note W [7], p.370f., idem., Materials. p.55ff (= "Mirza Jawad's Historical Epitome" in which the exact date of the murder of Siyyid Muhammad is given as 12th Dhu'l-Qa'da 1288.A.H. or 22nd January 1872 A.D.), Balyuzi, EGB&BF. pp.34-6, idem., BKG.p.322ff; idem., 'Abdu'l-Bahā (Oxford 1971), pp.35-6., Shoghi Effendi, GPB. pp.189-191; Moojan Momen, The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844-1944. (Oxford 1981), p.212ff.
153. Bahā'u'llāh, Lawn-i Ibn-i Dhi'b (see fn.147 below). ET. Shoghi Effendi, p.157.
154. Shoghi Effendi, letter to Isfandīyār Majzūb (Nov. 17. 1935) cf. Taherzadeh RB.II. p.298, 464, GPB.p.164. One might have expected Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957, the Guardian of the Bahā'ī religion and great-grandson of Bahā'u'llāh) to have labelled Mirzā Yahyā the supreme incarnation of the "Antichrist" rather than Siyyid Muhammad; especially since Mirzā Yahyā is said to have disguised himself as a Jew (refer, GPB.p.165), claimed identify with God (ibid., p.165 but cf. below on II. Thess 2:1ff) where the "Son of Perdition" [= Yahyā] claims Divinity) and worked mischief "right and left" (loosely speaking) between Syria and Iraq. His position as nominee of the Bāb and his close relationship with Bahā'u'llāh perhaps saved him from this notoreity.
155. <sup>c</sup>Andalīb's epistle to the great orientalist E.G. Browne (1862-1926) has, as far as I am aware, never been published; it is not clear whether Browne ever received it or whether the MSS has survived. My source of information is W.A. Rice's article, A Babi Pamphlet in the Church Missionary Intelligencer (August 1902), pp. 565-573 which contains an excellent summary of <sup>c</sup>Andalīb's epistle. cf. H. Balyuzi, The Bāb. (Oxford 1973), p.235. fn.15 [My thanks to Dr. Moojan Momen for supplying me with a copy of Rice's article].

156. Refer, W.A. Rice, art. cit (see fn. 155), p. 572.
157. cf. Bahā'u'llāh, Sūrat al-Haykal in Alvāh-i Babā'u'llāh mushtamil bar Sūrat al-Haykal.. (Bombay 1308.A.H./1892-3.A.D.), pp. 2-49[ff] and (with textual differences) in Āthar-i Qalam-i A'lā, Vol. 4, pp. 268-300. (An on the whole unreliable translation of this "Tablet" by Anton F. Haddad, Surat 'ul Hykl [Beha'is Supply and Publishing Board, Chicago 1900] exists portions of which are reproduced in H. Holley's Bahā'i Scripturee [New York 1923/82]).
158. cf. for example, Kheiralla's Beha'U'llah quoted fn. 192 below.
159. Isaiah 14:12f (RSV). These verses in Isaiah were probably originally based on an ancient myth about the banishment of a divine being from heaven. The דָּוִד בֶּן-שֶׁמֶשׁ (Day Star son of the Dawn) figure is reminiscent of the planet Venus or the deity associated with it. In the Ugaritic texts Šahar is a god of the dawn and hēlāl the morning star (see modern commentaries for details). I wonder, it may be noted here, whether the idea that the Antichrist-Dajjal would have an eye like the "morning star" (one of the most consistent features of the physiognomic descriptions of the Antichrist in Christian and Islāmic literatures; see below) is related to Isaiah 14:12?
160. Refer, Kitāb Al-Muqaddas.. Published by R. Watts, London, 1831.
161. Refer, MA. Vol. 7. p. 173ff.
162. ET. Shoghi Effendi of the identical Arabic text of Amos 4:12b-13 in Epistle to the Son of the Wolf (see fn. 147), pp. 145-6. For the Arabic text refer, MA. Vol. 7. pp. 191-2 and Lawh-i Mubarak Khitāb bi Shaykh Muhammad Taqī.. (np. nd.), pp. 171-2.
163. ET. Shoghi Effendi, Epistle to the Son of the Wolf, p. 146.
164. ET. Shoghi Effendi, *ibid.*, p. 146.
165. ET. Shoghi Effendi, *ibid.*, p. 147.
166. Bahā'u'llāh, Al-Kitāb Al-Aqdas, text from <sup>°</sup>Abd al-Razzāq al-Hasanī, Al-Bābīyūn wa'l-Bahā'īyūn fī Hādīrihim wa Madīhim (Sidon 1972), p. 130.  
Bahā'u'llāh makes a very large number of references and allusions to Siyyid Muhammad in his Tablets of the <sup>°</sup>Akkā period (1868-1892). In particular refer, Lawh-i Istintāq ("Tablet of the Interrogation") in MA. Vol. 4. pp. 220-260, esp. p. 232ff (here Siyyid Muhammad is referred to as "the detestible Siyyid Muhammad" [سید منکر خبیث], 250ff. cf. fn. 192 below).
167. Refer, <sup>°</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā, in (E.G. Browne), TN. II. p. 95. cf. Shoghi Effendi, GPB. p. 113.
168. Shoghi Effendi, GPB. p. 112, 165.
169. Refer for example, MA. Vol. 1. p. 20 where Rev 21:2/10 is referred to and cf, H. Holley (Ed) Bahā'i Scriptures (New York 1928), pp. 116-7.
170. cf. <sup>°</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in Some Answered Questions (= SAQ. London. nd.), pp. 234-6.
171. Refer, letter of <sup>°</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā quoted in Star of the West (= SW,) Vol. 14. No. 12 (March 1924), p. 358, Bahā'ī World Faith (Wilmette, Illinois, 1976), p. 351, Selections from the Writings of °Abdu'l-Bahā (Haifa 1978), p. 12-13.
172. From a letter of Shoghi Effendi to R.J. Moffett dated August 13th 1944.
173. <sup>°</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in The Promulgation of Universal Peace (Wilmette 1943) p. 455.
174. Refer for example, SAQ. p. 43ff and cf. below.
175. cf. Rev 1:1, 22:10f.

176. Various sets of unpublished "Pilgrim Notes" ( notes taken by those who visited 'Abdu'l-Bahā or Shoghi Effendi which are often of great interest but which are not regarded as authoritative by Bahā'īs) exist which record sometimes in detail the comments of 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Shoghi Effendi on verses or whole chapters of the Apocalypse. They remain for the most part in MSS. Of particular importance are the notes taken by Ethel J. Rosenberg in 'Abdu'l-Bahā's presence in the Holy Land in 1901 and 1909 (See below ; where I have consulted these notes I shall indicate this by the abbreviation Rosenburg PN ) and explanations of parts of the Apocalypse given by Shoghi Effendi in the 1950's .
177. Most of Mīrzā Abū al-Fadl's writings from the 1880's onwards contain discussions of Biblical texts, including the Apocalypse, which have not infrequently determined subsequent Bahā'ī interpretation. Haji Mīrzā Haydar 'Alī 's Bahr al-'Irfan ( Bombay 1312/3.A.H. 1896-7.A.D.) contains comments on Biblical texts again including the Apocalypse.
178. I.G. Kheiralla, a Syrian Christian who became a Bahā'ī in 1890 and arrived in America in December 1892 where he succeeded in converting a large number of Americans by the late 1890's, made constant reference to the Bible in his missionary endeavours as is amply illustrated by a reading of his Bshā'Ullah (1st. Ed. 1900). He was converted by Hājī 'Abdu'l-Karīm Tehranī a merchant resident in Cairo who had a considerable knowledge of the Bible and who, after Kheiralla abandoned allegiance to 'Abdu'l-Bahā in 1899, travelled to America where he condemned him at the same time fostering the application of Biblical prophecies to 'Abdu'l-Bahā.
179. E. Marsella, The Quest for Eden (henceforth, QE., New York 1966),
180. R.J. Moffett, New Keys to the Book of Revelation (henceforth, NKBR, New Delhi 1977)
181. R.F. Riggs, The Apocalypse Unsealed ( henceforth, AU, New York 1981).
182. cf. The letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā published in Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā, pp. 165ff. esp. p. 167. It may be noted here that the publications of Marsella, Moffett and Riggs all draw very heavily and without clear documentation on such "Pilgrim Notes" as we have mentioned above (fn. 176 above ). The use of these "Pilgrim Notes" is sometimes unsatisfactory in that their import is misunderstood and when these writers express their own opinions there are frequent errors of historical and other scriptural facts.
183. For a synopsis of the Bahā'ī interpretation of Revelation chapters 8, 9 and 11:15f ( the seven angels with seven trumpets), of minor interest in connection with our theme ; see Appendix I.
184. I refer to what has become known as 'Abdu'l-Bahā's "Some Answered Questions" (See fn. 170 above ). The original Persian text of the discourses collected in this volume was first printed by Brill of Leiden in 1908 under the title, An-Nūr Al-Abhā fī Mufawadat Abdi'l-Bahā and published by Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner and Co. Ltd in the same year. Two sections in this volume deal with the interpretation of the Apocalypse: section XI on Rev. 11 (pp. 43-57, Persian text, pp. 35-48) and section XIII on Rev. 12:1-6. (pp. 62-66., Persian text, pp. 52-57).
185. Compare for example the interpretation of Revelation 11:19 given by 'Abdu'l-Bahā in SAQ. section XI. p. 56f ( Persian text [see fn. 184 above] p. 46f) and that outlined by Mīrzā Abū al-Fadl in his Risāla-yi Istidlāl-yyih ( written, on the truth of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's being the centre of the Bahā'ī covenant after Bahā'u'llāh's passing, in the year 1317.A.H. 1900 A.D.) n.p. nd. , p. 18.

186. Refer, SAQ.p.43f, Persian text,p.35.cf. Marsella, QE.p.218f, Rigge,AU.p.147f. cf. 'Abdu'l-Bahā'e comments on Rev. 11:1 in SAQ.p.43, Persian text,p.35 where the "reed" is interpreted as a "perfect man" ( انسان کامل ) who is sanctified from all save God and eubject to divine inspiration.
187. Refer, ibid.
188. Refer, ibid. A useful summary of modern echolarly opinions on Rev.11 can be found in A.Feuillet's Johannine Studies (Chap.III., = Interpretation of Chapter XI of the Apocalypse), ET. Rev. T.E.Crane (New York, 1966).
189. Refer, SAQ.p.62f, Persian text,p.52f. On Revelation 12:1-2,4b-6 see also the letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā in Selections From the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahā,p.172. cf. also, Haji Mīrzā Haydar 'Alī, Bahr al-Irfān,p.111f, Mareella, QE.,p.202f, Riggs, AU,p.157f.
190. Refer, ibid. cf. also Bahā'ī World Vol.II (Rep.Wilmette, Illinois, 1980),p.277 on Rev. 11 and 12 as interpreted by the 'Israelitish Assembly of the Bahā'īs of Tihran, Persia' in a letter to the Bahā'ī House of Sprituality in Chicago dated May 9th 1904.
191. Refer, as fn.189. cf. also J.R.Richards, The Religion of the Bahā'īs (London, 1932),p.182f where objection is made to the fact that 'Abdu'l-Bahā regarded Abū Sufyan as an Umayyad in order to produce (with repetition) 10 names.
192. Refer, ibid( as fn.189). On Rev 12:7ff see Riggs, AU.p.160ff. Kheiralla wae, in his interpretation of Rev.12, influenced by H.Grattan Guinness's Light for the Last Days. In his BehaUllah, Vol.2.p.467ff he states that Rev 12 concerne " the contemporary appearance of Mohammedanism and the Church of Rome, which should wage war against each other"(p.468). cf. also E.G.Browne, Materials.pp.139-140.

Kheiralla, it is of interest to note, found prophecies about the activities and person of Mirza Yahyā in both the Old and New Testaments. Again, in his bulky work BehaUllah (Vol.2) he writes: " According to prophecy, Satan, the "adversary" of God should appear in the Kingdom, at the time of the "Manifest-ation", and, refusing to acknowledge his authority of revelation would be cast out, loosing the name which had been bestowed upon him. This name is the "Morning Star", "Sun of the East" or Suhh-i-Ezel[eic.]. This casting down of Satan out of Heaven, is the battle between Michael and his angels against the "adversary" of God [cf. Isa.14:12f, Rev 12:7f, etc.]. By it we are taught that he should be cast from his high spiritual position, into the earth, meaning that he shall become earthly, materially minded and belong to the party of Cain. In the 49th chapter of Jeremiah, the adversary is given the name of "Eau", in contradistinction to the "Manifestation" [i.e. Bahā'u'llāh], who is termed "Jacob", implying that the "Satan" of the Kingdom, would be a brother of the Manifestation. All these prophecies were fulfilled literally in Subh-i-Ezel, a brother of Beha'u'llah, who had been appointed by the Bab, but who, after the death of the Bab, refused to acknowledge "He whom God shall manifest" [ the expected Man Yuzhiruhu'llah of the Bābīs], thereby accomplishing his own dethronement and by his wickedness, being cast out of the Kingdom of God" (pp.417-8).

In his O Christians Why do Ye Believe Not on Christ? (1917) Kheiralla, in the course of a remarkable defense of the Bahā'ī assassination of the Azālīs at Akkā in 1872 ( perhaps influenced by that passage from Bahā'u'llāh's al-Kitāb al-Aqdas quoted above— which Kheiralla had translated into English but never published), applies Rev 12:7ff to the Bahā'ī- Azālī controversy. At one point he writes: "On my part it gives me great dsight to acknowledge it [ the assassination of 1872] and greater satisfaction that it happened. Because, the happening of this event is a decisive proof that Christ wae a Manifestation of God and that which he foretold was literally fulfilled.. The war in heaven which Christ prophesied was on earth where the Father manifested Himself[ at 'Akkā where Bahā'u'llah lived in 1872]. This prophecy was fulfilled by the defeat of Satan(Azal) and his angele by Michael(Beha'u'llah) and his angels.. [i.e. in Rev 12:7ff]"(pp.62-3).

193. That Mu'āwīya is the first beast of Revelation was an opinion expressed by Shoghi Effendi in a talk to the International Bahā'ī Council according to some unpublished pilgrim notes dating from the 1950's.
194. Refer, Riggs, AU.p.165ff.
195. Refer, Riggs, AU.p.168ff, 217. The letter of the 'Israelitish Bahā'īe' (Jewish converts of the Bahā'ī movement) mentioned above ( in fn.190 ) identifies the second beast of Rev 13 with Mu'āwīya (I, most probably): "Another prophecy is in the 13th chapter of Revelation , where the beast is mentioned as having " power given unto him to make war for forty and two months". This refers to the spirit of warfare which became manifest in Mu'awiyah, who was a descendant of Bani-Umayya, who made war after the departure of Muhammad, and continued it until the secret declaration of Bahā'u'llah to his disciples [i.e. until 1863.A.D.]" (p.278). Shoghi Effendi on the other hand is said to have identified the second beast with Yazīd (I) ibn Mu'āwīya ( in the pilgrim notes mentioned in fn.193 ) who reigned for about 3<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> years (680-683.A.D.). For Marella the second beast is the 'Abbasid dynasty as it is for Riggs (refer, QE.p.229 ).
196. Letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā quoted (in part) in ET. in Riggs, AU.p.299. The Persian text of this letter to an individual Bahā'ī is printed in MA. Vol.2.p.78.
197. In an unpublished Pilgrim Note attributed to Shoghi Effendi.
198. This line from an unpublished letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā is referred to by Riggs, AU.p.302., who describes it as a "Pilgrim Note" though, if I remember correctly, having had the opportunity some years ago to examine the "Notebook" of E.T.Hall, the Persian original as well as its English translation ( the Persian original signed by 'Abdu'l-Bahā ) appear to be authentic. In this letter, it may also be noted here, there is an explanation of the "New Jerusalem" as a pyramidal shape and the "two reapers" mentioned in Rev 14:14ff are interpreted as the Bāb and Bahā'u'llāh.
199. cf. Kheiralla, Beha'Ullah, Vol.2.p.368. where the "abomination of desolation" (Matt 24:15) is reckoned to be Napoleon Bonaparte I especially in the light of his besieging " the Holy City, the New Jerusalem, Akka in 1799." Many 19th century students of the Apocalypse imagined that the beast whose number was 666 was Napoleon.
200. From a letter of 'Abdu'l-Bahā published ( for the first time as far as I am aware ) in Riggs' Apocalypse Unsealed, p.299 in English translation ( I have not been able to locate the original text -which may be unpublished ).
201. A Pilgrim Note ascribed to Shoghi Effendi, cf. Moffett, NKBR.p. It may also be noted here that Riggs, (AU.p.169ff), who introduces into his volume all kinds of astrological and qabbalistic nonsense (frequently based on erroneous gematric calculations), at one point writes:  
" Since Mu'awiyah committed an act of blasphemy by assuming the title of Caliph, it should not be surprising if his assumed title The Caliph has a value of 666 (p.170., He proposes the spellings 'κελλαυφ and 'οκελλαυφ (sic) both of which he reckons add up to 666 by gematria [p.174] ).
202. cf. D.Mac Eoin, Babism, Bahaism and the Iranian Constitutional Revolution ( unpublished paper ), esp.p.12ff. On E.J.Rosenburg, Refer, O.Z.Whitehead, Some Early Bahā'īe of the West (Oxford 1976), p.55ff. Ethel Rosenberg's Pilgrim Notes were ( I believe the original MSS have now been transferred to Haifa ) kept in the British Bahā'ī Archives in London. There are also some Pilgrim Notes recording a speech of Shoghi Effendi on Rev 16 which at times differ from those taken by E.Rosenburg and attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahā. Riggs in his Apocalypse Unsealed appears to make use of them though his own ideas are also set down in his exposition of Rev 16. (refer AU.p.197ff).

203. Refer, Rosenberg PN (cf. fn. 176) .cf. Riggs, AU., p. 199.
204. Refer, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, p. 200. Khsiralla in his Beha'Ullah (Vol. 2. p. 377) holds that Rome is the "seat of the beast" (Rev 16:10) being the seat of Papal authority.
205. Refer, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, AU. p. 200f.
206. Refsr, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, AU. p. 201
207. Refsr, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, AU. p. 201-2.
208. Refer, *ibid.* cf. fn. above and cf. Riggs, AU. p. 202ff. On the significance of the "battle of Armageddon" for 'Abdu'l-Bahā and Bahā'ī writers, see also, Star of the West Vol. 5. No. 11. p. 163, Vol. 7. No. 7. p. 53., Vol. 7. No. 9. p. 85. Vol. 10. No. 3. p. 32. cf. Bahā'ī World, Vol. II. p. 52 and W. Tudor Pole, Writing on the Ground (London 1968), p. 156, Khsiralla, Beha'Ullah, Vol. 2. p. 371.
209. Refer, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, AU. p. 203-4.
210. Refer, *ibid.* cf. Riggs, AU. p. 204. Instead of following the Rosenberg Pilgrim Notes Riggs ( who frequently supressee the more problematic or difficult interpretations recorded in them) , inspired by Shoghi Effendi's mention of the "three false gods" in his The Promised Day is Come (Wilmette, Illinois, 1981), p. 113, makes a speculation as to the meaning of the division of the "Great City" that is his own.
211. Refer, Marsella, QE. p. 191-2; Riggs, AU., p. 207ff.
212. Refer, *ibid.* cf. also Riggs on Rev 18 in AU. p. 213ff.
213. E. J. Rosenberg on her pilgrimage in 1901 (?) also took notes on the significance of Rev 20:5, 6, 9, 10, 13 and 15 ( which I shall draw on below).
214. Refer, Moffett, NKBR., p. , Riggs, AU. p. 219ff. cf. Marsella, QE. p. 251-2.
215. Refer, Riggs, AU. p. 220ff.
216. Refer, Rosenberg PN (cf. fn. 213 above), Moffett, NKBR. p. , Riggs, AU. p. 223ff.
217. Refer, *ibid.*, cf. Riggs, AU., p. 227-9.
218. Hamid Algar in his The Oppositional Role of the Ulama in Twentieth-Century Iran (in N. R. Keddie [ Ed. ], Scholars, Saints, and Sufis. [University of California Press 1972, pp. 231-255]) notes that it was rumored during the reign of Muhammad Shah (1834-1848) " that the Qajars had been present in the Umayyad army at Karbala" and that such rumore ( still very much alive today, the late Shah having been likened to Yazīd) " gained particular currency and vigor in the period of the Constitutional Revolution." (p. 233). cf. also Mac Eoin, art. cit. (fn. 202 above), p. 4ff.
219. The lengthy tradition of Mufaddal was known to and quoted by the Bāb and the early Bābīs in their writings. It is summarized in Sachedina, op. cit. p. 161ff.
220. D. Mac Eoin, The Babi Concept of Holy War in Religion 12 (1982), p. 120 (for detailed references to the Bābī identification of persons and places mentioned in the eschatological Islamic traditions the reader is referred to this article).
221. Quoted in Sachedina, op. cit. p. 63 ( the tradition is attributed to the sixth Imān Ja'Far Sādiq ) and appears to be a late fabrication designed to enhance or legitimatē Safavid propaganda. Interestingly, Siyyid Muhammad Husayn Zavāra'ī's Waqayi' -i Mimiyya (Events in the Land of Mīm [= Mazandaran]) an unpublished eye-witness account of the Shaykh Tabarsi episode ( MS in Camb. Univ. Lib. Or. Ms. F. 28. item. 1 ) refers to Mullā Husayn Bushrū'ī as the "Qa'im of Khurāsān" and to Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Quddus as the "Qa'im of Jīlān" (pp. 1, 3, etc). cf. Mac Eoin, The Babi Concept of Holy War. p. 115.

222. See further below and cf. D. Donaldson, The Shi'ite Religion (London 1933), p.237f. It may be noted here that the 'Dajjal-like' figure of the "bearded woman" (the beard probably implying a Jewese!) mentioned in Shi'ite eschatological traditions is identified in the Nuqtat al-Kaf with Sa'id al-Ulamā, a cleric of Barfurush who fulfilled prophecy by killing the Qā'im of Jilan'or Quddus towards the end of the Shaykh Tabarsi seige.
223. This is not to say that Shi'ite eschatology does not give Jesus a role to play: cf. Sachedina, op cit. p.177f and see below.
224. Refer, Akka Lights (np.nd), p.4.
225. Words attributed to 'Abdu'l-Bahā in ibid, p.6.
226. V.V.Vail's The Glorious Kingdom of the Father Foretold was published in 1940 by the Bahā'ī Publishing Committee of New York being 262 pages long.
227. Vail, Glorious Kingdom, p.23.
228. Vail, Glorious Kingdom, p.62-3.
229. Remy himself was eventually expelled from the Bahā'ī Cause as a "covenant breaker". For some details refer, Vernon E. Johnson, An Historical Analysis of Critical Transformations in the Evolution of the Baha'i World Faith (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, Baylor University, 1974), p.342ff.
230. Refer, P. Smith, The American Bahā'ī Community, 1894-1917: A Preliminary Survey (unpublished essay), p.85ff.
231. Remy, Letter to a Bahā'ī Assembly written from Hawaii and dated July 19th 1913 printed in Star of the West Vol.4.No.10 (Chicago, September 8th 1913) p.172
232. For some details refer P. Smith, art.cit (fn.230), p.94ff. According to W.W. Harmon (refer his Divine Illumination [Boston, Mass., 1915], p.8) 'Abdu'l-Bahā said to him in August 1912 "I want you to write a book on 'Divine Illumination'". A year later he sent the MSS to 'Abdu'l-Bahā and it was apparently approved in a letter to him dated April 20th 1914. Harmon's other major work is entitled The Seven Principles of the Microcosm and Macrocosm applied to the disclosure of Baha'ullah in the Book of the Seven Valleys (Boston, Mass., 1915). His writings came to be seen as heterodox if not heretical and he was branded a "covenant breaker".
233. Refer, M. Remy, The Protection of the Cause of God (completed 27th March 1918 and circulated privately in a limited number of copies.) pp24-5. cf. also, M. Remy, Report of the Baha'ī Committee of Investigation 1917-1918 (privately circulated); idem, An Open Letter to the Bahais in America (dated March 21st 1918 and privately circulated); idem, Firmness in the Covenant (dated 27th March 1918, but written in the Fall of 1914, and again privately circulated).
234. On the date of the treatise refer, MA. Vol.5. p.198.
235. 'Abdu'l-Bahā, Risāla-yi Siyāsīyya (nd.np.), p.20. The text reproduced in Mirzā Assad Allāh Fādil Mazandarāni's Asrār al-Āthār Vol.2. (Tihiran 128.BE./ 1970-71 A.D.) p.232 (entry Dajjal) differs slightly from that aforementioned (omitting ج, after the word Dajjal).
236. Shoghi Effendi, from a letter quoted in High Endeavours: Message to Alaska by Shoghi Effendi (National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahā'īe of Alaska, 1976), p.69 (No.85).



237. Shoghi Effendi, GPB, pp. 82, 164.
238. Eugene Flandin, Souvenirs de Voyagen en Armenie et en Perse: II Tehsren et Ispahan ( in Revede Deux Mondes. Vol. 11. Paris 1851), p. 989, ET. in Momen, op. cit. p. 155.
239. Refer, for example, H. Balyuzi, The Bāb, p. 118ff.
240. The Bāb, extract from a letter to Muhammad Shāh, ET. H. Taherzadsh in Selections From the Writings of the Bāb (Haifa; 1976), pp. 25-6 .cf. GPB. p. 23.
241. Refsr, for example, H. Balyuzi, The Bāb, p. 121ff. Momen, op. cit. p. 154.
242. cf. Shoghi Effendi, GPB. p. 27., Momen, op. cit. p. 156.
243. Refer, Mīrzā Muhammad <sup>C</sup>Alī Zunuzī cited in Mīrzā Assad Allāh Fadil Mazandarānī, Kitāb-i Zuhūr al-Haqq, Vol. III (Cairo nd.) p. 35. cf. D. MacEoin, "Tāhirih" ( unpublished account of the life of Tāhirih ) chapter, Karbīla 1844. . p. iv. fn. 20.
244. Refsr, Hājī Mīrzā Jānī Kāshānī (?), Kitāb-i Nuqtatu'l-Kāf E. G. Browne (Ed) London and Leiden 1910, p. 118. <sup>C</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in a talk delivered at Haifa on June 15th 1914 is reported as having stated, it may be noted here, "If from the beginning when His Holiness the Supreme (the Bab) appeared, Hadji Mirza Aghasee ( the prime minister of Persia, who caused the martyrdom of the Bah, and in the orient is known as Dajjal, meaning anti-Christ or false Christ) and others, had not resisted this Cause, Persia would now have been the first country in the world and distinguished in every way" ET. Zia N. Baghdadi in Star of the West Vol. IX. No. 10 (Sept. 8th. 1918), p. 116.
245. D. Mac Eoin, "Tāhirih" (MSS. cf. fn. 243 above), chapter, Karbīla 1844. . p. 3.
246. H. Corbin, Spiritual Body and Celestial Earth. . ET. Nancy Pearson, (Princeton University Press 1977), p. 116.
247. Refer, Izhaq al-Bātil. Kirman 1351 Sh. 1973. A. D.
248. Refer, Tir-Shihāb. Kirman 1386. A. H. / 1966-7. A. D.; al Shihāb al-Thāqib,
249. Refer, E. G. Browne, The Babism of Persia. II ( see fn. 152 below), pp. 910-911.
250. From a letter of the Bāb cited in <sup>C</sup>Abd al-Hamid Ishraq Khavārī, Qāmūs-i Iqān, Vol. 1. ( Tehran 128. B. E. / 1971. A. D. ), p. 42 ET. D. MacEoin in "Tāhirih" (MSS), fn. 23 (p. vi) to chapter Karbīla 1844. . cf. also E. G. Browne, TW. II. (Note E), p. 242 where it is noted that the Bāb also stigmatized Karīm Khan as "the Quintessence of Hell-fire" ( جوهر جوهر کل نار ).
251. The first part of Zarandī's history was edited and translated by Shoghi Effendi under the title, The Dawn-Breakers, Nabil's Narrative of the Early Days of the Bahā'ī Revelation (1932). The original text has not been published.
252. Refer, The Dawn-Breakers. . (ET. Shoghi Effendi, London 1953), p. 29. The Shī'ī notion of the bodily perfection of the messengers and Imāms is discussed by Siyyid Kāzīm Rashtī in his Risāla-yi Usūl-i 'Aqa'id ( written in 1256. A. H., 1839-40. A. D. [ in MSS ] ) p. 140.
253. Refer, ibid, p. 29.
254. Shoghi Effendi, GPB. p. 21. A. L. M. Nicholas, it may be noted here, in his Essai sur le Shaykhisme, II (Paris 1914) writes, "If according to Karīm Khan the Bab and his followers are infamous and impious, for the Bahis, Karīm Khan is the Anti-Christ or Dajjal foretold by Muhammad" (p. 31).

255. Words attributed to Siyyid Kāzim Rashtī by Shaykh Abū Turāb and quoted in The Dawn-Breakers, p.30.
256. The extent to which the first two Shaykhs prepared the way for the advent of the Bābī movement awaits detailed investigation in the light of the many Bahā'ī sources that attribute fairly explicit prophecies to them.
257. This Risāla is printed as an appendix to Mīrzā Assad Allāh Fadil Mazandarānī's Kitāb-i Zuhur al-Haqq, Vol.3 (Cairo nd. ), pp. 502-532.
258. Refer. al-Karbālā'ī, Risāla, p. 516.
259. al-Qatīl ibn al-Karbālā'ī, *ibid*, p. 517.
260. Refer, *ibid*, p.519. ( I am grateful to Dr.Denis MacEoin for drawing this Risāla to my attention and allowing me to make use of his notes on it ).
261. Bahā'u'llāh, Kitāb-i Igān (ET.Shoghi Effendi), pp.121-2.
262. Refer, Bahā'u'llāh, *ibid*, p.118f. Karīm Khān's Irshād al-<sup>c</sup>Awwam was published in its 3rd.Ed. ( 4 vols in 2 ) in Kirmān 1353-1355 /1934-1936.A.D.
263. Bahā'u'llāh, Kitāb-i Igān, p.158. Text from Kitāb-i Mustatāb-i Igān (Cairo 1934), p.192.
264. Refer, <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Hamīd Ishrāq Khavarī, Qamūs-i Igān , Vol.4..(Teheran 128.BE. 1971.A.D.), pp.1791-2.
265. Refer, Ishrāq Khavarī, *op.cit.* (fn.264), p.1792.
266. See Appendix 2 (below).
267. Bahā'u'llāh, Lah-i Qina<sup>c</sup> in Majmū'a-yi Alwāh-i Mubāraka (Cairo 1920), p.67f. Bahā'u'llāh, also condemns Karīm Khān in his 'al-Kitāb al-Aqdās (c.1873). He expresses concern over the condition of the 'land of Kāf and Ra'<sup>c</sup>(= Kirman) and later names Karīm Khān as one who turned aside from him in his vanity, as one who "turned back, fleeing" (cf. Qur'an 27:10 ).
268. Bahā'u'llāh, Lah-i Qina<sup>c</sup> in Majmū'a.. p. 79.
269. cf. W.M.Watt. art. Abū Sufyān in EI<sup>2</sup> .p.157.
270. Aqā'id al-Shī'a cited E.G.Browne, TN.II (Note 0/8 ), pp.305-6.
271. Refer, Addresses by Abdel Karim Effendi Tehrani:Delivered before the New York & Chicago Assemblies, trans. Anton F.Haddad, Beha'is Supply and Publishing Board, of Chicago Ill(1900), p.43ff. <sup>c</sup>Abd al Karīm was a Tehranī merchant who had settled in Egypt.He managed to convert Kheiralla in 1890(and was instrumental in bringing about his missionary journey to the United States) and himself became aware of Bahā'u'llāh's claims during the Adrianople period(1863-8) of his ministry.During the <sup>c</sup>Akkā period of Bahā'u'llāh's ministry he visited him at <sup>c</sup>Akkā and over the years received no less than 53 letters from him.<sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karim expressed the purpose of his journey to the United States in the following terms, "I have come to this country to create harmony and mention peace among the believers, and praise be to God I have drawn the line of demarcation between the firm [believers] and the backsliders [ ' covenant breakers' ]"( *ibid*.p.67).
272. cf. Johnson, Critical Transformations..p.241ff., Mirza Assad Allāh, Instructions Concerning Genesis and the Mystery of Baptism (tr. Mīrzā <sup>c</sup>Alī Qulī Khān, np.nd ), p.22.
273. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karim, Addresses, pp.49-50.

274. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karīm, ibid,p.51.

275. Refer, ibid,p.50. Though <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā did not claim Divinity for himself certain oriental and occidental Bahā'īs had, by 1900, identified him with Jesus Christ and other prophets regarded by Bahā'īs as "Manifestations of God". His supporters in other words elevated him to a rank beyond that which he claimed for himself. Hoping to underline his spiritual greatness and rank in order to confound the partisans of Mīrzā Muhammad <sup>c</sup>Alī and other "covenant breakers" who challenged the authority of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā, many early Bahā'ī writers thought of their "Master" as an incarnate divine being. It was not in fact until Shoghi Effendi wrote his 'The Dispensation of Bahā'u'llāh' in 1934 that the rank or station of the Bāb, Bahā'u'llāh and <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā were clearly and authoritatively expounded for Bahā'īs by one whom they regarded as the infallible interpreter of Bahā'ī scripture.

276. <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Karim, ibid.pp.50-51.

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## PROBLEMS OF SCHOLARSHIP IN A BAHAI CONTEXT

The report, included in the second issue of the Baha'i Studies Bulletin, of the Weekend Institute on 'Baha'i Scholarship' held in Yerrinbool, Australia, does indeed inspire -- or, perhaps, provoke -- comment, as the Editor suggested it might. I do not, however, propose to take up his suggestion to tackle the question of 'what constitutes Baha'i scholarship?', largely because I do not believe that such a concept is itself a wholly meaningful or useful one within the context of contemporary academic traditions. But I do wish to examine some of the assumptions underlying the approaches and attitudes to scholarship that seem to have informed the Yerrinbool Institute. I think this is worth doing, if only because many, if not all, of these assumptions lurk in some degree behind much Baha'i thinking at a much wider level.

The reader should bear in mind that I write these observations as a professional academic who is, by choice and by temperament, not a member of the Baha'i community. I do not, however, regard myself, nor do I wish to be regarded as a 'non-Baha'i' counterpart of an idealized type defined as 'the Baha'i scholar', principally because I cannot regard myself (or anyone else who happens not to be among the body of the elect) as existentially defined (even in negative terms) on the basis of adherence/non-adherence to Baha'ism and its tenets. I am not a 'non-Baha'i': I am a human being who happens not to believe in Baha'ism or, for that matter, Mormonism, Spiritualism, Marxism, Islam, fairies, or a host of other things. People are no more 'non-Baha'is' than they are 'non-Mormons', 'non-Jews', 'non-blacks', 'non-women' or whatever. One might go further and say that people cannot really be defined within such categories even positively expressed: people may be Baha'is, but they may also be many other things simultaneously and even contradictorily. It is in categorical thinking of this kind that discrimination, be it racial, religious, sexual, or whatever, begins. Once others have been defined negatively, as, in a sense, non-persons, and oneself positively, the creation of discriminatory legislation or social attitudes may follow without hindrance. In this context, the reference in the Yerrinbool report to 'the Baha'i scholar' and his 'non-Baha'i counterpart' may be understood as, perhaps, the most critical element in it, indicative as it is of an attitude of mind that has far-reaching implications.

At the same time, it is only fair to add that, for almost fifteen years of my adult life, I did seek to define myself in such terms, and it is undeniable that my own rejection of the values and categories of the Baha'i system inevitably colours my thinking about it. In what is to follow, however, I wish to avoid turning a general discussion into a personal vindication, however much the arguments advanced may be deeply linked to my own intellectual and psychological development. Perhaps the most essential point to be borne in mind in this context is that virtually all of the ideas that follow were developed before my withdrawal from the Baha'i community, that it was a change in my perceptions in these and related areas that was, in the end, responsible for my decision to leave what I could no longer uphold. In other words, the following comments do not represent, in the main, an attempt by someone who has lost his faith to rationalize and justify that loss but represent a pattern of thinking (however incoherently expressed in the present account) that may be followed by those who still retain their faith as well as by those who have doubts concerning it or who have lost it entirely.

Perhaps the two things that struck me most about the report and that seemed to me most representative of what I have myself known of Baha'i thinking on this subject, were its anti-intellectualism and its quality of self-contained smugness, even, if I may say so, of arrogance. The blatant contrast drawn between 'the Baha'i scholar, well-versed in the teachings, upholding the covenant, bound by its laws, guided by wisdom, and humbled by knowledge of his responsibilities' on the one hand, and 'the scholar of the 20th century, whose knowledge has fed his ambition, set him aloof from society, and allow (sic) him to do anything he could

justify in the name of intellectualism' on the other, might be better ignored were it not so sadly typical of Baha'i attitudes, even where these are not expressed in such overtly crude and insensitive language.

The anti-intellectual tenor of such remarks is quite significant in that it allows us to make an important distinction. The Baha'i scriptural writings are not *prima facie* anti-intellectual or anti-scholarly (although, as I shall argue, they do enshrine attitudes that are intrinsically opposed to critical scholarship). They do, it is true, condemn a certain type of intellectualism that is centred in traditionalism, excessive reliance on external learning, pedantry, obscurantism, dogmatism, and so forth, but this can hardly be construed as condemnation of intellectual activity as such. More significantly, perhaps, it is, I think, clear that the kind of scholarship condemned in treatises like the Kitab-i iqan is a particularly Islamic style of learning, many of whose main faults have long been eliminated from Western scholarship. At least, the premises on which traditional Islamic scholarship and contemporary scholarship as developed in the West are respectively based are sufficiently different to make application of scriptural passages directed against the former to the latter a rather hazardous undertaking at best. There are, indeed, numerous Baha'i scriptural passages (with which most readers are, no doubt, familiar) that extol learning and confirm the importance of the role of the scholar in society. It is not altogether surprising that this should be so: the earliest Babis were all members of the 'ulama class, and many early Baha'is also emerged from such a background. Not only that, but Islamic values, on which the Baha'i ethos is wholly based, demand respect for the 'ulama and the learning they represent: condemnation of Islamic learning is directed towards what is understood as a debased form of it, not towards such learning in principle.

Current Baha'i anti-intellectualism is very much a reaction against this earlier trend and is explicable not so much in terms of ignorance of Baha'i texts to the contrary (since many of these have long been available) but, I think, to the social and cultural position of Baha'ism as a sect-type movement rather than a denomination or church (to use a terminology derived from Western sociological perspectives). Werner Stark has pointed out, with numerous illustrations, the way in which members of sects, who see themselves as representing a 'contra-culture' opposed to that of unredeemed society at large (a theme much pursued in contemporary Baha'i writing, particularly in pronouncements emanating from Haifa) are typically and fanatically antagonistic to the use of the intellect, to formal learning, and to critical study, particularly of religious matters (The Sociology of Religion, vol.2 'Sectarian Religion', pp.129-133). For the most part, Baha'is fit this category very well, both in their general attitudes to the values of what they see as a 'decadent' society and their specific rejection of the intellectual values and standards of that wider community. Not insignificantly, many of those Baha'is (including numerous leading members of the hierarchy) who condemn the intellectual attitudes of modern society are almost entirely unread in literature outside that of Baha'ism.

The attitude of self-righteous which I have remarked on as a marked feature of the Yerrinbool report is evident, not only in the language in which the whole statement is couched, but particularly in the way in which it seeks to judge 'non-Baha'i scholars' (i.e. the vast majority of all scholars who have ever lived and who are alive today and who will ever live) by a standard to which they themselves neither aspire nor accord recognition. To judge others by one's own standards and criteria will almost always lead to such a sense of personal superiority. More seriously, the report creates stereotypes on both sides of a wholly artificial border. Leaving aside for the moment the idealized figure of the 'Baha'i scholar', it may be worth commenting on the picture drawn with such broad strokes of 'the scholar of the 20th century'.

There is, of course, no such being, unless, perhaps, he exists somewhere as a Platonic universal. But even if we allow this generalization, what sense can we make of the attributes so liberally ascribed to this person? They are not, I

venture to assert, drawn so much from real life as imposed from without, entirely prescriptive and lacking in widespread empirical actuality. I for one do not recognize the picture, either in myself or in my colleagues or in those scholars known to me through their works. There is, of course, ambition and -- sometimes -- aloofness: but neither ambition nor pride are prerogatives of academics. Indeed, I would go so far as to say that such attributes may be found less often among academics as a whole than among certain other sectors of society, such as military officers, politicians, business executives, diplomats, entertainers, judges, and so on.

To be honest, my own gut feeling is that, if anything, the opposite is true, and true for very basic reasons. There are few things quite as genuinely humbling as academic work, be it research or teaching. To stand several times a week in front of a lecture-hall full of students is one of the most effective ways known of driving out of anyone's mind the conceit that he knows very much about even his own subject, let alone anything else. Reading the work of other scholars or simply revising one's own work is a regular shock to the ego. Scholarship -- real, pushing, serious scholarship -- is a process that brings one again and again into contact with one's own limitations. Few ways of life demand such constant reappraisal of one's own abilities and achievements: there is very little room to rest on one's laurels. The more a scholar learns about his subject, the more he realizes he does not know, how much work there is still to do, how many ramifications he can never hope to explore. Knowledge does not feed ambition -- it feeds what is often enough a sense of blind panic as one's mental horizons expand to show wider and wider vistas of the unknown. Perhaps that all sounds a bit rhetorical and possibly forced, but I am trying to express a genuine characteristic of the life of the academic mind.

By way of contrast, I have commonly found those with a limited knowledge of a topic to be the most cocksure about their grasp of it. Undergraduates and the 'self-educated' often show this tendency in abundance. There is nothing to say that such people may not attain to insights that have evaded the expert, but it is seldom the case that much real use can be made of such insights without the wider conceptual and contextual framework into which the more experienced scholar alone will be able to place them. This is, I think, of singular importance within the Baha'i situation, where, in my own experience, those with a limited knowledge of, say, Baha'i history, are the first to shout down any alternative versions of what they 'know' to be true. Such people tend also, in my experience, to be the first to identify their own opinions with 'the Baha'i view'.

This question of arrogance is, I would say, quite central to the problem at issue here. Normal scholarship involves a complex process of researching, testing hypotheses, exposing one's ideas to criticism, modifying one's views, and, above all, knowing perfectly well that, in ten or fifty years' time, someone else is going to come along and demolish ninety per cent of one's best theories. It is still possible to be fairly proud of work one has done (and I cannot see what is so terrible or unnatural about that -- do we condemn artists or composers or gardeners or athletes for showing pride in their achievements?), but it is a relative sort of pride. One tends to develop a certain detachment -- academics who identify too closely with their ideas are likely to receive severe blows to their self-esteem when their ideas are attacked, as they are bound to be. On the other hand, what could be more liberating than the belief that the ideas one holds come ultimately from an all-infallible source, that one is protected by something called a 'covenant' (and, of course, the necessary institutions to enforce it) from straying into the paths of error? I do not wish to appear flippant about something which is deeply meaningful to many sincere people, but I do want to draw their attention to how their position of absolute certainty may appear from outside. That may not matter much to them, but it does matter to the rest of mankind.

It would, of course, be entirely wrong of me to suggest that this trait of

arrogance in the possession of the truth is confined to Baha'is, or even that they possess it to a higher degree than anyone else. Obviously, they share such attitudes with the members of a good many other organizations that also claim access to ultimate truth. Once one has accepted the diktat that 'this is the truth and all else naught but error', however humble one's demeanour, it conceals an inward arrogance of the spirit of the most overweening kind. 'Non-Baha'i' scholars are then perceived as themselves arrogant, not so much because of anything they do or say, but because they have (unknown to themselves) the temerity to disagree with what Baha'is believe.

Let me turn from the problem of arrogance to more fundamental issues. At the heart of the dilemma faced by Baha'is in the matter of scholarship is the assumption that it is possible to categorize human knowledge as 'Baha'i' or 'non-Baha'i'. According to the report, 'A Baha'i's work, in whatever discipline, must be done in the light of the Revelation of Baha'u'llah, i.e. it would be untrue to his profession to make assumptions or draw conclusions which were contrary to the teachings in an attempt to conform to current thought'. Just what is meant by the phrase 'untrue to his profession' (assuming that 'profession of faith' is not what is intended by 'profession')? I can think of few things more untrue to the standards of professional scholarship than to make one's assumptions or draw one's conclusions on the a priori basis of certain supernaturally revealed truths, rather than in accordance, not with some fictitious concept called 'current thought', whatever that is meant to be, but the principles of academic honesty, precision, rigour, and discipline.

The attitude expressed here seems to be based on the main theme of the Baha'i World Centre Research Department's comments on the Baha'i Studies Seminar held in Cambridge in 1978. Those comments would, in themselves, merit close analysis, in terms both of intention and content, but, for the present, I propose to draw attention only to the following passages: 'In scientific investigation when searching after the facts of any matter a Baha'i must, of course, be entirely open-minded, but in his interpretation of the facts and his evaluation of evidence we do not see by what logic he can ignore the truth of the Baha'i Revelation which he has already accepted; to do so would, we feel, be both hypocritical and unscholarly. Undoubtedly the fact that Baha'i scholars of the history and teachings of the Faith believe in the Faith that they are studying will be a grave flaw in the eyes of many non-Baha'i academics, whose own dogmatic materialism passes without comment because it is fashionable....'

Let us look first at the assumption made in the second sentence here, that the belief of Baha'i scholars 'will be a grave flaw in the eyes of many non-Baha'i academics'. I think it is fair to say that this is a wholly unwarranted and undemonstrable assertion and that it betrays more than anything the prejudices of those making it. The problems involved in the study of a particular religious tradition by its own members have for a long time now been recognized and debated, and it is generally accepted by scholars that there is, in principle, no reason why belief should, in and of itself, constitute a barrier to research any more than unbelief. What is, of course, objected to is distortion originating in prior convictions, but here again the objection applies with equal force to non-believers as to believers. The assumption indicates a fundamental ignorance of what actually goes on in 'non-Baha'i' circles, particularly in the academic field, as does the parallel assumption that 'dogmatic materialism' passes without comment because it is fashionable'. Here, as elsewhere, I do not deny a modicum of truth to these assertions, I simply beg to point out that they are extreme and that they grossly misrepresent the attitudes and methods of the academic community at large.

More serious, however, is the assertion of the first sentence that, when searching after facts, a Baha'i scholar must be 'entirely open-minded' but that, when assessing those 'facts', he cannot 'ignore the truth of the Baha'i Revelation which he has already accepted'. As a statement on methodology, this is problematic for several reasons. At the most basic level, it involves a profound

misunderstanding of scientific method and the logical process of research, whether this be in the 'hard' or the 'soft' sciences. I propose to examine in detail the question of scientific method as such at a later stage of this response, but for the moment I would like to draw attention to the problem raised by a division of the research process into two semi-autonomous parts: neutral fact-finding and subjective evaluation. This represents a rather simplistic interpretation of the inductive method, beginning with the assumption that the researcher just goes out and looks for 'facts', the latter existing in some sort of epistemological vacuum. In reality he does nothing of the sort. Sir Karl Popper used to demonstrate this point to his students by asking them at the beginning of a lecture to 'observe'; naturally, they very soon began to ask for more information as to what they should observe, for what purposes they were expected to observe, and so on. Selectivity in the observation of facts is an essential part of the scientific process, but to be selective one must introduce an element of evaluation into one's method.

It is, nevertheless, essential to the quality of research that the scholar be entirely 'open-minded' at all stages of his work, particularly in so far as the discovery or re-evaluation of empirical data may force him to change his earlier hypotheses. The most basic meaning of open-mindedness (and the most crucial one for scientific research) is acceptance of the possibility that what one believes may be partly or wholly false (I shall look further at the question of falsification later). To indulge in niceties on that issue would be entirely dishonest. That one has accepted certain propositions (even metaphysical ones) at any given point is not to say that one cannot or should not reject them at a later stage. This is, in fact, implicit in the Baha'i concept of an unfettered search after truth: Baha'is constantly demand of others that they be willing to abandon their current beliefs -- why should they themselves be exempt from that demand? If it is correct to condemn the followers of other faiths for their lack of open-mindedness in refusing to change them, why should it not be equally correct to condemn Baha'is for the same reason? Presumably because they alone, out of all the peoples of the earth have a monopoly of the truth. Such a view hardly advances us very far from the Middle Ages. Within the Baha'i context, if scholarship is to be open-minded or honest at all, the scholar must be willing to accept as a potentially valid proposition the possibility that the Baha'i version of historical or other empirical data is not a reasonable one and that, like any other interpretation, it may be rejected. I can readily accept that to ignore what one believes would, in a sense, be hypocritical. But to do so would only be 'unscholarly' if by that were meant that one would fail to take those presuppositions into account in one's work, together with others. I cannot, however, see what fundamental objection there can be for the believer to mentally 'reserve' or 'bracket' his own a priori convictions so that they do not, as far as possible, influence his research in ways that would result in avoidable distortion. This would not be hypocritical: there is a distinction between 'denying' one's beliefs and withholding them from the arena of debate.

It may, of course, be the case (and I suspect that this underlies the basic fear expressed here) that, in reflecting with a more fully open mind on the data relating to the Baha'i faith, an individual may be led to conclude that his original belief in it was misplaced. This certainly is what happened to me and to other former Baha'is of my acquaintance. What I really knew of Baha'ism when I 'declared' my faith in it was very little indeed -- was I expected to close my mind at that point, never to re-examine the data or my belief, either to reaffirm or abandon the latter? What, after all, is the alternative proposition? To control the truth so that it fits with what is actually taught or written? To reach our conclusions before we have even examined our evidence? To acquit or condemn before witnesses have even been brought? This approach itself introduces a fundamental logical contradiction that, I believe, lies at the root of official Baha'i uneasiness about genuinely independent research. If we state (as Baha'i dogma demands we do) that the expression of truths in the Baha'i writings and the empirical events connected with them correspond, in some way, to 'objective' reality, it is essential that research be carried out with as much 'objectivity'



as possible.

As long as the results of that research seem to confirm what is elsewhere postulated dogmatically, scholarship would seem to provide a 'scientific' or 'objective' corroboration of transcendent reality. But what if the same methods of research, the same 'objectivity', should produce results at variance with the texts? Reason compels us to reject, even if only provisionally, the original expression of dogma. We can then either reinterpret it (and, from the point of view of faith, possibly gain deeper spiritual insights thereby) or discard it in some way (perhaps by a personal act of rejection). The approach suggested by Haifa and Yerrinbool is to reassert the priority of the original 'truth' and to deny validity to the 'objective' research, which then remains a dead letter. On such a basis, of course, we may as well not waste our time carrying out the research in the first place.

Let me try to approach this in another, more concrete, way. A basic conviction of Baha'i orthodoxy is the belief that the historical record of the lives of the Bab, Baha' Allah, and <sup>C</sup>Abd al-Baha' is, in some unexplained sense, 'true', in a way that earlier prophetic records are not. There is, of course, room for addition to the record, but not for radical re-evaluation. At the same time, it is recognized that historical research may perform a useful service by providing confirmation of existing basic records (such as God Passes By), in the form of documentary evidence, corroborating analyses, and so on. But what if research should reveal hard contradictory evidence, possibly of a serious nature, or if it should, at least, reverse the probabilities against the orthodox version? What if, for example, a historian should find that he is compelled (for internal or external reasons) to accept a version of events given by someone defined by orthodoxy as an 'enemy' or a 'covenant-breaker'? Either his basic method of proceeding is valid, in which case this new version deserves to be credited with at least provisional plausibility, or it is not, in which case this confirmatory evidence ought also to be dismissed. One cannot, in the academic world, re-make the rules to suit one's own progress in the game.

The matter becomes even more problematic, I think, where the researcher is able to point directly to fundamental contradictions in the Baha'i texts themselves or to provide evidence that certain texts have been suppressed in order to protect the faithful from such contradictions. Merely to say that such contradictions do not (cannot) exist or that one is interpreting as 'suppression' what is really the application of 'wisdom' simply will not do. If <sup>C</sup>Abd al-Baha' portrays Babism as a fanatical movement characterized by 'the striking of necks', burning of books, destruction of shrines, and so on, which has been superseded by the sharply contrasted ethics of his father's faith, while Shoghi Effendi avoids translating numerous passages of this nature and instead creates an image of the Babis as peaceful, meek, and tolerant, there is a real problem to be overcome that no amount of heavy-handedness can cause to go away.

Nevertheless, the Universal House of Justice makes it quite clear in a letter dated July 18, 1979, to an individual who had participated in the Cambridge Seminar (not the present writer) that 'it does not see how a Baha'i historian can in all honesty claim to be a faithful believer on the one hand and, on the other, challenge in his writings the veracity and honour of the Central Figures of the Faith or of its Guardian'. That may well be true, and I am happy to respect such a conviction, but I think it is only fair to point out that it is not possible to hold to this viewpoint and simultaneously carry out academic historical research which can claim to be entirely honest and critical. I do not say 'correct' here, but simply 'honest and critical' within the terms of rigorous scientific scholarship.

The problem involved here has, I think, been well expressed by Peter Berger in The Sacred Canopy (Anchor Books ed., N.Y., 1969, p.181):

All this leads to the commonplace observation, frequently found in the opening pages of works in the sociology of religion, that the theologian qua theologian should not worry unduly over anything the

sociologist may have to say about religion. At the same time, it would be foolish to maintain that all theological positions are equally immune to injury from the side of sociology. Logically, the theologian will have to worry whenever his position includes propositions that are subject to empirical disconfirmation. For example, a proposition that religion in itself is a constitutive factor of psychological well-being has a lot to worry about if subjected to sociological and social-psychological scrutiny. The logic here is similar to that of the historian's study of religion. To be sure, it can be maintained that historical and theological assertions take place in discrepant, mutually immune frames of reference. But if the theologian asserts something that can be shown to have never taken place or to have taken place in quite a different way from what he asserts, and if this assertion is essential to his position, then he can no longer be reassured that he has nothing to fear from the historian's work.

It is not, perhaps, insignificant that Baha'is are generally more than happy to accept the results of historical criticism of this kind where it is seen to contradict theological positions held by the exponents of other faiths. There may be certain reservations in the case of what are regarded as 'divinely-revealed religions' (although even here, 'evidence' against the historicity of the resurrection of Christ, for example, would be highly acceptable and uncontentious), but with regard to other religions or sects (such as Mormonism, for example), there would clearly be no objections even to the most radical questioning of historicity or whatever. In fact, the usefulness of scientific historical method would, no doubt, be extolled. I think this point is one that Baha'is would do well to ponder.

It may be objected that the Universal House of Justice has made it clear that there is ample room within the Baha'i faith for differing interpretations of history and doctrine (e.g. Wellspring of Guidance pp.88-89, and the letter just referred to). This is certainly an important principle and one that deserves greater attention in day-to-day Baha'i activities, but I fear that it is much too qualified in theory and little applied in practice to be of more than restricted value to pioneering spirits within the Baha'i community. Innumerable alternative views have already been foreclosed by 'authoritative' statements or the emergence of a broad and fixed consensus or by the existence of a widespread fear of contradicting figures such as Hands or Counsellors. In my own quite wide experience, the principle has generally been invoked to permit the perpetuation of popular or canonical opinions as equally valid with alternative views based on documentary evidence of a more solid nature, while other overriding principles have been brought into play to prevent the dissemination of the latter. Minor changes or alternatives are undoubtedly possible (such as the note in The Babi and Baha'i Religions to the effect that the date of the martyrdom of the Bab was almost certainly July 8 and not July 9), but more radical modifications remain inadmissible. These latter (and even the former, to some extent) present particular problems where they are premised on incontrovertible and significant contradictions in the Babi or Baha'i texts, as I have suggested above. It is easy enough to deny the possibility of 'real' contradictions, but this is more a theological than an empirical position and is bound to prove inadequate in extreme cases. In the end, alternatives can only be expressed (because they can only be understood ontologically to exist) within a basically non-contradictory (though not necessarily non-paradoxical) framework.

It may be argued -- as is done by the House of Justice in the above-mentioned letter -- that 'historical research is largely a matter of evaluating evidence and deducing probabilities' and that 'historical evidence, moreover, is always fragmentary, and may also be accidentally erroneous or even intentionally fabricated'. This is, of course, perfectly true, and no competent historian would seek to deny any of it. What is problematic is the actual application of this

principle within the Baha'i sphere, since there seems to be no evidence of its being invoked in the cases of Nabil's Narrative, God Passes By, A Traveller's Narrative, and similar productions, all of which are open to serious criticisms on the score of historical accuracy, both in terms of accidental error and of intentional fabrication. In a sense, I fear that the possibility of uncertainty in historical research is being used as a gambit by Baha'i orthodoxy in an attempt to devalue potentially damaging research at the most basic level. It must be stressed that, for all the uncertainty that attends research of this and any other kind, it is, nevertheless, still possible to speak in terms of a central body of empirical data which may not reasonably be questioned. The recent controversy surrounding a publication that seeks to 'prove' that the Holocaust is a myth provides an excellent illustration of this point. Historical data is neither so poor nor so confused as to permit such a theory as a rational one: the empirical data is heavily in favour of the historicity of the death camps and of the numbers murdered in them.

This raises the question of comparability in academic debate. It is not enough to insist that Nabil Zarandi or Shoghi Effendi have said such and such, in an attempt to refute an item of empirical data to the contrary: it is necessary to adduce a comparable piece of evidence the probability of whose truth content would at least counterbalance if not outweigh the first theory. Not only that, but even in matters of evaluation, it must be remembered that what is most 'probable' within an orthodox Baha'i framework may appear reasonably unlikely from almost any other point of view and that there is no a priori reason to prefer the former merely because the topic concerns Baha'i history or doctrine. Clearly it is easier to operate a double-standard system in which alternative historical evidence can be disputed on the grounds that it is 'fragmentary', 'erroneous', or 'fabricated', while authoritative texts (and even popular conceptions) remain immune to criticism on this level. If the Baha'i authorities insist on dictating the rules of the game in their favour, is it surprising that so many of us prefer to leave the field?

The Yerrinbool proposition makes explicit a view that I have heard orally expressed on many occasions. It does not, in any fundamental sense, differ from the basic propositions put forward at the World Conferences on Islamic Education held in Saudi Arabia in 1977 and Pakistan in 1981: to reclassify knowledge according to Islamic criteria and to formulate Islamic concepts instead of current Western, secular ones for 'reunderstanding' and 'restructuring' the imaginative, social and natural sciences. The continuing strength of Islamic perspectives within the mental world of Baha'ism is, I feel, revealed here in all its vigour.

The very belief that such a thing is either desirable or possible reveals an astonishing lack of understanding of the principles on which modern Western scholarship is based. It shows, at the outset, a basic failure to distinguish between the perfectly valid postulate of Baha'i (or 'Islamic' or 'Buddhist' or 'Marxist') perspectives on virtually any area of life and the equally invalid assumption that such perspectives can be used to 'shape' knowledge without perverting the very processes by which it is acquired. Let us look, first of all, at the first of these postulates. It is obvious that Baha'is, like any other group of people sharing certain ideological assumptions, may have particular views about most issues, views they may, in many cases, share with other groups or which may be peculiar to themselves. It is inevitable that Baha'is will want to formulate clear opinions about, let us say, nuclear disarmament, or abortion, or homosexuality. This, of course, tends to result in the adoption of a sharply-defined, black and white party line on issues that are often, by their nature, grey and ill-defined, and in the substitution of received dogma for moral convictions arrived at through individual consideration; but this aspect of the matter need not concern us at the moment. Such opinions or dogmas are likely to be more clearly developed and more sharply expressed in the case of major issues like those just cited, than in the case of relatively minor matters, such as the use of cosmetics by women or the kind of music one ought to listen to. It is, I think, fair, however, to say that, in the Baha'i case, the desire to avoid contro-

versial public issues and to favour expedient policies has tended to blur opinion on more than one major topic. It is the 'outmoded' Christian churches rather than the religion of the new age that are outspoken about issues such as apartheid, the arms trade, poverty in the third world, political repression, capital punishment, and so on. Baha'is, like anyone else, may think that their view on a given matter is the 'correct' one, but (at present at least), they will normally concede the right of others to differ. Such perspectives are determined by theological and ideological criteria, and there will inevitably be conflict between differing opinions. Nevertheless, it is clearly legitimate to hold views on such subjects and to express them. The matter only becomes difficult when a given group seeks to impose its views on others, to make its own world-view predominate (as, in the long term, Baha'is obviously wish to do, through the creation of Baha'i states and an eventual Baha'i world system -- but let us not enter that particular digression).

The second postulate -- that ideological perspectives may legitimately be used to 'shape' or 'reshape' knowledge or understanding -- is, I have argued, as invalid as the first is valid. My reasons for saying this are complex, but perhaps they can be summed up in the contention that, when we come down to basics, there is no such thing as 'Christian' or 'Islamic' or 'secular' science, there is just 'good' or 'bad' science. Perhaps this will become clearer if we note that we can speak historically about, say, 'Greek' or 'Arab' or 'Chinese' science, describing a body or even a method of knowledge developed within a relatively well-defined cultural and geographical context; when, indeed, we speak of 'Islamic' science, we are thinking less of Islam the religion than of Islam the civilization, and we are, indeed, referring often enough to the work of Jews and Christians alongside that of their Muslim colleagues. In the modern world, divisions of this kind are less valid, and what was originally developed as 'western' or 'European' science has now become something international. An Indian may carry out 'western-style' scientific research as well or as badly as an American; and, for that matter, a Jew as well as a Muslim or a Hindu as well as an atheist.

The kind of reaction that leads to calls for 'Islamic' or 'Baha'i' or 'Creationist' scholarship has its roots in a perception of modern science (including the so-called 'soft' sciences like sociology, anthropology, history, or religious studies) as an inherently secular phenomenon that disregards 'higher' truths derived from scriptural texts. Such a reaction involves a profound misconception of the nature of science and perpetuates what is by now an outmoded dichotomy between it and religion. It may be replied at this point that Baha'ism does not, in fact, perceive any dichotomy between religion and science (or reason), but I propose to argue at a later stage that this is, in fact, precisely what it does and that the reality of this perception lies at the heart of many of the problems under discussion.

Perhaps the easiest approach to this misconception of the nature of science (understood in the widest sense of the term) will be a roundabout one. One fairly obvious point that may be made here is that much scientific work has been and is carried out by believing Christians, Jews, Hindus, and so forth, whose convictions about the nature of ultimate reality have not been perceived by them as conflicting with their understanding of empirical data. Questions of ultimate meaning do not fall within the province of science since the latter can only concern itself with those matters that are subject to empirical investigation. In one sense, this means that science is secular, but it is important to stress that it is so only in its subject-matter, not in its ideology. Scientific conclusions may, of course, challenge certain kinds of belief, such as literal acceptance of the creation myth in Genesis or the notion that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, but such beliefs are not concerned with ultimate or metaphysical matters and cannot, for that reason, be said to fall outside the realm of empirical research. The existence of God, of the soul, of a life after death are, in their very nature, questions that can neither be proved nor disproved by empirical investigation. They rest on faith and are compatible with any variety of theories about the nature of mundane reality.

It is, perhaps, worth re-emphasizing here an earlier point, that I do not believe there to be any fundamental objection within Baha'i circles to the application of critical, even sceptical research (such as the techniques of source-criticism) to specific areas of belief within other religions or sects. The Baha'i doctrine of non-literal interpretation of scriptural texts would, if anything, confirm such an approach. This indicates that Baha'i objections to demythologisation and so forth are not to such processes as such or in principle, but rather to their specific application to areas of Baha'i belief, where this might call in question cherished dogmas or even the entire edifice of Baha'i faith. A radical example of this would be the possibility of Baha'i 'debunking' of the Shi'ic belief in the birth of the supposed twelfth Imam. Since Baha' Allah himself has rejected the story of the Imam's birth as false and has condemned the four 'gates' as imposters, there would be no objection in principle to a Baha'i historian carrying out the most rigorous tests of the evidence nor, indeed, to his presentation of his findings in language as forceful as that used in the Baha'i writings on the matter (which is far from the humble, moderate, tolerant standard demanded by the House of Justice of Baha'i writers). But even to question for a moment a historical 'fact' such as the claim that the body of the Bab is actually buried in Haifa (I do not say it is not, just that the 'fact' has been challenged) would undoubtedly be to raise an uproar of considerable proportions. Special pleading of this kind is, however, likely to receive short shrift in the academic world.

I do not wish to turn this short essay into a treatise on scientific method, but I do feel that it is essential to say something, however inadequate, on the subject. Perhaps I should begin by stating the obvious but still not widely recognized point that 'science' (in the widest sense) is not a body of knowledge or a collection of data, but a method that can be applied to a wide variety of problems. In some ways, the idea that scientific knowledge and science are identifiable lies at the heart of the misconception I have referred to above. If science is a given set of conclusions about reality and if, as we see to be true, those conclusions can be modified, even radically, from generation to generation, then it may appear reasonable to seek fresh modifications based on different initial assumptions, such as the doctrines of biblical fundamentalism or Islam or Baha'ism or Marxism. An unspoken corollary of this view is, of course, that, once all the necessary reformulations have taken place, there will be no further need for modification, since 'science' would now correspond to an absolute or transcendent standard of truth. (Ernest Gellner's view of the Qur'an as a Platonic Word Mark 2 containing all possible propositions is entirely relevant.) A further corollary is that there would thus come into existence a number of competing scientific systems, the differences between which would rest, not on the empirical data available to them, but on the non-scientific a priori assumptions built into their initial doctrinal postulates.

This would be all very well, perhaps, if science did, indeed, operate in this way or could be made so to operate. But it does not and cannot. There are, of course, different theories about scientific method, but all of them are founded on certain principles that are the sine qua non of acceptable, quantifiable, and repeatable research. The scientist (or sociologist or linguist or historian) 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. Furthermore, the findings of scholarship do not remain the private property of the individual scholar but are exposed to testing by his colleagues, on the basis of which they may be verified or falsified until such time as fresh research uncovers new information or improves the methods of investigation or introduces new hypotheses.

Scientific work in all fields has generally been held to proceed by a process of inductive reasoning, whereby research and observation lead to discoveries that are used to provide material for discussion, this in its turn leading to the formulation of general hypotheses designed to fit the known facts.

An attempt is then made to confirm these hypotheses by discovering supporting evidence, leading to the formulation of explanatory 'laws', on the basis of which further work is carried out, the frontiers of knowledge being thus continually pushed back. While this method has yielded remarkable results and is, therefore, of considerable practical value, it entails serious logical problems, first noted by Hume. No number of empirical observations can logically permit us to arrive at general statements about reality. The fact that the sun has always risen does not logically entail that it must always do so or even that it will do so tomorrow. We can, of course, proceed on the assumption that it will and publish tables giving the exact times of sunrise throughout the world, but an element of uncertainty remains -- a chemical factor of which we remain unaware may cause the sun to turn nova in a matter of hours.

The most effective solution to this problem is undoubtedly that proposed by Sir Karl Popper, whose works on the subject I cannot recommend too highly: Conjectures and Refutations, Objective Knowledge, and The Logic of Scientific Discovery (or, as an excellent introduction, Bryan Magee's short study simply entitled Popper). I cannot seriously attempt to explain in any detail the complexities of Popper's arguments, but let me refer to one or two points that seem relevant to our present undertaking. Popper began by examining theories such as those of Marx or Freud, which impressed him by their remarkable explanatory power. He came to the conclusion that the reason why such theories possessed this power was that, once one's eyes had been opened by the theory, almost any observation could serve to confirm it. The world would be 'full of verification of the theory'. The main reason for this was that any given empirical case could be interpreted in the light of the theory (either positively or negatively). It is a little like the situation in religion, where the effectiveness of prayer may be confirmed both by fulfillment and by non-fulfillment: in the first case, God has chosen to answer one's prayer (therefore prayer is answered), in the second, He, in His wisdom, has chosen not to answer (therefore, it is, in another sense, answered). In either case, prayer is efficacious and it is in our interest to pray. By way of contrast, theories such as those of Einstein or Newton did not possess this quality of universal verifiability. Even a single observation to the contrary could serve to overturn a theory such as Einstein's that light must be attracted by heavy bodies. No number of sightings of white swans can ever prove the assertion that 'all swans are white'; but a single sighting of a black swan can serve to disprove it (and to force us to modify our original hypothesis to something like: 'most swans are white, but there are also black swans' or 'there are white and black swans, and there may also be purple swans, but no observations have been made of the latter').

Popper thus concluded that 'the criterion of the scientific status of a theory is its falsifiability, or refutability, or testability' (Conjectures p.37). Ideas must, then, be so formulated that they entail a high degree of risk of being falsified. The aim is to formulate hypotheses with a high informative content, which in itself implies lower probability. '... only a highly testable or improbable theory is worth testing, and is actually (and not merely potentially) satisfactory if it withstands severe tests -- especially those tests to which we could point as crucial for the theory before they were ever undertaken' (ibid pp.219-20). Scientific knowledge advances from problem to problem by the method of exposing new theories to the severest possible criticism.

If we may pause here to look at the Yerrinbool proposition, we can see that it would lead to an end to serious progress in most scientific areas. Once we admit propositions that, by their very nature, are deemed to be above criticism or which cannot be subjected to rational testing, the whole process grinds to a standstill. Or, if we do introduce propositions from a 'higher' authority, then we must do so on the understanding that they, like any other propositions, are open to criticism, to testing, and to falsification. Otherwise, we are not engaged in a scientific enterprise. Perhaps those at Yerrinbool do not wish to be associated with such an enterprise (as I suspect they do not): but then they

must abandon all pretence of respect for science, for the 'principle' that religion and science are essentially harmonious. It is evident too, I think, that Popper's principle would be quite acceptable to those at Yerrinbool or Haifa when applied in a relatively uncontentious area such as electrical engineering, but that it would be much less palatable in, let us say, religious history. This again raises the problem of special pleading and of the desire to divide knowledge, not on the basis of method, but of content (and contentiousness).

A major assumption underlying Popper's work, which is developed from the ideas of Alfred Tarski, is that there is such a thing as objective or absolute truth. The sciences, in particular the social sciences, have in recent years come under attack on the grounds that they cannot provide 'certain' knowledge. Scientific theories have been shown to be merely provisional, with the result that the positivist outlook has been discarded as meaningless. And so it is. But this should not allow us to justify a flight from reason towards irrationality (as has, indeed, become fashionable in recent years), nor should it lead us to some sort of relativism or subjectivism which is willing to accord the same probable truth content to each and every theory advanced. Science, to be meaningful at all, must be a search for truth (and, Popper adds, 'interesting truth'), recognizing that truth is hard to come by. In a sense, our advancing theories are steps on an unending path towards an ultimately unattainable goal, approximations rather than final statements about the truth. It is by means of criticism that we hope to test the truth content of our propositions: '... the rationality of science lies not in its habit of appealing to empirical evidence in support of its dogmas -- astrologers do so too -- but solely in the critical approach: in an attitude which, of course, involves the critical use, among other arguments, of empirical evidence (especially in refutations). For us, therefore, science has nothing to do with the quest for certainty or probability or reliability. We are not interested in establishing scientific theories as secure, or certain, or probable. Conscious of our fallibility we are only interested in criticizing them and testing them, hoping to find out where we are mistaken; of learning from our mistakes; and, if we are lucky, of proceeding to better theories' (ibid p.229).

The arguments put forward at Yerrinbool and elsewhere rest on the assumption that, since human knowledge is subject to error (being 'fragmentary', 'accidentally erroneous', or 'intentionally fabricated') we must discover higher, infallible sources of knowledge. Popper's ideas are significant here: 'How can we admit', he asks, 'that our knowledge is a human -- an all too human -- affair, without at the same time implying that it is all individual whim and arbitrariness?' The solution, he suggests, 'lies in the realization that all of us may and often do err, singly and collectively, but that this very idea of error and human fallibility involves another one -- the idea of objective truth: the standard which we may fall short of. Thus the doctrine of fallibility should not be regarded as part of a pessimistic epistemology. This doctrine implies that we may seek for truth, for objective truth, though more often than not we may miss it by a wide margin. And it implies that if we respect truth, we must search for it by persistently searching for our errors: by indefatigable rational criticism, and self-criticism' (ibid p.16).

The Baha'i (or Muslim or Christian fundamentalist) solution to the problem, however, is to consider, not the method by which we may seek to uncover the truth, but the source from which it may be derived (or 'revealed') -- be it the Kitab-i iqan or Shoghi Effendi or the Universal House of Justice (or the Qur'an or the Bible or Das Kapital). According to Popper, 'the traditional systems of epistemology may be said to result from yes-answers or no-answers to questions about the sources of our knowledge. They never challenge these questions, or dispute their legitimacy; the questions are taken as perfectly natural, and nobody seems to see any harm in them.

'This is quite interesting, for these questions are clearly authoritarian in spirit. They can be compared with that traditional question of political theory, 'Who should rule?', which begs for an authoritarian answer such as 'the

best' or 'the wisest', or 'the people', or 'the majority'. This political question is wrongly put and the answers which it elicits are paradoxical.... It should be replaced by a completely different question such as 'How can we organize our political institutions so that bad or incompetent rulers (whom we should try not to get, but whom we so easily might get all the same) cannot do too much damage?' I believe that only by changing our question in this way can we hope to proceed towards a reasonable theory of political institutions.

'The question about the sources of our knowledge can be replaced in a similar way. It has always been asked in the spirit of: "What are the best sources of our knowledge -- the most reliable ones, those which will not lead us into error, and those to which we can and must turn, in case of doubt, as the last court of appeal?" I propose to assume, instead, that no such ideal sources exist -- no more than ideal rulers -- and that all "sources" are liable to lead us into error at times. And I propose to replace, therefore, the question of the sources of our knowledge by the entirely different question: "How can we hope to detect and eliminate error?"

'The question of the sources of our knowledge, like so many authoritarian questions, is a genetic one. It asks for the origin of our knowledge, in the belief that knowledge may legitimize itself by its pedigree. The nobility of the racially pure knowledge, the untainted knowledge, the knowledge which derives from the highest authority, if possible from God: these are the (often unconscious) metaphysical ideas behind the question. My modified question, "How can we hope to detect error?" may be said to derive from the view that such pure, untainted and certain sources do not exist, and that questions of origin or of purity should not be confounded with questions of validity, or of truth.'

The 'genetic' nature of the question of sources is, I think, particularly well exemplified in the case of Islam, where the fundamental element in hadith (tradition) criticism was not verification or falsification of the matn or text (i.e. of the inherent probability or otherwise of the content of the tradition as transmitted) but investigation of the isnad, the chain of authorities, whose names guaranteed the purity of the descent of the text. Something of this kind is involved in the Baha'i system of authentication of texts on the basis of scribal impeccability, revelatory handwriting, or, most importantly, sanction by central and infallible authority.

Popper later identifies two main ideas as underlying the doctrine that the source of all our knowledge is supernatural. The first is that we must justify our knowledge or theories by positive reasons, which means that we must appeal to some ultimate or authoritative source of true knowledge. This idea he believes to be false. The second is 'that no man's authority can establish truth by decree; that we should submit to truth; that truth is above human authority'. He goes on:

'Taken together these two ideas almost immediately yield the conclusion that the sources from which our knowledge derives must be super-human; a conclusion which tends to encourage self-righteousness and the use of force against those who refuse to see the divine truth.

'Some who rightly reject this conclusion do not, unhappily, reject the first idea -- the belief in the existence of ultimate sources of knowledge. Instead they reject the second idea -- the thesis that truth is above human authority. They thereby endanger the idea of the objectivity of knowledge, and of common standards of criticism or rationality.

'What we should do, I suggest, is to give up the idea of ultimate sources of knowledge, and admit that all knowledge is human; that it is mixed with our errors, our prejudices, our dreams, and our hopes; that all we can do is to grope for truth even though it be beyond our reach. We may admit that our groping is often inspired, but we must be on our guard against the belief, however deeply felt, that our inspiration carries any authority, divine or otherwise. If we thus admit that there is no authority beyond the reach of criticism to be found within the whole province of our knowledge, however far it may have penetrated into the unknown, then we can retain, without danger, the idea that truth is beyond human authority. And we must retain it. For without this idea there can



be no objective standards of enquiry; no criticism of our conjectures; no groping for the unknown; no quest for knowledge.' (ibid pp.29-30)

The Yerrinbool proposition, with its evident animosity to 'current thought' or, indeed, to 'true scholarship' that might threaten to 'unwisely question the foundation stones of the Faith', carries with it disturbing implications. At the risk of becoming boring, I would like to quote Popper again:

'Disbelief in the power of human reason, in man's power to discern the truth, is almost invariably linked with distrust of man. Thus epistemological pessimism is linked, historically, with a doctrine of human depravity, and it tends to lead to the demand for the establishment of powerful traditions and the entrenchment of a powerful authority which would save man from his folly and wickedness....

'The contrast between epistemological pessimism and optimism may be said to be fundamentally the same as that between epistemological traditionalism and rationalism. (I am using the latter term in its wider sense in which it is opposed to irrationalism, and in which it covers not only Cartesian intellectualism but empiricism also.) For we can interpret traditionalism as the belief that, in the absence of an objective and discernible truth, we are faced with the choice between accepting the authority of tradition, and chaos; while rationalism has, of course, always claimed the right of reason and of empirical science to criticize, and to reject, any tradition, and any authority, as being based on sheer unreason or prejudice or accident.' (ibid p.6)

'This false epistemology, however, has also led to disastrous consequences. The theory that truth is manifest -- that it is there for everyone to see, if only he wants to see it -- this theory is the basis of almost every kind of fanaticism. For only the most depraved wickedness can refuse to see the manifest truth; only those who have reason to fear truth conspire to suppress it.

'Yet the theory that truth is manifest not only breeds fanatics -- men possessed by the conviction that all those who do not see the manifest truth must be possessed by the devil -- but it may also lead, though perhaps less directly than does a pessimistic epistemology, to authoritarianism. This is so, simply, because truth is not manifest, as a rule. The allegedly manifest truth is therefore in constant need, not only of interpretation and affirmation, but also of re-interpretation and re-affirmation. An authority is required to pronounce upon, and lay down, almost from day to day, what is to be the manifest truth, and it may learn to do so arbitrarily and cynically. And many disappointed epistemologists will turn away from their own former optimism and erect a resplendent authoritarian theory on the basis of a pessimistic epistemology.' (Ibid pp.8-9)

That this latter passage might serve as a brilliant and concise description of the basic Baha'i epistemological attitude -- 'Gracious God! How strange the way of this people! They clamour for guidance, although the standards of Him Who guideth all things are already hoisted. They cling to the obscure intricacies of knowledge, when He, Who is the Object of all knowledge, shineth as the sun. They see the sun with their own eyes, and yet question that brilliant Orb as to the proof of its light.... The proof of the sun is the light thereof' (Iqan p.133; cf. Gleanings pp.105-6, etc.) -- and of the subsequent development of authoritarianism based on the need for interpretation (and even carefully controlled distribution) of the sacred texts is, I think, quite clear. Genuine scholarship, open debate, innovative thinking cannot flourish in a system that demands total control of all publications, that holds the power of disenfranchisement or, more seriously, excommunication, as a punishment for intellectual or moral dissent, and that judges a man by how far he conforms to the dogmas of a narrowly-defined orthodoxy.

The consequences of this authoritarianism can be seen at all levels of the Baha'i community, where bodies for the 'protection of the faith' (which is a euphemism for the suppression of dissent and its isolation) keep a close watch on those deemed dangerous to the status quo. In the realm of scholarship, this

attitude has had far-reaching and devastating results. Let me be outspoken in saying that I do not believe a single work of scholarship of any merit whatsoever has ever been published within the confines of the Baha'i system, nor do I think any are likely to be. The works of the most highly esteemed Baha'i 'scholars' from Gulpaygani\*onwards would not pass muster for a moment in the wider world of scholarship, not because academics have somehow been corrupted by 'current thought' (which is, in any case, about as precise and meaningful a term as Ruhiyya Rabbani's 'modern architecture'), but because they lack even the pretence of rigour, of critical analysis, of open-mindedness, of balance and lack of obvious bias that is so essential in works of scholarship. Baha'i historiography from the earliest to the latest examples is consistently little more than hagiographical distortion and oversimplification, in which important facts are altered or omitted to conform to preconceived notions of reality and to a worldview divided between black and white, believer and unbeliever. Does this sound an unnecessarily harsh judgement? Read any classic of modern historical writing in any area, not least that of religious history, and then turn to the standard histories of the Baha'i faith. Look at the best examples of contemporary Christian theological writing, then consider the best that Baha'i writers have to offer. Is it really fair even to make a comparison?

The results of this appalling imbalance between what passes for scholarship within the Baha'i community and the products of modern scholarship in general, whether religious or secular in inspiration are extremely serious. It is difficult to envisage any meaningful debate in which Baha'i 'scholars' could, at present, readily participate as equals, certainly as long as they continue to subject themselves to the extraordinary limitations imposed by publications review. Baha'i writing is naive and undeveloped in the extreme and contrasts unfavourably with the great bulk of well-argued, carefully-written material produced in all fields of the humanities and sciences today. The level of sophistication of, let us say, Jewish or Christian scholarship is considerable and enables useful dialogue to take place. By way of contrast, the low level of attainment in Baha'i writing precludes anything like a meeting of equals. Comparability exists only with the productions of groups like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, or Theosophists, with whom no useful dialogue is likely in any case. This is, of course, in part a reflection of the overall lack of intellectual sophistication within the Baha'i community at large, but it does not explain the failure of Baha'i academics, few though they may be, to contribute usefully to the heightening of quality in this area. The sad histories of World Order magazine and the Canadian Association for Studies in the Baha'i Faith bear eloquent testimony to this. The real reason must, I feel, be sought in the extreme pressure brought to bear on Baha'i writers by the reviewing process and in the obvious preference of the Baha'i administration for the unexceptionable, the bland, and the turgidly-written over the innovative, the controversial, and the carefully-worded.

Surely, someone will, no doubt, assert, the Baha'i faith accepts the essential harmony of science (or reason) and religion (or faith). Is that not, in the long term, a sufficient protection against the evils you describe? Are we not 'children of the half-light', and is it not unjust to be so hard on a system that has yet to mature? I can only reply that, if we have anything to learn from history (and a Baha'i cannot very well deny that such a thing is possible), it is that mankind cannot rely on the professed ideals of groups as a guide to how they will behave. The fact is that, when the matter is closely analysed, Baha'ism teaches nothing of the sort, nor does it encourage the active prosecution of an 'unfettered search after truth'.

Let us look first at the second of these principles. It is, according to the Universal House of Justice (letter dated July 18, 1979), supposed to be applicable to all believers -- that is to say, it is not, as I have often heard asserted, restricted to non-believers prior to their conversion (although I would assert that this widespread conviction reflects an accurate apprehension

\* I realize the inclusion of Gulpaygani and others like him may be a little unfair since they wrote within the limits of a traditional system. But there is a point to be made with respect to contemporary Baha'i regard for such writers and their work

of how things really stand). How, in all honesty, can a system based on the revelation of absolute truth really permit its followers to engage in such a search throughout their lives? To be truly unfettered, genuinely independent, a scholar (or anyone else) must be free to question any proposition, any source of authority, any claim. What sort of independence is allowed by statements like this: 'His obedience to the covenant must be preserved, lest in the name of "true scholarship" he unwisely questions the foundation stones of the Faith e.g. the validity of the Guardianship, the Universal House of Justice, etc.'? The implication of this sentence (and a necessary one) is that "true scholarship" here must be understood as a mere 'cover' or pretence for something else, not, in other words, true scholarship at all. But what if it is true scholarship? What if, by the term (and the demands it entails) we really do mean a genuine kind of scholarship, something corresponding to the 'science' and 'reason' that are supposed to be harmonious with religion and faith? Is our criterion to be scientific or based on faith (or, rather, obedience)? Either we are talking here about good scholarship or we are not. But from the Yerrinbool standpoint, it is irrelevant, since daring to 'question', not academic or scientific integrity, is the criterion.

I have already argued that there is no fundamental clash between matters of faith and matters of reason since they relate, as it were, to different universes of discourse. But the Baha'i theory of revelation does not admit such a formulation, since the Manifestation of God is deemed infallible in all matters. This view is made clear in the following statement of the Haifa Research Department:

'It has become customary in the West to think of science and religion as occupying two distinct -- and even opposed -- areas of human thought and activity. This dichotomy can be characterized in the pairs of antitheses faith and reason; value and fact. It is a dichotomy which is foreign to Baha'i thought and should, we feel, be regarded with suspicion by Baha'i scholars in every field. The principle of the harmony of science and religion means not only that religious teachings should be studied in the light of reason and evidence as well as of faith and inspiration, but also that everything in this creation, all aspects of human life and knowledge, should be studied in the light of revelation as well as in that of purely rational investigation.'

This might be a reasonable point of view were it not for the fact that, despite the attempt to imply some degree of comparability between these twin areas, the Baha'i version of revelation invariably reserves for revelation the final say. When questioned, for example, about the Bab's placing of David before Moses in the chronological series, Baha' Allah replied that men must simply accept whatever is revealed by the Manifestation of God, without questioning (tablet in Ishraqat p.18). Speaking of himself, he writes that 'should he decree that water is wine or the sky the earth or the light fire, he is unquestionably right, and none may object or say "why" or "wherefore"' (Lawh-i ishraqat in ibid p.58). 'Whoso sayeth "why" or "wherefore" hath spoken blasphemy' (Iqan p.109). Similarly, 'Abd al-Baha' writes of himself that 'Whatever the Centre of the Covenant says is correct. No one shall speak a word of himself' (Covenant of Baha'u'llah p.69). Shoghi Effendi claimed an infallibility confined to matters concerning the Baha'i religion, but in practice he made it very difficult for anyone else to disagree with him, even in extraneous matters, as evidenced in the following statement: '... the Baha'i Revelation... constitutes the ninth in the line of existing religions... with intellectuals and students of religion the question of exactly which are the nine existing religions is controversial, and it would be better to avoid it' (Directives from the Guardian pp.51-51). In view of the belief that 'everything in this creation, all aspects of human life and knowledge, should be studied in the light of revelation', Shoghi Effendi's disclaimer of infallibility in matters 'outside' those touched on by revelation is clearly devoid of any real meaning.

Even if the possibility of questioning in certain areas were genuinely accepted, how easy would it be to put this into practice in any meaningful sense?

In Islam, it has been argued that the only individuals whom Muhammad had put to death (generally by means of assassination) were those guilty of the crime of sabb al-rasul, insulting the Prophet -- i.e. venturing to disagree with him. This same basic conception has continued within the Baha'i system (although assassination seems to have been abandoned in the modern period) and has extended to all levels. Publicly to question a Hand of the Cause or a Counsellor is to bring on one's head the greatest of opprobrium. Respect for authority rather than freedom to search after truth is the guiding principle of the modern Baha'i community.

How can the spirit of genuine scientific rationalism survive in such an atmosphere? In practical terms, what the Baha'i position amounts to is that religion and reason are in harmony so long as reason does not overstep its bounds, does not seek to contradict the infallible assertions of religion, which latter have no bounds, for do they not touch on 'all aspects of human life and knowledge'? It is a view which derives from the traditional Islamic perspective that religion is wholly rational (which is where 'Abd al-Baha' borrowed the concept and the phraseology), but that religious knowledge is superior to human learning and must always have priority over it. If I am not allowed to question the statement that there were two Davids or (on a wider level) Shoghi Effendi's version of Babi and Baha'i history, if I am obliged to take these as 'given' facts or infallible 'interpretations', as incontrovertible starting-points upon which to base my research, what possible room can there be for scientific method? Does a dusty corner even remain? And how can I possibly hope to take part in discussion with other scholars if I rule out of court the very principles on which they work, if I claim the right to appeal at all times to a higher court, a court whose judgements neither I nor they may criticize?

Academic endeavour depends for its success on the willingness of all those involved to respect both its methods and its legitimately-argued conclusions, whatever their implications. Systems that enshrine absolute truths invariably block this process. My own experience as a Baha'i and an academic was that, whenever my conclusions agreed with those of accepted Baha'i opinion, they were extolled and held up for display as examples of the valuable place of scholarship within the faith; when, however, my data led me to conclusions at variance with the 'authoritative' versions of events or even with popular conceptions, I found myself condemned as one who had placed his head before his heart, and my work dismissed as a 'Trojan Horse' that threatened to introduce all sorts of impurities into the unsullied city of Baha'i thought. I did not 'understand' the Baha'i faith and its teachings, whereas my detractors, of course, understood it perfectly. It was at all times a situation in which the principle of 'heads we win, tails you lose' applied. There is no choice for those working within such a system but to do so on its own terms, for 'it would be untrue to his profession to make an assumption or draw conclusions which were contrary to the teachings in an attempt to conform to current thought'. Is it not perverse and hypocritical that the same people who respected me as a scholar, as one versed in the writings and history of the faith, so long as I subscribed to their beliefs, now regard me as a sort of traitor, merely because I no longer so subscribe? How was it that Avarih's history of Baha'ism, once proclaimed by Shoghi Effendi as 'beyond any doubt the most graphic, the most reliable and comprehensive of its kind in Baha'i literature' suddenly was dropped like a hot brick following Avarih's defection from the movement? Had Avarih's personal change in convictions in some mystical way altered the content of the book? Was Shoghi Effendi's presumably infallible verdict as to its reliability and comprehensiveness itself devalued by Avarih's change of belief? An unfettered search after truth?

A related problem here is that of the popular argument that only a Baha'i (and an orthodox Baha'i at that) can claim to provide an entirely 'valid' presentation of his religion, that the non-believer (or ex-believer), by virtue of his inability to enter empathetically into the life of faith, is unqualified for such a task and that books or articles written by the latter are, ipso facto, devoid of perception, balance or verisimilitude. This is, of course, not a view restricted to Baha'is, although it has, I shall show, special application to their doctrinal position, and is widely used by them in attempts to have encyclopaedia

entries rewritten, text-books altered, and the views of scholars 'corrected' in order to conform to the official Baha'i perception of Baha'i faith and practice. The views of the Haifa Research Department, in particular, add up to the assertion that only a believer and, indeed, an orthodox, obedient believer, can hope to understand and express properly the verities of the Baha'i revelation. Although this view has obvious flaws from a number of viewpoints (it is clear, for example, that, while only a believer may be able to say what faith means at the subjective level, a non-believer may often be much better placed to investigate with objectivity how it may be implemented at the level of social action) I think it will be most useful to look at it from an alternative Baha'i perspective. It is clear that, from the orthodox Baha'i viewpoint, this argument does not (and cannot) hold true for other religions. It is fundamental to Baha'i theology that the followers of other faiths have misunderstood, corrupted, and distorted their originally 'pure' revelations and that a 'true' understanding of them can only be obtained from Baha'i sources. According to the Research Department, 'A Baha'i, through his faith in, this "conscious knowledge" of, the reality of divine Revelation, can distinguish, for instance, between Christianity, which is the divine message given by Jesus of Nazareth, and the development of Christendom, which is the history of what men did with that message in subsequent centuries; a distinction which has become blurred if not entirely obscured in current theology'. Apart from the questionable portrayal of 'current Christian theology', this passage brings us face to face once again with special pleading, with the claim to superior knowledge to which only those who have accepted the 'true faith' are privy. If a Christian should maintain that the heart of his religion lies in the Resurrection or a Muslim assert that Muhammad was the 'Seal of the Prophets' in the literal sense, no Baha'i could possibly accept that that would be an authentic expression of either Christianity or Islam. Is it not time that mankind washed its hands of such dangerously arrogant notions?

Perhaps the impossibility of carrying out serious, independent academic work within the confines of such a system is best illustrated by the pernicious policy of publications review. How can someone who wishes to preserve his self-respect and the respect of others as a scholar possibly submit to such a process, as so many do? One of two situations if possible: either the reviewing panel concerned will be made up (as is usually the case at present) of individuals lacking any expertise in the scholar's field (as a sociologist, historian, etc.) or lacking his detailed knowledge of his specialized area of research, in which case it would be presumptuous and futile for them to sit in judgement on his work. Or the panel will consist of qualified academics who may choose to disagree with the author, but who, if they have any humility at all, will be willing to accept that theirs are just alternative opinions and that the author has every right to disagree with them in his turn, if he so wishes. The only point of such a system, it appears to me, is to ensure the doctrinal purity of all Baha'i writing, with the result that large numbers of ideologically unexceptionable materials are churned out, none of which have any scholarly value, while serious attempts to examine important issues from a critical viewpoint are suppressed.

It seems to me inevitable that suppression of thought of this kind will continue within the Baha'i system. By its very nature, scholarship involves the frank and free examination of those issues that are most controversial, because it is precisely these issues that will provide the keys to the most interesting, the most significant theories. Problems, not tiny matters of fact, are what matter most, in history as much as in physics. But problems are just what the Baha'i leadership wants to avoid. The flock of believers must be protected, cocooned from controversy. Hence the publication of books like Women's The Babi and Baha'i Religions, in which concerted attention is given to endless trivia, new materials are presented that tell us next to nothing about the most crucial issues, and a bland avoidance of controversy conceals the fact that not an inch of real progress has been made towards a fresh analysis of the real problems of Babi and Baha'i history. Hence the publication of only those passages of the Kitab al-ahdas or the writings of the Bab that are certain not to cause distress

to the Baha'i masses, who would probably abandon the movement in large numbers if they knew what those writings really contained. In its paranoid fear of dissent, the reviewing process stands as the forerunner of a much more thorough-going system of thought control. Against such a system, we must oppose with the utmost vigour the principles of untrammelled intellectual freedom -- a genuinely 'unfettered search after truth' -- and man's inalienable right to dissent.

'...we not only owe our reason to others, but we can never excel others in our reasonableness in a way that would establish a claim to authority; authoritarianism and rationalism in our sense cannot be reconciled, since argument, which includes criticism, and the art of listening to criticism, is the basis of reasonableness. Thus rationalism in our sense is diametrically opposed to all those modern Platonic dreams of brave new worlds in which the growth of reason would be controlled or "planned" by some superior reason. Reason, like science, grows by way of mutual criticism; the only possible way of "planning" its growth is to develop those institutions that safeguard the freedom of this criticism, that is to say, the freedom of thought' (Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies Vol.2 pp.226-227).

Perhaps it will be objected that the system of review exists largely to protect the innocent mass of simple believers from well-intentioned but mis-directed criticism of faith from their more learned or articulate coreligionists. The House of Justice has placed particular emphasis on this principle, stressing the need for scholars to 'remember the many warnings in the Writings against the fomenting of discord among the friends' and speaking of the writings of 'certain individuals' that would 'understandably cause alarm in the breasts of the most tolerant of believers'. This age-old principle has been invoked by political and religious establishments down through the ages (and most often in the present day) to justify the suppression of alternative views. The mass of believers may be (and are) fed an endless diet of mindless pap, of hagiography and myth, of self-aggrandizing rhetoric (and second-rate rhetoric at that), of scarcely-literate exhortation -- but God forbid that they should be led to question any of this by coming into contaminating contact with original or critical views. One can only admire the tactic adopted by the House of Justice -- it serves to inspire feelings of guilt in the minds of those tempted to express their opinions clearly and openly, for few of us actually wish to cause distress to others, while, at the same time, it conveys a warm sense of collusion and tactful mutual understanding -- 'we all know, you and ourselves, that the masses need cushioning from the deeper truths to which we are privy; we regret the restrictions this must impose upon you, but we are sure you will understand its necessity and cooperate with us in keeping your own counsel'. It is the first step towards co-option, the classic method of controlling dissidence by embracing it the better to remove its sting and lull it to sleep. To suborn is easier than to destroy and, in the end, much more successful.

In his brilliant novel of the 'Benevolent State', One, David Karp illustrates this point in the following dialogue between Wright, a government official, and Lark, the state's chief inquisitor:

"Yes, I'll admit that the State's plan has been very shrewd. Yet there's been a new factor of crisis -- a rather modern factor. It was growing rapidly until it was struck down by this State -- our benevolent State. I'm speaking of the intellectual -- the person you call a heretic -- the individual. The concept of individualism has been growing for a long time, sir -- it now has earned the right to be called a crisis matter. I think in seventy-five years you'll find that it's grown enormously. And the harder the State squeezes its citizens into the mould, the more heretics will appear. They'll grow rapidly and they will include the thoughtful, the gifted, the honest, the brave, the moral. In short, the best elements of the society will be arrayed against the State. That's what's going to happen in seventy-five years, sir, and this State, inflexible as it is, will break."

"Yes, Doctor Wright," Lark said, pleased with Wright almost as if Wright were his protege, a protege who had performed brilliantly, "that's exactly what I told the Commissioner. That's why he's allowed me two weeks in which to rid Burden of heresy. You see, if we can take the intellectuals, the people you so poetically call the thoughtful, the gifted, the honest, the moral, the brave" -- he paused, smiled -- "did I get the sequence right? -- and enchant them into conforming, we'll have whipped the last crisis. That's why Burden must be reclaimed. If Burden can be purged of his heresies, then we can purge anyone of his heresies." (pp.120-121)

In the Baha'i case, there is, once again, more than a little special pleading. No such strictures are raised against the work of Baha'i pioneers among, let us say, Hindu villagers, demolishing centuries-old systems of belief in order to replace them with the new, improved doctrines of Baha'ism. Far from discouraging questioning, unfettered searching, the Baha'i teacher must do all he can to chivvy his potential converts into challenging the authority of his priests, the validity of his world-view, and the desirability of remaining within his ancestral system. The Baha'i missionary effort takes, as ever, precedence over the feelings, the convictions, the beliefs of the unconverted: all in a spirit of love and understanding, of course, but nonetheless wholesale in its intention.

I mentioned earlier the existence of Baha'i scriptural texts that uphold the place of the scholar in society. Perhaps it will be instructive to examine how one particular aspect of this original position has actually been developed and is being further developed within the Baha'i system. In the Kitāb 'ahdī, Baha' Allah refers to the 'scholars' and 'rulers' of his faith, identifying them by the Arabic terms ulama' and umara'. Early texts from the period of Baha' Allah and even 'Abd al-Baha' suggest that they understood ulama' here much in the sense the word was actually used in Islam, with the important distinction that legislation on novel matters (istinbat) was now confined to the house of justice (or, in certain cases, to the ulama' with the approval of this body -- see 'Abd al-Baha', letter cited Fadil-i Mazandarani Amr wa khalq, Vol.4 p.300). I would suggest that the situation as envisaged in such texts is really quite a simple one: anyone suited by ability and training to become a scholar was free to do so, but he would not, as such, possess legislative or judicial authority (as had been the case in Shi'i Islam). Things were fairly open and there seemed tremendous room for development. This situation changed radically with the interpretation put forward by the Universal House of Justice\* to the effect that by the umara' of the faith was intended the elective half of the Baha'i administrative organization, and that by the ulama' was meant the Hands, Counsellors, and other appointed members of the system. The implications of this interpretation are far-reaching and, I think, little appreciated. Leaving aside the rather simple observation that, in my own experience, the most significant feature of the 'learned' side of the Baha'i administration at present is the conspicuous absence in it of anyone even remotely qualified for that epithet, I would draw attention to the inevitable result of such an identification. Evidently, religious scholars in Baha'ism are to be appointed and institutionalized, and they are to include among their chief functions the propagation of the faith and the elimination of heresy from its ranks. If anyone imagines for a moment that such a system is designed to foster independent, meaningful scholarship at any level, he is pitifully ignorant of history and human nature. Perhaps even more significant is the effective creation here of what amounts to a Baha'i clergy, differentiated from other clerical establishments only to the degree that the latter are differentiated one from the other. Claims that the Baha'i faith has no clergy are, I would argue, based on Islamic criteria which maintain precisely the same thing with regard to the faith of Muhammad. In that sense, the Baha'i faith has, like Islam, no sacramental priesthood, but it manifestly possesses a clergy and, indeed, one whose authority is inextricably linked with that of the putative Baha'i state system (the umara'). Conformity rather than brilliance is inevitably the guarantee of success within such an establishment (and if anyone thinks that people do not want to succeed within Baha'ism, he is naive in the extreme). For

\*Letter to Continental Boards of Counsellors and National Assemblies, 24 April, 1971

academic freedom of any kind to exist within the confines of such a system would require daily miracles of the first order

Perhaps none of this would matter very much if scholarly concerns were essentially irrelevant to the wider preoccupations of society. But such is not the case. Scholarship cannot take place within a vacuum, any more than society can survive in any meaningful sense without its scholars, writers, painters, composers, and all others who contribute in one way or another to the culture that may be said to form its greater life. When scholarship is stifled or, what is often worse, transmuted into an imitative, sterile process of passing on received wisdom, when the sharp edge of critical debate is blunted by censorship, be it overt or hidden, when new or difficult ideas are seen as disturbing rather than exciting or stimulating or even provocative, then society is in great danger. Attitudes towards academic freedom are indicative of deeper and wider beliefs as to the nature of social and political discourse, and I believe that the consensus of Baha'i opinion on such matters reflects more basic features of the Baha'i view of society.

I think I am right in stating that the Baha'i dream of a new world order in which all men will live as one under a single government, believing in a single faith, adhering to one basic set of principles, loyal, obedient, orderly, is nothing more than yet another version of the ages-old utopian vision of a perfectly-ordered, perfectly-controlled, little-changing society from which all destabilizing influences will have been forever banished. For such a system, the greatest of all threats is that of dissent, be it political, religious, moral, philosophical, or simply intellectual, and all projected utopias, from that of Plato to that of Lenin, have incorporated measures to suppress or neutralize dissenting opinion. The Baha'i system is one of the most extreme in its proposed methods of social control: there are to be no parties -- only one party, that of the true faith, whose institutions will provide the organs of both the legislature and the executive, will be permitted; dissenting views may be punished, in mild cases by removal of the right to vote or be elected, and in extreme cases by total ostracism from society; such views may also be controlled by the overriding right of the government to insist on prior approval of all publications and broadcasts, even in the case of poetry and music; disturbing opinions can be effectively muzzled by insisting that they be presented only through the 'proper channels' and in what is deemed appropriate, respectful, and reassuring language; the 'channels' through which complaints are allowed to be made about the administration are themselves part and parcel of the administrative system, and refusal to work through them will itself be deemed evidence of bad faith and disaffection.

New and creative ideas are, by their very nature, disturbing. They threaten to unbalance the status quo, to challenge received opinion, to raise doubts in men's minds and hearts. The history of thought shows time and time again how the proponents of such ideas have been received by society -- with scorn, censorship, imprisonment, even death. This is not to suggest that the reverse is always true, that their controversial character makes ideas innovative or creative. But the link is undeniable. Without dissent -- radical, vocal, far-reaching dissent -- men and society stagnate and all the best things wither from within. In retrospect, we hail as pioneers and geniuses those who were, in their own day, reviled and cast out. We even elevate radicalism to the status of a prime social virtue, while remaining suspicious of radicals in our own time. Religious history, more perhaps than any other area, shows example after example of this. And yet, in spite of century upon century of experience to the contrary, there still rise up those who wish to create the final, ultimately stable, ultimately perfect society, from which the very need to dissent will be absent. They wish to build a world so perfect that to be unhappy or dissatisfied in it would in itself be a sign of mental or spiritual sickness. It is that sort of society that the Baha'i community wishes to see established, a society from which there can be no escape except death or insanity.



To go further here would, I fear, be to digress too far from the topic under discussion. But I have not introduced these themes gratuitously. There are real, live connections between attitudes to intellectual freedom and attitudes to all other freedoms. 'A state must persuade its citizens to accept the premises on which it exists and functions. In some cases persuasion is quite simple, in others, difficult. But it must be accomplished with every citizen -- particularly the intellectuals' (Karp, One, p.108). All utopian systems start out with one major flaw: they cannot admit that things can go seriously wrong within them, that the revolution may have taken a wrong turning, that the slate, once wiped clean, may yet again need cleaning. The Baha'i cannot admit that divine guidance is not always present in the 'onward progress' of the faith, in its setbacks as much as in its triumphs, any more than the Marxist can admit that events do not always reveal the process of an ineluctable march of history, the working out of a remorseless dialectical movement. Once established, such a system is fatal to all who come within its orbit, for the act of criticism reaches to its very *raison d'etre* and challenges its right to exist. Within such a system, only the second-rate, the tawdry, the unoriginal, the uncomplaining, the suborned, can survive or hope to flourish. To ask too many questions, to reveal too many inconsistencies, even to use language other than the officially-approved 'safe-speak' of platitudes and cliches, is to step out of line and to incur the wrath of those who wish to preserve the illusion that all is well. There will, of course, always be room for a few token intellectuals, allowed just so much rein, encouraged to raise answerable questions and, perhaps, to answer them, paraded as evidence of the freedom the system allows (which is, of course, absolute, real freedom, contrasted with all other freedoms), and ultimately co-opted as its best and most obedient servants.

These are not trivial issues. The freedom and happiness of the human race depends today, more than ever, on our ability to tackle the questions of how to combine maximum dissent with minimum social and governmental control, of how to work for the material betterment of men without destroying their spiritual and intellectual integrity as human beings, of how to develop diversity within society while eliminating from it the causes of strife and prejudice. These questions cannot be answered within closed, totalitarian systems. They can only hope to be solved where men are free to change and direct their lives as they themselves see fit, to make their own laws and rule themselves through their own institutions, to question and, if need be, abandon rules and dogmas and systems under which they do not wish to live. If we have any task as intellectuals, as scholars, as academics, as teachers, it is to preserve and to strengthen those freedoms, to foster the rational tradition and the open society it enables to exist, to act as society's first defence against irrationality, authoritarianism, and totalitarian systems of thought and belief.

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Much of the foregoing will, I fear, prove offensive to some readers, perhaps to most. It will seem to them that I have set out deliberately to present a picture of the Baha'i community, its administration, and its motives that bears no resemblance -- or at best a very distorted one -- to what they conceive to be reality, that personal feelings have warped my own mental image of these things, and that it is this image, rather than a more empirically faithful one, that is reflected in these pages. Perhaps that is true: I am scarcely well situated to evaluate the conditioning effects of my own subjectivity. But that is equally true of most Baha'is who may read these pages, perhaps, in some ways, more true, for their thoughts are shaped less by their own perceptions than by the mould of a system. In the end, it is all a matter of differing perspectives, none of them wholly true to an assumed empirical reality, in which case all parties must, at least, recognize one another's right to their own ways of seeing things. In a sense, the view held by most Baha'is of their faith is a vital part of that faith and may not prove an insignificant factor in shaping its future trends. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, although never made widely public, there

do exist within the Baha'i community many different perspectives, and it would be foolish to ignore these. It must also be acknowledged, in all fairness, that ex-Baha'is and 'non-Baha'is' in general may have valuable perspectives to contribute to any internal discussion, even if these are -- as mine tend to be -- highly critical in tone and content.

Nevertheless, offense is easily caused, not least because criticism of the system may seem to imply criticism of those who live and worship within it; but I, for one, would wish to avoid that implication in the main. Baha'is are, as a whole, no worse and no better than the generality of mankind, certainly the generality of religious communities. They are, in my own quite long experience, warm-hearted, sincere, well-meaning people, whose long-term aims reflect a genuine love for humanity and a well-developed religious disposition. They have, of course, their weaknesses, their limitations, in common with other small religious groupings. There are among them possibly disproportionate numbers of the crankish, the unstable, the socially and psychologically unsure -- such movements have a way of attracting such people. There are also among them very well-adjusted individuals some outstanding men and women who would do credit to any community. They are not, as individuals or a group, noticeably authoritarian, given to expediency, fanatical, or exclusive. And yet Baha'ism as a system can be and often is all these things. There is, in other words, a conceptual gulf of sorts between the perceptions and feelings of Baha'is and the actual working out of religious and political aims within the movement -- which both contains the individuals (and, in one sense, is them) and exists independently of them (and, in this sense, dictates how they should be and act). There are also important -- and more problematic -- conceptual gulfs between what the majority of Baha'is (particularly in the West) believe and what the Baha'i scriptures (much expurgated and bowdlerized in translation) teach. In this sense, I feel that large numbers of sincere people are, unknown to themselves, working and sacrificing for aims sometimes the diametrical opposite of those that they themselves cherish. There is no room here to enter into the possible complexities that an analysis of this situation would entail -- suffice it to draw attention simply to the common problems that originate in the tendency to identify with a cause ('my nation', 'my party', 'my religion') against one's own interests or the interests of other people.

It is a mistake to judge a movement by the intentions or even the behaviour of its followers. That much is accepted in Baha'i circles when observers are reminded not to judge the faith by the often imperfect acts and even opinions of the believers. The reverse is also, unfortunately, true. We may not judge the Catholic Church by the Inquisition or the sale of indulgences, but equally we cannot allow the presence of a Teresa or a Francis to blind us to the often sordid realities of Church history. The development of communism provides us with one of the most pertinent examples of this dilemma. Marx and his early followers (and many modern communists) were (and are) deeply and genuinely committed to the ideals of freedom and equality for all men, to the dream of creating a perfect future world, from which the evils of tyranny, poverty, hunger, political repression, and so forth, would be fully eliminated from human society. And yet communism in practice has proved to be the greatest threat ever posed to the freedom and dignity of man. I do not wish to draw a direct parallel here with Baha'ism, for there are obvious differences at many levels, but I do wish to insist on the reasonableness of a perspective that ignores, however painfully, stated ideals or individual or mass sincerity, in order to extrapolate from other factors the possible future trends of a system. As a scholar, I cannot allow ad hominem appeals to the goodness or sincerity of major figures or to the laudable motives of their followers to deflect me from a critical examination, based on sociological, philosophical, or other criteria, of textual or empirical data that may lead to conclusions about Baha'ism radically different to those of official propaganda. To have to proceed in such a manner is not always an easy or pleasant task (and it was certainly a cause of profound distress to me over a period of several years), but it is unavoidable if the demands of honesty and rigour are to be met, if, indeed, any meaningful 'independent search after truth' is to be carried on.

What is, perhaps, a more serious problem is raised by Baha'i history. I have already referred to the fact that modern Baha'is are willing to recognize imperfections in the contemporary community (attributing these to external pressures,

to the status of 'children of the half-light', and so on), and I am ready to accept that, to a limited extent, there is some recognition that other imperfections have existed in the past. Nevertheless, it is inevitable that the historical perspective tends to be more idealized in proportion to the distance travelled back into the past. There are several reasons why this should be so, all largely connected with a fundamental religious tendency to conceptualize a past 'sacred time' which is capable of sacralizing present 'profane time', but I believe one important motive to be the need to insist on past righteousness as a token, a pledge of good intent for the future. The revelatory periods of the Bab and Baha' Allah, and the patristic eras of 'Abd al-Baha' and Shoghi Effendi must, therefore, be shown in the best possible light. As a result, the mundane events of Babi and Baha'i history are mythologized and the figures connected with them transformed into participants in a cosmic drama, either as saints or devils. What had been grey and ambiguous becomes sharply black and white. Thus, writers like Marzieh Gail can speak without blushing of 'the drama of contrasts between the cowering, puny figure of Subh-i-Azal and the inspiring, majestic personage of Baha'u'llah'. Even the mildest suggestion that things might not have been quite so sharply contrasted, that human beings, including Mirza Husayn 'Ali Nuri Baha' Allah, are infinitely complex and ambiguous creatures, that a mundane reality underlies the myth is taken to be tantamount to espousal of the cause of the 'forces of darkness'. Thus, for example, a reviewer writing about an academic article on behalf of the Canadian Association for Studies in the Baha'i Faith attacks the author for referring to 'covenant-breaker' sources as primary (and, therefore, of historical importance), not because these are really secondary or forged or otherwise improperly termed 'primary', but because they are mere 'babblings of a crazed covenant-breaker' or 'total trash'. I have a remarkably strong feeling that the reviewer in question had never read even a single word of this 'total trash', and I am sure that, even if asked, he would have refused to do so.

More serious, perhaps, is the marked tendency in Baha'i historical writing to achieve mythologization by depersonalizing the events of history. The perfect example of this is Ruhyyih Rabbani's The Priceless Pearl, which tells the reader virtually nothing about Shoghi Effendi as an individual (let alone as a man or a husband), but great amounts about Plans, administrative developments, goals, and so on. It is as if we have moved, not just from history to hagiography, but from hagiography to what we might call 'systemography'. The same features are evident in Ugo Giachery's equally badly-written and turgid Shoghi Effendi, most of which seems to be devoted to buildings ('architectonography'?). More disturbingly, a distinct pattern can be discerned in the volumes of The Baha'i World: beginning as fairly interesting records of people and events connected with the Baha'i community, these yearbooks have degenerated remarkably, becoming less and less useful as vital, living historical sources. Articles in them are increasingly sanitized and devoid of immediate historical content: they represent considered, retrospective views of events and concentrate on impersonal, almost abstract developments -- plans, campaigns, conferences, legal documents, bye-laws, charters, formal and somewhat stale presentations of Baha'i belief. Individuals enter these pages as the subjects of trivialized obituaries or in the fashion of Ruhyyih Rabbani's seemingly interminable and tedious journeys through Africa. The articles on 'Hands of the Cause' in volume 13, for example, could be about robots or organizations for all the human detail provided. The genuinely mundane has receded far behind a veil of pious abstraction, and future historians will find themselves much handicapped if they should be forced to rely on such publications for their source material.

In this area, the scholar faces a particular threat and has a major role to play. He has to recreate, as far as he can, the people and events of sacred history, even if, by so doing, he is forced to divest them of much or all of their sanctity. In doing so, he faces almost intractable difficulties and is certain to encounter more than a little hostility -- myths have a powerful hold over those that believe in them. But he may do a great service, not only to the academic community or the public at large, but to the Baha'i community itself. By turning it back to face the realities of its own history, to understand its roots more intelligently, he may help it come to terms with its present situation and to find ways of developing in the world that are consistent with that

situation. It is really not for me to suggest the possible consequences, theological and otherwise, of such a change in perspective -- that will be for believers, whether historians or not. But I will suggest that these consequences may be radical and far-reaching, that they may transform the lives of many by bringing back a sense of the real that had been displaced by empty idealizing. For myself, I remain pessimistic about the outcome. I think it more likely that larger and larger numbers will desert the Baha'i movement the more its true historical and doctrinal face is revealed, and that this, in its turn, will lead to deeper and deeper retrenchment on the part of the guardians of the orthodox faith. But I am willing to accept that I may be very wrong and that others have a right to be, even if only tentatively, optimistic and to continue the struggle I myself abandoned some years ago. I would be relieved and refreshed to learn one day that they were right and that Baha'ism could yet prove a force for good in a world sorely in need of goodness. If 'Baha'i scholarship' is ever to have any meaning, it will be in the furtherance of that end. The odds are against it. But you all have my support in your struggle to change them.

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DR. MACEOIN'S 'PROBLEMS OF SCHOLARSHIP..': SOME THOUGHTS.

Dr. Denis MacEoin is well known in Baha'i circles as an academic possessed of a very considerable knowledge of the Babi-Baha'i movements. Without a doubt much can be learned from his writings in this area whether or not one agrees with his conclusions. His sometimes controversial views should prompt Baha'i intellectuals, whether engaged in Baha'i studies from an academic or theological standpoint, to think deeply about methodological, historical, doctrinal and other issues. Having resigned from the Baha'i movement a few years ago his writings are naturally coloured— as he himself admits—by a rejection of Baha'i perspectives and institutions as he has understood and experienced them. At times his language is forceful and his orientation decidedly non-empathetic. Various readers of his 'Problems of scholarship..' will probably dismiss his views as extreme or coloured by a 'released from the watch-tower' bias despite his attempt to be objective. However his response to the Yerrinbool report be evaluated from a faith standpoint, the fact remains that he raises issues which Baha'is who aspire to academic integrity cannot afford to pass over in silence. It might in fact be said that Babi-Baha'i studies will not progress and mature unless honest criticisms are taken seriously and responded to. Indeed, the failure of Baha'i intellectuals to respond to or engage in dialogue with critics and to discuss problems of Baha'i scholarship has undoubtedly contributed to the withdrawal from Baha'i membership of a growing number of Baha'i intellectuals.

The time will surely come when critical academic evaluations of the Babi-Baha'i movements will be read by intellectuals and others who wish to know what the Babi-Baha'i movements are and what they teach or have to offer. If Baha'i intellectuals continue to ignore problematic issues they will prove unable to respond to academic critics. They will be seen to be out of touch and unable to engage in informed and meaningful dialogue. Baha'is, in other words, will be forced to respond to academic and critical presentations of their faith and be ill prepared to respond apologetically or in any other way unless it is realized that there are many issues in need of honest and open-minded debate. The development of an informed and honest Baha'i apologetic is essential. Apologetic it might be added here, can only be taken seriously today if it is honest, sincere and academically informed.

In one of his letters Shoghi Effendi predicted that "Baha'i scholars" would appear who would lend a "unique support" to their Faith. This "unique support" may well be in the field of apologetic. But where are the Baha'i apologists who are ready to grapple with controversial issues?

Baha'i intellectuals today face issues which did not confront religious apologists of the past who lived in an age when historico-critical methodologies were unknown. They will have to grapple with problems unknown to such learned Baha'i apologists as Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani (1844-1914) who knew nothing of the difficulties raised by the modern scholarly analysis of religion or of the application of critical tools to the study of the Bible, Qur'an and Babi-Baha'i writings. Whether or not Baha'is admit the validity of such modern scholarly methodologies and the findings resulting from their application, the fact is that they will be compelled to respond to them. Baha'i apologetic of the near future will need to be academically informed in order to make an effective response to contemporary scholarly critics. For this reason alone the fostering of 'Baha'i scholarship' is of great importance.

Having made something of a plea for the opening of a new era of honesty in Baha'i apologetic—which need not be naive theology—I set down a few notes on some of the issues raised by Dr. MacEoin.

Baha'i anti-intellectualism.

Dr. MacEoin's critique of the strong contrast drawn in the Yerrinbool report between Baha'i and other scholars is undoubtedly justified. There are indeed countless humble and many deeply religious academics who do not belong to the Baha'i movement. He reminds us that the Baha'i writings do not encourage anti-intellectualism. It is sad that this prejudice exists within certain Baha'i communities when both Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha repeatedly underlined the importance of learning and respect for the learned.

It is argued by Dr. MacEoin that Baha'i 'anti-intellectualism' is rooted in the social and cultural position of the Baha'i cause as a sect type-movement. Baha'is supposedly, as self-conscious members of a redeemed 'contra-culture', reject the intellectual values of a 'decadent society'. While there may be some truth in this hypothesis in connection with certain contemporary western Baha'i communities which have something of a sectarian 'contra-culture' consciousness, to hold that Baha'i 'anti-intellectualism' is rooted in such an exclusivist world view is to be too clear cut.

Baha'is, over the last century or so, have had various attitudes towards intellectualism and the values of the world whether secular or religious. They have seldom been averse to appropriating the intellectual discoveries of modern thinkers and have generally had a high regard for the findings of modern science. Many early western Baha'is, far from retreating into an exclusivist Baha'i 'contra-culture' saw their faith as the 'spirit of the age'. By no means all Baha'is are today anti-intellectualist in the sense of their imagining that modern 'non-Baha'i' thinkers are all hopelessly lost. Baha'i anti-intellectualism is not as rampant or as widespread as Dr. MacEoin seems to believe. Where Baha'i anti-intellectualism exists it is seldom thoroughgoing since scholarship and intellectuality are not seen as inherently evil or destructive.

It is possible to argue that a good deal of contemporary Baha'i 'anti-intellectualism' is not rooted in a sectarian contra-culture consciousness but relates to a reserved attitude towards controversial intellectuals within the Baha'i community. Many Baha'is, in other words, are fearful that Baha'i intellectuals will destroy faith and come to exhibit 'anti-intellectualist' tendencies. The desire to maintain 'unity' has led to a form of 'anti-disunity' expressed as 'anti-critical scholarship'. That this 'anti-scholarship' attitude exists is not perhaps surprising, sad though it is. One cannot expect any religion to promote the critical study of its history and teachings. Religionists, be they Christians, Muslims or Baha'is, view the findings of modern scholarship with suspicion. After all, a religion is not a God founded university existing for the purpose of championing academicism. What Dr. MacEoin sees as Baha'i 'anti-intellectualism' is not essentially different from that reserve held by many Christians and Muslims towards the critical study of religion. This at least, might be said to account for some manifestations of Baha'i 'anti-intellectualism'. Many Baha'is, it might also be argued, are less radically 'anti-intellectualist' than a good many Christians or Muslims.

As noted above academics and intellectuals within the Baha'i community at present are widely viewed with suspicion out of fear that they will create disunity or destroy faith. The aims of Baha'i intellectuals are widely misunderstood. Though one cannot perhaps expect Baha'i institutions to foster critical scholarship (as opposed to faith informed 'theology') it is sad that scholarship appears to many to be dangerous to faith--as Dr. MacEoin points out scholarship is not anti-faith. The tension which creates anti-intellectualism within the Baha'i community has to some extent been brought about by Baha'i intellectuals who see their religion as a kind of quasi-religious academic institution and expect the mass of Baha'is to have the capacity to accept critical analyses of their faith. Baha'i intellectuals who see their task as the academic initiation of the mass of 'ignorant' Baha'is are bound to be coolly received and misunderstood. The findings of the Baha'i scholar may well be of great importance but for them to be presented to

the generality of Baha'is would, at present, be comparable to a Biblical scholar giving a sermon on Bultmanian lines to a fundamentalist congregation. Most Baha'is have little or no understanding of modern scholarship and Baha'i intellectuals sometimes expect too much of them. The clash between the overzealous Baha'i intellectual and the overzealous Baha'i charismatic has created a tension which has led to anti-intellectualism within the Baha'i community. This tension needs to be resolved. Perhaps the generality of Baha'is need to be educated more adequately and Baha'i intellectuals need to be reminded that they belong to a religion and not a God-founded university.

Dr. MacEoin's remarks about the arrogance and anti-intellectualism which has crept into certain Baha'i communities highlights the need for Baha'is to review the quality of their intellectual life. Have, Baha'is might do well to ask themselves, we succumbed to that subtle secularization or introversion that draws interest away from intellectual and religious dimensions of faith into the mechanics of administrative and missionary efficiency? The role and relationships between Baha'i intellectuals and Baha'i institutions needs to be reviewed—otherwise, I fear, mutual disrespect will cause the collapse of the firmament of Baha'i intellectual life.

#### Methodology and the Baha'i-non-Baha'i dichotomy.

Dr. MacEoin notes the view that scholars who are Baha'is should undertake their researches in the light of and in conformity with the "Revelation of Baha'u'llah". He reminds us of what is meant by academic research and highlights the fact that the majority of Baha'is are unaware of the distinction between academic research and faith oriented theological studies.

Once again Dr. MacEoin seems to think that a religion such as the Baha'i movement should promote a critical academic methodology. That Baha'i institutions invite Baha'i intellectuals to embark upon essentially apologetic or theological endeavour is to be expected. As previously indicated, religion does not exist for the redemption of academic standards. Great spiritual thinkers, it seems to me, are more concerned with spiritual perspectives than scientific, historical or doctrinal facts. It is obvious for example, that 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi in their Traveller's Narrative and God Passes By were less concerned with historical accuracy than with presenting a spiritually edifying Baha'i historical perspective. Such is the prerogative of religious teachers whose concerns are not those of academics. What an academic might see as the distortion or suppression of facts the religious thinker can view as the meaningful recreation of the concrete designed to foster or encourage faith. Though I am fully conscious of the limitations of this line of argument, there is, I think some truth in it. Dr. MacEoin expects Baha'i institutions to make statements about scholarship such as might be made by a council of academics. This is to expect what is incompatible with Baha'i teaching which calls believers to engage in apologetic.

Dr. MacEoin is quite right in pointing out that there are problems raised by the proposal that Baha'is should undertake academic research in the light of the "Revelation of Baha'u'llah". Much as the believing academic might gain insights of value from his faith oriented empathy towards the 'object' of his study he cannot allow his faith to determine the nature of the 'object' of his study. Academic research in itself is neither 'faith affirming' nor 'faith negating'.

Since Baha'i institutions call Baha'i intellectuals to embark on an essentially apologetic task the question arises as to whether the academic study of the Baha'i movement is legitimate for Baha'i believers. Is it, in other words, possible for Baha'is to 'bracket faith' and utilize critical methodologies which might lead to findings incompatible with mainstream Baha'i perspectives? This question, it seems to me, has not been squarely faced by Baha'i intellectuals. I do not propose to attempt to answer it here though the bare outline of my thoughts is as follows.

Firstly, it must be realised that academic study differs from 'theology' in that 'theology' is essentially faith oriented and academic study is neither faith oriented nor anti-faith oriented. —the academic student of religion at least attempts to attain this 'objectivity'. Because academic study does not aim to destroy faith it can be argued that it is theologically legitimate. The findings or hypotheses resulting from the historico-critical study of religion may tend to either validate or challenge faith perspectives. It is for the religious apologist or theologian to evaluate academic theories in the light of faith; in this respect, the mature theologian should not ignore the negative academic hypotheses. The theological grappling with problematic issues raised by academics often leads to great insights. A faith which cannot cope with the findings of critical scholars is not likely to command much respect today.

The religious believer who engages in academic research might operate as follows:-

#### Stage 1.

Here faith is controlled or 'bracketed' such that real openmindedness and honesty prevent the fixed crystallization of Baha'i or other religious perspectives— this does not mean the abandonment of faith which may in fact play a significant quasi-methodological role in allowing that balanced empathy to emerge which leads to insight. All data, whether seemingly 'positive' or 'negative' must be taken into consideration. Critical methodologies must be utilized and honest conclusions drawn. whether or not they tend to confirm or challenge faith perspectives.

#### Stage 2.

The believing academic will undoubtedly desire to evaluate the results of his/her critical researches in the light of faith or indulge in 'theology' ( this process having been 'bracketed' at 'stage 1' ). In so doing the believer must not, ~~if~~ he/she wishes to be honest, ignore problematic issues and must be ready to admit, if necessary, that there are 'fundamental contradictions' between faith perspectives and honest critical theories. Faith problems may result but faith must be ready to cope with all manner of problematic issues.

It might also be noted here that the believer, at 'stage 1' ( when indulging in academic research ) must, paradoxically, control not only faith perspectives but also possibly distortive anti-faith perspectives. In other words there is a certain danger in the believer entertaining distortive anti-faith perspectives which may arise out of a desire to create a psychological predisposition towards 'objectivity'. Such paradoxical anti-faith perspectives in the believer which go beyond honest openmindedness and the balanced control of faith can have an adverse effect on both academic research and on faith. The believing academic must understand that no methodology will enable presuppositions to be completely controlled. Methodologies provide a framework which may contribute to 'objectivity' but cannot bequeath academic objectivity or scholarly insight in some magical way.

#### Contradictions and suppression.

Dr. MacEoin refers to 'fundamental contradictions' which the researcher may find within the Baha'i writings. This, as indicated above, is to be expected. Religion is not exactly a clear cut body of logical axioms or historical facts. Shoghi Effendi himself, it is of interest to note, expressed the view that there are points within the Baha'i teachings that are 'poles apart' (letter written on his behalf dated July 5th 1949 ). There are undoubted differences of emphasis, sometimes marked, within the writings of Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi which might be seen by academics as 'fundamental contradictions'. Such 'fundamental contradictions' need to be identified and discussed in detail by Baha'i apologists before Baha'is themselves can be accused of believing in a movement that harbours 'fundamental contradictions'. Faith, it must also be remembered, is not exactly grounded in doctrinal consistency or a monolithic historical perspective.



For Dr. MacEoin it appears to be illegitimate for religious thinkers to "suppress" problematic historical and other facts as might be dictated by wisdom. For the academic engaging in research such "suppression" is certainly out of place but within a religious community the application of such "wisdom" has an un doubted role to play. That Shoghi Effendi toned down the at times fanatical 'Shi'iosity' of the early Babis when presenting a Baha'i perspective of early Babism to western readers cannot be denied. But as he was writing as the Guardian of a religious community and not an academic it might be said to be mistaken to accuse him of "suppression". He was surely conscious of the fact that an undiluted presentation of Babi history might confound the faith of western Baha'is who knew just about nothing of 19th century Iran or the Shi'i milieu in which the Babi movement had its birth. Shoghi Effendi was doubtless also fully aware of the fact that Baha'i historians of the future would present many aspects of Babi-Baha'i history in a more detailed and more matter of fact manner. In a number of his letters he refers to such future endeavours of Baha'i historians, at times underlining the provisional nature of his own historical writing-- an area in which he did not (contrary to popular Baha'i opinion) claim infallibility. It might also be pointed out here that Shoghi Effendi in his historical writings does make use of sources penned by 'covenant breakers' who sometimes provide historical data of great importance. This fact should not be overlooked by Baha'i historians.

Dr. MacEoin accuses Baha'is of accepting the results of historical criticism when it suits them. Again there is undoubtedly truth in this. It is only natural for theologically oriented religionists or religious apologists to make a selective use of the findings of critical scholarship. Hopefully however, mature Baha'i apologists will attempt to grapple theologically with the problems raised by the findings of critical scholarship which do not seem to support Baha'i perspectives.

In Dr. MacEoin's opinion there is no such thing as 'Christian', 'Islamic' or 'Baha'i' science, etc., but only 'good' and 'bad' science, etc. He denies the possibility that religious values may legitimately be used to 'reinterpret' scientific or other data. In effect Dr. MacEoin rules theology out of court. For him the theological evaluation of scientific and human knowledge has no place. This, at least, is the logical outcome of his monolithic academicism. It is of course true that there is ultimately only 'good' or 'bad' science but that theology has something to say about the religious dimension of scientific discoveries must be recognized. There may not be a 'Muslim science' or a 'Baha'i science' but that Muslims and Baha'is have something to say about scientific findings in the light of their beliefs and world view is not in itself a bad thing. Science is not concerned with theology but it is not illegitimate for theologians to concern themselves with the theological interpretation of scientific discoveries. Perhaps Dr. MacEoin would agree with this; his line of argument is not entirely clear to me.

#### Supernatural knowledge and human knowledge.

Baha'is, like many Jews, Christians and Muslims, believe in divine guidance through messengers sent by God. They believe that there is a supernatural source of knowledge and that this knowledge was communicated by Baha'u'llah, and infallibly interpreted by Abdu'l-Baha, Shoghi Effendi and the Universal House of Justice. Baha'i scripture while it does not dismiss human avenues to knowledge upholds the principle that there are ultimate sources of truth; though absolute truth cannot be attained. Dr. MacEoin criticises these Baha'i beliefs or the notion that there are supernatural sources of knowledge. He quotes Popper's brilliant but rather clear-cut critique of a simplistic-  
-ally stated religious epistemological stance as if it corresponds with the Baha'i position--which has yet to be worked out.

While Baha'is believe in ultimate sources of knowledge this does not at all invalidate human approaches and avenues to knowledge. Content criticism is not necessarily ruled out for Baha'is nor does the Baha'i movement seek to perpetuate a naive 'Yes'-  
'No' approach to truth. An oft repeated Baha'i principle is that religious truth is

not absolute but relative to human needs and capacities. Baha'is do not claim to be in possession of the absolute fulness of truth. The Baha'i principle of 'unity in diversity' and the 'absolute right' of the individual to express his views (refer, Principles of Baha'i Administration, pp. 24-5) should guard against that totalitarianism which results from a simplistic epistemological stance born of a rigid belief in supernatural sources of knowledge—quite rightly criticised by Popper.

A passage from Baha'u'llah's Kitāb-i Iqān is quoted by Dr. MacEoin as if it expresses Baha'i epistemology in a nutshell. Far from it. Baha'u'llah was evidently commenting on Shi'ite obscurantism in the light of his call to Muslims to identify spiritually with the Bābī movement. There is also a danger in taking one or two Baha'i texts which seem epistemologically conservative and ignoring others. The following words of Abdu'l-Baha may be said to comment on the texts noted by Dr. MacEoin and to put them in a rather different light: "If thou wishest the divine knowledge and recognition, purify thy heart from all beside God, be wholly attracted to the ideal beloved One; search for and choose Him and apply thyself to rational and authoratative arguments. For arguments are a guide to the path and by this the heart will be turned unto the Sun of Truth. And when the heart is turned unto the Sun, then the eye will be opened and will recognise the Sun through the Sun itself. Then man will be in no need of arguments (or proofs), for the Sun is altogether independent, and absolute independence is in need of nothing, and proofs are one of the things of which absolute independence has no need. Be not like Thomas; be thou like Peter.." (Baha'i World Faith, p. 383-4). Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha in the texts mentioned above are it appears, calling the spiritual seeker to a faith which recognises that there are paths to spirituality which are independent of ratiocination or which pass beyond the sphere of intellectual inquiry. Such however, does not mean that rational argument or intellectual enquiry has no place in a Baha'i epistemology. Abdu'l-Baha indeed, indicates that unfettered rational enquiry leads to spiritual identification with the messenger of God. While Babi-Baha'i writings give great importance to Sufi-type mystic avenues to knowledge and to mystic states which transcend reason, this does not mean that blind faith rules or that rational argument has no place.

#### Authoritarianism

Dr. MacEoin implies that Baha'is attempt to stultify open debate and innovative thinking in the light of their alleged 'total control of all publications'. It is to be admitted that many Baha'is at present have something of an over rigid attitude towards creative thinkers of an academic inclination. The principle of Baha'i review of publications designed to ensure doctrinal accuracy can be carried to extremes in the light of the fact that there is still much to be learned about Baha'i teachings and Baha'i history, etc. Baha'i reviewers might do well to bear in mind the following passage from Shoghi Effendi's writings: "There are many who have some superficial idea of what the Cause stands for.. There is no limit to the study of the Cause. The more we read the Writings, the more truths we can find in them, the more we will see that our previous notions were erroneous" (Principles of Baha'i Administration, p. 11).

It must also be borne in mind that academic Baha'i writing is in its infancy. It is not entirely the control of publications that stultifies creative thinking but the fact that creative thinkers who are theologically aware are few and far between. For the last ten years or so there has been something of a Baha'i intellectual crisis. Academically aware Baha'i intellectuals have begun to appear within the Baha'i community. The Baha'i community is not quite sure how to cope with them or channel their energies. Mistakes have been made out of an over-rigid sense of orthodoxy.

Excommunication, Dr. MacEoin contends, is the penalty for intellectual and moral dissent within the Baha'i community. He does not spell out what he means by dissent though intellectual non-conformity and moral failing does not lead to excommunication. Official excommunication within the Baha'i community, if I understand it correctly, is only the lot of those who 'break the Baha'i covenant' or exert a concerted effort to destroy faith while themselves denying fundamental aspects of that faith. Academics, it might be argued in this connection, should never be excommunicated as a result of their researches since academic study, as I have argued, is not intended to destroy faith. I know of no academic who has ever been excommunicated from the Baha'i community for intellectual dissent. A number of Baha'i intellectuals have however, it must be admitted, chosen to resign their Baha'i membership in the light of their inability to work within the confines of a religious system which propagates certain doctrinal and other norms. A distinction should also be made, when the question of excommunication is raised, between intellectual non-conformity and obvious "heresy".

Baha'i bodies or individuals which have to do with the 'protection of the faith' are seen by Dr. MacEoin as primarily concerned with the suppression and isolation of dissent. This is a rather harsh and clear-cut judgement. Those responsible for the 'protection of the faith' are-- or should be-- as much concerned with fostering mature spirituality as with counselling individuals who disrupt Baha'i community life.

#### Baha'i publications and review

Dr. MacEoin believes that no 'single work of scholarship of any merit whatsoever' has ever been-- or is likely to be-- published within the confines of the Baha'i system. All Baha'i literature appears to him to be so much 'mindless pap'.

While it is true that little academic Baha'i writing has as yet been published by Baha'i publishing trusts it must not be forgotten-- Dr. MacEoin plays this down-- that very, very few Baha'is have had any academic training in the field of religious or oriental studies that such writing might be published. Baha'i academic writing is only just beginning to emerge. Dr. MacEoin exalts academic writing to such a degree that all Baha'i apologetic and theologically oriented writing is seen as so much garbage. Is this judgement as potentially authoritarian or intellectually totalitarian as the supposed Baha'i radical censorship system?

Dr. MacEoin judges such classic Baha'i apologists as Gulpaygani by modern academic standards. It must be borne in mind however that Gulpaygani wrote in an Islamo-Baha'i intellectual universe which rendered him hardly if at all conscious of modern academic standards and norms. Writing off the output of such Baha'i apologists as Gulpaygani as non-academic pap is in a sense comparable to writing off the treatises of the Church Fathers because they do not conform to the high standards of modern Biblical scholarship.

It is obvious that modern Baha'i writing is not as academically or intellectually mature as the writings of modern Christian scholars. The latter have had the time, finances and maturity to educate themselves in the use of modern critical tools. Baha'i institutes of higher learning do not, as yet, exist. There are no Baha'i universities where Baha'is are trained in the use of modern critical tools and methodologies.

In the estimation of Dr. MacEoin the poor standard of Baha'i writing is attributable to Baha'i review processes and the preference of the Baha'i administrative institutions for the 'unexceptionable and bland'. Though there is truth in this judgement it is again an overstatement. There are undoubtedly 'overprotective' reviewers who have prevented the publication of works and essays of great merit though the actual Baha'i output of academically informed creative writing is, as implied above, very small. The Baha'i review process will undoubtedly mature as Baha'i intellectual life matures. Works which 'overprotective' reviewers might not deem fit for publication now may well, quite shortly, be seen in another light. Baha'i review is not a static phenomenon but, it seems to me, will mature and become more openminded as Baha'i understanding develops.

### The Search after truth

Dr. MacEoin asserts that when closely examined the Baha'i writings neither really teach nor encourage an 'unfettered search after truth'. He interprets the exhortation to search after truth as an essentially pre-conversion endeavour. While it is true that many texts underline the pre-conversion necessity of a search for truth Dr. MacEoin plays down the undoubted existence of Baha'i texts that underline the importance of post-conversion seeking, 'deepening' and intellectual progress. Becoming a Baha'i is not an automatic grasping of the fulness of truth for Baha'is believe that intellectual and spiritual progress is an eternal or unending process. Intellectual honesty and openmindedness should be as important for Baha'is after conversion as it presumably was before.

### Infallibility and reason

The Baha'i notion of revelation does not, in Dr. MacEoin's opinion, admit of a necessary balance between 'faith' and 'reason' since 'revelation' has the 'final say'. It is not, I would suggest, quite as simple as this despite the fact that 'revelation' in Baha'i theology does have the 'final say'. Revelation to have the 'final say' must be understood by human reason. This since an 'infallible' or 'revealed' statement is only infallible if reasonably grasped and understood. Then also, the statement that 'revelation' has the final say must be balanced by the Baha'i assertion that 'revelation' is not incompatible with human reason. That Baha'u'llah exhorted Baha'is to accept whatever the 'Manifestation of God' says without any 'why' or 'wherefore' cannot be said to preclude the rational investigation of the content of 'revelation' not infrequently advised in Baha'i writings. The issue of the "two Davids" mentioned by Dr. MacEoin awaits detailed analysis in the light perhaps of the fact that the Bab and Baha'u'llah sometimes wrote in accordance with an oriental chronological scheme that differs from that generally accepted by modern historians-- there is a letter of 'Abdu'l-Baha on this subject as well as (at least one) by Shoghi Effendi (cf. Dawn of a New Day. pp. 76-7). That 'Abdu'l-Baha asserted that whatever he said as 'Center of the Covenant' is correct is quite true but the seeming authoritarianism implied by this statement must not be taken out of context. Made at a time when the American Baha'i community was in grave danger of falling apart and being disturbed by the activities and assertions of such 'covenant breakers' as the partisans of Mirza Muhammad 'Ali ('Abdu'l-Baha's half-brother and rival claimant) it does not rule out individual Baha'i intellectual creativity. Shoghi Effendi did not set out to make it difficult for others to disagree with him by overstepping the limits of the sphere of his infallibility though exactly what "confined to matters which are strictly related to the [Baha'i] Cause and interpretations of the teachings" means has yet to be clarified even though it is clear that Shoghi Effendi was not infallible in subjects such as economics and science (refer, letters of Shoghi Effendi quoted in a letter of the Universal House of Justice to Mr. Richard Grieser dated July 25th 1974--see below). Dr. MacEoin exaggerates, by quoting select texts, the authoritarianism implicit in a religious movement that accepts revelation and has a philosophy of the covenant which attributes infallibility to its central figures. Theologically things are more flexible than Dr. MacEoin implies though, as he points out, in practice a greater flexibility is desirable.

### Questioning Baha'i notables

Dr. MacEoin implies that it is practically a crime to publically question a Baha'i notable; that such a 'questioner' brings on himself the 'greatest opprobium'. This he thinks illustrates the elevation of authoritarianism over the freedom to seek the truth within the Baha'i community. Much in this connection though depends on the attitude of the questioner and the kind of question asked. Baha'i notables-- or some of them-- are naturally unhappy about being publically asked embarrassing or controversial questions. They are human as are those Baha'is who zealously over react to anyone who has the courage to be controversial--which is not always a bad thing. Dr. MacEoin over states his case though more honesty and freedom in Baha'i consultation would undoubtedly be a good thing.

### Āvārīh's history.

Reference is made by Dr. MacEoin to <sup>c</sup>Abd al-Husayn Āyatī, Āvārīh's al-Kawākib al-Durriya, a two volume history of the Babi-Baha'i movements up until the passing of <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā in 1921 which was first published in Cairo in 1923-4. This history was commissioned by <sup>c</sup>Abdu'l-Bahā and highly praised, as Dr. MacEoin notes, by Shoghi Effendi. In the early 1920's Āvārīh was called from Iran to Haifa and from there sent to Europe to strengthen the Baha'i believers (cf. Star of the West, 13/12, p. 329) but came himself to leave the movement after his return to Iran and to engage in anti-Baha'i activities. He wrote a lengthy book entitled Kashf al-Hiyāl (The Unveiling of Deception, 7th Ed., 2 Vols., Tehran 1340.A.H.) which purports to expose Baha'i corruption and in which Āvārīh himself declares his al-Kawākib al-Durriya to be of little or no value (cf. Miller, The Baha'i Faith, p. 275). Shoghi Effendi eventually excommunicated him and referred to him as a "shameless apostate" (refer, Baha'i News, No. 21, pp. 5-6, No. 162, p. 8., God Passes By, p. 327). Āvārīh's anti-Baha'i writings, like those of most oriental 'covenant breakers', are not only bitter but decidedly unbalanced. This in no way however, signifies that his al-Kawākib al-Durriya should neither be read nor republished by Baha'is. His defection has not mysteriously rendered his history of no value. Baha'is are not forbidden to read the writings of apostates written after their defection and are certainly not forbidden to republish the sometimes very valuable books written by apostates before their defection.

Dr. MacEoin assumes that the fact that Āvārīh's history has not been republished is the result of the Baha'i attitude towards Āvārīh himself. While there may be some truth in this it must not be forgotten that a great many books written by Baha'is who did not defect have not been republished. The history of Baha'i publications shows that there have been many instances in which highly important books have come to be practically forgotten. On the whole Baha'i publishing trusts—partly through financial considerations and government restrictions as well as the continual evolution of the Baha'i community—have not followed a consistent policy of republishing even Baha'i scriptural texts. Dr. MacEoin reads too much into the fact that Āvārīh's history has not been republished—which has nothing to do with the Baha'i ideal of an unfettered search after truth.

### The understanding of the Baha'i movement.

Are only Baha'is capable of understanding and presenting their faith adequately? This question is raised by Dr. MacEoin who evidently believes that Baha'is would answer 'Yes' to it. The fact that many Baha'is probably would answer 'yes' to this question is partly due to the fact that very little obviously non-polemical writing about the Babi-Baha'i movements has been done by 'non-Baha'i' scholars. Ex-Baha'is have tended to express themselves in a polemical and obviously inadequate fashion. It seems to me though, and I cannot think of any Baha'i text to explicitly contradict this, that a 'non-Baha'i' or balanced 'ex-Baha'i', could write about the Baha'i faith adequately and accurately. The writings of those who do not subscribe to the Baha'i faith are certainly not ipso-facto devoid of perception, balance or truth. It may even be that the 'non or ex-Baha'i' scholar who has a balanced empathy may contribute to Baha'i understanding in an important way. Sometimes Baha'is have endeavoured to correct 'errors' in the writings of 'non-Baha'i' academics which are not errors at all but are perspectives substantiated in little known or ignored Baha'i texts.

### Arrogance and the Baha'i view of other religions.

Dr. MacEoin thinks it a sign of arrogance that Baha'is understand pre-Baha'i religious teachings in a way that differs from the current or long established views of the adherents of such religions. This is not arrogance but simply the fact that Baha'is have their own interpretation of past religions just as Christians have their own understanding of Judaism which differs—sometimes radically—from the perspectives of Jews and Muslims understand both Judaism and Christianity from an Islamic perspective. Baha'is at least are not so arrogant

as many Jews or Christians who write off Islam as a manifestation of falsity. That Baha'is disagree in some instances with the Christian interpretation of the New Testament or mission of Jesus or the Muslim interpretation of the Qur'an need not be seen as an expression of religious arrogance. In fact a great many of the Baha'i interpretations of Christianity and Islam, the Bible and the Qur'an, have been put forth by Christians and Muslims themselves. Many Christians and Muslims would agree with a good many Baha'i interpretations of their religion. Baha'u'llah and Abdu'l-Baha it might be added here exhorted Baha'is not to consider themselves superior to other religionists or to be proud and arrogant.

#### Dr.Momen's Book and the Kitāb al-Aqdas

Dr.Momen's The Babi and Baha'i Religions is characterised by Dr.MacEoin as a compendium of 'sundry trivia' illustrative of the failure of Baha'i intellectuals to grapple with controversy. What, I wonder, does Dr.MacEoin expect to find in a volume which is not designed to grapple with controversial or crucial issues? More than this I hesitate to write in the hope that Dr.Momen might himself express his views.

Christian missionaries and other anti-Baha'i writers have long accused Baha'is of withholding the publication or translation of Baha'u'llah's Kitāb al-Aqdas (Most Holy Book, c.1873) for fear of countering the faith of occidental Baha'is. Muslim scholars are also fond of raising this point along with that of the Bab's grammar and the nature of his laws, etc. Shoghi Effendi on several occasions responded to these criticisms as have a number of Baha'i writers. It must suffice here to note that western Baha'is are not forbidden to acquaint themselves with the contents of Baha'u'llah's Kitāb al-Aqdas— most of the main points made in this book are contained in the Synopsis and Codification issued some years ago by the Universal House of Justice. Shoghi Effendi's view was that "...as most of the laws of the Aqdas cannot at present be enforced anywhere he [Shoghi Effendi] has not deemed it necessary or wise to translate and promulgate them. You can orally translate them for any of the believers anxious to know exactly what they are" (letter dated 22nd July 1949 quoted in Unfolding Destiny, p.455). He also expressed the matter as follows: "The reason it [the Aqdas] is not circulated amongst all the Baha'is is, first, because the Cause is not yet ready or sufficiently matured to put all the provisions of the Aqdas into effect and, second, because it is a book which requires to be supplemented by detailed explanations and to be translated into other languages by a competent body of experts. The provisions of the Aqdas are gradually, according to the progress of the Cause, being put into effect already, both in the East and in the West" (letter quoted in Dawn of a New Day, p.94).

Dr.MacEoin fears that masses of Baha'is would leave their faith if they knew what the writings of the Bab or Baha'u'llah's Kitāb al-Aqdas 'really say'. This is an extremely pessimistic supposition. There are admittedly certain texts in the Aqdas and the writings of the Bab that occidental Baha'is would find it difficult to accept or understand taken at face value. A number of these problematic or challenging passages have however, been interpreted by Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi in ways that render their actual application far less radical or controversial. (refer for example, Dawn of a New Day, p.77 on inheritance and pp.77-8 on the severity of the Bab's laws). The details of Baha'i law have yet to be worked out. If made fully known to the mass of Baha'is certain questions and problems would doubtless arise though to suggest a mass apostasy is to go too far. Many Baha'is do however, need to be more fully conscious of the Islamic dimension of their faith without which they may be perturbed by the 'neo-Shi'osity' of certain aspects of their faith. As the Islamic dimension of the Baha'i movement becomes more fully known in the West there will be difficulties for those raised in a liberal western culture though it is unlikely that mass apostasy will take place.

#### Baha'i 'pioneers' and ancient beliefs.

Baha'i pioneers, as Dr.MacEoin states, undoubtedly seek to offer prospective converts a new religious ideology. They do not however, attempt to demolish all cultural values, etc. in a mindless and uncompromising manner. Indeed, Shoghi

Effendi wrote: "Let there be no misgivings as to the animating purpose of the world-wide Law of Baha'u'llah. Far from aiming at the subversion of the existing foundations of society, it seeks to broaden its basis, to remold its institutions in a manner consonant with the needs of an ever-changing world. It can conflict with no legitimate allegiances, nor can it undermine essential loyalties. Its purpose is neither to stifle the flame of a sane and intelligent patriotism in men's hearts, nor to abolish the system of national autonomy so essential if the evils of excessive centralization are to be avoided. It does not ignore, nor does it attempt to suppress, the diversity of ethical origins, of climate, of history, of language and tradition, of thought and habit, that differentiate the peoples and nations of the world. It repudiates excessive centralization on one hand, and disclaims all attempts at uniformity on the other. Its watchword is unity in diversity. The call of Baha'u'llah is primarily directed against all forms of provincialism, all insularities and prejudices. If long-cherished ideals and time-honoured institutions, if certain social assumptions and religious formulae have ceased to promote the welfare of the generality of mankind, if they no longer minister to the needs of a continually evolving humanity, let them be swept away and relegated to the limbo of obsolescent and forgotten doctrines. Why should these, in a world subject to the immutable law of change and decay, be exempt from the deterioration that must needs overtake every human institution?.." ( The World Order of Baha'u'llah, pp.41-2).

#### The role of the scholar in the Baha'i movement.

Dr. MacEoin sketches, on the basis of a few texts, what he considers to be the 'early' Baha'i understanding of the role of the Baha'i scholar. He contrasts the openness implied in these 'early' texts with what is implied by the Universal House of Justice's ( in fact Shoghi Effendi's) supposed institution-isation of scholarship. The fact that the 'learned' are identified with individual Baha'is who hold appointed office within the Baha'i administrative system suggests to Dr. MacEoin the subtle suppression of non-conformist Baha'i scholars. This is an unjustified inference. There is no suggestion in Baha'i scripture that the 'learned' who hold appointed administrative office are alone learned or that individuals who hold no office cannot be taken seriously or be truly learned. Scholarship and learning cannot be institutionalised within the Baha'i world as the Baha'i administrative system attempts to channel and not suppress creative energy. Certain Baha'i texts imply a role for Baha'i scholars who have no specific administrative office or duty.

Baha'is do not have, as Dr. MacEoin notes, a 'sacramental clergy' though certain individuals (i.e. Counsellors) do have some authority as individuals within the Baha'i administrative system. They do not however, have the same kind of duties or authority as either the Shi'i mujtahids or the Christian clergy. While it could be argued that Baha'is appointed to administrative office form a kind of 'clergy' much depends on how the term "clergy" be defined. They certainly do not have the authority to make authoritative legal or doctrinal pronouncements.

#### Utopian dreams

The vision of a new world order of the future and of a world government, etc., is regarded by Dr. MacEoin as a Baha'i utopian dream. One cannot argue either the truth or falsity of this vision which is a matter of faith-- in general terms shared by many religionists throughout the world. Baha'is do not though, necessarily expect the kind of paradisaical, totalitarian and 'perfectly-ordered' dream world of the future outlined by Dr. MacEoin to mysteriously materialise in the near future. They do not exactly look forward to a 'perfectly-controlled' and excessively centralised 'one-party' nightmare of the kind suggested. One of the 'unities' Abdu'l-Baha looked forward to in a famous tablet was the 'unity in freedom': " The third candle is unity in freedom which will surely come to pass". Baha'is are not working towards a world of unity by means of uniformity upheld by suppression of freedom.

Concluding Note

I have attempted to set down some thoughts on Dr. MacEoin's highly critical evaluation of Baha'i perspectives on scholarship, etc., being, most of the time fully conscious of the tentative nature and inadequacy of my arguments. I hope others will take up some of the points raised in more detail and apologize to any reader of this Bulletin who might be upset by Dr. MacEoin's forceful language. The controversy which the publication of Dr. MacEoin's views might spark off is neither intended to create disunity nor destroy faith. Indeed, the intellectual and theological grappling with controversy can heighten apologetic awareness and, in my view, contribute to the evolution of a more mature and open-minded Baha'i scholarship.

Stephen Lambden.

Notes, Reviews and Communications

I. Some letters of the Universal House of Justice--including various extracts from unpublished letters written by or on behalf of Shoghi Effendi.

a) Letter to Mr. Richard Grieser dated July 25th 1974 concerning the infallibility of Shoghi Effendi:

Dear Baha'i Friend,

We have received your letter stating you were disturbed by statements made in your deepening class regarding the infallibility of the beloved Guardian and we appreciate your concern.

According to your letter, this question arose in connection with Shoghi Effendi's references in God Passes By to historical events, and his descriptions of the characters of opponents of the Faith, particularly that of Hájí Mírzá Aqásí. Letters written on behalf of the Guardian by his secretary to individuals who asked similar questions clearly define the sphere of the Guardian's infallibility. We quote from two of these, one written in 1944, the second in 1956.

"The infallibility of the Guardian is confined to matters which are strictly related to the Cause and interpretations of the Teachings; he is not an infallible authority on other subjects, such as economics, science, etc."

"The Guardian's infallibility covers interpretations of the revealed word, and its application. Likewise any instructions he may issue having to do with the protection of the Faith, or its well-being must be closely obeyed, as he is infallible in the protection of the Faith. He is assured the guidance of both Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb, as the Will and Testament of 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly reveals."

Now, in the matter of accuracy of historical fact, Shoghi Effendi had to rely on available information. For example, on page 5 of God Passes By, he refers to Hájí Mírzá Aqásí as "...the idolized tutor of Muhammad Sháh, a vulgar, false-hearted and fickle-minded schemer..." An appropriate and pertinent quotation supporting that characterization can be found in P. M. Sykes's A History of Persia, Volume 2, pages 439-440, which appears as a footnote on page 233 of Nabíl's Narrative:



" The state of Persia, however, was not satisfactory; for Haji Mirza Aqasi, who had been its virtual ruler for thirteen years, was utterly ignorant of statesmanship or of military science, yet too vain to receive instruction and too jealous to admit of a coadjutor; brutal in his language; insolent in his demeanour; indolent in his habits; he brought the exchequer to the verge of bankruptcy and the country to the brink of revolution... Such to adopt the weighty words of Rawlinson was the condition of Persia in the middle of the nineteenth century."

The Guardian was meticulous about the authenticity of historical fact. One of the friends in Yazd wrote to him stating that the account given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in one of His Tablets about events related to the martyrdom of some of the believers in that place was in conflict with known facts about these events. Shoghi Effendi replied saying that the friends should investigate the facts carefully and unhesitatingly register them in their historical records, since 'Abdu'l-Baha Himself had prefaced His recording of the events in His Tablet with a statement that it was based on news received from Yazd.

It is a great pity if some of the friends fail to recognize the matchless prose to be found in the Guardian's writings. Shoghi Effendi's masterly use of the English language makes the meaning abundantly clear, and that is an essential quality of great works...

With warmest Bahá'í greetings,

[signed] The Universal House of Justice.

b) Letter of the Universal House of Justice to Mr. Stephen Lambden dated 22 November 1982 concerning Jesus' cry from the cross:

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

Further to our letter to you dated 6 April 1982, the Research Department has identified what would seem to be the source of the statement made by a number of Bahá'ís to which you refer in point 5 of your letter of 11 February 1982. On page 2 of the "Bahá'í Quarterly" No. 23 for April 1942 issued by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Australia and New Zealand appears the following question and response. The question, together with a number of others, was put to the Guardian by the National Spiritual Assembly in a letter dated 23rd September 1941, and was answered in a letter written on behalf of the Guardian dated 23 February 1942.

Question: Did Christ on the cross say, "O God, O God, why hast Thou forsaken me"? The following is an extract from an interview with 'Abdu'l-Baha reported by Mary Hanford Ford. "So Christ never suffered upon the cross. From the time the crucifixion began His soul was in Heaven and he felt nothing but Divine Presence. He did not say, speaking in Aramaic: "O God, O God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" But this word Sabachtani [sic] is similar in sound to another which means glorify, and he actually murmured, "O God, O God, how dost thou glorify me". Is this correct and may we quote this as 'Abdu'l-Baha's utterance?"

Answer: The Guardian considers that the gist of what Mrs. Hanford Ford reported can be considered quite correct.

It should be noted that the Guardian does not answer the National Assembly's specific question as to whether they may quote this passage as 'Abdu'l-Baha's utterance, but confines himself to authenticating the gist of what Mrs. Hanford Ford reported. The full text of the interview appears on page 105 of "The Bahá'í Magazine" Vol. 24, No. 4. A copy of this page is enclosed. As you can see the question at issue is whether martyrs suffer during their martyrdom. To this 'Abdu'l-Baha' is reported to have said:

"There are many kinds of martyrdom. How many times have I prayed for it, but instead of that I have lived on in prison as if with the sword of Damocles suspended by a hair over my head! Each morning as I waken I feel that before the day ends I may be dragged to the public square and shot to death. But nevertheless I have been very happy in this long martyrdom, for no victim suffers from the cruelties inflicted upon him. The instant the torture begins he is in a state of bliss, and feels nothing but the joy of Heaven which surrounds him."

Such a statement must be read in the light of the many passages in which Baha'u'llah writes of the sufferings of the Manifestations of God and of their devoted followers, and of His own sufferings. Indeed an illuminating Tablet on this very theme is printed as section 190 of "Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha'".

The main point, therefore, that it seems we can draw from the gist of what 'Abdu'l-Baha' is recorded as having said to Mary Hanford Ford, is that, whatever the actual words of Christ's cry from the Cross may have been, it was not a cry of despair, and that Jesus had not lost faith in the loving care of God."

with loving Bahá'í greetings,

[signed] Ethna Archibald

For the Dept. of the Secretariat.

[ This letter throws some further light on certain points made in my article on Jesus' cry from the cross in Bahá'í Studies Bulletin, Vol. 1, No. 1, (June 1982), pp. 27-42. (Ed) ].

c) Letter of the Universal House of Justice to Mr. Robert B. Stauffer, Jr., dated July 9th 1979 in response to various questions:

Dear Bahá'í Friend,

The Universal House of Justice has asked us to acknowledge your letter of 14th June 1979 and to convey the following answers to your several questions.

- (1) In the matter of infallibility, attached is a copy of part of a letter pertaining to this subject, dated 29 September 1977, written on behalf of the House of Justice to an individual believer who asked a similar question.
- (2) Such matter as the observance of national traditions should be referred to your National Spiritual Assembly, who will decide whether the practises in question adversely affect the interests of the Faith.
- (3) Other friends too have asked about congregational prayer, and we enclose a copy of part of a letter on this subject written on behalf of the House of Justice on 6 February 1975 to an individual believer.
- (4) The statements of Shoghi Effendi and that of Adib Taherzadeh about the twenty-four Elders are not necessarily contradictory. The Tablet Mr. Taherzadeh refers to is a well known Tablet of the Master, and it cannot be assumed that Shoghi Effendi was not cognizant of its contents. No doubt at the time the

beloved Guardian wrote his letter, he did not consider it propitious to enter into such details for the friends in the West.

In 1973 the House of Justice wrote to the National Spiritual Assembly of Italy about this subject, and a copy of this letter is attached for your information.

(5) We are asked to point out that merely the fundamental principles of the punishment for murder are given in the "Kitáb-i-Aqdas". Wilful murder is to be punished either by capital punishment or life imprisonment. Such matters as degrees of offence and whether the extenuating circumstances are to be taken into account are left to the Universal House of Justice to decide in light of prevailing conditions when the law is in operation.

It is obviously not wise for the friends to indiscriminately proclaim this ordinance of Bahá'u'lláh or volunteer to set forth its various aspects. However, if and when asked, they should unhesitatingly provide the answer based on the above guidelines.

(6) On the subject of begging, the following extract taken from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá indicates the time will come when "no one will be obliged to beg". 'Abdu'l-Bahá gave to the poor and needy because of the conditions of the time. But he made clear in this Tablet, assistance to the needy will be provided in the future:

"By the sacred verse: 'Begging is forbidden, and it is also prohibited to dispense alms to a beggar' is meant that mendicancy is forbidden and that giving charity to people who take up begging as their profession is also prohibited. The object is to wipe out mendicancy altogether. However, if a person is disabled, stricken by dire poverty or becomes helpless, then it is incumbent upon the rich or the trustees to provide him with a monthly allowance for his subsistence. When the House of Justice comes into being it will set up homes for the incapacitated. Thus no one will be obliged to beg, even as the supplementary part of the blessed verse denotes: 'It is enjoined upon everyone to earn his livelihood'; then He says: 'As to those who are disabled, it devolveth upon the trustees and the rich to make adequate provision for them.' By 'trustees' is meant the representatives of the people, that is to say the members of the House of Justice."

The House of Justice does not wish to go beyond quoting this Tablet at the present time, and hopes that you will yourself be able to arrive at an understanding of the meaning of Bahá'u'lláh in the Arabic "Hidden Words", no. 30, which you mention.

(7) Your question about Ahmad Sohrab's book "'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt" has been asked previously, and we quote from the reply written on behalf of the House of Justice on 5 February 1976 to an individual believer:

"We have been asked to quote the following from a letter, dated March 24th, 1934, written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi by his secretary to the American National Spiritual Assembly:

'Shoghi Effendi...has carefully considered the matter of having Ahmad Sohrab's "Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt" included in the new catalogue of Bahá'í books which the Publishing Committee is intending to prepare very soon. He feels that in view of the fact that this book of Ahmad has already been reviewed and corrected under Bahá'í auspices reference to it in the Bahá'í catalogue is advisable.'

"In view of the above quotation the Universal House of Justice states that it would be permissible for you to quote from "'Abdu'l-Bahá in Egypt'."

(8) There is nothing in the writings of our Faith specifically authorizing the institutions of the Faith, on either arm of the Administration, to prohibit the reading of certain books written by Covenant-breakers or to make selections from them for the benefit of the friends. These institutions are created for the protection and promotion of the Faith, and must use their best judgement as to how to carry out these duties. Bahá'ís are not prohibited from reading the writings of Covenant-breakers, but they are warned strongly of the dangers of doing so, as the misrepresentations and calumnies in such writings can erode one's faith.

with loving Bahá'í greetings,  
 [signed] Mrs. Loraine Johnson  
 For Dept. of the Secretariat

Enclosures

PS. Regarding the first item, you will find attached a copy of an extract from another letter, dated 22 August 1977, written on behalf of the House of Justice.

Text of the enclosures mentioned in the above letter to Robert B. Stauffer

[1. Baha'i goals and infallibility]

Extract from a letter to an individual believer written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice, dated 29 September 1977:

"In your letter, which was received on 12 May 1977, you asked the Universal House of Justice "Are your goals infallible because they are the perfect goals to be set, or...because they, without a question, will be met?" The House of Justice has instructed us to send you the enclosed copy of excerpts from a letter on the general subject of infallibility which was recently written to an individual believer, and to add the following comments on the particular aspects that you have raised.

There are two great interrelated plans of God going forward in the world at the present time. In one of its letters the Universal House of Justice describes these as follows:

"We are told by Shoghi Effendi that two great processes are at work in the world: the great Plan of God, tumultuous in its progress, working through mankind as a whole, tearing down barriers to world unity and forging humankind into a unified body in the fires of suffering and experience. This process will produce, in God's due time, the Lesser Peace, the political unification of the world. Mankind at that time can be likened to a body that is unified but without life. The second process, the task of breathing life into that unified body- of creating true unity and spirituality culminating in the Most Great Peace- is that of the Bahá'ís, who are labouring consciously, with detailed instructions and continuing divine guidance, to erect the fabric of the Kingdom of God on earth, into which they call their fellow-men, thus conferring upon them eternal life.

"The working out of God's Major Plan proceeds mysteriously in ways directed by Him alone, but the Minor Plan which he has given us to execute, as our part of His grand design for the redemption of mankind, is clearly delineated. It is to this work that we must devote all our energies, for there is no one else to do it."

As you are no doubt aware, the Tablets of the Divine Plan, which were revealed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during the First World War, are the charter for the teaching of the Faith. All the teaching plans launched by the beloved guardian, as well as those subsequently directed by the Universal House of Justice, are stages in the implementation of this master plan conceived by the Centre of the Covenant for the diffusion of the Message of Bahá'u'lláh.

When it is working out the goals of a plan, such as the Five Year Plan, the Universal House of Justice, in collaboration with the International Teaching Centre, collates information on the current status of the Faith throughout the world, considers the condition of mankind as a whole and the direction in which political and economic events throughout the world are moving, gives thought to the specific needs of the evolving pattern of the Bahá'í community in each country, and sets goals which, in the light of the information before it, it judges to be both essential of achievement and also within the capacity of the Bahá'í communities to reach. All the goals thus set are minimum goals; that is to say, the needs of humanity are far greater than anything the Bahá'í community can plan to meet at the present time, and therefore, although the goals are set as high as the Universal House of Justice considers it possible for the Bahá'ís to reach within the time provided, the friends should always strive to exceed them if they can.

In setting the goals the House of Justice cannot take into account the unpredictable operations of God's Supreme Plan. At time it may seem that the operation of the Major Plan causes a disruption in the work of the Minor Plan, but the friends should not let this distress them. In 1955 a sudden recrudescence of the persecution of the Faith in the land of its birth intervened dramatically in the progress of the Ten Year Crusade. Referring to this, the Guardian wrote, as recorded on page 140 of "Citadel of Faith":

"For though the newly launched World Spiritual Crusade—constituting at best only the Minor Plan in the execution of the Almighty's design for the redemption of mankind—has, as a result of this turmoil, paralyzing temporarily the vast majority of the organized followers of Bahá'u'lláh within its birthplace, suffered a severe setback, yet the over-all Plan of God, moving mysteriously and in contrast to the orderly and well-known processes of a clearly devised Plan, has received an impetus the force of which posterity can adequately assess."

Although the followers of Bahá'u'lláh are not answerable for the results of events beyond their control which may prevent them attaining their goals, the importance of the exertions of the individual believers should in no way be underestimated. The beloved Guardian wrote very forcibly about this in a letter which is published on page 122 of "Citadel of Faith". The passage in question reads:

"Without his (the individual believer's) support, at once wholehearted, continuous and generous, every measure adopted, and every plan formulated, by the body which acts as the national representative of the community to which he belongs, is foredoomed to failure. The World Centre of the Faith itself is paralyzed if such support on the part of the rank and file of the community is denied it. The Author of the Divine Plan Himself is impeded in His purpose if the proper instruments for the execution of His design are lacking."

Thus the friends, while radiantly accepting whatever may transpire in the world around them, whether it appears to help or hinder their work, should, for their part, approach their task with the absolute determination to do all within their power to achieve the goals that are set before them, placing their confidence in the supreme might and unfailing support of Bahá'u'lláh for those who arise to promote His Cause. " .

[ 2. Congregational prayer ]

Extract from a letter dated 6 February to an individual believer, written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice.

" You have asked whether it is permissible for the friends to chant a prayer collectively. There is a difference between chanting a prayer collectively and congregational prayer. The latter is a formal prayer led usually by an individual using a prescribed ritual. Congregational prayer in this form is forbidden in the Faith except in the case of Prayer for the Dead. While reciting prayers in unison and spontaneously joining in the recitation of the Words of God is not forbidden, the friends should bear in mind the advice of the beloved Guardian on this subject when he stated that:

" although the friends are thus left free to follow their own inclination, ... they should take the utmost care that any manner they practise should not acquire too rigid a character, and thus develop into an institution. This is a point which the friends should always bear in mind, lest they deviate from the clear path indicated in the teachings."

[ 3. The 24 Elders of the Apocalypse ]

Extract from a letter to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Italy dated 2 October, 1973.

" Dear Baha'i Friends,

With reference to your letter of September 7th relaying the question from one of the believers in your community about the identity of the twenty-four elders mention in the Book of Revelation, we share with you the following passage from a letter dated December 13, 1955 written on the beloved Guardian's behalf by his secretary to the National Spiritual Assembly of the United States:

" 'Abdu'l-Bahá clearly stated that the eighteen Letters of the Living, and the Báb, form part of the twenty-four Elders referred to in the Bible; and that the other five would be known later. No one has any right to interpret this statement or to apply it to themselves."

In another Tablet when asked the identity of the remaining five, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated that one of them was Hají Mirzá Muhammad -Tagí, the Báb's cousin. Reference to him can be found in God Passes By, page 268 and Memorials of the Faithful, pages 126-129.."

[ 4. The infallibility of Shoghi Effendi ]

Extract from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer dated 22 August 1977.

" Shoghi Effendi was asked several times during his ministry to define the sphere of his operation and his infallibility. The replies he gave and which were written on his behalf are most illuminating. He explains that he is not an infallible authority on subjects such as economics and science, nor does he go into technical matters since his infallibility is confined to "matters which are strictly related to the Cause." He further points out that "he is not, like the Prophet, omniscient at will", that his "infallibility covers interpretation of the revealed word and its application", and that he is also "infallible in the protection of the Faith". Furthermore, in one of his letters, the following guideline is set forth:

"...It is not for individual believers to limit the sphere of the Guardian's authority, or to judge when they have to obey the Guardian and when they are free to reject his judgement. Such an attitude would evidently lead to confusion and to schism. The Guardian being the appointed interpreter of the Teachings, it is his responsibility to state what matters which, affecting the interests of the Faith, demand on the part of the believers complete and unqualified obedience to his instructions."

It must always be remembered that authoratative interpretation of the Teachings was, after 'Abdu'l-Baha, the exclusive right of the Guardian, and fell within the "sacred and prescribed domain" of the Guardianship, and therefore the Universal House of Justice cannot and will not infringe upon that domain. The exclusive sphere of the Universal House of Justice is to "pronounce upon and deliver the final judgement on such laws and ordinances as Bahá'u'lláh has not expressly revealed." Apart from this fundamental difference in the functions of the twin pillars of the Order of Baha'u'llah, insofar as the other duties of the Head of the Faith are concerned, the Universal House of Justice shares with the Guardian the responsibility for the application of the revealed word, the protection of the Faith, as well as the duty "to insure the continuity of that divinely-appointed authority which flows from the Source of our Faith, to safeguard the unity of its followers, and to maintain the integrity and flexibility of its Teachings." However, the Universal House of Justice is not omniscient; like the Guardian, it wants to be provided with facts when called upon to render a decision, and like him it may well change its decision when new facts emerge."

Excerpts from four further letters of the Universal House of Justice

1. Excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated November 17 1970 to an individual believer.

"..there is no longer a source of authoratative interpretation of the Sacred Texts in the Bahá'í community, as this was a specific function of the Guardianship which ceased when Shoghi Effendi died. There remain however, the vast quantities of interpretations already made by 'Abdu'l-Baha during His Ministry and also those made by the Guardian during the thirty-six years of his Guardianship.

The unchallengeable authority and assurances of divine guidance conferred upon the Universal House of Justice in the sacred Scriptures make it, in the absence of the Guardian, the supreme and central institution of the Faith to which all must turn, and also the one body invested with the authority and inspiration required to enable it to guide the Cause of God and maintain unbroken the Covenant of Babá'u'lláh."

2. Excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated May 21 1973 to a National Spiritual Assembly.

" We query the use of the word "interpretation" since this is definitely not a function of the Universal House of Justice. The House of Justice must assemble, collate, apply the interpretations made by the Master and the beloved Guardian and even elucidate the text but it is denied the right of interpretation. We feel you should consider correcting this error."

3. Excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated October 20 1977 to an individual believer.

"As the Guardian himself stated, the Guardian and the Universal House of Justice are the "Twin Successors" of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Baha. We have now no Guardian, but the Universal House of Justice continues its own successorship

In the absence of the Guardian the Universal House of Justice, being the only divinely guided institution to which all must turn, is the Head of the Faith, but it does not and cannot thereby assume the Guardian's right of interpretation. The infallibility it exercises is the infallibility conferred upon it by Baha'u'llah, in its own sphere. However, as Shoghi Effendi himself wrote:

"...the members of the Universal House of Justice, it should be borne in mind, are not, as Baha'u'llah's utterances clearly imply, responsible to those whom they represent, nor are they allowed to be governed by the feelings, the general opinion, and even the convictions of the mass of the faithful, or of those who directly elect them. They are to follow, in a prayerful attitude, the dictates and promptings of their conscience. They may, indeed they must, acquaint themselves with the conditions prevailing among the community, must weigh dispassionately in their minds the merits of any case presented for their consideration, but must reserve for themselves the right of an unfettered decision. 'God will verily inspire them with whatsoever he willeth', is Baha'u'llah's incontrovertible assurance. They, and not the body of those who either directly or indirectly elect them, have thus been made the recipients of the divine guidance which is at once the life-blood and ultimate safeguard of this Revelation."

4. Excerpt from a letter of the Universal House of Justice dated January 13 1973 to an individual believer.

"While it is true that the Guardianship and the Universal House of Justice are referred to as the "twin" pillars of the Administrative Order, the "twin" successors of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, and that infallibility has been conferred upon both institutions, the Constitution of the Universal House of Justice clearly states that in addition to the revealed Word of Baha'u'llah the "interpretations and expositions" of 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi "constitute the binding terms of reference of the Universal House of Justice and are its bedrock foundation."

"... while the pronouncements of the Universal House of Justice are, according to our Scriptures, "susceptible of amendment or abrogation" by the Universal House of Justice itself, the interpretations of the Guardian are not. "The Guardian", we stated, "reveals what the scripture means; his interpretation is a statement of truth which cannot be varied." This fundamental and profound difference between the interpretations and expositions of the Guardian and the decisions of the Universal House of Justice should always be borne in mind."

[ My thanks to Mr. Robert B. Stauffer, Jr. of Bellevue, Washington, U.S.A. for communicating the letters reproduced above. (Ed.) ]

## II. Notes on Recent Publications

New Titles from Kalimát Press ( 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700, Los Angeles, California 90024 ).

Tasbīh va Tahlīl ( 'Glorification and Praise' ), Baha'i Publishing Trust India ( New printing 1982? ), available from Kalimát Press, Cat.No. P 32.

Gulshan-i Haqāyiq ( 'The Rose garden of Realities' ), New Ed. Kalimát Press, 1982. Cat.No. P 30. This volume contains materials relating to the Jewish and Christian prophecies applied by Haji Mirzá Mahdí Arjumand to the Baha'í movement and was borne out of the latter's debate with the Christian missionary Dr. George Washington Holmes (d.1910).

Dr. Yūnis Khān Afrūkh-tih, Khātirāt-i Nuh Salih-yi 'Akkā ( 'Memoirs of Nine Years in 'Akkā' ), Kalimát Press [ new printing ], 1982. Cat.No. P 31.



Other publications

Peter Smith, Millennialism in the Babi and Baha'i religions, in Millennialism and Charisma, Ed. Roy Wallis, pp.231-83, Belfast, The Queens University, 1982.

----- (Comp.) Additional doctoral and master's theses relating to Babi and Baha'i subjects in Bulletin of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies 9/1, pp.89-90 (1982).

D. Martin, \_\_\_\_\_ [?] Middle East Focus (Toronto)

W. van der Hoonard, \_\_\_\_\_ [?] Conflict Quarterly ( University of New Brunswick, Fall 1982 )

[ I cannot supply full details of these two articles though Peter Smith informs me that they concern the Baha'i persecutions].

Roger Cooper, The Baha'is of Iran, Minority Rights Group Report No.51, London, 1982, pp.16. Available from MRG., 36 Craven Street, London WC2N 5NG [ £1.30.p.].

Firuz Kazemzadeh, The Terror Facing the Bahais, in The New York Review of Books Vol.XXIX, No.8. May 13th 1982, pp.43-44.

Some points raised by Kazemzadeh are challenged in a letter to the Editor headed, 'The Bahais' by Patrick Clawson in NYRB Vol.XXIX, No.14., pp.66-7. The former replies to these criticisms in *ibid* p.67 ..

Mangol Bayat Philipp, Mysticism and Dissent, Socioreligious Thought in Qajar Iran New York, Syracuse University Press, 1982, pp.xi+228. \$25.00 hard-bound, ISBN 0-8156-2260-0.

Review by Robert Stauffer

" Mangol Bayat received her Ph.D in history from U.C.L.A. and contributed to Women in the Muslim World, Islam and Development, and Towards a Modern Iran. She has taught at the University of Shiraz, Iran, and at Harvard University.

Mysticism and Dissent, a work dedicated to Prof. Bayat's instructor at U.C.L.A., Prof. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, and drawing on the expertise of several noted authors including Nikki Keddie (U.C.L.A.) and Roy Mottahedeh (Princeton), provides the reader with what may be the first major work by a non-Baha'i author dealing with Shaykhi doctrine and the Babi-Baha'i movements since the era of E.G. Browne and A.L.M. Nicholas. The researches of Dr. M. Momen and Dr. D. MacEoin and used in this fairly well balanced study of the more important mystical and dissident movements of Qajar Iran. Considerable attention is given to the Babi movement and the political milieu in which it arose. Mysticism and Dissent is a welcome addition to the library of any serious student of Qajar Iran and especially of the Babi-Baha'i movements.

Gottlieb, Randie Shevin, Needs Assessment Survey to Determine the Training Requirements of International Baha'i Travelling Teachers, Boston, Boston University School of Education, 1982, pp.xvi+288. Available from University Microfilms International, #8220927.

Review by Robert Stauffer

"Needs Assessment Survey, which has won Mrs. Gottlieb a scholarship award from the Seventh Annual Conference of the Association of Baha'i Studies held in 1982, was written to determine the training needs of international Baha'i travelling teachers and to assist

in the selection of teachers with particular assignments. The survey depended on a questionnaire form sent out to 200 teachers who travelled through 81 countries during 1979-1981. Host nations were also assessed from the viewpoint of each nation's Baha'i sponsor. Gottlieb's survey presents some unexpected conclusions of considerable importance for the future travelling teacher and host nation and should be studied by National Teaching Committees' throughout the world when seeking to plan their various projects.

[Shoghi Effendi ], Arohanui, Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand, Baha'i Publishing Trust, Suva, Fiji Islands, 1982, pp. xiii+111. With a forward by Collis Featherstone, notes, index, page reference guide and 8 photographs. [Available from the American Baha'i Publishing Trust, U.S. \$.7.00 ].

Review by Robert Stauffer

"This collection of Shoghi Effendi's letters includes letters not included in Letters from the Guardian to Australia and New Zealand. The title "Arohanui" is a native Maori word which conveys the sense of "love which builds and carries forward culture or civilization." The edition is divided into 6 parts, the last part being of particular interest since it contains letters to individuals which help answer questions on alcohol, evolution, psychic practises, philosophers, scouting, and soul, mind and spirit. It is an essential addition to the library of all students of the history of the Baha'i movement in Australia and New Zealand.

Hampson, Arthur, The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith, Honolulu, University of Hawaii, Ph.D. thesis [ Geography ], 1980, pp. xx+505 — including bibliography, 46 tables and 45 figures. Available from University Microfilms International, # 8022655.

Review of Robert Stauffer

" The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith is a very detailed analysis of the numerical growth of the Baha'i Faith in terms of its size in number of adherents worldwide, per each nation and per the important historical epochs the Faith has witnessed thus far. Hampson, currently teaching in Alberta, Canada, is able to demonstrate the rapid growth and overall diffusion of the Baha'is. He attributes this growth to the universality of the Baha'i teachings and their worldwide appeal and to the successive Teaching Plans which have been greatly emphasized by the Baha'i community. The charts and figures are based on information supplied by the NSA of the Baha'is of the United States. Hampson ( a Baha'i himself ) is careful to note the backgrounds of members of the Baha'i community in various countries, in particular the United States. The Growth and Spread of the Baha'i Faith, first cited in Morrison's To Move the World, will undoubtedly come to be seen as an important aid to the Baha'i administrative institutions in their teaching work.

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I wonder if anyone can be of assistance in helping me to obtain copies of the following works--:

Mirza Na'im [Isfahani], Istidlāliyyih, apparently published in two volumes in Tabriz in c. 1911-1912, and discussing Biblical texts.

Mirza Abu al-Fadl Gulpaygani, Fasl al-Khitāb ( in MSS? ).

Wilhelm Herrigel, Die Zeichen unserer Zeit im Lichte der Bibel und der Baha'u'llah, Stuttgart. 1916.

Arthur Pillsbury Dodge, The New Holy City, A Notable Seventh [sic] Day Pilgrimage, Mutual Publishing Company, New York, [190?].

Mrs Margery Mc Cormick, Pilgrim Notes taken at Shoghi Effendi's table, Haifa. Nov. 3rd-16th. 1937. + Pilgrim Notes of Jessie and Ethel Revell (1953) and of Amy Raubitschek ( Feb. 1955.?). Stephen Lambden (Ed.).