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#### 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) and be befittingly published rather than photostatically reproduced.

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

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- e) Previously unpublished notes or documents;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

All contributions to this Bulletin should be sent to:-

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#### Editor's Note

During the past year or so it has not been possible, for a variety of reasons, to produce this Bulletin as regularly as was planned. Considerable delays may thus be experienced in receiving copies. My apologies to those contributors whose articles and notes have only now appeared: issues up till Vol.3 No 2. ( Sept 1984) are now ready for distribution.

Please note that contributions to this Bulletin should be clearly typed on A4 sized paper.

Stephen Lambden (Ed).

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The Psychology of Mysticism and its relationship to  
the Baha'i Faith

As a result of much work that has been done in the field of experimental psychology during the Twentieth Century, a great deal of important information has accumulated regarding the manner in which the mind works and the manner in which human beings perceive the world. This work has certain implications for the study of religion and, in particular, for the study of mystical states. The present paper has a two-fold purpose: firstly, to see what light the findings of this research shed upon the subjective experiences of mystics in the various religious systems of the world and also upon their various ontological systems, and, secondly, to see in what way our findings may be applied to the teachings of Bahā'u'llāh, the founder of the Bahā'ī Faith.

With respect to the ontological theories of the various religious systems, one of the greatest dichotomies in this sphere is between those religious systems that have a monist and those that have a dualist outlook and philosophy. Each side in this debate has claimed that it holds the truth and that the other side is either misinterpreting reality or holds a "lower" form of the truth.<sup>1</sup> As I hope to show, modern work on experimental psychology and neurophysiology sheds light on this question of monism, dualism and the interpretation of reality.

Psychological and Physiological Research

In this section of the paper, I will briefly describe a number of concepts which have emerged from psychological and neurophysiological research that strike me as being of particular relevance to the subject of mysticism and to ontological theories in general.

In the 1920s, Piaget brought out a number of books and papers

which, although much refined by later work, remain to this day the basis of scientific thought about the perceptual development in children.<sup>2</sup> Extrapolating back from his findings in children from the age of two onwards, Piaget considered that a new-born baby has no perception of itself as being a separate entity from its environment.<sup>3</sup> "A baby has no consciousness of self... There is a total continuity between internal and external experience."<sup>4</sup> It is only as the baby grows and begins to manipulate his environment that he learns by experimentation that the hand is part of "me" and the cot is "not-me". Gradually the child imposes schemata upon the external world and, after a while, these schemata become automatic and subconscious and do not have to be thought through each time. But even as late as the time when the child is learning to speak, there is no clear distinction between "thoughts" and "things". The word "chair" is considered to be an inherent part of a chair. It is only increasing age that brings about the complete subject-object detachment of adult thought. What this means in terms of the mechanisms of adult thought is that incoming stimuli are processed rapidly through the now-subconscious schemata that are thought to lie in the subcortical zones of the brain and are presented to the cortical areas of conscious thought already analysed and integrated into the meaning patterns built up during childhood. Although much more information can be processed in this adult way, each individual unit of stimulus must necessarily have less impact which is another way of saying that childhood sensory experiences are more vivid. To give an example, if an adult picks up a book to look at its title, the visual information regarding the size, shape and colour of his own hand will be suppressed and will barely register in conscious thought as it will be automatically processed in the subcortical zones and filtered out. Even the shape and colour of the book may not have any great impact on conscious thought as the adult concentrates attention on the title of the book. If a book is put into



At the extreme end of the two pathways lies mystical ecstasy and deep trance respectively. However, in fact, these two states are not very far from each other and it is common to find a person in a high state of hyperarousal going directly into a state of trance without retracing his steps along the ergotropic pathway. This frequently-observed phenomenon is called abreaction in some studies and the rebound phenomenon in others. Movement in the opposite direction is also to be found in that a state of trance is frequently reported to be followed by a state of ecstasy. This link between the ergotropic and trophotropic pathways is not just confined to their endpoints. Experimental data indicates that each level of hyperarousal has an equivalent level of hypoarousal and that there is a close link between these two states. Thus, for example, it was found that a set of words memorised at one level of hyperarousal is better remembered at either the same level of hyperarousal or the equivalent level of hypoarousal but less well-remembered at other levels of either hyper- or hypo-arousal.<sup>8</sup>

What has been found experimentally is that as a person is taken from the arousal level of daily activity along either pathway towards the extremes of hyper- and hypo-arousal, a number of subjective and objective phenomena are consistently reproduced. These apply whether the mechanism for proceeding along these pathways occurs naturally, pathologically or is artificially induced. Firstly, the sensory-to-motor ratio (S/M)<sup>9</sup> which is very low at the level of routine activity rises. What this means is that in our routine activities, we maintain a high level of motor activity which continuously works to verify the perceptions of our sensory input. As we travel along the two pathways, our ability to perform voluntary motor activity diminishes and so we become increasingly unable to verify sensations. Man may be thought of as creating experience through his perceived interpretation (i.e. at the cortical level) of his sub-cortical activity. At the level of daily routine, man is to a large extent free to interpret his sub-cortical

activity in a large number of ways. With increasing levels of either hyper- or hypo-arousal, however, the EEG shows decreasing variability and this is reflected subjectively in a decreasing independence of perception from sub-cortical activity. Thus with increasing S/M ratios we are left with 'an intensification of inner sensations, accompanied by a loss in the ability to verify them through voluntary activity.'<sup>10</sup> The overall effect of this is a marked diminution in our interpretative repertoire.

One of the effects of the decreased independence of cortical interpretation from sub-cortical control is that whereas, at the level of daily routine, there is a sharp subject-object definition and the individual is able to view himself and his actions in an objective manner, as we travel along these two pathways, we begin to lose this distinction. The boundary between observer and observed becomes increasingly blurred. Other boundaries also break down. The link with the chronological time of the physical world is broken and time can either appear to speed up or slow down depending on certain personality parameters.<sup>11</sup> A person who is in a high state of hyper- or hypo-arousal becomes increasingly impervious to external stimuli. In the hypoaroused state, the tendency is for all outside stimuli to be increasingly blocked. While the alpha wave EEG rhythm of an ordinary individual in deep relaxation is easily interrupted by external stimuli such as auditory clicks or flashing lights, a Yoga master in deep meditation shows no interruption in his EEG pattern despite flashing lights, sounding gongs, or the touch of a hot test-tube.<sup>12</sup>

The third area of psychological research that is of interest in understanding mystical states is the phenomenon of state-bound knowledge and meaning. This has already been briefly touched on when it was stated that a series of numbers learned at one level of consciousness is best remembered at the same level rather than at other levels. However, it is not just memory that is affected by varying levels of arousal. We have

already seen that as there is progress towards the extremes of hypo- and hyper-arousal, subject-object distinction becomes blurred. Most of our rational processes such as Aristotelian logic depend upon discounting any interaction between observer and observed and are therefore only applicable at the level of arousal of daily routine. Our system of logic and even the meaning of words begin to break down once we leave this level. Thus, as Fischer has stated; 'Meaning is "meaningful" only at that level of arousal at which it is experienced,' and so 'every experience has its state-bound meaning.'<sup>13</sup> Thus what is experienced in states of hyper- or hypo-arousal is, firstly, not so clearly remembered once the individual returns to normal levels of arousal and, secondly, even what is remembered can only be poorly expressed in terms of a vocabulary that is firmly bound to the normal level of arousal. In expressing these experiences, recourse can only be made to metaphor, symbols, art, poetry, or music.

Almost everyone has had the experience that when something particularly arousing (such as an unpleasant accident or an injury) occurs, for a long time afterwards, seeing or experiencing something that is a symbol of that episode leads to a sudden flashback raising one to a high level of arousal. After an accident at a crossroads with a red car, for example, for a long time afterwards, a driver will experience unpleasant symptoms of arousal whenever he comes to a similar crossroads or if he sees a red car similar to the one with which he had an accident. This then is the role of a symbol in religious and mystical experience. The symbol is an aspect of an experience at another level of arousal which when encountered during the course of daily routine is able to transport the individual immediately to that level of arousal in which he can again live that experience.

The fourth and last piece of experimental evidence that I consider illuminating for a consideration of mystical states is the neurophysiological results of split-brain experiments. Briefly, it has been found that if the brain is split (either due to an accident or for therapeutic reasons) into a left and right half, one half (usually the left) will be found to be the

active-verbal half of the brain that directs intellectual, analytical activity and the other half is receptive, concerned with spatial and other non-verbal intuitive, gestalt experiences.<sup>14</sup> The active-verbal half of the brain is usually referred to as the dominant hemisphere.

#### Mystical Systems

Before proceeding with an explanation of how these findings from psychological and neurophysiological research help to explain some of the features of the mystical experience, it is perhaps timely to interpose one word of explanation. Some of those who themselves practise the mystic path may feel incensed and dubious about the fact that the results of research often obtained using drugs to achieve certain levels of arousal or resulting from highly-abnormal situations such as the split-brain or the schizophrenic patient should be applied to the mystical experience. But it is necessary to realize that all that is being asserted is that these various mechanisms (mysticism itself, drugs and pathological states) produce certain states in man. These states are consistently reproducible and have a number of common features. Therefore it is reasonable to regard these common features as being specific to the state itself rather than to the mechanism producing the state. And so it should be emphasised that science can only give clues as to the state of a person undergoing a mystical experience and to the manner in which he may interpret that experience. It can give no value judgement on the "truth" of the experience. Although it may have something to say about why a particular experience is interpreted in one system in one way rather than another, it has nothing to say about whether one system is closer to the "truth" than another.

The various religious systems of the world can be broken down into two major groups: the Western religions (the Judæo-Christian-Muslim

traditions) that emphasize a dualistic universe with a God and each individual having an eternal soul, and the Eastern religions (the Hindu-Buddhist traditions) that look to a monist universe in which the self is considered to have either no reality <sup>or</sup> (individual identity) or is destined to merge completely into and Absolute Reality (or Void). This fundamental difference colours all other aspects of the teachings of these religions: their concept of evil, their idea of man's ultimate goal, etc.

It can readily be seen that the infantile state as described by Piaget may be considered to be a state of monism. For the infant there is no distinction between him and the world around him. This state appears to be similar to that of the extreme mystical experience. It is of particular interest to note that of the three main characteristics of the universe of the infant as described by Piaget: "first, the assimilation of the world to the self; second, the formation of emotional schemas; third, the special orientation of thought by emotional association and not by logical systematization,"<sup>15</sup> the first and third apply equally to the extreme mystic state.

The adult, however, operating at the level of arousal of routine activity is very much a dualist. There is no lack of clarity in the mind about the boundary between "me" and "not-me". Subject-object definition is very clear cut. And yet the work of Fischer and others has shown that if the adult experiences a level of arousal different to that of daily routine, the subject-object definition begins to break down until, at the extremes of hyper- or hypo-arousal, the individual again experiences monism. Thus each individual is capable of experiencing reality in both a monist or dualist manner.

It should not surprise us, therefore, that in those religious traditions where deep meditation entering trance states is encouraged (i.e. the Eastern religions), the usual world-view is a monist one, while in the Western religions, where there has been little encouragement of such activities,

the dualist view prevails. Nor should it surprise us, given the universal availability of both monist and dualist experiences, that even within each religious tradition, there are individuals and groups who subscribe to the views of the opposite tradition. Thus, within the dualist camp of Western religion, it is possible to find individuals such as Master Eckhart and groups such as some Sufis who subscribe to a monist view of the universe (and of course these are also the people who are most 'engaged' in 'mysticism'). And within the monist Eastern tradition, there is a substantial body of Hindus, the bhakti tradition, and some Buddhists, the Personalists, who subscribe to a dualist view of the universe.

Another manner in which these research findings help us to understand the differences between the experiences of Eastern and Western religion is in the type of mystic states experienced. We have seen from split-brain studies that each half of the brain appears to act differently. One side is active-verbal and the other perceptive-intuitive. Neurophysiologists have become used to calling the active-verbal side of the brain the dominant hemisphere but I suspect that this name is a culturally-based phenomenon. Most of the research in hemispheric function has been done in the West where action and verbalisation are more highly prized and so have become 'dominant'. This may well accord with the fact that most mystical states achieved in Western religions are of the hyper-arousal mystical ecstasy type - whether among Christian mystics like St Theresa or among Sufis. In Eastern traditions, however, mystical experience is usually gained through hypo-arousal techniques such as meditation culminating in deep trance. This corresponds with the fact that receptivity and intuition are more highly prized in the East and that if we were to repeat the hemispheric experiments in the East, we may well find that that/<sup>brain</sup> hemisphere (i.e. the receptive-intuitive, usually the right hemisphere) would be 'dominant'. Thus the type of mystic state experienced may well be a cultural phenomenon linked to hemispheric dominance.

Many of the features of mystical states can be described in terms of

this research. We have described how, in a mystic state, there is integration of cortical and sub-cortical activity so that there is, in effect, a loss of use of those automatic schemata whereby incoming stimuli are organised, interpreted and selected. Arthur Deikman has called this deautomatization and has shown how it explains several features of the mystical experience.<sup>16</sup>

Firstly, there is the feeling of realness associated with mystical experience. Mystics frequently assert that they need no evidence for the reality of their experience because of the intense 'feeling of reality' experienced during the state. But, in fact, this intense 'feeling of reality' has no connection with an objective judgement of reality. It may, for example, be experienced in dreams while objective reality may on occasion be deprived of the 'feeling of reality' as in the phenomenon of depersonalisation or derealisation. During the early stages of individual development, the 'feeling of reality' becomes fused with the objects of the outside world. In mystical states, however, the process of deautomatization breaks this link and the 'feeling of reality' can become attached to the feelings and ideas that enter awareness during this state. The stimuli and images of the inner world become thus endowed with the 'feeling of reality'. In addition, because in the state of hyper- or hypo-arousal, deautomatization means that stimuli are no longer systematised and selected before being presented to conscious thought, all stimuli, therefore, present themselves equally strongly to the consciousness which either eliminates them all or is only able to focus on one unselectively. That one stimulus which is picked at random, because it has had none of its features attenuated by prior sub-cortical processing, appears with the vividness that we have previously described for childhood. Thus, for example, it is commonly reported during LSD 'trips' that some usually-trivial sensory detail, such as a colour, is experienced with an intense vividness.

Secondly, there is the phenomenon of unusual perceptions: perceptions of infinite energy, dazzling light, etc. In mystical states where controlled

analytical thought is absent, the subject's attitude is one of receptivity to stimuli and there is heightened attention to sensory pathways (raised S/M ratio), it can be expected that psychic phenomena (e.g. conflict, repression, etc.) will be perceived by being translated via the relatively unstructured sensations of light, colour, movement, etc.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, we should not be surprised that the mystic commonly describes the world that he enters as being outside the bounds of reason and not attainable by the intellect. St Theresa, for example, says of the mystic state: 'As to memory, the soul, I think, has none then, nor any power of thinking, nor are the senses awake, but rather lost.'<sup>18</sup> This is to be expected because in moving along the two pathways towards the extremes of mystical experience, we are moving away from the realm of Aristotelian logic and intellectual analysis.

Lastly, the consistent reports of mystics of the ineffability of their experience and of the knowledge and understanding gained through it, may indeed be an expression of the state-bound nature of knowledge and meaning. Knowledge and understanding gained at the extremes of hyper- and hypo-arousal only have meaning in those states and cannot be communicated once the mystic has returned to the level of daily routine.

Although in the above description of the monist viewpoint, we have linked this with infantile patterns of thought, while the dualist viewpoint has been linked with adult patterns, it is very important not to make this point the basis of a value judgement. It would be incorrect to think of the monist view as more 'primitive' and therefore the dualist position as better in some way. As we have seen, both monist and dualist viewpoints co-exist in the adult. Just because the dualist mode is the usual one in everyday life, this does not mean that the monist mode is of less importance. Indeed, if we accept the views of most of the great theoretical psychologists from Freud onwards, it is the monist 'self' hidden in the subconscious that is the major motivating force in human life. Moreover, although superficially it may appear that man's greatest advances have come from the world of science where dualist modes of logical thought predominate, in fact, the



greatest advances in science come from a combination of rational thought from the dualist sphere and intuitive insight emerging from the subconscious monist 'self'.

#### A Description of 'Inner Space'

Fischer has suggested that what we call the subconscious is merely the result of state-bound knowledge and that the subconscious is sub-conscious purely because the memories and experiences contained in it are associated with other levels of arousal than those of daily routine.<sup>19</sup> But even from Fischer's own writings, it is clear that we must go beyond this description. For, as William Hocking has said: 'What we call subconsciousness, far from being a sort of mental sub-basement, is at the center of selfhood, and the invidious term "subconsciousness" is an inept recognition of the fact that the primary springs of selfhood are not habitually at the focus of its outgoing interests.'<sup>20</sup> Deep within the subconscious, below the various levels of state-bound knowledge - perhaps we should even say beyond the subconscious (for reasons that will be stated presently) - lies the 'self'.

We have seen that in moving along the ergotropic or trophotropic pathways towards the extremes of mystical experience, man is, in a sense, making a journey into inner space. He is exploring that vast part of his being that functions below the level of normal consciousness. In taking this journey, he is travelling into a world where the laws of Aristotelian logic and intellectual analysis which applied in his normal world of waking consciousness no longer apply -- indeed, where these become an encumbrance. In this world, the external world has no importance nor any relevance, he either becomes oblivious to it (on the trophotropic pathway) or feels that it is merging with him (on the ergotropic pathway).

At the extreme end of the journey into inner space is the centre of selfhood. Here the mystic has arrived at the deepest point of inner space which is the point from which his "self" looks out on his world of experiences and memories. At this point, the observer has become fused with the observed. But if man travels that far, he is caught in a situation where precisely because observer and observed have become fused, he is no longer able to describe his experience (or, to put it more accurately if somewhat more cryptically, at this point, he is no longer able to experience his experience - and this is why I have earlier suggested calling this point beyond the subconscious). His only recourse is to escape back along the pathway that he came and at the level of creativity (see diagram) to try and describe what he experienced. But we must question the usefulness of this. For, from what we already know of the state-bound nature of knowledge and meaning, all descriptions of this sort must be regarded as provisional and of dubious reliability. Given the overwhelming difficulties involved, we must suspect that all such descriptions are going to be influenced by and patterned upon the individual's religious and cultural background.

#### Mysticism and the Bahā'ī Faith

Having completed our survey of the light that research sheds upon mystical states, it remains to view the writings of the Bahā'ī Faith in relation to these findings. The first point that is noticeable is that although Bahā'u'Īlāh does not forbid his followers from trying to achieve extreme mystical states, he does not encourage it either. His writings contain exhortations to his followers to meditate, but there is nothing that can be seen as a system for achieving extreme mystical states nor is one of the existing methods recommended. Indeed, the only reference that seems to indicate some sort of acceptance of the Sufi technique of dhikr

is when Bahā'u'llāh is reported by 'Abdu'l-Bahā to have set aside one day in the year in honour of one of his companions, Darvīsh Sidq-'Alī.<sup>21</sup> On this day, those who wish to pursue such mystical activities are enjoined to gather and perform dhikr rituals. But there is no encouragement for the generality of Bahā'īs to do this and indeed one could even interpret the setting aside of one day a year for this activity as being almost a restriction on performing dhikr rituals at other times. This is not, however, explicitly stated.

However, Bahā'u'llāh evidently does not wish his followers to remain at the arousal level of daily routine either. His writings clearly imply that man should not regard the physical world as his real home. Bahā'u'llāh has, in his writings, produced an image, a map, of the spiritual world and has encouraged his followers to transcend their ordinary lives of routine activity and live in this spiritual world. This, he states, is man's real home. 'Abdu'l-Bahā has even referred to the physical world as a 'shadow'<sup>22</sup> and a 'mirage'.<sup>23</sup>

Thus Bahā'u'llāh appears to want his followers to occupy a middle position between the two extremes of the level of daily routine and the ecstasy/trance states of mysticism. This is the position at which man is in contact with both extremes and is able to utilise both viewpoints. It is the position of man's maximum creativity in all fields: science, art, philosophy and religious thought. In this position, man is able to obtain intuitive insight from the subconscious 'self' without being trapped in the extreme of the monist mystical state where the descriptive and interpretative repertoire becomes severely restricted and at the same time he is able to use dualist rational thought both more fully to describe and to work out the consequences of his intuition without being locked into the sterile logical progression of the extreme dualist position.<sup>24</sup>

We can see now why Bahā'u'llāh regards monism as being a stage that the mystic wayfarer leaves behind: 'the wayfarer leaveth behind him the stages of the "oneness of Being and Manifestation" and reacheth a oneness that is sanctified above these two stations.'<sup>25</sup>

The reality of man appears to be best expressed by recognising him as a bi-polar being. At one pole buried deep in the subconscious is the monist 'self' which is the observer, the knower. At the other pole is the rational, dualist 'I' which, with respect to the 'self', is the observed, the known. Man's ideal place is in maintaining an intermediate position between these two poles, avoiding the disadvantages of each and being able to utilise the advantages of both.

### Conclusions

And so the answer to the debate between the monist and the dualist positions appears to be that they are both correct. In physics, when some experimental results seemed to indicate that light was particulate in nature and some seemed to indicate that it was wave energy, Neils Bohr and others conceived the idea of Complementarity to resolve the issue, saying, in effect, that both are correct and it depends on the observer and the methods he uses to observe. A similar solution would appear to apply for the dualist and monist positions. Both viewpoints are correct and both are 'real' and depend only on the position of the viewer. Neither has exclusive access to the truth.

We have seen that Bahā'u'llāh regards man as being best situated at a level midway between the monist and dualist extremes. This, as we have indicated, is the position of maximum creativity and maximum ability to adapt either extreme to his use. In a sense, it can be said that this psychological position parallels man's position in the process of physical evolution. Man is the apex of physical evolution, not because he has gone furthest in specialising himself to fit a certain environment - the animals that do that enter what may be considered evolutionary blind alleys and when the environment changes, they cannot adapt and become extinct. Man's success lies in the fact that he has undergone very little

specialisation and so can adapt to all sorts of environments and even to major environmental changes. In the same way, those who spend all their time at the extreme of the monist pathway in trances and those who live their lives strictly by codes of rationalism and positivism at the dualist extreme are down the equivalent of evolutionary blind alleys. Those who maintain the middle position are best situated for creativity, fulfilment and advancement.

M. Momen  
November, 1983

#### Notes

- 1) See for example, Ninian Smart, A Dialogue of Religions (London, 1960), passim where these issues are discussed, see especially pp. 61-74.
- 2) The best compilation of Piaget's work is to be found in The Essential Piaget (ed. Howard Gruber and J. J. Voneche), London, 1977.
- 3) For the development of this aspect of Piaget's thought, see "The First Year of the Life of the Child" in The Essential Piaget, pp. 198-214 (first published in French in Brit. Jour. Psych. Vol. 18 (1927-8): 97-120).
- 4) Piaget, "First Year", p.205.
- 5) Roland Fischer, "A Cartography of Ecstatic and Meditative States" pp. 286-305 in Understanding Mysticism, (ed. Richard Woods), London, 1980/(originally published in Science, Vol. 174,(1971): 897-904)
- 6) Fischer, "Cartography", p.288-91
- 7) Ibid., p. 287
- 8) Roland Fischer, "State-bound Knowledge: 'I can't remember what I said last night but it must have been good'", in Understanding Mysticism, p.309, quoting work by Herbert Weingartner at the National Institute of Mental Health at Bethesda. Police and Intelligence Agencies in the U.S.A. and Israel have used this research successfully by bringing witnesses to a terrifying episode (i.e. one that causes hyperarousal) into an equivalent state of hypoarousal using drugs. In this state, the witnesses are able to remember the episode more accurately.
- 9) For methods of measuring this see R. Fischer et al, Dis. Nerv. Sys. Vol. 3 (1970): 91ff.
- 10) Fischer, "Cartography", p. 294.
- 11) See R. Fischer, Ann. N.Y. Acad. Sci. Vol. 96 (1962): 44ff.
- 12) B. Anand et al, Electroencephalogr. Clin. Neurophysiol. Vol. 13 (1961):452f
- 13) Fischer, "Cartography", p. 298.
- 14) The classical work on the Split-brain was done by Sperry and his associates; see R.W. Sperry, "Cerebral Organisation and Behaviour," Science Vol. 133. (1961) : 1749-1757; M. Gazzaniga et al, "Some functional effects of sectioning the cerebral commissures in man," Proc. Nat. Acad. Sci Vol. 48 (1962): 1765-9. A useful summary can be found in Robert Ornstein, "The two sides of the brain" in Understanding Mysticism, pp. 270-285.
- 15) Piaget, "First Year", p. 202.
- 16) Arthur Deikman "Deautomatization and the Mystic Experience" in Understanding Mysticism, pp. 240-260 (first published in Psychiatry, Vol. 29 (1966): 324-38).
- 17) Deikman, "Deautomatization", p. 253-4.
- 18) Works of St. Theresa (tr. E. Allison Peers, New York, 1946), Vol. 1, p. 328; quoted in Louis Dupre, "The mystical experience of the self and its philosophical significance," in Understanding Mysticism, p.456.
- 19) Fischer, "Cartography", p. 300 and/"State-bound knowledge", p. 310.
- 20) William E. Hocking, The meaning of Immortality in Human Experience, New York, 1957, p. 50.
- 21) 'Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful (tr. Marzieh Gail), Wilmette, Ill., 1971, p. 38.
- 22) 'Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá (tr. Marzieh et, al), Haifa,1978, p.178
- 23) Bahá'í World Faith, Wilmette, Ill., p. 386.
- 24) Fischer, "Cartography", p.296.
- 25) Bahá'u'lláh, The Seven Valleys and the Four Valleys (tr. Marzieh Gail), Wilmette, Ill., p. 39.

SOME NOTES ON FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES: WESTERN SCHOLARSHIP  
AND THE RELIGION OF THE BĀB.

R. Mehrabkhani.

In recent years scholarly papers have appeared in Western countries on the Bahā'ī religion the like of which only very rarely emerge in the East. Bahā'ī writers in Iran have never been able to produce works informed by critical analysis; not only because most of them were not used to this kind of methodology but also in view of the fact that enemies of their newly-born Faith were ever ready to attack them and latch onto any word or expression that might further their hostile aims. Iranian Bahā'ī literature is thus a kind of apology, a defence of the Faith.

Scholars in western countries, on the other hand, have also, in certain cases failed to grasp important fundamentals. Some among them have failed to penetrate the religious milieu within which the Bābī-Bahā'ī Cause emerged; they have neither gained an adequate notion of what religion is nor befittingly set, for example, the Bābī Faith within in 19th century Iranian religious environment. Bābī history and doctrine are spoken about in largely socio-political terms as if the Bābī Faith were a 'political movement'. This undoubtedly leads to wrong judgements.

In this paper the present writer will attempt to discuss certain fundamental principles which, it is hoped, will help Western scholars to gain a more adequate grasp of the religion of the Bāb. A narrowly historical and non-theological approach to religion is severely limited. The divine plan and purpose behind historical events must be appreciated. The eminent Bahā'ī scholar Mīrzā Abū'l-Faḍl Gulpaygānī has observed that scholars have made great mistakes in taking a narrowly historical approach to the revealed Books—outside of an understanding of them in the light of the Divine Purpose.<sup>1</sup> More recently H.M. Balyuzi has written as follows about the inadequacy of the western understanding of the Arabian Prophet: "This inadequacy among western authors may be traced to a fundamental lack of the appreciation of the full claims and the Mission of the Prophet. However greatly impressed by the achievements, character and even doctrines, their judgement of Muhammad Himself and their evaluation of his Faith cannot be other than suspect when their fundamental conviction was that he was a deluded imposter."<sup>2</sup>

Those who attempt to study the history of a religion in purely historical terms and in disregard of the religious teachings of its Founder Messenger may discover contradictions. It should be borne in mind however, that the exigencies of the Divine Wisdom not only necessitate a progressive revelation of religious truth in terms of the succession of religions but also within the span of a single religion. Like a loving father God gradually and in a variety of ways guides his creatures.

It is unfortunate that western scholars of the early years of the Bābī-Bahā'ī religion have, in some cases, failed to realise the progressive or gradual unfoldment of the religious message conveyed and have thereby misrepresented its historical evolution.

I. THE CLAIMS OF THE BĀB

The study of the claims of the Bāb should be made in the context of God's plan for mankind through his Messengers as expressed in Bābī scripture.

In the Bāb's writings it is explained that the Founders of all religions, though they appeared in different places and at different times, have all been manifestations of the same Divine Reality; "We discriminate against none of His apostles".<sup>3</sup> The "Days" or dispensations of these great Founder Prophets have though, in the light of varying human capacities and the levels of the greatness of the Message, never been the same; "We have exalted some above others".<sup>4</sup> In the revealed Books mention is made of a future "Day of Days" or "Day of God". The end of the cycle of prophethood is announced in the Qur'ān in the light of the world being at the threshold of the "Day of God". The Prophet Muhammad was the "Seal of the Prophets"<sup>5</sup>. His religious dispensation will be followed by the arrival of the "Day of God" which is the "Day" when humanity will behold their God walking among them on earth.

In many of his writings the Bāb declared that the expected "Day of God" had arrived and that the promised One of all ages had appeared. His claims should be viewed in this light. Consider the following excerpts from his writings:

"When God sent forth His Prophet Muhammad, on that Day the termination of the prophetic cycle was foreordained in the knowledge of God. Yea, that promise hath indeed come true and the decree of God hath been accomplished as He hath ordained. Assuredly we are today living in the Days of God. These are the glorious days on the like of which the sun hath never risen in the past. These are the days which the people of bygone times eagerly expected. What then hath befallen

you that ye are fast asleep? These are the days wherein God hath caused the Day-Star of Truth to shine resplendent. What hath then caused you to keep your silence?.."<sup>6</sup>

"Fear ye God and breathe not a word concerning His most Great Remembrance other than what hath been ordained by God, inasmuch as We have established a separate covenant regarding Him with every Prophet and his followers. Indeed, We have not sent any Messenger without this binding covenant and We do not, of a truth, pass judgement upon anything except after the covenant of Him Who is the Supreme Gate hath been established.."<sup>7</sup>

These passages illustrate the real claims made by the Bāb. Such claims were in fact made by him at the very outset of his mission. He did however, gradually and in the light of the capacities of his hearers, intimate his ultimate claims. As we shall see he early on referred to himself as "the Gate" ( bāb ) giving the impression that he was an intermediary between the hidden Imām and the believers. He represented his words as being the words of the hidden Imām and drew on Shī'ī concepts surrounding the advent of the promised Qā'im and his occultation.

In order to appreciate the gradual nature of his Bāb's intimation of his ultimate claims one has to take into account the contemporary Muslim attitudes surrounding:-

#### A) The claim to Divinity

The idea of calling a prophet "God"—not problematic for Christians—was out of the question for Muslim theologians. In Islām a prophet is a man chosen by God to be his Messenger; throughout his life he remains a man. Those verses in the Qur'ān that mention the "meeting" ( liqā' ) with God on the "Day of Resurrection"<sup>8</sup> were not taken literally. Commentators interpreted them in terms of "reward and punishment" and the "power of God" and the like in connection with the "Day of Resurrection". Though some Muslim mystics, that by virtue of their "dying to self" and "living in God" they could legitimately say "I am the Truth" they were condemned as heretics. Husayn ibn-i Mansūr Hallāj was brutally tortured and condemned to death for such a claim.<sup>10</sup>

#### B) The claim to Divine Revelation

Muslims were very sensitive to any claim to be capable of revealing verses ( nuzūl-i āyāt ); no one could claim that verses had been revealed to him subsequent to the mission of the Prophet of Islām. They belie-

believed

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that āyāt (= verses) came only to the Prophet Muhammad through the Angel Gabriel. The Prophet did not himself reveal verses but received them from God via Gabriel often having to wait months or even years before receiving them.

Apart from the Qur'ān there is of course the question of the hadīth qudsī or "holy tradition"—also known as the "Lordly" and "Divine" tradition ( hadīth-i rabbanī / hadīth-i illāhī ). It is commonly believed that these are records of revelations that came upon the Prophet Muhammad through Gabriel while he was asleep—in his dreams—or in a visionary state. They are not to be compared to Qur'ānic revelation or the āyāt.

None of the Shī'ī Imāms ever claimed that his words were āyāt, divinely revealed verses. Not even the eloquent and much-praised words of Imām <sup>C</sup>Alī contained in the Nahj al-Balāgha are considered to be the "Word of God"—they are greater than the utterances of men but inferior to the "Word of God".

The Muslim notion of Divine Revelation is such that the āyāt are considered to be the proof of the prophethood of Muhammad. This is indicated in the Qur'ān itself: "If men and jinn (the people of this world and the next) combined to write the like of this Qur'ān, they surely would fail to compose like it, though they helped one another."<sup>11</sup>

#### C) The claim to abrogate Qur'ānic Law.

Muslims are unanimously agreed that the laws of the Qur'ān will never be changed or abrogated. All the laws of the Qur'ān will ever endure until the end of the world. The expected Qā'im or Mahdī will rule according to the laws and precepts of the Qur'ān. The advent of Jesus in the last days, intimated in the Qur'ān,<sup>12</sup> is such that this will not lead to the alteration or abolition of Qur'ānic law. The Messiah at his second-coming will live according to Islāmic law.

The miserable fate that befell Mullā Saḍīq-i Khurāsānī when he, in line with an injunction of the Bāb, added a clause to the accepted adhān formula illustrates how sensitive Muslims were to the least deviation from legal norms. Although Mullā Saḍīq was an outstanding muṭahhid his act created such an uproar that according to Nabīl, "the whole city [Shīrāz] had been aroused, and public order was, as a result,

seriously threatened".<sup>13</sup> His beard was burnt, his nose pierced, and through this incision a cord was passed by means of which he was paraded through the streets.

In the light of the foregoing it is not at all suprising that that Bāb gradually intimated his ultimate claims and purposes. The present writer is amazed that western scholars have sometimes failed to realise this especially inasmuch as the same pattern may be seen in the lives of other great Prophets.

It is generally accepted today that Christianity was, from the beginning, intended to be a universal religion applicable to all mankind; and not a localised religion exclusively for the Jews. It should not be noted however, that Jesus did not teach this at the outset of his mission. He said, "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel"<sup>14</sup>. When he sent his disciples out to teach he instructed them saying, "Go not into the way of the Gentiles and into any city of the Samaritans enter not."<sup>15</sup> Particularly striking is the case of the woman of Canaan who asked Jesus' help for her daughter; "He answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheeep of the house of Israel...It is not meet to take the children's bread and cast it to the dogs."<sup>16</sup> With respect to the Jewish law Christ is recorded as having said:- "It is easier for heaven and earth to pass away, than for one dot of the law to become void";<sup>17</sup> "Think not that I am come to abolish the law and the prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them"<sup>18</sup>. These words may be contrasted with the developed Christian conviction that the Jewish law is no longer applicable to Christians.

The prophet Muhammad's gradual introduction of Islāmic law is also worthy of detailed study. He educated his contemporaries according to their evolving capacity. Initially for example, he was lenient with respect to idolatry as the following verse indicates: "Say: Unbelievers, I do not worship what you worship nor do you serve what I worship..You have your own religion and I have mine."<sup>19</sup> At one point during his mission he was not strongly condemnatory of drinking; "They ask you about drinking and gambling. Say: there is great harm in both, although they have some benefit for men; but their harm is far greater than their benefit."<sup>20</sup> Then, seeing that some believers came to the congregational prayer completely drunk, the following verse was revealed: "Believers,

do not approach your prayers when you are drunk, but wait until you can grasp the meaning of your words."<sup>21</sup> Subsequently the following verse was revealed, "Believers, Wine and games of chance, idols and divining arrows, are abominations devised by Satan. Avoid them so that you may prosper."<sup>22</sup>

It was in the light of the limited capacity of his contemporaries that the Bāb gradually introduced his claims. In his Dalā'il-i Sab'a he writes:

"Consider the manifold favours vouchsafed by the Promised One, and the effusions of His bounty which have pervaded the concourse of the followers of Islam to enable them to attain unto salvation. Indeed, observe how He Who representeth the origin of creation, He Who is the exponent of the verse, 'I, in very truth, am God', identified himself as the Gate [ Bāb ] for the advent of the promised Qā'im, a descendant of Muhammad, and in His first Book enjoined the observance of the laws of the Qur'an, so that the people might not be seized with perturbation by reason of a new Book and a new Revelation and might regard His Faith as similar to their own, perchance they would not turn away from the Truth and ignore the thing for which they had been called into being."<sup>23</sup>

At this point it should be kept in mind that the gradual education the Bāb gave his followers was not in a way, as some scholars have thought, that he initially presented Himself as a Shaykhī leader or pretended only to be the "Gate" of the Hidden Imām. The fact is that at the same time that He was trying to say things through which his contemporaries "might regard His Faith as similar to their own" he claimed to reveal āyāt after the manner of the Prophet Muhammad. He, furthermore, claimed Divinity and that the promised "Day of God" had arrived. Consider the following verses from the early Qayyūm al-Asmā':

#### On the revelation of Āyāt;

"Verily We made the revelation of verses (āyāt) to be the testimony of Our Message unto you. Can you produce a single letter to match these verses? Bring forth, then, your proofs, if ye be of those who can discern the one true God. I solemnly affirm before God, should all men and spirits combine to compose the like of one chapter of this Book, they would assuredly fail, even though they were to assist one another."<sup>24</sup>

"We have, of a truth, sent down this divinely-inspired Book unto Our servant..."<sup>25</sup>

" Verily such as ridicule the wonderful, divine Verses revealed through His Remembrance, are but making themselves the objects of ridicule.." 26.

#### On the claim to Divinity and the "Day of God"

"The Lord hath, in truth, inspired Me: Verily, verily, I am God, He besides Whom there is none other God, and I am indeed the Ancient of Days.." 27.

"O My servants! This is God's appointed Day which the merciful Lord hath promised you in his Book.." 28.

"Indeed We conversed with Moses by the leave of God from the midst of the Burning Bush in the Sinai and revealed an infinitesimal glimmer of Thy Light upon the Mystic Mount and its dwellers, whereupon the Mount shook to its foundations and was crushed to dust.." 29.

#### The abrogation of Islamic Law

This third aspect of the Bāb's claims, destined to shake the foundations of Islām, was only fully accomplished during the later years of the Bāb's ministry when the Persian Bayān was revealed. There are however, in the Bāb's earlier writings, passages in which new precepts are introduced. On his return from pilgrimage for example, the Bāb, anticipating later pronouncements, introduced seven new legalistic precepts in his newly composed Khasā'il-i Sab'a.<sup>30</sup> They, as far as Muslims were concerned, were unacceptable innovations (bid'at) marking their author out as a heretic. The previously mentioned addition to the adhān formula, in fact, "I bear witness that He whose name is 'Alī before Muhammad [=the Bāb] is the servant of the Bāqīyyatallāh [=the Hidden Imām]" , was particularly unacceptable. Nabī's account of Mullā Sādiq's voicing this new Bābī adhān formula set down in the Khasā'il-i Sab'a bears eloquent testimony to extent to which Muslims regarded it as heretical. 31.

At the beginning of his prophetic mission the Bāb expressed 'triple claims' about which Muslims were extra sensitive; that is, 1) He claimed Divinity and spoke of the arrival of the Day of God; 2) He claimed the revelation of verses ( nuzūl-i āyāt ) and 3) He began to undermine the stronghold of Islāmīc Law—unimaginable to Muslims. At the same time He made less exalted claims that would satisfy those with limited capacity

\* In the traditional SHI'Ī call to prayer the reality of the Divine Oneness (tawhīd), Prophethood (risalat) and Guardianship (wilāyat) are affirmed. No orthodox Muslim ever considered adding anything new to the call to prayer let alone the name of one claiming special authority.

and hold back the clamour of the Ḥulamā'. He acted as a wise and loving spiritual physician; first administering small sugar-coated doses of medicine. Despite this there were divines who could not tolerate the least innovation or who reacted to the Bāb's great claims. Many denounced him including Haji Muḥammad Karīm Khān Kirmānī who cried out in desperation, "Our God is not his God, our Prophet is not his Prophet, and our Imām is not his Imām." 32.

To sum up : from the very beginning of his mission the Bāb conceived the supreme revelation promised in all previous religions. He spoke in accordance with the capacity of the people of his day though it would be incorrect to maintain that he merely wanted to claim leadership of the Shaykhī school—in rivalry with Karīm Khān Kirmānī and such other claimants to leadership after Siyyid's Kāzīm Raḥī's passing as Mullā Muḥammad-i Māmaqānī. 33.

#### THE CONCEPT OF HOLY WAR IN THE BABI DISPENSATION.

The notion of war against unbelievers and the imposition of religion by the sword in the Bābī dispensation is one of the issues that has given rise to speculative statements. 34.

Before turning directly to this question and in the light of the previously mentioned importance of a comparative approach to the study of religion—the plan of God mirrored in all religions—reference may be made to the example of Jesus who, according to certain New Testament texts, was not exactly the gentle pacifist he is popularly imagined to be.

In his book The Death of Christ Joel Carmichael has, in recent times, discussed the possibly revolutionary intentions of Jesus Christ.<sup>35</sup> He argues, on the basis of New Testament texts, that Jesus was a militant revolutionary, referring in particular to his being called "King of the Jews", his 'cleansing of the Jerusalem Temple' (allegedly necessitating armed disciples) and his words recorded in Luke 12:49, Matthew 10:14 and Luke 22:36. The disciples of Jesus carried arms<sup>36</sup>—the same has been said of the disciples of the Bāb (see below).

To what extent Carmichael is right is not easy to determine. The New Testament texts raise difficult questions similar to those raised in the Bābī sources. One can easily go astray in attempting to resolve such issues.

← The apparently militant directives of Jesus and the Bāb were made in accordance with the capacities and expectations of Jews and Muslims regarding their promised One. The interesting parallelism between the ministry of the Bāb and that of Jesus has been referred to by Shoghi Effendi: "The passion of Jesus Christ and indeed the whole of his public ministry alone offers a parallel to the mission and death of the Bāb which no student of comparative religion can fail to perceive or ignore".<sup>37</sup>

To return to the question of Holy War in Bābism. A comprehensive study of the writings of the Bāb on this matter in comparison with a consideration of His actions and those of His disciples leads, at first sight, to a clear contradiction between them.

In his writings the Bāb writes theoretically about jihād ("holy war") and often uses the same expressions as are found in the Qur'ān. In practise however, he advises his disciples or counsels his followers to be mild, compassionate and forgiving towards those who oppose Him and his religion. His Christlike gentleness led him to view others with compassion though the Muslim expectations as to the character of the expected Qā'im led him to speak theoretically about jihād.

The Bāb's 'Farewell Address of the Letters of the Living' illustrates how he called upon his followers to lead such saintly lives that others would be attracted to his Religion through their example.<sup>38</sup> His writings contain passages such as the following; "It is better to guide one soul than to possess all that is on earth...The path to guidance is one of love and compassion, not of force and coercion. This hath been God's method in the past and shall continue to be in the future!"<sup>39</sup>; "Take heed to carefully consider the words of every soul, then hold fast to the proofs which attest the truth. If ye fail to discover truth in a person's words, make them not the object of contention".<sup>40</sup> When the Bāb decided upon the expulsion of Mullā Javād, a covenant-breaker and fierce enemy of His, He wrote with suffering heart: "At the time when I was writing the decree of his expulsion, it was as if one were calling within My heart, 'Sacrifice the most beloved of all things unto you, even as Husayn (Imām Husayn) made sacrifice in My path'".<sup>41</sup> Had he wished to act according to Islāmic law he might have instead acted in accordance with the following Qur'ānic verse, "But if after coming to terms with you, they break their oaths and revile your Faith, make war on the leaders of unbelief."<sup>42</sup>

During the Bāb's stay in Isfahān as a guest of Manūchīhr Khān He was addressed by his host as follows;

"The Almighty Giver has endowed me with great riches...Now that I have by the aid of God, been led to recognise this Revelation, it is my ardent desire to consecrate all my possessions to the furtherance of its interests...It is my intention to proceed, by Your leave, to Tihān and do my best to win to this Cause, Muhammad Shah, whose confidence in me is firm and unshaken.."

His reply to this noble offer was;

"May God requite you for your noble intentions. So lofty a purpose is even to me more precious than the act itself.. Not by the means which you fondly imagine will an Almighty Providence accomplish the triumph of His Faith.. Through the poor and lowly of this land, by the blood which these shall have shed in His path, will the Omnipotent Sovereign ensure the preservation and consolidate the foundation of His Cause."<sup>43</sup>

When the Bāb was on his way to Ādhirbāyjān some believers from Qazvīn and Zanjān collected the necessary forces to go to his rescue. This group overtook the guards at the hour of midnight and, finding them fast asleep, approached the Bāb and begged him to flee. "The mountains of Ādhirbāyjān too have their claims"<sup>44</sup> was his confident reply, and he advised them to abandon their project and return to their homes.

It is recorded, on the other hand, that whilst being conducted to Mah-Kū the Bāb sent messages to two men in positions of authority requesting that they accomplish his deliverance. One was Sulaymān Khān-i Afshār whose son was married to a daughter of Siyyid Kāzīm and who was in Zanjān at that time. His message was "I am the Promised One. Arise and deliver me from the hands of the oppressors." The other was Prince Bahram Mīrzā the then governor of Ādhirbāyjān. Both of these men ignored the Bāb's appeal.

How can the student of the ministry of the Bāb resolve such contradictions? While in the Qayyūm al-Asmā' the Shāh of Persia is exhorted to arise and propagate the Bābī cause with the sword the Bāb is also known to have refused Manūchīhr Khān's offer of assistance. The youthful Messenger of Shīrāz requests deliverance from leading men on the way to Ādhirbāyjān but when a group of his followers attempt this they are lovingly commanded to withdraw!

These difficulties can be resolved in the light of the Shī'ī notion of the character of the promised Qā'im who was not expected to be a man of compassion and grace. He was to be a man of the sword who



would declare war against all the inhabitants of the earth. The ensuing bloodbath would be such that its wave is to reach up to the stirrups of his horse. The Bāb made statements in line with this image of the Qā'im but did not desire the concrete waging of holy war. He spoke of holy war but did not put it into practise. He appealed to the powerful of his day in order to test their faith for, when assistance was offered, he refused it. His various directives regarding holy war were designed to indicate the fulfilment of time-honoured Islāmic traditions: not destined to be literally fulfilled. His contemporaries were not completely ready for radical reinterpretations of the prophecies. The Bāb educated and prepared his followers for the era to come. Though the new age had dawned with the Bāb certain changes, such as the clear abrogation of holy war, had to await the manifestation of Bahā'u'llāh.<sup>45</sup>

In his attitude to holy war the Bāb gradually educated his followers, especially his close disciples. This is clear from the historical sources. In spite of the pronouncements regarding holy war in the Qayyūm al-Asmā' the sources do not lead us to believe that leading Bābīs prepared for any insurrection. Those who took part in the episodes of Tabarsī, Zanjan and Nayriz were protecting themselves and ready for martyrdom.<sup>46</sup> During the Zanjan upheaval Hujjat clearly declared: "...During all this period of strife, what day hath there been, or what night, wherein I have commanded a religious war save only that I was constantly considering how we might ward off your assaults from our wives and children, for we have no choice but to defend."<sup>47</sup> In a letter from Hujjat to one of the divines of Zanjan, extant in his own handwriting, we read, "Tell the governor who has been deceived by your tricks, that it is enough of that. Let him stop sedition and disperse the army from around us and we are ready to continue our subjection. By God, the same king who is the object of your worship, will rise in anger against you if he is informed of your acts."<sup>48</sup>

Some students of Bābī history who have enjoyed the life-long security of the western world have argued that Bābī militancy is proven by the fact that certain groups of Bābīs are said to have been armed. i.e. those Bābīs who accompanied Tahira from Karbala to Iran. Such arguments are misdirected. In 19th century Iran there was no real police force to protect the peoples. Travellers had to be prepared to face the attacks of thieves and armed groups which were widespread. Macdonald Kinneir who visited Khurāsān

towards the beginning of the 19th century wrote: "The inhabitants, in constant fear of being attacked, never go unarmed. They even cultivate their gardens with their swords by their sides."<sup>49</sup>

The present writer has vivid recollection of two experiences dating from the time when the Pahlavi dynasty had established a relatively peaceful situation in Iran. They may throw light on alleged 19th century Bābī militancy.

In the spring of 1942 I arrived in Nayriz in order to spend some time with the courageous Bahā'īs of that town, the descendants of the dawn-breakers of the Bahā'ī era. I noticed that in the town, though there was a governor and a small body of police, there was no real authority. In view of this the government had allowed wealthy citizens to engage their own armed men (tufangchīs). One of them was the chairman of the local Bahā'ī Assembly. Wherever he went an armed man accompanied him. His name was Mr. Mansūrī. When the Bahā'ī Assembly met he used to sit outside the door of the room in which his master attended to Bahā'ī business.

On another occasion during the month of Muharram of the same year and at the same place, I noted that the Bahā'īs and the Muslims lived in two different parts of the town—separated by a dry river-bed. News came that the Muslims had decided that on the 10th of Muharram they would stage a procession through the Bahā'ī sector. At the instigation of the Mullas they planned to attack, kill and plunder Bahā'īs and their properties. In view of this the Bahā'īs requested protection from the governor. He bluntly promised nothing and advised the Bahā'īs to be ready to defend themselves. The Bahā'īs decided that in order to put a stop to the savagery of the Muslim fanatics they would have to be seen to be powerful and ready to defend themselves. In consequence a number of armed men (tufangchīs) were dispatched to the roofs of the houses of the main street through which the Muslim procession was to pass. This action had the desired result. The Muslim procession passed peacefully through the main street. There was no disturbance.

Of the three major Bābī upheavals, those at Tabarsī, Zanjan and Nayriz, it is regarding that at Tabarsī that we have the most first-hand information. Eye-witness testimony indicates that from the moment Mullā Husayn raised the black-standard until the end of the Māzandarān upheaval there was no effort to collect arms. One source has it that when the Bābīs arrived at the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsī they had only seven guns in their possession.<sup>50</sup>

At this point I should like to contrast what one student of the Bābī religion has written about the arrival of Mullā Husayn in Bārfurūsh and subsequently Tabarsī with the testimony of a source written down when the Māzandarān upheaval was hardly finished.

It has been recently written that,

" In order to avoid further trouble, Hamsa Mīrzā ordered Bushrū'i to leave Mashhad and, on 19 Sha'ban 1264 / 21 July 1848, he set out with a large body of fellow Bābīs, ostensibly heading for the Shi'ī shrines in Iraq. Travelling towards Māzandarān, this party, swelled somewhat in numbers by new arrivals along the route, reached Bārfurūsh on 12 Shawwāl / 12 September and there clashed seriously with local inhabitants trying to prevent their entry to the town. Penetrating more deeply into the forest region of Māzandarān province, they reached the shrine of Shaykh Abū 'Alī al-Faḍl Tabarsī on 22 Shawwāl / 24 September. " 51.

In this short account, of course, the writer has not had the space to go into details and explain how the clash began or record subsequent events; to explain why the Bābīs penetrated deeply into forest region of Māzandarān and how they came to arrive at the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsī. The impression is given that Mullā Husayn wanted to enter Bārfurūsh by force; hence the journeying into the forest region of Māzandarān in order to find a suitable place to build a fort. The chronicle of Lutf 'Alī Mīrzā indicates a different perspective.

Lutf 'Alī Mīrzā-yi Shīrāzī was a prince of the Afshāriyya dynasty ( a pre-Qajar ruling class ) who, dressed in the garb of a Sufi, joined Mullā Husayn's Bābī companions at Dih-i Mullā. He was among the survivors of the Māzandarān upheaval-along with Mullā Sādiq-i Muqaddas. He never completed his eye-witness account of the upheaval due to his martyrdom in 1852 though what was written down includes the following account:

" [On entering the town] that head of the wretched ones ( Sa'id al-Ulamā ) had ordered that a large crowd of three or four thousand, with firearms, staves, and stones be ready and not let us enter the bazaar. Āqā Siyyid Zayn al-'Abidīn who was in front of the companions said: 'We are pilgrims and we have come a long way. The king has died and the roads are unsafe. This is the land of believers; we shall be your guests for a few days, until the king occupies his throne and the country is secure; then we shall go away'. 'You are not pilgrims', they said, 'and we shall not let you enter'. At length His Holiness (Mullā Husayn) ordered us to return and make our own way out. Those accursed ones started to treat us shamelessly and persecuted the friends. They took the companions property and harmed them. The companions asked permission from that Qutb al-Aqtāb (Mullā Husayn) to defend themselves, but he did not allow them to. We reached the corner of the Sabziḥ Maydan ('Green Square'). Here they (the enemies) unloaded the horse of

\* Bārfurūsh [Ed].

Āqā Maḥmūd of Igfāhān and then a shot was heard. Āqā Siyyid Ridā, an old man of seventy, fell down dead. Another shot was heard and Mullā 'Alī of Miyanīh, who had not yet completed his youth, fell. Mullā Husayn unsheathed his sword and turned back..".

Lutf 'Alī Mīrzā goes on to relate how the Bābīs came to reach the shrine of Shaykh Tabarsī :

".. A rider came and announced that Khusrāw Khān (Qadī-Kalā'i) wanted to talk to us. His Holiness (Mullā Husayn) sent Āqā Siyyid Zayn al-'Abidīn. That accursed one (Khusrāw Khān) had said, 'You have killed thirty-seven people of Bārfurūsh. How can you go on your way?' Āqā Zayn al-'Abidīn had answered [to the effect that] it had been their fault and they had first started things off by killing some [Bābī] companions. That accursed one (Khusrāw Khān) had said that killing us [the Bābīs] was lawful and that he would not allow us to depart... That accursed one (Khusrāw Khān) entered the presence of His Holiness (Mullā Husayn) and it was agreed that he [Khusrāw Khān] would escort the companions [Bābīs] safely out of Māzandarān and that then Mullā Husayn's horse and sword and everything else of our [the Bābīs'] possessions that he might ask would be given to him. While the conversation was going on they started to take possession of our properties. One took the horse of a companion [Bābī] away and the other seized another companion's sword from his hand... The companions [Bābīs] started off and enemies began to attack. One [enemy] came and took the sword from the hand of the companion [ a Bābī ] and if he followed him [that enemy] into the forest they [the enemies] would cut him to pieces... Then his holiness (Mullā Husayn) took an unsheathed sword and said to that accursed dog (Khusrāw Khān), 'If you want to kill me here is my neck; take this sword and kill me, but let the companions go free and do not trouble them.'... Anyhow, when night came the calamity increased, the groans and complaints of the friends [Bābīs] augmented. The enemies laid hands on the companions [Bābīs'] possessions; half of the companions [Bābīs] were stripped of their clothes and wounded; scattered in the forest... Then he (Mullā Husayn) asked if there was a place nearby where we [the Bābīs] could stay. He [the guide] said that there was a shrine close by... Three or four hours before sunrise we reached Shaykh Tabarsī... All the companions [Bābīs] gathered around him [Mullā Husayn]. Then he [Mullā Husayn] said: 'We will all be martyred in this place. The enemies will soon attack us and shed our blood.' The companions asked him if it was ordained by God, if so they were satisfied with it; but if it was not ordained he should ask God to change it. He answered saying: 'God desires to reveal His Truth in this way, just as He did so in the time of the Prince of Martyrs [ Imām Husayn ].."

This heart-rending account of Mīrzā Lutf 'Alī does not lead us to believe that Bahā'ī historians have suppressed the real facts of history or concealed the militant character of the Bābīs. Mullā Husayn is presented in an even more gentle way than in the Tārīkh-i Nabīl ['The Dawn-Breakers'].

THE EARLY FOLLOWERS OF THE BĀB

The lives of the early followers of the founders of the great world religions have ever inspired passion and enthusiasm in subsequent generations of believers. The early days of the emergence of a world faith marks a turning point in history and souls of extraordinary capacity stand ready to face the greatest of tests, often sacrificing all that they possess including their precious lives. Though little is known about the earliest adherents of most of the great world religions the study of Christianity and Islām illustrates that they were largely from the lowest level of society and bereft of culture and learning. For this, among other reasons, the great Messengers of God were not taken seriously by the learned of their day. In the time of Muhammad those of high rank repeated what had been said at the time of Noah: "We regard you as a mortal like ourselves. Nor can we find any among your followers but men of hasty judgement, the lowest of our tribe."<sup>52</sup> It was similar at the time of Christ whose Cause was ignored by leading Rabbis and members of the Jewish hierarchy. Hence Jesus' praying, "I thank thee O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that thou hast hidden these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to babes."<sup>53</sup> and Paul's saying, "But God hath chosen the weak in the world to shame the strong."<sup>54</sup>

During the dispensation of the Bāb the learned and wise, forgetting rank and position, responded to the heavenly voice of the Manifestation of God. Mention will here be made of a few learned Bābīs in view of the fact that some writers have supposed that the learned deserted the Bāb when they became aware of the real nature of his Cause. The submission of outstandingly learned men to the youthful Siyyid of Shīrāz is a remarkable phenomenon that cannot adequately be accounted for outside of the recognition of His Divine Power.

- 1) Mullā Sādiq Muqaddas Khurasānī was an outstanding Iranian Mujtahid who received his ijāzih ('authorisation') from Siyyid Kāsim. In it the Shaykhī leader refers to him as "my trustworthy brother", "an accomplished scholar", one "superior among his peers, because of his outstanding insight and sharp intelligence, a possessor of both rational (ma'qūl) and traditional (manqūl) [learning]." At the time of the Bāb's declaration Mullā Sādiq was resident in Isfahan. He enjoyed the highest degree of honour such that 4,000 Muslims followed him in the congregational Friday prayers.<sup>55</sup> On believing in the Bāb he suffered the calamity which befell him in Shiraz (see above). He took part in the Māzandarān upheaval (see above), was released following its suppression and lived a long life during which he was both faithful and ever ready to give his life for the Bābī Cause.
- 2) Mullā Muhammad 'Alī Hujjat-i Zanjānī was another outstanding mujtahid who gave his life for the Bābī Cause. His father Mullā 'Abd al-Rahman was

was one of the most distinguished mujtahids of Zanjān. After completing his studies in Zanjān Hujjat himself travelled to Iraq where he undertook advanced study. On his return to Iran he was already so famous that a great crowd gathered to meet him in Kirmanshāh. The inhabitants of Hamadān begged him not to proceed to Zanjān but stay amongst them; this he did for some two years until the death of his father (in Zanjān). At the request of the people of Zanjān he took over the position of his father. His influence in Zanjān was great. He acquired more power than the other Mullas who, unlike himself, made a business of their religion.<sup>56</sup>

On hearing of the Bābī Cause he sent one of his disciples, Mullā Iskandar, to Shīrāz to investigate it. His emissary had become a Bābī and when he presented Hujjat with some writings of the Bāb he, after reading only one page, prostrated himself and exclaimed, "I bear witness that these words which I have read proceed from the same source as that of the Qur'ān. Whoso hath recognised the truth of that sacred Book must needs testify to the Divine Origin of these words."

Hujjat was steadfast in the Bābī Cause until his last moment. He showed much heroism and courage in propagating it. His story has inspired many historians to write about him at great length. He died a martyr's death along with more than 1,000 of his companions.

3) Siyyid Yahyā Vahīd was another outstanding divine who believed in the Bāb and gave his life for His Cause. His father was the famed author of many books. Vahīd also attained the highest level of religious knowledge being well-versed in fiqh and usul. It is said that he had memorised 30,000 Islāmic traditions (ahādīth). He was highly regarded by Muhammad Shāh by the time news was circulating about the claims of the Bāb and was asked to travel to Shīrāz to investigate the matter. At Shīrāz he became a Bābī. A treatise is extant in his own handwriting in which he sets down many proofs of the truth of the Bāb; acknowledging, for example, that the Bāb was, though an unlettered Persian, capable of revealing 1,000 verses in Arabic in only six hours and answering the most abstruse questions. The Bāb's power of revelation seemed miraculous to Siyyid Yahyā, a miracle which he could not refute. He found, whilst a guest of the Bāb, that the Bāb's manners, moods and behaviour were beyond normal human capacities. In his treatise about the Bāb he applies to him the following Arabic poem: "If you attained his presence you would find the whole of humanity in one Man, Eternity in one Hour and the whole earth in one House."<sup>57</sup>

Siyyid Yahyā led the upheaval in Nayrīz and gave his life in the path of his Beloved ten days before the Bāb was martyred in Tabriz.

4) Mullā Husayn -i Bushrū'ī was a highly knowledgeable, pious and well-regarded disciple of Siyyid Kāsim Raḡhtī. During the lifetime of his master he wrote books and commentaries on the Qur'ān. He was so praised by Siyyid Kāsim that the thought arose that his might be the Promised One—much spoken of by Siyyid Kāsim.<sup>58</sup> When the time came to send someone to touch the lion's tail Mullā Husayn was chosen.<sup>59</sup> It is well known that Mirzā Muhammad Bāqir-i Shāftī greatly praised him<sup>60</sup> and how highly regarded he was by such great divines as Mullā 'Abd al-Khāliq-i Yazdī, Mullā Muhammad Taqī-yi Hiravī, Mirzā Ahmad-i Azghandī, Siyyid 'Alī-yi Bushrī and, Shaykh Bashīr-i Najafī (all disciples of Siyyid Kāsim).<sup>61</sup> The story of his coming to faith in the Bāb has been set down elsewhere along with details regarding his services and martyrdom in the Bābī Cause.

5) Mirzā Ahmad-i Azghandī was "the most eloquent, the wisest and the most eminent" among the ḥulamā' of Khurasan.<sup>62</sup> He was the first to believe in that province and was converted by Mullā Husayn. After becoming a Bābī he travelled to Shīrāz in order to attain the presence of his Beloved. On the way he "compiled a voluminous compilation of traditions and prophecies about the Bāb. He collected more than twelve thousand traditions in his

book." 63. Throughout his long life he remained steadfast in the Bābī Cause for which he had sacrificed wealth, reputation and all else besides.

6) Mullā Yūsuf-i Ardabilī, a confidant of Siyyid Kazim, was one of the most eminent Shaykhī ʿulamā. His eloquence was such that he was [even] praised by Hajī Muhammad Karīm Khān -i Kirmānī. A native of Adhirbayjān he, having accepted the Bāb's claims, taught his faith in that province to large numbers of people. He was widely travelled and eventually died a martyr during the Māzandarān upheaval. 64.

7) Hajī Siyyid Javād-i Karbalāʾī was the grandson of the renowned Siyyid Mahdī, Bahr al-ʿUlum. He was born, brought up and studied in Karbalā and was a leading disciple of both Shaykh Ahmad and Siyyid Kāzīm. He also studied with some of the outstanding Iranian ʿulamā. After completing his studies he went to India and associated with all manner of peoples before returning to Iraq. After perusing some of the Bāb's writings he became a believer without hesitation and journeyed to Shīrāz to meet his Beloved. He attained an advanced age and met and came to believe in Bahāʾu'llāh. The eminent Bahāʾī scholar Mīrzā Abū al-Faḍl Gulpaygānī considered himself a pupil of Siyyid Javād during the time that they both resided in Tehran—Siyyid Javād took up residence in Tehran the same year that Gulpaygānī became a Bahāʾī [1876 Ed.]; the latter visited Siyyid Javād each week for some years.

8) Tāhira's fame and renown are well-known outside of Iran. In view of her very considerable scholarly abilities her father always expressed regret at her being a woman and thus unable to occupy his place. After the death of Siyyid Kāzīm she held a class in his house where many came to benefit from her vast knowledge. Fascinated by her learning and eloquence a number of Shaykhīs and subsequently Bābīs accompanied her wherever she went. In his 14 volume commentary on the Qurʾān the Muftī of Baghdad, Siyyid Muhammad-i ʿAlūsī lauded Tāhira and credited her with accomplishments not seen in scholars of his time. 65. She died a martyr's death in Tehran.

9) Siyyid Ibrāhīm-i Khāḥī was a leading ʿulamā of the Shaykhī school and a close disciple of Siyyid Kāzīm. He was famous throughout his native province of Adhirbayjān where many considered him greater than Mullā Muhammad -i Mamāqānī who claimed to succeed Siyyid Kāzīm. He lived many years after the Bāb's martyrdom and served the Faith with all his heart and soul.

The above are but a few of scores of Muslim divines who came to believe in the Bāb and who remained firm in their faith. Without going into details others were—:

10) Mullā Jalīl-i Urūmī; 11) Mullā Ahmad-i Abdāl; 12) Mullā Husayn-i Dakhlī; 13) Mīrzā ʿAlī-yi Sayyāh; 14) Mullā Mahdī-yi Khūʾī; 15) Mīrzā Assadallāh Dayyāh; 16) Mullā ʿAlī-yi Bastāmī; 17) Mullā Muhammad ʿAlī Quddūs; 18) Mīrzā Hasan-i Zunūzī; 19) Mullā Bāqir, Harf-i Hayy; 20) Mullā Muhammad-i Furūghī; 21) Mīrzā Ahmad-i Muʿalim-i Hīsārī; 22) Mīrzā Muhammad Bāqir-i Qāʾinī; 23) Shaykh ʿAlī-yi ʿAzīm; 24) Mullā Mīhdī-yi Kandī; 25) Mīrzā Muhammad Husayn Hakīm-i Illāhī; 26) Mīrzā Qurbān ʿAlī-yi Istirābādī; 27) Mullā Ismāʿīl-i Qummī; 28) Shaykh Muhammad-i Shībī; 29) Mullā ʿAbd al-Karīm-i Qazvīnī; 30) Mullā Jaʿfar-i Qazvīnī; 31) Mullā Ibrāhīm-i Mahallātī; 32) Siyyid Ahmad-i Yazdī; 33) Mullā Bāqir-i Ardakānī.

Anyone who has lived in Iran will be aware of the level of authority which even low ranking Mullas exert. The influence exerted by the Bāb on divines of the highest rank was remarkable in the light of the sufferrings surrounding their espousal of His Cause. The following words are hardly accurate: "The history of Bābism up to 1848 is marked by a high measure of tension between the cautious intellectualizing of large numbers of Shaykhī Bābīs who became more and more disillusioned and abandoned the Bāb in greater and greater numbers as his doctrines and injunctions jarred increasingly with established Islamic theory, and the utterly dedicated bands of saints and zealots who argued, fought, and were often tortured or put to death for a cause they often understood little enough of." 66. There were, of course, those who abandoned the Bābī Cause when tests came. This happened in all religions: why should the Faith of the Bāb be an exception? 67. Those who left the Bāb were not however, the people of knowledge but the ordinary believers whose names have not been recorded. Only a few high-ranking divines abandoned the Bāb along with two or three mullās of lower rank. In the former category are to be numbered Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq Yazdī and Mullā Muhammad Taqī-yi Hiravī.

Mullā ʿAbd al-Khāliq, an eminent Mullā, recognised the station of the Bāb and, in a letter to his Beloved, expressed himself as follows: "I do not know with what tongue I should thank God for the honour of having been in your service... My Lord, my God, I beg to be honoured by being taken into the service of my Lord and Master." 68. The martyrdom of his son at Shaykh Tabarsī shook his faith. Abbas Amanat has written, "in 1265 [AH], the death of his young son Shaykh ʿAlī, in the Tabarsī uprising, which happened at the same time as the Bāb's claim to Qāʾimīyyat, shattered the faith of the old mujtahid, and brought him to the point of denial." 69.

Mullā Muhammad Taqī-yi Hiravī, an outstanding mujtahid from Isfahān, became a staunch Bābī and translated some of the Bāb's writings from Arabic into Persian. He was among the earliest converts of Mullā Husayn whom he admired very much. When trouble and calamity befell the Bābīs he was not able to remain steadfast. In spite of his failure he was known as a Bābī until the end of his life—he died in Karbalā. None of the Mullas of Karbalā were prepared to attend his funeral or attend to his burial; in the end a local mujtahid had him buried.

These were the only two high ranking mujtahids who left the Bābī Cause and whose names have come down to us. Mention might also be made though of two lower ranking Mullas who denied the Bāb after believing in Him.

Firstly, Mullā Jawād-i Baraghānī who left Bābism along with a few of his associates. The problem with him was that he became a Bābī in order to satisfy his ambitions. It is recorded in Māzandarānī's Kitāb-i Zuhūr al-Haqq (Vol. III) that he, on accepting the Bāb, would be in a position to right the wrongs done to the Shaykhīs. Mullā Ja'far-i Qazvīnī, a native of the same town as Mullā Jawād, has left to posterity a MS in which he has described certain events surrounding the early days of the Bābī Faith. He has recorded that when Mullā Jawād first heard the news of the Bāb's claims he stated, "Now the time has arrived for us to take revenge on Baraghānī (an enemy of the Shaykhīs)." Later however, he became jealous of Mullā Husayn and threw in his lot with Karīm Khān-i Kirmānī. 70:

Secondly there is the case of the lower ranking Mullā Siyyid <sup>Alī</sup>-yi Kirmānī a one time secretary of Siyyid Kāzim. According to Qatīl-i Karbalā'ī he forged a letter in favour of Karīm Khān Kirmānī's being the successor of Siyyid Kāzim Rashtī. 71. When the forgery was discovered Siyyid <sup>Alī</sup> confessed to the forgery and stated that he had attempted to draw people's attention away from Mīrzā Hasan-i Gawhar — a claimant to leadership of the Shaykhī school after Siyyid Kāzim's passing. He abandoned the Cause of the Bāb at the time of the uproar of the divines of Karbalā. Much frightened he fled to Mecca.

Apart from these divines there were many souls who left the Cause of the Bāb because they had no real idea of what the mission of the youthful Manifestation of God was. They apostasized when, according to the Bāb's own testimony, he did not journey to Karbalā—as promised — after his pilgrimage; when the conference of Badasht took place; when the Bāb defended the position of Tahira; when the believers of Marāghih were informed by the Bāb that he has abrogated Islamic Law, and on the occasion when those who had witnessed a miracle of the Bāb in Urumīyya were put to the test or experienced persecution. It was not the learned however, who left the Bābī Cause on these occasions but ordinary, immature people who could not stand up to the tests.

\* When the Bāb cancelled his journey to Karbalā, Mullā <sup>Abd al-Khāliq</sup>-i Yazdī (see above) wrote a letter and asked the Bāb about this. In his reply, a Tablet in the form of a prayer, the Bāb explains:

"..And Thou knowest that I commanded the <sup>Ulamā'</sup> to enter the Holy Land [= Karbalā] for the Day of my return, so that Thy Hidden Covenant might be publicly revealed. And Thou knowest the decree about which I heard in Umm al-Qurā [= Mecca] regarding the opposition of the <sup>Ulamā'</sup> and the denial of the remote among Thy servants who are the inhabitants of the Holy Land [Karbalā]. Wherefore did I change my decision and did not journey in that direction. This in order to avoid sedition.. to the end that not a single hair be unjustly taken from the head of anyone.."

\* fn. continued.

Though part of the original text of this writing of the Bāb is printed in <sup>Abd al-Hamīd</sup> Ishrāq Khāvarī's Qāmis-i Kitāb-i Igān (Vol. II [Tehran 128 Badī<sup>c</sup>], p.1003f) it has escaped the attention of students of this subject. Denis MacEoin and Abbas Amanat have relied on the doubtful words of Qatīl-i Karbalā'ī [his Risāla published as an appendix at the end of Māzandarānī's Kitāb-i Zuhūr al-Haqq [Vol III] — Ed] and Moojan Momen has written in his article, The Trial of Mullā <sup>Alī</sup> Bastami. (in Iran XX [1982], p.113ff), "Neither in the Bāb's writings nor in the Bābī and Bahā'ī literature is there much to indicate the cause of this change of plan." (p.140).

#### NOTES

1. Refer, Gulpaygānī, al-Durar al-Bahiyya in Mukhtārāt min Mu'alifāt -i Abī'l-Fada'il (Brussels 1970 / 138 Badī<sup>c</sup>), p.20.
2. Balquzi, Muhammad and the Course of Islām (Oxford 1976), p.1.
3. Qur'ān 2: 284.
4. Qur'ān 2: 252.
5. Qur'ān 33:40.
6. The Bāb cited in Selections From the Writings of the Bāb (Haifa 1976, : henceforth SWB), p.161.
7. Ibid., p.46.
8. See for example, Qur'ān 29:23.
9. Refer, Khulāṣat al-Tafāsīr, pp.174, 184, 253.
10. See <sup>Attar</sup>, Tadhkirat al-Awliya', p.583.
11. Qur'ān 17:87.
12. See Qur'ān 97:3
13. Refer, Shoghi Effendi [trans.] The Dawn-Breakers (London 1953), p.101.
14. Matthew 15:24.
15. Matthew 9:5.
16. Matthew 15:24, 26.
17. Luke 16:17.
18. Matthew 5:17.
19. Qur'ān 109:1.
20. Qur'ān 2:218.
21. Qur'ān 4:42.
22. Qur'ān 5: 89.
23. SWB, p.119.
24. SWB, p.43.



EXCHANGES ON BAHĀ'U'LLĀH'S  
AL-QASIDA AL-WARQA'IYYA

45.

Reproduced below are a number of communications regarding the translation and interpretation of Bahā'u'llāh's al-Qasida al-Warqa'iyya written by Dr. J.R.Cole and Dr.D.MacEoin. The debate was sparked off by the inclusion of MacEoin's translation of this ode in Bahā'i Studies Bulletin Vol. 2.No.2. (Sept. 1983) and in view of an earlier (privately circulated) translation by Cole (made in Beirut in 1978). At the request of Dr.Cole I have reproduced the full text of his initial critique of Dr.MacEoin's translation and notes earlier summed up and commented on by MacEoin (in Bahā'i Studies Bulletin Vol.2 No. 3 .,pp.68-72 and again reproduced below pp.47 - 51). In addition, reproduced below, is the text of a reply to MacEoin's response by Dr. Cole communicated to me and dated 30th June 1984. (= pp. 52-4) and another response by Dr.MacEoin (= pp.55 - 56). It is hoped that readers of the Bulletin will benefit from this learned debate.

(Ed).

\* In view of delays in the issue of this Bulletin over the last year certain communications reproduced below are dated after March 1984.

I wish to thank Dr. MacEoin for sharing with readers of the Bulletin his translation of the al-Qasidah al-warqa'iyyah. The making of such provisional renderings is very important if we are to move toward new and technically accurate translations of such important and difficult Tablets, and it is also necessary that scholars share their work in this regard with one another before formal publication so that comments may be received. As Dr. MacEoin knows, I myself made a provisional rendering of the Qasidah in 1978 while in Beirut. At that time, I shared it with him, with Mark Hellaby and with Moojan Momen for comments, as well as sending a copy to the World Center. The latter asked me not to publish my version, and I therefore put any further work on it aside.

Dr. MacEoin's rendering is a literal, prose one, while I was aiming at a more poetic effect, but I am glad to see that in most important passages we have agreed as to the basic meaning of these difficult verses. Our concurrence gives some hope that a fairly accurate formal translation can be hoped for, in spite of the work's obscurity. More comparison of Bahā'u'llāh's ode with that of Ibn al-Fārid and with the mystical Arabic poetry of Ibn al-'Arabī, as well as with later eighteenth and nineteenth century Iranian Sufi poets writing in Arabic, should provide a sounder philological basis on which to proceed. Also, I hope someone can succeed in working with an English-language poet in producing a formal version that is both accurate and yet poetry. (Professor Amin Banani's highly successful use of this technique in his translation of the poetry of Forrukhzad points the way here.)

I do have some suggestions for improving the accuracy of Dr. MacEoin's rendering, and I hope that he will take them in the spirit they are given, of respect and sharing. I should say first of all that line 84 is missing, and that this throws off the verse numbering in the latter part of the poem.

- line 7: tīb ash-shamāl does not mean "perfume of the left" but "north wind."
- line 9: I believe the translator has misread taqaballat (here, "accepted") as taqallabat ("turned about"). The heart of hearts accepted her dart. This reading is confirmed by the Persian note, which gives muqābil shudih. The passive "was stretched out" ill fits the verb tamaddati in the next hemistich, and should be "stretched forth".
- line 10: ghāyatī al-quswā means "my highest goal," not "the ends of creation"
- line 11: I think these lines should read "I have wept in every eye for union with her, in every fire I have burned because of our separation." That is, the verbs must be read in the first person. The idea is that the mystical lover is ubiquitous in his grief--every time someone weeps, that is him weeping for his beloved.
- line 12: The word carpet does not appear, though it could be used as a poetic translation. bi kulli'l-bast is an adverbial construction equivalent to an absolute \* object; thus it equals basattu bastan.
- line 14: The phrase "and that shall be the reward of them that love me" is a quote from the Beloved.
- line 18: The translator has misread the imperative feminine munnī (manna-yamunnu) as the prepositional phrase minnī, from me. The correct translation is "Grant me union for my excessive love of you."
- line 22: Again, minnī is mistakenly given for munnī. The second hemistich has the imperative habnī from wahaba, preceded by the conjunction wa (and). It should be read wa habnī (and give me), not "he has granted me". habnī may be a textual corruption for the more correct feminine imperative habī. The whole line should read "Grant the attainment of union with you after exile, and bestow on me the spirit of intimacy after my grief."
- line 23: the word shuhūd refers to the world of the seen ('ālam ash-shuhūd), and does not here mean witness. (also line 79).
- line 24: al-'ama' means not, "unknowing," but the unknown essence of God.
- line 25: tha'r here simply means blood and not revenge.
- line 28: gharr means vanity, not just delusion.
- line 30: "smoke" should read "dust"

- line 36: the verbs must be read in the first person. Thus, wuridtu, not waridat, in the passive voice. The same holds for the second hemistich, which has also been misread as an active feminine rather than a passive first person (the latter being correct). The line should read "all sorrow has befallen me in every heart, I was gripped by sorrow in every joy (or literally, constricted completely in every expanse)."
- line 61: khalli does not mean fail, but is an imperative meaning "forsake". In English diction the use of fail to mean anything but the opposite of to succeed is in any case incorrect.
- line 76: wahshah means loneliness, not beast (wahsh). The hemistich is a play on words--the author is communing with loneliness.
- line 84: has been inadvertently omitted. I translated it "And with no spirit, heart or inmost self did I abide, till my continuing existence mightily bewildered me."
- line 91 (line 90 in the trans.): bi'thah, a technical term in prophatology referring to the sending of the Prophet forth by God, has been mistranslated as resurrection (ba'th). This is an important point, since the use of the word bi'thah demonstrates that Baha'u'llah already in 1855-56 thought of himself as having a mission. Also, matrud here means ostracized or exiled (whether to Baghdad or Sulaymaniyyah), rather than "cast down." The line should read, "No matter if I have been exiled, for I attained the light of exaltation the day I was given my mission."
- line 92: <sup>(trans. 91)</sup> This line has several allusions to the mi'raj story that the translator has missed. al-quds here means Jerusalem, which Baha'u'llah claims mystically to have visited, just as Muhammad did in the mi'raj. The hijrah in Tehran again appears to have been a spiritual analogy to the Prophet's hijrah. The mi'raj theme is reinforced in the next line by the use of the verb from that root. While such imagery in a mystical poem cannot be taken too literally, it might indicate an early claim of prophetic status.
- lines 95, 96 (trans. 94, 95): Ma laki (you have no part of) has been misread as the imperative malik. The second hemistichs in both thus give the wrong impression.
- line 110: wat'ah means footstep, not oppression.
- line 123: wujud does not mean assistance.

A version in the hand of Zayn al-Muqarrabin has a postscript from the Baghdad period of some interest.

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Los Angeles, California  
5 January 1984

In my introduction to my translation of Baha' Allah's Qasida warqa'iyya (Bulletin 2:2, Sept. 1983), I emphasized that it was 'a very tentative personal rendering of a difficult text' and expressed serious reservations about the accuracy of the version I had prepared. Since then I have been both reassured about the overall accuracy of my translation and confirmed in my fears about the existence of errors in it as a result of an extremely able critique forwarded to the Editor of the Bulletin by Juan Cole.

Mr Cole draws attention to the fact that he himself has prepared a more poetic rendering of the qasida but that he has been dissuaded from publication of it by the Baha'i World Centre in Israel. I hope that he will at least forward a copy of this version to me so that I may be able to refer to it in the course of any future studies I may make of the work. I am extremely happy that he feels that 'in most important passages we have agreed as to the basic meaning of these difficult verses' since, as he himself points out, this 'gives some hope that a fairly accurate formal translation can be hoped for, in spite of the work's obscurity'.

I am also extremely pleased that Juan has been able to point out several errors of translation or misreadings of the text of which I have been guilty. In order to assist readers in their understanding of the text, I shall reproduce the gist of his comments here, together with one or two separate comments of my own.

1. I have accidentally skipped line 84 so that all subsequent lines are misnumbered. Mr Cole translates line 84 as follows: 'And with no spirit, heart or inmost self did I abide, till my continuing existence mightily bewildered me'. I would concur with his translation.
2. Mr Cole feels that the words tib al-shamal in line 7 should be translated, not as 'perfume of the left' but as 'north wind'. I agree that this is a possible rendering and one that readers may consider. But I am not inclined to accept it as preferable, for several reasons. The first lines of the poem contain a number of terms expressive of the idea of 'perfume', 'fragrance', or 'soft breeze' (misk, nafaha; and in the notes nafahat-i dilkash, fawahat-i dilynishin, ra'iha-yi tayyiba, ra'iha-yi mahabbat), and I feel that the word tayb (which means 'scent' or 'perfume' rather than wind) fits well into this context. Secondly, Baha' Allah's own note to this line speaks explicitly of how the 'perfumed breaths of her hair' (anfās-i tayyiba-yi sha'r-i ū) are the source of 'the perfume of joy and splendour' (tayb-i bihjat wa sanā) and 'the musk of bounty and glory' (misk-i marhamat wa bahā). Not only that, but the following use of the words shamal and yamin is, I think, strong evidence that the former must be understood as 'left hand' rather than 'north'. Nor am I entirely happy with the notion that the Beloved's tresses waft the 'north wind' rather than perfume.
3. In line 9, I have committed an elementary misreading of taqallabat for taqabbalat. The sense of the line should, Mr Cole suggests, be 'the heart of hearts accepted the arrow of her eyelashes', a reading which is, he says, confirmed by the Persian note, which gives muqābil shuda. I am inclined to accept his reading, but with some reservations. If the Arabic taqabbalat be taken straightforwardly as 'it accepted', we are left with the problem of the preposition before its assumed object. Nor is the Persian much help here, since it does not, in fact, confirm a reading of 'accepted' but rather 'faced, placed itself opposite'. I would, therefore, prefer a rendering of 'the heart of hearts faced the arrow of her eyelashes', and I would re-translate the note as follows: 'They call sahm "an arrow", that is, the shining and purified hearts have turned to face the arrow of the lashes of the most exalted Beloved and have sought for it



to reach them'.

4. Mr Cole suggests the phrase ghāyatī al-quswā in line 10 means 'my highest goal', not 'the ends of creation'. That is certainly correct, but I have actually read the phrase, not as ghāyatī al-quswā (or ghāyatī 'l-quswā), but as ghāyatayī 'l-quswā, ('the two furthest ends'). Now, I know, as does Juan, that my reading does not make for very good Arabic, but it is a common difficulty in translating texts by Baha' Allah that one cannot rely on his Arabic to conform at all times to normal grammar. The phrase al-ghāya al-quswā is a fairly standard one for 'the furthest end', and I do not think that one can rule out a dual variation on this, giving 'the two furthest ends' (sc. 'of creation'), which seems to me to make better sense in this verse than 'my highest goal'. If Mr Cole can suggest a meaning for the first hemistich which incorporates his rendering and also balances it in some way with Carsh al-<sup>C</sup>amā in the next, I would certainly be happy to accept it as the grammatically better reading. Otherwise I will stick with mine on the grounds of sense.
5. Regarding line 11, Mr Cole writes: 'I think these lines should read "I have wept in every eye for union with her, in every fire I have burned because of our separation". That is, the verbs must be read in the first person. The idea is that the mystical lover is ubiquitous in his grief -- every time someone weeps, that is him weeping for his beloved.' I find this a very attractive reading, particularly since it fits the Persian gloss rather better. It is also grammatically more satisfactory since it avoids the reading of wafā with kullu <sup>C</sup>ayn (although this is not impossible).
6. Mr Cole points out that the phrase 'and that shall be the reward of them that love me' in line 15 is a quotation from the Beloved, in which he is perfectly correct.
7. In lines 18 and 22, I have clearly misread the first words as wa minnī rather than wa munnī, which latter makes better sense. The first half of line 18 should, therefore, read: 'Grant me union for my excessive love of you', and the first half of 22: 'Grant the attainment of union with you after exile'.
8. Accepting this above reading, the first words of the second hemistich of verse 22 should read wa habnī rather than wahabānī, even though the latter is more grammatically correct. This being so, the hemistich should be rendered: 'And bestow on me the spirit of intimacy after my grief'. (These last three renderings are those suggested by Mr Cole.)
9. Mr Cole holds that in lines 23 and 79 the word shuhūd should be rendered as 'the world of the seen', rather than as 'witness' or 'contemplation', and this seems to me entirely correct.
10. I am less sure about his argument that the term al-<sup>C</sup>amā (line 24 and elsewhere) should not be rendered 'unknowing', since it really refers to the 'unknown essence of God'. This is really a literary point, since my implied reference was to the Middle English mystical treatise The Cloud of Unknowing. The real meaning is, of course, that pointed out by Mr Cole: I simply used a less explicit expression for it. As far as the validity of a rendition of al-<sup>C</sup>amā by ('cloud of) unknowing' is concerned, there are some useful references to it in Sayyid Kazim Rashti's Sharh al-khutba al-tutunjiyya, p.16.
11. Mr Cole holds that, in line 25, the word tha'r should be translated simply as 'blood' rather than ('act of) revenge. I confess that I fail to see why he thinks this is the case.

12. Mr. Cole points out that gharr in line 28 'means vanity, not just delusion'. I think that my gloss to note 20 does, in fact, make that clear.
13. In line 30, Mr Cole would prefer to read 'smoke' as 'dust'. Since the Arabic verb in question can be translated either as 'to rise in the air like dust' or 'to rise in the air like smoke', there can, I think, be no objection to either rendering.
14. Mr Cole prefers to read the verbs in line 36 as first person passives rather than third person feminine actives, giving the translation: 'All sorrow has befallen me in every heart, I was gripped by sorrow in every joy (or literally, constricted completely in every expense)'. This seems certainly entirely plausible, but it does involve the problem of a change of subject from line 35 to line 36 and back again in line 37. On the other hand, Mr Cole's reading does provide a continuity of subject with those prior to line 35.
15. On line 61, Mr Cole writes 'khalli does not mean fail, but is an imperative meaning "forsake". In English diction the use of fail to mean anything but the opposite of to succeed is in any case incorrect'. I'm afraid Mr Cole is here finding fault where there is none. Khalli certainly does mean 'forsake'; but it also means 'offend against'; 'infringe, transgress'; 'violate, break'; 'fail to fulfill, fail to meet' -- or so, at least, Wehr's dictionary says. As for the use of the word 'fail' in English, I would recommend that Mr Cole buy a bigger dictionary. The third meaning in the Shorter Oxford is 'to fall short in performance or attainment; to make default; to miss the mark'. It also has a number of other meanings, all of which may be found there.
16. Mr Cole correctly points out that, in line 76, the word wahshah means loneliness, not beast (wahsh). He continues to say that 'The hemistich is a play on words -- the author is communing with loneliness'. This seems eminently acceptable, especially since it avoids taking wahsha in a technically incorrect sense. However, it is worth pointing out that I had in mind when translating this line Baha' Allah's reference to this same period in his Lawh-i Maryam, where he speaks of his exile, in which 'the beats of the field (were) My associates' (quoted God Passes By, p.120). The original of this passage is in Persian and reads bā vuhūsh-i 'Carā' mujālis gashtam (Ma'ida-yi asmanī, vol.4, p.330), there being a clear parallelism in the use of the term 'Carā' beside the root whsh (as well as a parallelism between mu'nīs in the previous hemistich and mu'ānis in the immediately preceding sentence in the Lawh-i Maryam).
17. Mr Cole raises an important point with regard to line 91 (90 in the translation): 'bi'thah, a technical term in propheticology referring to the sending of the Prophet by God, has been mistranslated as resurrection (ba'th). This is an important point, since the use of the word bi'thah demonstrates that Baha'u'llah already in 1855-56 thought of himself as having a mission. Also, matrud here means ostracized or exiled (whether to Baghdad or Sulaymaniyyah), rather than "cast down". The line should read, "No matter if I have been exiled, for I attained the light of exaltation the day I was given my mission".  
Since these remarks are, I think, best commented on in the light of Juan's comments on the succeeding line, it will be best to cite those here as well: 'This line (92; trans.91) has several allusions to the mi'raj story that the translator has missed. al-quds here means Jerusalem, which Baha'u'llah claims mystically to have visited, just as Muhammad did in the mi'raj. The hijrah in Tehran again appears to have been a spiritual analogy to the Prophet's hijrah. The mi'raj theme is reinforced in the next line by the use of the verb from that root. While such imagery in a mystical poem cannot be taken too literally, it might indicate an early claim of prophetic status.'

I think these are extremely interesting remarks and ones deserving of careful consideration. In their light I have re-examined this whole section of the poem, and I will readily admit that something more is going on in these lines than my original translation implied. At the same time, I fear that Juan's comments here, as occasionally elsewhere, suffer by being rather too overconfidently and absolutely stated. Some things may be as he suggests, but I am far from convinced that they must be read as he reads them. To begin with, I fail to see that there are several allusions to the mi<sup>c</sup>rāj story, and I am not wholly sure that there are any. If the term al-quds is a reference to Jerusalem, that might be regarded as a mi<sup>c</sup>rāj reference, although it would by no means necessarily be so.

What appears certain is that these lines refer in some way to an exile or exiles. Matrūdan in line 92 (91) is, as Juan correctly points out, 'exiled' or 'cast out'. Hajartu in the following line means 'I emigrated' or 'I performed a hijra', while ghurbatī at the end of the same line means 'my exile'. All in all, and leaving aside for the moment the use of the verb āraja in line 94 (93), I am rather inclined to think that we are dealing with the theme of hijra here and not that of mi<sup>c</sup>rāj. It should certainly be pointed out that taking al-quds as Jerusalem is contrary to the grammar of the hemistich, which continues: min nūri unsihi; the pronoun here seems certainly to refer back to al-quds, but since it is masculine it should be taken as belonging to a male person, rather than to Jerusalem, which is properly feminine. I have tried to resolve the question of whether the text here should be read al-quds or al-qudus (as I originally took it) by scanning the line. Unfortunately, although the ode is supposed to have been written in the same metre as Ibn al-Farid's original Naẓm al-sulūk, which is in tawīl, Baha' Allah's poem is virtually unscannable. I admit that scansion is not something in which I am expert, and I would be very happy if Juan or someone else could suggest a method by which the qaṣīda could be fairly scanned. In any case, line 93 (92) does not scan regularly and could be open to a reading of al-qudus, although I will accept that bi 'l-quds matches the subsequent readings of bi 'l-tā, bi 'l-nūr, and bi 'l-rūh.

At this stage, I do not wish to offer any very definite interpretation of these lines; but I would like to make a tentative suggestion as to what they are about. One of the linguistic oddities of lines 92-94 (91-93) is the recurrent but not obviously consistent use of the preposition bi with a variety of verbs before it. The chief problem caused by this is in the second hemistich of line 93 (92), where the text reads something like 'I emigrated with OR to OR in al-tā'. Now, if al-tā be taken (as Mr Cole has taken it) as a reference to Tehran (ard al-tā), the interpretation of this passage becomes problematic. Juan suggests some sort of hijra in Tehran, although I find it hard to guess what this might be. His imprisonment in the Siyah Chāl perhaps? And how does all of this relate to 'the day of my mission' (yawma ba<sup>c</sup>thatī) or his belief in 'al-nūr'? At the risk of sticking my neck out a little far, may I offer the following for the consideration of readers?

Al-nūr and al-nūr al-<sup>c</sup>alī are <sup>possible</sup> references to Baha's half-brother, Ṣubḥ-i Azal. In several of his less well-known works of the Baghdad period, including a letter to Mirza Muhammad Hadi Qazvini and a wasāya in Arabic, Baha' Allah speaks of his brother in terms such as this, usually as tal<sup>c</sup>at (or wajh) al-nūr (the countenance of light), and expresses his servitude towards him. It is worth comparing a passage in the wasāya with line 119 (118) of this poem. In the wasāya, Baha' Allah writes: 'Is the countenance of light (wijhat al-nūr -- sic) who has sat upon the throne of command and decrees from behind the veil a matter on the part of God?' Here he says: 'Recognize the face of light (wajh al-nūr) in the innermost part of the unseen'.

I would continue to argue that al-qudus and al-tā are references to Mulla Muhammad 'Ali Barfurushi Quddus and Qurrat al-<sup>c</sup>Ayn respectively: there is certainly plenty of evidence for the use of al-tā or 'the letter tā' in reference to the latter. Again, the reference to al-nūr in line 94 (93) is, I think, an allusion to Subh-i Azal. The first hemistich may be compared with the following passage from Baha' Allah's wasāya: 'I am a servant who has

believed in God and in the countenance of light'. The succession of al-nūr and al-rūh in that same line is paralleled by the following passage from the wasāya: 'Say: the light of God has encompassed you from all sides and the spirit of the command assists you at every moment'. Unfortunately, I have no immediate suggestions as to the identity of al-rūh in line 94 (93), if the word is, indeed, to be taken in this way.

I would, therefore, suggest the following translation for these lines:

- 92 What matters it if I am at this moment in exile?  
I attained to (the presence of) the exalted light on the day I was given my mission.
- 93 And I associated with Quddus out of the light of his familiarity,  
and I wandered with Tahira at the time when I was a stranger.
- 94 And I believed in the light out of the light of my inner being,  
and I ascended with (to?) the spirit in the mystery of my inmost heart.

What is all of this a reference to? I would suggest that it relates in some way to the events of Badasht, when Baha' Allah met with and associated with Subh-i Azal, Quddus, and Tahira, leaving afterwards with Tahira when the Babi contingent was forced to leave the vicinity. It is quite possible that Baha' Allah may have been given some form of mission to carry out by Mirza Yahya, which would be the ba<sup>c</sup>tha alluded to in line 92. (It should be noted that, although 'prophetic mission/calling' is a perfectly correct translation of ba<sup>c</sup>tha -- or bi<sup>c</sup>tha -- it is by no means the exclusive or ordinary meaning of the word.) Of course, something more than a mundane mission may be involved here, a view that would fit in well with the conditions of Babism at this period.

I am as yet uncertain how to understand the possibly related lines 119-20 (118-19) and 123 (122), which refer to 'the countenance of light', 'the beauty of holiness' (jamāl al-quds) and 'the mystery of holiness' (sirr al-quds). (But on the notion of the spirit of Quddus having been reincarnated in Ṣubḥ-i Azal, see Nuqtat al-kāf, p.243.)

I realize that the above reading will, in part at least, probably prove unacceptable to most Baha'is since it has implications that do not fit in too well with the standard picture of relations between Baha' Allah and Subh-i Azal. Nevertheless, evidence supportive of such an interpretation does exist and I hope to subject some or all of it to a closer analysis in the course of a paper I plan to write this summer.

- 18 With regard to lines 95 and 96 (94, 95), Mr Cole suggests that the word مالك in each be read as mā laki (you have no part of) rather than as the imperative mālik, and I find myself entirely in agreement.
- 19 In line 111 (110), Mr Cole suggests (correctly, I believe) that wat'a must be understood to mean, not 'oppression' but 'footstep'.
- 20 In line 123 (122), the word 'assistance' is a misprint for 'existence'.

May I once again thank Mr Cole for sharing his comments with me and allowing me thus to draw the attention of readers to some alternative readings and interpretations of passages in this extremely recondite poem. There can be no doubt but that further study will lead to considerable progress in our understanding of this important early Babi-Baha'i text.

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RESPONSE TO Dr. Denis MacEoin, "al-Qasida al-warqa'iyah: Further Comments.

Denis MacEoin condensed the points I made in discussing his rendering of the very difficult and obscure ode by Baha'u'llah into 17 basic critiques. I should say that he replied with a commendable graciousness. He fully accepted almost half of my suggestions for revision (some involving words or structures that recurred in the poem). In another 5 instances he found my suggestions plausible but still had reservations. In only 4 cases did he more or less reject my points.

While I do not wish to draw this discussion out or debase it with minutiae, I do want to reply in length to his remarks on the crucial lines 90 to 94 of the poem.

As for the other points of clear dispute, I think a native speaker of Arabic will confirm that *tib ash-shamal* means the north wind and not "perfume of the left" (line 7); the latter phrase gives no clear meaning in the first place, and I am surprised Dr. MacEoin felt constrained to defend this rendering. Moreover, the north wind in Arabic literature has pleasant connotations, as does the very word *tib*.

The reading "ghayatayl-l-quswa" in point no. 4, with the first word in the dual is highly unlikely and idiosyncratic. It does not scan, and is grammatically impossible since the modifier *al-quswa* would also have to be dual. There seems little doubt that the phrase, quite simply, means "my highest goal." Even Occam's razor would so rule.

In line 11, *tha'r* means blood; this is another case of the poet's ubiquity--all the blood spilled in the world is from the tears of blood he shed.

In line 61 (point 15), Dr. MacEoin has committed a solecism with his use of the word 'fail,' which a quick glance at a style guide will confirm. It is wrong to say "The General failed to send his troops." when one means he sent no troops. That is the sense in which he misused the word.

These are mere quibbles. Much more important are the points raised in Dr. MacEoin's no. 17, concerning the interpretation of lines 91 through 94 of the poem. I have offered an interpretation of these lines, which I hope will be printed in full in this issue of the bulletin. Dr. MacEoin says that he thinks the main theme is emigration/hijrah and not ascension/mi'raj. However, I see no reason for an either/or interpretation. The central events of the Prophet's spiritual biography were his reception of a prophetic mission (*bi'thah*), his night-journey to Jerusalem (*al-Quds*) and subsequent ascension (*mi'raj*) into heaven, and his emigration (*hijrah*) from Mecca

to Medinah. Now, in the space of only a few lines we encounter four key-words from this prophetic biography (*bi'thah/mission*, *al-Quds/Jerusalem*, *ascension/arajtu*, and *hijrah/emigration*). It seems clear to me that these lines evoke the biography of the Prophet, and they do so very possibly to make the point that Baha'u'llah himself had had rather prophetic experiences. Certainly, the use of the word "my mission" (*bi'thati*) cannot help taking on very serious overtones in this context.

Dr. MacEoin, however, tentatively rejects my interpretation, questioning whether the word *al-quds* means Jerusalem here and wondering whether *at-Ta'* might not refer to *Tahirah*, with the phrase the "exalted light" referring to Mirza Yahya Nuri "Subh-i Azal." The whole complex, he suggests, may make reference to *Badasht*.

I can only say that, even as a tentative construction, this interpretation strikes me as fanciful and wholly unsubstantiated. Moreover, it hinges on an interpretation of the Arabic that cannot be correct.

Dr. MacEoin reads *hajartu bi't-Ta'* as "I wandered with *Tahira*" rather than as "I emigrated in *Tehran*." Now, "bi" in Arabic is an instrumental preposition (*harf al-alah*) and does not generally (never in the case of verbs of motion) have the overtones of "in the company of" that the English "with" carries. The sense of to accompany is carried in Arabic by another preposition, *ma'a*. Thus, in English I can say both that "I went with *Tahirah* to the store" and "I hit the door with my hand." The first "with" means in the company of, the second means "by the instrumentality of." In Arabic, you would have to use "ma'a" for the first sentence. "*Dhahabtu ma'a Tahirah ila ad-dukkan*." But for the second, "bi" must be used. "*Darabtu'l-baba bi yaddi*." To mix up these two Arabic "withs" is a common error for English-speakers. We are constantly hitting the door in the company of our hands.

The reading tentatively proposed by Dr. MacEoin commits precisely this error. "*Hajartu bi't-Ta'*" simply cannot mean "I wandered with *Tahirah*." That would be "*Hajartu ma'a Tahirah*." This is generally true of verbs of motion. Likewise, "*Dhahabtu bi Tahirah*" does not mean I went with *Tahirah*; rather, it has sinister overtones. I travelled by plane is "*Safartu bi't-tayyarah*." One cannot say "I travelled with *Tahirah*" by saying "*Safartu bi Tahirah*." That would mean she was the mode of transportation. I am afraid "*Hajartu bi Tahirah*" would either mean Baha'u'llah rode on her shoulders, or--well, let's just say it does not work.

The other meaning of "bi" is "in." "I lived in the Arab world five years" would be "*Sakintu bi'l-'alam al-'Arabi khams sanawat*." Thus, if "*Ta'*" meant *Tehran*, "*Hajartu bi't-Ta'*" would mean "I emigrated in *Tehran*." Moreover, this emigration or "*hijrah*" could have been from the comfort of the life of a wealthy minister's son to the rigors of the *Siyah Chal*, paralleling the *hijrah* of the Prophet from Mecca to Medinah. Since we know that Baha'u'llah wrote that he underwent mystical experiences in the *Siyah Chal*, saw his "hour!" for the first time, was assured of victory, and determined to reform

the Babi community, this would appear to be the referent of his "mission" (bi'thah). Elsewhere in the poem, Baha'u'llah makes explicit mention of the scars on his skin caused by manacles, presumably those he received in the Siyah Chal.

Dr. MacEoin's attempt to make every appearance of the word "al-quds" refer to Quddus, again, strikes me as idiosyncratic and untenable. Baha'u'llah was writing for Sufis in Sulaymaniyyah, Quddus had been dead for years, and anyway "al-quds" has many perfectly good ordinary meanings one would expect to find in a mystical poem, quite aside from its fairly obvious meaning in line 93 of Jerusalem. But I think the grammatical points above have in any case seriously undermined his tentative interpretation of these important verses.

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COMMENTS UPON COMMENTS, GLOSSES UPON GLOSSES: SOME REMARKS ON JUAN COLE'S REMARKS

Much as I dislike having to do so, I feel obliged to offer one or two remarks about Juan Cole's further comments on my translation of the Qasida warqa'iyya. Perhaps I should first say one or two words in defence of the editor of the Bulletin, whom Mr Cole criticises for having failed to publish his original remarks in full. This was, in fact, done at my suggestion, partly because it seemed to me to simplify things if I could simultaneously describe and comment on his remarks, but more because I wanted to defuse a potentially delicate situation and save Mr Cole some embarrassment. To put it simply, I thought many of his remarks were expressed in a high-handed, arrogant manner which at times reached the low level of a schoolteacher reprimanding a rather slow pupil (as is again the case in his most recent remarks). I have previously drawn this tendency to Mr Cole's attention in private correspondence, and I hope he does not mind my raising it here again, even though it be at the cost of his considerable amour propre. Juan is a brilliant scholar for whom I have a great deal of respect and not a little envy, but I do wish he could learn that, when others disagree with him, it is not necessarily because they are wrong or incompetent. Well, I shall leave it for other readers to draw their own conclusions: perhaps I am too sensitive, and maybe I really do need to be slapped down from above every now and then.

I suppose I ought to begin by responding to one of Mr Cole's rather annoying minutiae, his remarks about the use of the word 'fail' in line 61. Now, I'm willing to accept that 'fail to meet the demands of love' is rather inelegant, although largely dictated by the original. But I'm a bit fed up with all this pedantic niggling about the use of 'fail' in English in general. A 'quick glance at a style guide' does not, I fear, confirm Mr Cole's point. None of the several guides in my library even mentions this problem. And the remark about generals failing to send troops is as incorrect as the earlier remark about 'fail' only meaning the opposite of 'succeed'. Let's leave aside the Shorter Oxford Dictionary and refer instead to the Concise, which gives six meanings of fail, 'neglect, not remember or not choose' and provides as examples, 'he failed to appear' and 'don't fail to let me know'. Even the much smaller dictionary section of the Oxford Guide to the English Language provides the meanings of 'neglect or be unable; disappoint'. I don't wish to seem pedantic myself about this, merely to express my impatience with Mr Cole's pedagogic smart-alekness based on something he has once read in some obscure style guide. If, of course, he wants to write independently to Oxford University Press, I'm sure they will be delighted to learn that their dictionaries are so full of elementary solecisms.

I won't say much about the comments on my interpretation of lines 91 to 94. I did say that my suggestions were tentative (although I don't see why they deserve to be regarded as 'fanciful and wholly unsubstantiated' any more, at least, than Cole's own interpretation) and I am happy to relinquish them in favour of something more substantial should it come along. In fact, now that Mr Cole is talking of the prophet's biography and not exclusively about his mi'rā'ij, I am inclined to think there may be something in what he says. But I do take exception to the attempt to undermine my interpretation by such high-handed 'correction' of my Arabic. Why doesn't he just say my suggestions are rank heresy and be done with it? I certainly don't need Mr Cole to teach me Arabic. I've no doubt his Arabic is wonderful and much better than mine; but I have studied, read, and taught the language for thirteen years and I have, for example, learnt one or two basic points of grammar, such as the use of the prepositions bi and ma'a. By failing (sic) to respect the fact that I may know almost as much as he does about Arabic grammar, he assumes that I must be making elementary mistakes and instead runs after the red herring of prepositions while neglecting to ask why I might have suggested such a reading in the first place. And his failure to do that is crucial.

I believe I am correct when I say that I have probably read a great many more Babi texts and possibly at least as many Baha'i texts as Mr Cole himself. Now, if immersion in those texts has taught me anything it is this, that one cannot read this material very usefully with a grammar book in one hand. Surely Mr Cole is aware of the common Muslim criticism of Babi and Baha'i scripture,

that it is frequently, sometimes seriously, ungrammatical -- a point to which the standard reply has always been that God is free to play with the rules of human grammar as he sees fit. If instead of turning pedantically to his grammars, Mr Cole were to develop a sensitivity to the style and phrasing of these texts, he would, I think, find himself better equipped to handle them. Frequently, of course, even sensitive reading will fail to grasp the correct meaning of a word or phrase, but in such cases the grammar is seldom likely to be of much help either. Now, Baha' Allah's Arabic is not, on the whole, good Arabic (unlike that of his son 'Abbas), and I am frankly uneasy at attempts to read it as if it must be, as if it should correspond to the rules of modern standard Arabic, with which Mr Cole is familiar.

With that as a general background, however, I think it will be as well to draw Mr Cole's attention to the fact that, even according to the technicalities of the Arab grammarians, the points he has made so confidently about the use of the preposition *bi* do not always hold true. Of course *ma'a* is the normal Arabic for 'with' in the sense of 'in the company of', but that doesn't mean that *bi* never has that meaning, as Mr Cole seems to suppose. Let me, for example, quote Wright's grammar (vol.2, p.158): 'From the idea of contact there arises, in the case of a superior and inferior or primary and secondary object, that of companionship and connection; as *سار باهله* he set out with his household; ... *اشترى البعير* he bought the ass together with its bridle'. Or again (p.159), referring to the use of *bi* for 'the relation between the act and its object' which is always the case after intransitive verbs... especially such as indicate motion, e.g. *قام*, to come, *راح*, to go away, *سار*, to depart, set out, *رأى*, to see, *قام* to get up, rise, *سار*, to be high, etc. These verbs are construed with *ب* and the genitive of the thing, accompanied by, or in connection with, which one performs the act they denote.'

But perhaps I can illustrate this better by quoting one or two passages taken at random from a writer whose Arabic was, if not as good as Mr Cole's, at least a lot better than mine, Shaykh Ahmad al-Ahsa'i. In a short *risala* on physical resurrection, for example, he writes *تدخل (الروح) بجسمها فيه (الجسد الثاني) فيخرج* 'it (the spirit) enters into it (the second body) with its corporeality and leaves it in the resurrection from the grave and the accounting with its *jism* and its *jasad*' (*Jawāmi al-kilām*) -- compare *al-Risāla al-khāqāniyya*: *وإما الذي يخرج مع الروح فهو الجسم الحقيقي* 'that which leaves with the spirit is the true body', where *ma'a* is used as an equivalent for *bi* above. Or again, in a short *risala* on the *barsakh*: *خرجت (الروح) به من البدن* 'it (the spirit) went with it (its earthly form) out of the body' (*Jawāmi*, vol.2, p.245).

I am not trying to score points here. What I am trying to do is to get across that, if Mr Cole could muster up enough respect for my abilities and feel a little less for his own, he might spend less time 'correcting' my assumed mistakes and rather more thinking about the ideas I am trying to convey. Grammar is important (as I daily tell my students), but it must be secondary to a feel for the language, especially when one is dealing with such unconventional texts. I would certainly never advise a student to use *bi* whenever *ma'a* is the more normal preposition, but I would hardly want to criticize him if he found *bi* in a text where he might have expected to find *ma'a*. I tend not to think much about grammar when I am reading or translating, but prefer to try to get the feel of what the writer wants to say. Quite often I make mistakes, but occasionally I am correct. Actually, Mr Cole, I am frequently correct. I think my reading of these lines is, on grammatical grounds, at least, still quite defensible. It certainly has not been 'undermined'.

In the meantime, I am still waiting for an explanation of how Mr Cole thinks Baha' Allah could have 'emigrated in Tehran'. One emigrates 'from' and 'to', not 'in', even in Arabic. And the transition from wealth to the rigours of a prison cannot be a parallel for Muhammad's move from the persecutions of Mecca to a position of power and ultimate triumph in Medina. To maintain that is to turn upside down the whole significance of the *hijra* in Muslim consciousness. There, I think, we should leave things for the moment.

On an Episode in the  
Childhood of the Bāb

البيرو والحواسب بجسمه وحده

William Collins

In his essay on "An Episode in the Childhood of Siyyid Ali Muhammad the Bab" Stephen Lambden has made an excellent comparison of the stories of the Báb's experience in school, with the stories related of Jesus's first day in school by Christians and Muslims. From what appear to be obvious parallels and even borrowings, Lambden concludes that "it seems likely that the accounts of the Báb's first day in the school of Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid [sic] ...are highly hagiographic reworkings of elements contained in the Islāmic versions of Jesus' first day at school. It may be the case that the Báb was an intelligent and unusual youth and that his teacher felt compelled to take him home in light of this. Yet the elaborate accounts in the Tārīkh-i-Jadīd and the Tārīkh-i-Nabīl doubtless owe not a little to the speculative piety of Bābī-Bahā'í historians who were active before the 1880's." While it is certainly true that there are clear similarities in the Islamic stories of Jesus's childhood, and the Bābī-Bahá'í versions of the Báb's, the conclusion which Stephen Lambden has reached is not the only one possible under the circumstances.

One of the problems of any historical-textual research is the sifting of fact from humanly transmitted accounts, humans being inherently subjective and interpretive in their observations. Part of any scholar's deductions must involve the determination of the probable veracity of any transmitter of historical data. In the case of the Báb's first day at school, we have at present no other way to check the accuracy of Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid's statement, except for the corroborative testimony of Āqá Muhammad Ibrāhīm-i-Ismā'īl Bag, which Balyuzi summarizes in his biography of the Báb.<sup>1</sup> But in the case of both of these men, they claim to have been eye-witnesses to the events—a quite different case than with the line of transmission of apocryphal stories told by Muslims and Christians about the first day Jesus attended school. It also seems clear that, in the case of Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid, Nabīl felt him to be a reliable reporter of events, and that Bahá'u'lláh (who reviewed the manuscript of Nabīl's narrative) accepted <sup>C</sup>Ábid's testimony as true.

We may of course question whether the Báb's teacher was not influenced by the effect of his own conversion to the Bābī Faith. It is indeed also possible that legendary tales of Jesus may have become commingled with the story told by Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid in the minds of other Bābīs and Bahá'ís; but it seems doubtful that Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid, in his own reporting, would have become so deluded as to have forgotten exactly how he experienced the Báb

in his school. Time and conversion may have colored his reporting, but it would seem more logical to accept this eye-witness as having the best claim to be a reporter of a substantially correct account.

The curious closeness of the story told of the Báb, and the legendary stories of Jesus's first day in school, juxtaposed with the probable veracity of Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid's account, may lead us to another reassessment. Could it be that there is something true in the legendary stories of the childhood of Jesus and of other Prophets? Even if we were to remove the various miracles and wonders which have appeared in some of the apocryphal stories, there still remains an indication that these were children of unusual ability, intelligence and perception. That Jesus Christ and Mīrzá <sup>C</sup>Alī Muhammad the Báb became, as adults, claimants to religious callings which have captured the imaginations and influenced the lives of millions, would certainly point to their having been extraordinary as children. We might thus accept that the 'legends' of superhuman childhood intelligence of the various Founders of religions may actually be quite accurate in this detail, though the specific historical 'facts' may become mixed with other elements.

The specific historical detail aside, we must also raise the question of how 'myth' and 'legend' embody truth. Even if we were to admit that the stories of the precocious childhoods of the Prophets were mere fanciful inventions in terms of their factual accuracy, we would have to pose the question of whether or not the historical truth or falsehood of the reported events is in itself adequate to the meaning of the stories. Catholic theologian Hans Küng writes:

The poem, the parable or legend has its own rationality. It underlines, stresses, brings out, gives concrete shape; the truth announced can be more relevant than that which is contained in a historical account.... [The main interest is not in what really happened...but in the practical question of what it means for us....—(emphasis in original)

Therefore, though we may speculate on possible influences of legendary accounts of Jesus's childhood, the probable veracity of Shaykh <sup>C</sup>Ábid's statement—based upon his having been an eye-witness, as well as based upon a traditional authority shown in trust placed in his account by Bahá'u'lláh and Nabīl—would lead us to a re-examination of Lambden's conclusion. We also must review our understanding of such stories as that of the Báb's first day at school to come to terms with the meaning, which arises from, yet transcends, the question of their historical truth.

## NOTES

1. R. M. Balyuzi, The Báb: the Herald of the Day of Days (Oxford: George Ronald, 1973), pp. 34-5.
  2. Hans Küng, On Being a Christian (London: Collins, 1974), p. 416.
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A Brief Reply to William Collins' Remarks on "An Episode in the Childhood.."

Stephen Lambden

May I at the outset express my thanks to William Collins for taking the trouble to make some interesting remarks on my article "An Episode.." (see above). While it is not my intention to respond to his remarks in detail I should like to make the following few points.

Mr Collins notes that "historical-textual research" involves the sifting of "fact" from "humanly transmitted accounts" which may contain interpretive or subjective elements. In line with Muslim hadith criticism he holds that the scholar should bear in mind the "probable veracity" of "any transmitter of historical data". With this I do not disagree though it is important to realize, given the milieu within which Bābī-Bahā'ī historical narratives originated, that the personal veracity, piety or Bābī-Bahā'ī status of transmitters is not in itself a guarantee of historical reliability. Devoted and pious religionists, especially when relating stories about the object of their devotion— or indeed their bitter enemies— frequently embellish or supplement (with "myth") even personally experienced historical events. The saintly characters from whom certain narratives contained in Bābī-Bahā'ī historical sources originate were, despite and as a result of their piety, given to 'myth-making' for 'myth' is an important vehicle for the expression of meta-historical religious perspectives. 19th century Bābī-Bahā'ī history writing is not modern historico-critical research and is often informed by apologetic and polemical considerations. What 'took place' is sometimes mixed with what 'ought to have taken place' or what cannot possibly have occurred. The piety of Bābī-Bahā'ī writers is, in other words, no certain guarantee that historical narratives— sometimes indirectly attributed to them— allegedly transmitted by them are historically accurate. Certain documents and texts which purport to give eye-witness accounts by leading Bābis or Bahā'īs are known to be inconsistent or inaccurate.

The recognition of the above observations is not, I believe, a departure from 'Bahā'ī orthodoxy' but a necessary appreciation of the non-historical but crucially important religious dimension of Bābī-Bahā'ī historiography. That Bābī-Bahā'ī narratives at certain points 'go beyond what took place' enhances rather than lowers their interest to all but the naively 'fundamentalist historian'. Whether or not (for example) the Bāb or Bahā'u'llāh actually did 'X' or 'Y' or whatever is not unimportant but certain narratives related by their pious devotees are most meaningful in the light of the religious message conveyed by their alleged doing of 'X' or 'Y'.

Determining whether or not a given Bābī-Bahā'ī historical narrative is 'historically accurate' involves much more than merely assessing the "probable veracity" of narrators. Parallel and divergent accounts must be carefully examined. Possible apologetic or polemical intentions must be taken into account in the light of the ( more or less pre-critical ) ' religious and ideological milieu ' in which narrators lived. The critical examination ( to use Muslim terms ) of both isnāds ( chains of transmission ) and matn ( the content, what is transmitted ) is in certain connections necessary. It must be remembered that Bābī-Bahā'ī historical sources contain pericopes that must have been orally circulating for several decades and which were subject to additions, omissions and alterations.

Though it would be a gross exaggeration to assert that Bābī-Bahā'ī historical sources stand in need of wholesale 'demythologization' the recognition that 'mythical elements' exist and the appreciation— and not mere condemnation—of their meaning is important. For the mature Christian believer the recognition of the 'mythic element' in the Gospels does not devalue these writings. Similarly, it seems to me, mature Bahā'īs need not be troubled by the meaningful 'mythic element' in Bābī-Bahā'ī historical narratives. Theologically speaking, religious truth goes beyond what 'actually took place'.

As Collins notes the story of the Bāb's 'first day at school' is, in both the Tārīkh-i Jadīd and Tārīkh-i Nabīl, attributed to his one-time teacher Shaykh 'Ābid. In the former source it is stated that this was one of the "anecdotes" which he "used to relate" and in the latter that "he related" it. The details of what Shaykh 'Ābid is said to have related in these two sources however, diverge at several points. Shaykh 'Ābid cannot have been responsible for both these versions in all their details. Indeed, Shaykh 'Ābid died around 1846-7 about 35 years before the Tārīkh-i Jadīd was written and almost 45 years before Nabīl-i Zarandī completed his Bābī-Bahā'ī history. The authors of neither the Tārīkh-i Jadīd nor Tārīkh-i Nabīl had, it is very likely, ever met Shaykh 'Ābid— Nabīl-i Zarandī became a Bābī about two years after he died. They are thus not relating direct from the Bāb's teacher and provide no chain for the transmission of the story of the Bāb's 'first day at his school.' The story contained in the Tārīkh-i Jadīd and Tārīkh-i Nabīl is not then a direct eye-witness testimony but a narrative attributed to an eye-witness ( Shaykh 'Ābid ) by others. If we assume that it originated with Shaykh 'Ābid ( and this remains uncertain ) it must have been orally circulating for between 35 and 45 years before being written down. In this light it is not unreasonable to assume that the story in question is largely a pious though meaningful invention which probably originated in the 1850's (?) and which was inspired by

the Christian-Islāmic apocryphal accounts of 'Jesus and the alphabet'. The story is not, as Collins asserts, corroborated by the testimony of Āqā Muḥammad Ibrahim Ismā'īl Bag ( reported in the Tārīkh-i Amrī-yi Shiraz ) for , though inspired by similar motives, it is an independent and basically different narration. It is also obvious that the differing accounts in the Tārīkh-i Jadīd and Tārīkh-i Nabīl as compared with that attributed to Āqā Muḥammad Ibrahim Ismā'īl Bag cannot both represent the Bāb's 'first day' at school.

Furthermore, the concerns and milieu within which pious 19th century Bābī-Bahā'ī narrators lived was not, it seems to me, that different from the sitz-im-leben that inspired pious Christian "inventors" of apocryphal and hagiographically oriented Gospels. While I am not suggesting that the authors of the Tārīkh-i Jadīd and Tārīkh-i Nabīl were mere "myth-makers" it cannot be ruled out that they drew on narratives which contain mythic elements or which were embellished in the process of oral transmission. That this was the case, is, it appears, illustrated by the very story of the Bāb's 'first day at school'.

Nabīl-i Zarandī, not one of those two persons Bahā'u'llāh alone considered aware of the origins of the Bābī-Bahā'ī Faith (= Mirzā Mūsā [ Bahā'u'llāh's brother ] and Mullā 'Abd al-Karīm Qazwīnī also known as Mirza Ahmad [ see Lawh-i Nasīr in Majmū'a-yi Alwāh Mubāraka, Cairo 1920, p.174 ) was not, as indicated, in a position to judge the accuracy of Shaykh 'Ābid's alleged narration of the Bāb's 'first day at school'. He may have considered Shaykh 'Ābid to have been a "reliable reporter" ( so Collins ) but this does not in itself prove the historicity of the narrative attributed to him. In all likelihood he considered the story of the Bāb's 'first day at school' to be an impressive testimony to the remarkable youth of the Bāb and therefore included it in his narrative without worrying unduly about its historicity.

As Collins notes, it is known that Nabīl had the assistance of Mirzā Mūsā ( cf. above ) in compiling his chronicle and that " parts of the manuscripts were reviewed and approved, some by Bahā'u'llāh, and others by 'Abdu'l-Bahā " ( see The Dawnbreakers, trans. Shoghi Effendi [ London 1953 ], p. xxxiv ). That this was the case need not be taken to indicate that the narrative attributed to Shaykh 'Ābid is, in all its details, ' historical fact ' or that ( to quote Collins ) " Bahā'u'llāh ( Who reviewed the manuscript of Nabīl's narrative ) accepted 'Ābid's testimony as true ". Firstly, we do not know which " parts of the manuscripts " ( note the plural manuscripts ) or which manuscript ( see ibid ) was reviewed by Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā ; or, in other words, whether they considered Shaykh 'Ābid's narration to



be historically accurate. Such may or may not have been the case. Secondly, that Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā "reviewed" parts of the manuscripts of Nabīl's narrative does not necessarily mean that they were operating like modern reviewers who might be particularly concerned with empirical historical accuracy. If a given narrative, such as that attributed to Shaykh 'Abid, expressed a 'spiritual truth' Bahā'u'llāh and 'Abdu'l-Bahā might have regarded it as acceptable whether or not it represented 'historical fact' in all its details. In this light it is worth bearing in mind that 'Abdu'l-Bahā "reviewed" many of the writings of early Western Bahā'īs, praised them and gave them permission to publish. A good many of them however, contain— as 'Abdu'l-Bahā was doubtless well aware— ideas which are not in accordance with Bahā'ī teaching. His generous doctrinal liberality designed to encourage and foster unity outweighed a rigid imposition of doctrinal orthodoxy in secondary matters. It is not then, enough to assert that Bahā'u'llāh and/or 'Abdu'l-Bahā reviewed Nabīl's narrative in order to maintain the historicity of Shaykh 'Abid's narrative of the Bāb's 'first day at school'.

That the narrative of the Bāb's 'first day at school' embodies meaning, as Collins asserts and as I have indicated above, is important. In my original article I do not deny this. I do not mean to suggest that the story is a "meaningless fabrication" or that Nabīl's narrative is not an extremely important and generally reliable historical chronicle.

Finally, I should like to point out that Bahā'ī status or 'orthodoxy' is neither enhanced by nor dependent upon an uncritical acceptance of the narratives reported by Bahā'ī historians. They are neither "infallible" nor part of authoritative Bahā'ī scripture. Any Bahā'ī intellectual who has made a thorough study of the many Bābī-Bahā'ī historical writings will be only too aware of the detailed work that needs to be done in order to sift 'historical fact' from 'error' and 'myth'. Bahā'ī historiography is in its infancy. Numerous and conflicting accounts of certain episodes exist in Muslim, Bābī, Azālī and Bahā'ī sources that have, on the whole, never been critically examined. As Shoghi Effendi himself indicated in his letters, much work needs to be done by future Bahā'ī historians.

NOTES, COMMUNICATIONS AND  
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL MISCELLANY

I

RESPONSES TO IRANIAN ANTI-BAHA'I POLEMIC

Reproduced below and following a letter to Mr. Robert Stauffer\* are two statements written on behalf of the Baha'i International Community. The first, dated November 1982 (see below pp. 68—75) is a 'Statement in Rebuttal of Accusations made Against the Baha'i Faith by the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations (General Assembly, 37th session, November 1982)'. The second, dated August 1983, is a 'A Commentary on the Document, "Baháism—Its Origins and its Role" (see pp. 76—84 below).

The booklet Baháism—Its Origins and its Role is 54 pp long and was published (in English) in Holland (P.O. Box 85567 The Hague) around August 1983. Its first half (pp. 3-24) consists of an extremely naive and ill-informed account of the alleged "facts" of Bahā'ī history and teaching. The rest of the booklet is made up by 'Exhibits No's 1-36': No's 1-16 being citations from miscellaneous Bahā'ī publications (allegedly backing up statements made in part one of the book) and No's 17-36 (for the most part) reports by Iranian Intelligence Agencies on internal Bahā'ī activities.

(Ed).

\* Robert Stauffer has kindly communicated the documents/letters reproduced on pp. 66—84 (below).

# BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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Representative  
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Dr. Victor de Araujo  
Alternate Representative  
Mr. Gerald Knight

2 February 1984

Mr. Robert Stauffer,  
818 N. 30th,  
Renton, WA 98056.

Dear Mr. Stauffer,

Thank you for your letter of 27 January 1984, in which you raise various queries in connection with two items of anti-Bahá'í literature currently being disseminated on campuses by the Muslim Students' Organization.

The first document you mention, entitled "Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran: A review of the facts", made its first appearance when members of the Iranian delegation to the United Nations distributed it to representatives to the Third Committee of the 37th General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters on 23 November 1982. The Bahá'í International Community immediately prepared and circulated to representatives to the Third Committee a written rebuttal of the false allegations contained in the Iranian document. A few days later, on 30 November 1982, a slightly amended version of the rebuttal statement, together with relevant excerpts from the Iranian document, was mailed to all Ambassadors to the United Nations. A copy of the 30 November document, with its attachment, is enclosed for your information.

For the answers to your queries concerning the Bahá'ís (or alleged Bahá'ís) who are identified as having held high office under the Shah, please see pages 4 and 5 of the rebuttal statement.

With regard to the five men listed on page 31 of the Iranian document, all are (or were) Bahá'ís. For details of their fate, please see pages 6 and 7 of the rebuttal statement. There are no grounds whatsoever for believing that those who were released from jail won their freedom by recanting their faith. It has long been the policy of the Iranian authorities to sow doubt and uncertainty among the members of the Bahá'í community by carrying out arbitrary arrests of Bahá'ís and by ordering equally arbitrary releases of some Bahá'í prisoners. Frequently, those released are subsequently re-arrested.

The second document you mention - the booklet entitled "Baháism: Its origins and its role" - made its first appearance in a United Nations forum on 19 August 1983, when representatives of the Government of Iran circulated it to the members of the United Nations Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities at its 36th session in Geneva.

- 1 -

Mr. Robert Stauffer  
page 2

2 February 1984

The Bahá'í International Community was already aware of the existence of this document and had prepared a written rebuttal, which was immediately circulated to the members of the Sub-Commission. Copies of the Iranian booklet and of our commentary upon it are enclosed for your information.

Once again, the answers to your questions concerning Bahá'ís, or alleged Bahá'ís, named in the Iranian document are to be found in the Bahá'í International Community's rebuttal - see pages 6 and 7.

We are grateful to you for sending us your first-hand report of the anti-Bahá'í activities being carried out on American campuses by the Muslim Students' Organization. Since we believe that the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States would also be interested in this information, we are sending to the National Assembly a copy of your letter, and of our reply.

With loving Bahá'í greetings,

*Margaret N. Knight*

Margaret N. Knight  
Alternate Representative for Human Rights

Encs: 4

cc: National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the United States

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30 November 1982

STATEMENT IN REBUTTAL  
OF ACCUSATIONS MADE AGAINST THE BAHÁ'Í FAITH BY THE  
PERMANENT MISSION OF THE ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN TO THE UNITED NATIONS  
General Assembly, 37th session, November 1982

In a document entitled "Human Rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran - a review of the facts" circulated to representatives to the Third Committee of the 37th session of the General Assembly at United Nations Headquarters on 23 November 1982, the delegation of the Islamic Republic of Iran made a number of false and damaging statements concerning the nature of the Bahá'í Faith and the activities of its followers. The Bahá'í International Community wishes to refute these false statements and to present the true facts.

(For ease of reference, copies of the relevant pages of Iran's report are attached).

1. The Bahá'í Faith is accused of being "a political entity created and nourished by anti-Islamic and Colonial Powers" (see page 27 paragraph 3 of the report). Reference is made to "the Bahá'í espionage network" (p.3. para 2) and it is alleged that "a very sophisticated and systematic espionage network has been established by the Bahá'ís" (p.29 para 2). Other references of a similar nature appear elsewhere in the report.

The Bahá'í International Community categorically denies these allegations. Participation in partisan politics, and involvement in any form of subversive activity, are both totally forbidden to Bahá'ís in accordance with the most fundamental principles of their faith.

Bahá'í communities exist in countries throughout the world and their activities are known to the governments of these countries to be non-political, non-partisan and peaceful.

The activities of Bahá'í communities in every part of the world are open to scrutiny and, in view of the serious nature of the charges made by the Iranian government in this world forum, the Bahá'í International Community invites the establishment of an impartial body of inquiry to mount a thorough investigation into the activities of the Bahá'í world community.

2. All the allegations made against the Bahá'ís in Iran are based on deliberate misinterpretations of the aims and purposes of the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings. The most common charges levelled against the Bahá'ís - and repeated in Iran's new report - are as follows:

1. Bahá'ís are accused of being political supporters of the late Shah and of having benefited from the former regime.
2. Bahá'ís are accused of being a political organization opposed to the present Iranian government.
3. Bahá'ís are accused of collaboration with SAVAK.
4. Bahá'ís are accused of being enemies of Islam.
5. Bahá'ís are accused of being agents of Zionism.

All these allegations are explained and convincingly refuted in the Bahá'í International Community's publication "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority", revised and updated July 1982, pages 19 to 24.

The new and/or very specific allegations contained in Iran's latest report can be answered as follows:

3. It is alleged that the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith was an agent of the British government, engaged in "covert activities against the Ottoman Empire" in Palestine; that, during World War I, he was "highly successful to render great services for the British army", including supplying the army with "large supplies of food and grains which he had secretly been storing"; and that the British authorities protected his life and gave him "huge amounts of gold" and a knighthood as a reward for his espionage activities. (See pages 24 and 25 of the report).

These alleged "facts" are gross distortions of the truth.

'Abdu'l-Bahá (also known as Abbas Effendi), the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, was not a British spy. The knighthood conferred upon him by the British government in 1920 was in recognition of his humanitarian services to the poor and needy in Palestine during World War I. To portray these humanitarian services as calculated political acts is totally unjustified. Although 'Abdu'l-Bahá accepted the knighthood, he never used the title, and he never received any financial aid, much less "huge amounts of gold" (p.25 para 6), from the British government.

The intervention of the British government in 1918 to protect the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá had nothing whatsoever to do with any supposed covert association between that government and 'Abdu'l-Bahá. It was inspired by, and in response to, urgent requests from the British Bahá'ís, who

were gravely concerned about the safety of the leader of their faith - just as Bahá'ís in the free world today appeal to their governments, expressing concern about the safety of their fellow-believers in Iran.

The concern of the British Bahá'ís arose from the fact that the leader of the advancing Turkish forces, Jamal Pasha (a fanatical and long-standing enemy of the Bahá'í Faith) had publicly declared his intention of crucifying 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family on the slopes of Mount Carmel. The British authorities (including those named in the report, p.24 para 3) responded sympathetically to the appeals of the Bahá'ís and alerted the Commander of their forces in Palestine to the potential danger. Having entered Haifa, General Allenby duly cabled a confirmation to London that 'Abdu'l-Bahá and his family were safe.

In order to reinforce the argument that some clandestine connection existed between the British government and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the report (pages 24 to 26) cites the names of many prominent Britons. It should be emphasized, however, that, during his years in the Holy Land, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was in contact with prominent personalities in many countries (among them such eminent figures as Dr. Auguste Forel of Switzerland, Leo Tolstoy of Russia, Professor Arminius Vambery of Hungary, Prince Muhammad-Ali Pasha of Egypt); with scholars and leaders in Lebanon and other middle-eastern countries; and with such institutions as the Central Organization for a Durable Peace, in the Netherlands.

Similarly, while the report (p.26 para 1) names the two British officials who attended 'Abdu'l-Bahá's funeral, it omits to mention that, in recognition of his high and unique position, the chiefs of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other religious communities in the Holy Land, as well as notables from all strata of Palestinian society, were also present at the obsequies.

4. *It is alleged that the Bahá'í Faith was used by the colonial powers as a tool for colonial expansion into Muslim countries.*

This is a complete fabrication, unsubstantiated even by the "evidence" adduced in its support. The report (p.26 para 5) accurately refers to a passage in the Bahá'í book "God Passes By", recording that the leader of the Bahá'í Faith was invited to "spend a while in India", but omits to cite either the circumstances of the invitation or the response to it - both of which are detailed in the same passage.

At the time of the invitation, news of the martyrdom of the Báb (the Prophet-Herald of the Bahá'í Faith) and the massacre of 20,000 of His followers had spread to the west and had aroused much sympathy and interest among Europeans. Bahá'u'lláh, the most prominent follower of the Báb (who had not yet declared His own mission) was exiled by the Iranian government and imprisoned in Baghdad. His plight attracted the sympathetic attention of the British consul-general in Baghdad, who offered Him the

protection of British citizenship and also offered to arrange residence for Him in India or in any other place agreeable to Him. Bahá'u'lláh declined these offers and chose instead to remain a prisoner in Baghdad.

It was not unusual at that time, nor is it unusual today, for government officials to offer aid and sanctuary to those they perceive as being the victims of oppression in other countries. This kind of intervention is commonly recognized as being humanitarian and non-political in nature. The attempt to portray the humanitarian assistance offered to Bahá'u'lláh as being part of a sinister project of colonial expansion is clearly ridiculous.

The reference (allegedly drawn from the same book, but actually to be found in a letter written by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to an individual Bahá'í) to the "anxiety" of the government of France to send Bahá'ís to the French colonies in Muslim Africa is likewise taken out of context and is deliberately misleading. The true facts are that the French Ambassador in Teheran, greatly impressed by the Bahá'í teachings and by their effect upon the people who embraced them, suggested that Bahá'ís might go to Tunisia and teach their faith there. 'Abdu'l-Bahá duly mentioned this suggestion in a letter to one of his followers but, as it happened, nothing ever came of it. Clearly, this incident cannot seriously be used to suggest, or prove, any form of collusion between the Bahá'í Faith and the French government to promote colonial expansion in Africa.

5. *Certain Bahá'ís are alleged to have held high political office during the reign of the late Shah.*

Bahá'ís are forbidden by the laws of their faith from becoming involved in partisan politics or from holding any political post. The report (pp 27/28) accuses the Iranian Bahá'ís of not adhering to this principle of their faith, alleging that certain people identified as Bahá'ís held prominent political positions during the reign of the late Shah. These accusations are refuted below.

*It should be noted in this connection that, during the reign of the Shah, it was common for unscrupulous politicians to attempt to discredit their political opponents by accusing them of being Bahá'ís. Such accusations were either entirely without foundation or were based upon the fact that the fathers or families of the individuals concerned had once been Bahá'ís. It is, however, a basic principle of the Bahá'í religion that the gift of faith springs from the free choice of the individual and cannot be automatically and blindly inherited from an earlier generation. A person is a Bahá'í only when he freely declares himself to be a Bahá'í.*

It is true that Dr. Ayadi, a Bahá'í, served as personal physician to the late Shah. He was appointed to this non-political position not only because of his skill in medicine but also because of his personal integrity and trustworthiness. It is untrue to state (as does the report) that he was "the man behind the whole pharmaceutical market".

General Khattani, Commander of the Air Force, Mrs. Parsa, Minister of Education, and General Nasiri, Head of SAVAK, were never Bahá'ís and never claimed to be Bahá'ís.

General Sani'i, Minister of War, was once a Bahá'í but was expelled from the Bahá'í community when he accepted ministerial office in the government - in accordance with the Bahá'í law forbidding Bahá'ís to hold political office.

Parviz Sabeti, Director-General of SAVAK, Mansur Ruhani, Minister of Agriculture, and Prime Minister Amir Abbas Hoveida were never Bahá'ís and never claimed to be Bahá'ís. Their alleged membership in the Bahá'í community was based on the fact that their fathers were, or had once been, Bahá'ís.

6. Bahá'ís are accused of being agents and political supporters of Zionism.

*The report (p.27 para 1) cites the well-worn accusation that, since the Bahá'í World Centre is in Israel, the Bahá'í Faith must in some way be identified with Zionism, and also asserts that this means that the Bahá'í Faith is not a religion but is a "political entity created and nourished by anti-Islamic and Colonial Powers."*

The Bahá'í World Centre was established in the last century, long before the State of Israel came into existence, and has nothing to do with Zionism. The Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, was exiled to the Holy Land in compliance with the order of two Islamic governments (Iran and Turkey). He remained in the Holy Land until His death in 1892, His Shrine was raised there, and the Holy Land thus became the world spiritual centre of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh Himself directed that the world spiritual and administrative centres of His faith must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be relocated for the sake of temporary political expediency.

References are made later in the report (p.28 paras 4 and 8) to the Bahá'ís sending "millions of dollars" to Israel to "support the Zionist regime". This allegation is entirely without foundation. The funds sent by Bahá'ís the world over (including those in Iran) to the Bahá'í World Centre are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy Shrines and historic sites in the Holy Land, and for the administration of their faith.

It should be noted that other religious communities contribute towards the maintenance of their holy places in Israel without attracting the charge that they are financially supporting the government of Israel. Similarly, the Shiite Muslims send financial contributions towards the upkeep of their holy places at Najaf and Karbala in Iraq. Should the fact that Iran and Iraq are at war suddenly draw down the charge upon the Muslim Iranians that they have lent financial aid to the Iraqi government? Yet this is precisely the nature of the spurious allegation being made by the Iranian government against the Bahá'ís.

7. SAVAK documents adduced to support allegations against Bahá'ís.

*The report (pp.28/29) summarizes the contents of various documents allegedly extracted from the files of SAVAK, which purport to implicate Bahá'ís (or alleged Bahá'ís) in a variety of anti-Islamic activities.*

It is impossible for the Bahá'í International Community to comment upon these documents because it has not seen them. It might, however, be asked how and why - since the present Iranian government has itself discredited SAVAK - the documentation produced by this organization has suddenly become relevant and "authentic" where Bahá'ís are concerned?

The hostility of SAVAK towards the Bahá'ís is well attested. A SAVAK memorandum linking the bureau with the operations of the fanatical anti-Bahá'í organization Tablighat-i-Islami was published in the Iranian daily newspaper Mujahid on 9 June 1980, and one of the final acts of SAVAK in 1978, shortly before the fall of the Shah, was to attempt to divert public attention away from disaffection with the regime by mounting violent attacks on the Bahá'ís. During raids organized by SAVAK on Saadi village near Shiraz, 150 Bahá'í homes were looted and burned down. The Bahá'í International Community has in its possession an announcement by Ayatollah Mahallati, the most prominent religious leader in Shiraz, telling Muslims that such attacks against the Bahá'ís were the machinations of SAVAK, and warning them not to participate.

8. Specific cases of accused Bahá'ís.

*The report cites the cases of five Bahá'ís, tried in February 1980, who were "proven guilty in the Court of Justice" but whose sentences were commuted (p.31).*

These trials actually took place in Shiraz, under very questionable circumstances, and the Bahá'í International Community cannot comment upon the veracity of the evidence or charges. We do, however, have reliable and up-to-date information concerning the fate of these Bahá'ís.

1. Enayatollah Ehsanian - stated in the report to have been released for lack of evidence against him. True.
2. Ja'far Sha'er-zadeh - stated in the report to have been released on compassionate grounds. He was, in fact, re-arrested approximately one month ago and is currently in detention in Shiraz.
3. Sattar Khosh-Khu - stated in the report to have been found guilty of supporting Zionism and to have been given a two-year prison sentence. He was, in fact, summarily executed in Shiraz on 30 April 1981 (approximately 14 months after his trial).
4. Enayatollah Mehdi-zadeh - stated in the report to have been released. He was actually released after spending ten months in prison.

5. Mohammad-Reza Hesami - stated in the report to have been fined and released. He is, in fact, still in prison and has not at any time been released.

*The stated purpose of including these details in the report was to make it "crystal clear" that "not a single person in the Islamic Republic of Iran is tried and punished merely because of his/her particular ideology or set of principles." (p.30 para 7).*

Even if it were to be assumed, for the sake of argument, that the details of the cases cited in the report were true, it is difficult to see how isolated cases such as these could justify the pervasive and continuing persecution of the entire Bahá'í community of Iran.

*Despite the repeated denials of the Iranian government, it is clear that the persecution of the Bahá'ís is based solely upon their religious beliefs.*

During the past four years, one hundred and eighteen Bahá'ís have died for their faith in Iran. No evidence exists to support any of the charges brought against those who were executed. In the very few cases in which a Bahá'í has been willing to recant his faith, he has immediately been released and all charges against him dropped - while his fellow believers who refused to recant have been executed.

Two Bahá'ís very recently executed in Shiraz - Mr. Habibu'llah Awji on 16 November and Mr. Ziya'u'llah Ahrari on 21 November - were offered their freedom by the trial judge if they would agree to recant their religion. In the case of Mr. Ahrari, the court verdict - published in the Teheran daily newspaper Kayhan on 22 November - clearly stated that the principal charge against him was his membership in the Bahá'í community.

Membership in the Bahá'í community was first recognized by the courts as a capital offence in March 1981, when Mr. Mihdi Anvari and Mr. Hidayatu'llah Dihqani were tried and executed in Shiraz. In the case of Mr. 'Azizu'llah Gulshani, executed by hanging on 29 April 1982, the charges against him related solely to his Bahá'í activities. (These charges were detailed in Kayhan on 29 April 1982).

All the Bahá'ís executed during the past two years were prominent believers whose executions were intended to intimidate the rank and file of the Bahá'í community into recanting their faith. Most compelling is the fact that the authorities have twice eliminated the membership of the national governing body of the Bahá'í Faith in Iran. On 21 August 1980, all nine members of this body were arrested by revolutionary guards and have since disappeared without trace. On 27 December 1981, eight members of the national governing body that replaced them were secretly executed in Teheran. Their execution, initially denied by the authorities, was finally admitted by the President of the Supreme Court of Iran, Ayatollah Musavi Ardibili, at a press conference on 5 January 1982.

The executions and disappearances are part of a systematic campaign to eradicate the Iranian Bahá'í community and obliterate all traces of the Bahá'í Faith from Iran.

The other elements of the campaign are the confiscation and destruction of all Bahá'í community properties and holy places in Iran (now accomplished) and the denial of the most basic human rights to thousands upon thousands of innocent Bahá'ís. This denial has been expressed in many dehumanizing ways, such as dismissal from employment, denial of pensions, confiscation of private property and denial of schooling to children. (An article in the newspaper Kayhan on 25 November 1981 reported the expulsion of 43 students from the University of Shiraz because of their membership in the "misguided Bahá'í group").

Many of the notices dismissing Bahá'ís from their jobs have clearly stated that membership in the Bahá'í community is the reason for the dismissal, and many of the notices have stated that the individual concerned will be given back his job if he will publicly recant his faith. In a communiqué published in Kayhan on 8 December 1981, the Ministry of Labour stated that dismissal for life from government service had been decreed by the Islamic Parliament as "the punishment for anyone who is a member of the misguided Bahá'í group".

It is clear to the Bahá'í International Community that the allegations contained in the report circulated by Iran in the General Assembly represent an attempt to conceal, and to divert international attention from, the fanatically religious motivation of the persecution of the Bahá'ís of Iran, and to undermine the good reputation which the Bahá'í community enjoys throughout the world.

*The Bahá'í International Community emphatically refutes all the charges levelled against the Bahá'ís by the Iranian government and its spokesmen, most particularly the charges of political involvement and espionage, and strongly appeals for the establishment of an independent body to investigate the entire situation.*

# BAHÁ'Í INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

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A COMMENTARY  
ON THE DOCUMENT  
"BAHAISM - ITS ORIGINS AND ITS ROLE"  
PUBLISHED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE  
ISLAMIC REPUBLIC OF IRAN

As part of its continuing campaign to discredit the Bahá'í Faith, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran recently published a document entitled "Baháism - its origins and its role".

The alleged purpose of this publication is to set out the "facts" concerning the Bahá'í Faith. It is clear, however, from the intemperate language of the document, from the patent inaccuracies and contradictions it contains, and from the unconvincing nature of the "evidence" it presents, that this publication is not concerned with facts or with the truth but is simply an exercise in defamation.

The real purpose of the document is to support the Iranian Government's allegation that the Bahá'í Faith is a seditious political entity; to justify, on this pretext, the persecution and execution of Bahá'ís in Iran; and - most important of all - to conceal the true motive underlying the persecution of the Iranian Bahá'í community. That motive is, quite simply, primitive religious prejudice.

In the early days of the Bahá'í Faith, which originated in Iran in the middle of the last century, the religious leaders of the country did not trouble to conceal the true reasons for their hostility towards the new religion. The very notion that any religion could appear after Islam was anathema to the Shiite Muslim fundamentalists, who viewed the Bahá'í Faith as a dangerous heresy and its followers as apostates who deserved death. In the pogroms that ensued, over 20,000 men, women and children were brutally slaughtered. However, as times changed, so rationalizations and slogans changed. In the twentieth century, modern notions of religious toleration penetrated Iran and the fundamentalist religious leaders found that they could no longer win public support by attacking the Bahá'í Faith on purely theological grounds. Secularism had influenced the educated classes, who embraced nationalism as a surrogate religion. In order to turn them against their Bahá'í fellow-citizens, it was necessary to accuse the Bahá'ís of being unpatriotic and politically-motivated. Spurious accusations to this effect were duly invented and disseminated by the religious leaders as a means of inflaming public opinion against the Bahá'ís who, as a result, suffered

severe discrimination and repeated pogroms throughout the Pahlavi regime. The Iranian Revolution, which brought to power those very elements most bitterly opposed to the Bahá'í Faith, witnessed the resurgence of primitive religious fanaticism and signalled the start of a campaign of persecution against the Bahá'í community of an intensity and ferocity unparalleled since the early days of the Faith.

The Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, piqued at the many protests it has received from Governments the world over concerning the treatment of the Bahá'ís, and unwilling publicly to admit that it is engaged in a systematic campaign of religious persecution, is now attempting to convince the international community - particularly non-Western Governments - that the Bahá'í Faith is a political organization and that its followers worldwide are engaged in subversive activities.

The Bahá'í International Community categorically denies these allegations. The Bahá'í Faith is an independent world religion and its followers are forbidden by the laws of their faith from becoming involved in partisan politics or in any form of subversive activity.

Bahá'í communities exist in countries throughout the world and their activities are known to the Governments of those countries to be non-political, non-partisan and peaceful. The activities of Bahá'í communities in every part of the world are open to scrutiny and the Bahá'í International Community would welcome the establishment of an impartial body of inquiry to mount a thorough investigation into these activities, particularly into the charges of political involvement and subversion, in order to disprove once and for all the false and malicious accusations propagated by the Government of Iran.

The Bahá'í International Community does not propose, in this brief commentary, to examine and rebut in exhaustive detail every mis-statement contained in the new Iranian document but has the following general comments to make concerning the main arguments put forward in this publication.

Introduction (page 3). The introduction to the report asserts that Western Governments and the Western media are solely responsible for drawing world attention to the "Bahá'í issue" and that this issue is being cynically exploited by the West as a vehicle for propaganda against the Islamic Republic of Iran. The human rights organs of the United Nations are accused of complicity in this process. The authors of the report conveniently omit to mention that Governments and the media in Africa, Asia, Australasia and Latin America have also condemned and publicized the Iranian Government's treatment of the Bahá'ís and that human rights experts from a number of Muslim nations have deplored the persecution of the Bahá'ís as being contrary to the teachings of Islam.

Origin of the Bahá'í Faith (pages 3 to 6, 8 and 9). The proposition that the Bahá'í Faith is a product of Russian imperialism and that it owes its very existence to the activities of a Russian spy masquerading as a mullah is so

foolish that Muslim scholars themselves have ridiculed it. The whole argument is based upon the fact that, in the early days of the Faith, various Russian diplomats intervened with the Iranian authorities in an attempt to halt the religious persecution of Bahá'ís. Yet the "Russian connection" is solemnly presented as a fact in the Iranian document, and quotations from "history books" are presented in support of the argument.

It should be noted in this connection that, for over a century, the enemies of the Bahá'í Faith have produced numerous books and tracts denouncing the Faith and its followers and deliberately distorting and misrepresenting its history and its teachings. Typically, in such publications, the Founders of the Bahá'í Faith are portrayed as moral degenerates, its teachings are distorted in such a way that they appear either ludicrous or anti-Islamic, and historical incidents involving the victimization of Bahá'ís are depicted as bloodthirsty assaults carried out by Bahá'ís.

The Iranian document contains numerous examples of this kind of distortion, all supported by quotations. Assuming that these quotations were not invented specifically for the purposes of the report, it must be concluded that the compilers are quoting heavily from anti-Bahá'í "history books" - thereby using one falsehood to support another.

In addition to these distortions, the report contains major errors concerning readily-verifiable facts. Since they add nothing to the report's anti-Bahá'í arguments, such errors of fact may be presumed to be unintentional - but their mere presence in the report indicates very clearly the compilers' total disregard for accuracy.

Alleged relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and colonialism (pages 6 to 11).

The compilers of the Iranian document have assiduously sought to find in authentic Bahá'í publications (most notably in the book "God Passes By") any reference to Western Governments or government officials. Where any such reference is found, it is solemnly presented as evidence of some kind of illicit relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Western Governments. The reader who studies this "evidence" will find, however, that it is totally innocuous. Throughout the history of the Bahá'í Faith, numerous diplomats - both Eastern and Western - have, for purely humanitarian reasons, offered assistance to the Bahá'í victims of persecution and intervened with the Iranian authorities in an attempt to halt the persecution. Such actions - which were not uncommon in the past, just as they are not uncommon today - are duly noted with gratitude in Bahá'í books. Similarly, Bahá'í books record instances in which Governments throughout the world (not just Western Governments) have, through their official actions, expressed their recognition of and respect for the Bahá'í Faith and its teachings. References such as these, while testifying eloquently to the humanitarian and non-discriminatory attitudes of many Governments, can hardly be said to constitute evidence of political collusion between these Governments and the Bahá'í Faith.

In a further attempt to provide evidence of some "colonial connection", the Iranian report refers to events in Palestine during World War I (which is redefined as being, in essence, a conflict between Islamic and imperial powers). The report alleges that 'Abdu'l-Bahá (also known as Abbas Effendi), the son of the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, acted as an agent of the British Government in Palestine, stockpiled wheat for the British army while the local population was starving, and that he was protected, financially rewarded and knighted by the British Government, in recognition of his services.

These alleged "facts" are gross distortions of the truth. 'Abdu'l-Bahá never received any money from the British Government and the knighthood conferred upon him was in recognition of his humanitarian services to the poor and needy in Palestine during World War I. The claim (page 10 paragraph 4) that 'Abdu'l-Bahá hoarded wheat for the British army while the local population starved is flatly contradicted by the very evidence which is used to support it (i.e. Exhibit 4, page 27 of the report). As this exhibit makes clear, the wheat cultivated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá was used for the relief of the famine-stricken local population throughout the war years 1914-1918. Also clear from this exhibit is the fact that the British army had access to the wheat only once, towards the very end of the war.

The intervention of the British Government to protect the life of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was inspired by and in response to appeals from the British Bahá'ís, who had learned that the Commander of the Turkish forces had publicly vowed to crucify him on Mount Carmel. Similar situations exist today, when Bahá'ís in different countries appeal to their respective Governments on behalf of their co-religionists in Iran.

The report cites the names of various British officials who attended 'Abdu'l-Bahá's funeral, but omits to mention that his funeral was also attended by the chiefs of the Muslim, Christian, Jewish and other religious communities in the Holy Land, and by notables from all strata of Palestinian society.

Alleged relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Zionism (pages 11 to 14).

In an attempt to concoct some political relationship between the Bahá'í Faith and Zionism, the Iranian document quotes extensively from Bahá'í publications which describe the status of the Bahá'í Faith and its World Centre in the Holy Land. Once again, the reader will find that the material is wholly innocuous. It is totally devoid of political content and simply records various incidents pertaining to the relationship which must inevitably exist between the headquarters of an international non-governmental organization and its host government.

As the Bahá'í International Community has explained on many previous occasions, the Bahá'í World Centre was established in the last century, long before the State of Israel came into existence, and has nothing to do with Zionism. The



Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, Bahá'u'lláh, was exiled to the Holy Land in compliance with the orders of two Islamic governments (Iran and Turkey). He remained in the Holy Land until His death in 1892, His Shrine was raised there, and the Holy Land thus became the world spiritual centre of the Bahá'í Faith. Bahá'u'lláh Himself directed that the world spiritual and administrative centres of His faith must always be united in one locality. Accordingly, the world administrative centre of the Bahá'í Faith has always been and must continue to be in the Holy Land. It cannot be re-located for the sake of temporary political expediency.

References are made in the report to the Bahá'ís sending funds to Israel "to support international Zionism". In fact, the funds sent by Bahá'ís the world over to the Bahá'í World Centre are solely and exclusively for the upkeep of their holy Shrines and historic sites in the Holy Land and for the administration of their Faith. It will be noted that other religious communities (including the Muslim and Christian communities) also send money for the upkeep of their holy places in Israel without being accused by the Iranian Government of giving financial support to the Government of Israel.

Allegation that the Bahá'í Faith is a political party and not a religion (pages 14 and 15). Most of the arguments marshalled in support of this false allegation (viz. the "Russian connection", the "colonial connection" and the "Zionist connection", complete with the usual references to "history books") have been discussed and discredited earlier in the commentary and do not merit further consideration. The only new allegation - namely, that the Bahá'ís were political supporters of the late Shah - is fully discussed on pages 6 and 7 of this commentary.

Alleged examples of Bahá'í teachings (pages 15 to 17). In this section of the Iranian report, the compilers have quoted Bahá'í laws out of context and misrepresented them or, in other instances, have simply invented them. This commentary would be unduly lengthened if corrections on such ideological issues were included in it.

Contrary to what is implied in the report, there is no hidden or sinister meaning in any of the Bahá'í teachings and the whole body of Bahá'í law is open to scrutiny and to question by any person who cares to enquire into it.

The allegation that the Bahá'ís lack loyalty to their homeland or to their country of residence is a deliberate distortion of the Bahá'í teachings, which exhort all Bahá'ís to be loyal citizens of their country and commend a "sane and intelligent patriotism", but condemn arrogant and aggressive nationalism and hold that, in this age, the goal of mankind should be the establishment of the unity of all nations rather than the promotion of purely national interests.

As stated in the report, "non-participation in political parties" is, indeed, a fundamental principle of Bahá'í belief, but the assertion that "this provides

a cover for operations of sabotage" is as false as it is ingenuous. As noted earlier in this commentary, Bahá'ís are prohibited by the law of their faith from becoming involved in any form of subversive activity.

The allegation that the Bahá'í Faith preaches "collaboration with oppressive, instrumental rulers" is a distortion of the Bahá'í law which requires all Bahá'ís to show loyalty and obedience to the government of the country in which they live, whatever its form or political orientation.

Finally, there is no shred of truth in the allegation that the Bahá'í Faith preaches "obstinate enmity with Muslims and belief in the annihilation of all Muslims throughout the world". Nothing in the Bahá'í teachings could possibly be construed as conveying these sentiments and it is quite clear that this inflammatory accusation has been inserted in the report for the specific purpose of arousing the hostility and mistrust of Muslim readers and Muslim Governments.

The Bahá'í Faith, in fact, advocates religious unity and teaches that all forms of religious intolerance and discrimination must be abolished. The Bahá'í attitude towards all religions can briefly be summarized as follows. Whereas the followers of other religions believe that divine revelation ended with their Prophet, the Bahá'í Faith teaches that religious revelation is continuous and progressive and that Bahá'u'lláh, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith, is the latest - but not the last - of the Divine Educators sent by God to guide mankind. Accordingly, Bahá'ís believe in the essential oneness of all the major religions of the world and honour and revere their Founders as divinely-inspired Prophets. (Indeed, the Bahá'í Faith is the only independent world religion, apart from Islam itself, which recognizes the Holy Qur'án as a divinely-revealed Book). For a Bahá'í to oppose, belittle or seek to destroy other religions and their followers would thus be a denial of one of the most fundamental Bahá'í principles.

Alleged collaboration between the Bahá'ís and Pahlavi regime and between the Bahá'ís and SAVAK (pages 18 to 21). The allegation that the Bahá'ís collaborated with and supported the regime of the late Shah springs from the fact that, in accordance with the teachings of their faith, Bahá'ís are loyal to the Governments of their countries and that, consequently, the Iranian Bahá'ís did not affiliate themselves with political parties or subversive organizations opposed to the regime. The same principle is observed by Bahá'ís at the present time, under Iran's new regime. The allegation that the Bahá'ís collaborated with SAVAK is equally false. SAVAK officials such as Parviz Sabeti, who have been described as Bahá'ís, were not Bahá'ís.

Ignoring the fact (of which they must be well aware) that, short of being executed for their religion, the entire Bahá'í community in Iran suffered persecution and discrimination throughout the Pahlavi regime, and that SAVAK was one of the principal agencies used against them, the compilers

of the Iranian report illogically assert (page 18) that "the major part of the organization of the Shah's damned rule, particularly SAVAK, was managed by Bahá'ís".

The report goes on to list thirteen people whom it identifies as Bahá'ís. In common with the rest of the material contained in the report, this list is half innocuous fact and half damaging fiction. None of the political figures named in the list (Hoveyda, Rohani, Parsa, Sabeti) is or was a Bahá'í; nor is (or was) Lili Amir-Arjomand. General Sani'i was once a Bahá'í but was expelled from the Bahá'í community when he accepted a political post. None of the others (who truly are Bahá'ís) was ever in any way associated with the political or security operations of the Shah's regime. Doctor Ayadi was one of the Shah's physicians; Mr. Khademi was head of the national civil airline. Shapour Rasekh, a distinguished economist and educationalist, served on the planning commission for development projects in Iran. His wife Mehri, an eminent psychologist, was sometimes consulted in her professional capacity by official bodies responsible for implementing Iran's educational development programme. Messrs. Sabet and Yazdani are private businessmen. Hossein Amanat is a distinguished architect whose name was no doubt included in the list because he designed the recently-completed Permanent Seat of the Universal House of Justice (the supreme administrative body of the Bahá'í Faith).

Alleged SAVAK documents (pages 18 to 21). Two very pertinent questions arise in connection with these documents:

If (as falsely alleged in the report) SAVAK was "managed" by Bahá'ís, why was this organization spying on Bahá'ís and producing reports damaging to the Bahá'í community?

Since the compilers of the report have chosen to ignore this blatant incongruity, the following question arises:

Bearing in mind that the present Iranian Government has totally discredited SAVAK and all its works, why are SAVAK documents now being held up as reliable and authentic as far as Bahá'ís are concerned?

Turning to the documents themselves, the dates of various Bahá'ís meetings and the names of those attending them might possibly be genuine (the Bahá'ís were constantly under surveillance by SAVAK) but the statements purported to have been made by Bahá'ís are so ludicrous that they have obviously been fabricated. Significantly, these fabricated statements contrive to serve the ends both of SAVAK itself (which attacked the Bahá'ís on political grounds) and of SAVAK's arch-collaborator, the fanatical Tablighat-i-Islami organization (which attacked the Bahá'ís on religious grounds). Evidence of collaboration between these two organizations in "attacking Bahá'ís in a scientific and logical way" was published in the Iranian newspaper Mojahed on 9 June 1980. (For full text, see "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the

Persecution of a Religious Minority", page 83 of the 1982 edition).

Contrary to what is alleged in the Iranian report, no Bahá'í has ever "confessed" to any of the charges brought against the Bahá'í community and the purported "confession" referred to on page 18 is simply a quotation from one of the SAVAK documents. No shred of evidence has ever been produced to support any of the charges brought against Bahá'ís and the numerous "Exhibits", masquerading as documentary evidence, which occupy the final 21 pages of the Iranian report will be found to be either innocuous quotations (Exhibits 1 to 16) or crude and very obvious fabrications (Exhibits 17 to 36 - alleged SAVAK documents).

The inability of the Iranian authorities to produce any convincing evidence against the Bahá'ís is not at all surprising. The Bahá'í principles of loyalty and obedience to government, and of abstention from political or subversive activities, are absolutely fundamental: they do not change with changing governments or with changing circumstances.

Attitude of the Iranian Government towards the Bahá'ís (pages 21 to 24). The final sections of the Iranian report contain (among a mass of political diatribe) various false assertions concerning the attitude of the Iranian Government towards the followers of the Bahá'í Faith.

It is alleged (page 22 paragraph 3) that many Bahá'ís have "recognized the imperialist nature" of their faith and have therefore renounced it and "returned to the bosom of the people and Islam". The truth is that the 300,000 members of the Iranian Bahá'í community (the largest religious minority in Iran) have resisted remorseless social, financial, psychological and physical pressure rather than deny their beliefs; that 142 Bahá'ís have suffered death when they could have saved themselves by recanting; and that the very small number of Bahá'ís who have actually recanted their faith did so only under extreme physical pressure.

The report (page 22 paragraph 5) duly takes up the official stance of the Iranian Government and asserts that no Bahá'í has ever been executed in Iran because of his religious beliefs and that any Bahá'í who has been imprisoned or sentenced to death has been found guilty of crimes against the State.

This argument does not explain the pervasive and continuing persecution of the entire Bahá'í community in Iran. It ignores the fact that no evidence has ever been produced to support any of the charges brought against those Bahá'ís who were executed, and also ignores the fact that, in the very few cases in which a Bahá'í has been willing to recant his faith, he has immediately been released and all the charges against him dropped - while his fellow believers, who refused to recant, have been executed on identical charges. The argument does not explain the disappearance, following their arrest, of all nine members of the national governing body of the Bahá'í

Faith in Iran, nor the secret execution (initially denied by the authorities) of eight of their successors. It does not explain why over 200 Bahá'ís, including women and juveniles, are currently being held without charges in Iranian prisons.

The argument that there is no large-scale persecution of the Bahá'í community on religious grounds is singularly unconvincing in the light of the fact that all Bahá'í community properties and holy places in Iran have been confiscated and/or destroyed, and that thousands of innocent Bahá'ís have been deprived of their fundamental human rights in a variety of dehumanizing ways, including dismissal from employment, denial of pensions, confiscation of private property, deprivation of means of livelihood and denial of education to children.

The contention (page 23 paragraphs 2 and 5 of the report) that the Bahá'ís are protected by the Iranian Constitution provided that they do not engage in anti-State activities is also false. The Bahá'ís are not recognized as a religious minority in the Iranian Constitution and thus (according to the Islamic law upon which the Constitution is based) they have no status, rights or protection under the Constitution. Under the present legal system, they will be granted constitutional rights only if they are willing to recant their faith and embrace Islam.

Despite the repeated denials of the Iranian Government, it is clear that the persecution of the Bahá'ís is based solely upon their religious beliefs. It is equally clear that the allegations contained in the document "Bahaism - its origins and its role" represent an attempt by the Iranian Government to divert international attention from the fanatically religious motivation underlying the persecution and to undermine the good reputation which the Bahá'í community enjoys throughout the world.

(The current plight of the Bahá'í community in Iran, and the false accusations levelled against the Bahá'ís by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran, are more fully discussed in the Bahá'í International Community publication "The Bahá'ís in Iran: A Report on the Persecution of a Religious Minority," first published in June 1981, revised and updated in July 1982).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact Person: Anthony A. Lee  
213-208-8559

REPLIES SOUGHT TO CIRCLE OF UNITY

Kalimát Press is actively seeking replies to the essays in the recently published volume Circle of Unity: Bahá'í Approaches to Current Social Issues. The replies are to be published as a small book which will contain letters and short essays in support of or in rebuttal to the ideas and approaches found in the first book.

"We see Circle of Unity as the beginning of a process, not the end of one," explained Anthony A. Lee, the editor of the volume. "The whole idea of the book was to begin constructive discussion and debate within the Bahá'í community on the most pressing social issues of our time." Kalimát Press plans to take this process one step further by publishing a sequel to Circle of Unity which will contain different points of view.

The initial book is a collection of ten essays plus an introduction. The essays address such issues as the peace movement, the women's movement, poverty, racism, human rights and Marxism. But the articles represent only the views of the respective authors. They are not intended to be authoritative statements of the Bahá'í positions on the questions addressed. Rather, it was hoped that the book would only open the door to discussion and dialogue within the Bahá'í community.

Contributions to the sequel volume should be sent directly to Kalimát Press, 10889 Wilshire Boulevard, Suite 700, Los Angeles, CA 90024.

An Introduction to

# NEW ERA PRESS

*"It is hoped that Bahá'í authors will provide a constant stream of new works. Introductory books, commentaries, dissertations on various aspects of the Revelation ...needed to stimulate study of the Faith and to promote the vital teaching work."*

*"Publishing Trusts are encouraged to supply to believers, the book trade and libraries, all Bahá'í publications..."*

The Universal House of Justice  
Ridván 1971

**NEW ERA PRESS** is a Bahá'í-owned private publishing company recently established in Cyprus, dedicated to the goal of fulfilling the above wishes of the House of Justice.

This we cannot achieve without the participation of interested individuals all around the world, be they authors, illustrators, graphic designers, or simply people with suggestions and ideas who can identify areas in the existing body of Bahá'í literature needing greater attention.

In order to familiarise you with our work and aspirations, we set out below areas which are of particular interest to us:

## SPECIALIST SUBJECTS

Although there are several excellent introductory books for non-Bahá'ís, many people will have found that in a teaching context they present certain limitations. Not everyone interested in discussing the Bahá'í view of a certain subject would eagerly welcome a text book on the Faith itself, whether written in a simple or intellectual manner. Consequently, it is difficult to cater for the individual needs of the seeker, as we are exhorted to do, when using the existing written material.

Therefore, in order to increase the teacher's flexibility in this important area of service, we propose to commission books and booklets which present Bahá'í viewpoints on individual subjects and topical issues. To attract the independent inquirer as well as to provide a comprehensive back-up service to personal teaching, each publication will be designed specifically — in its written content, artwork and high standard of finish — for presentation to non-Bahá'ís and sale through non-Bahá'í outlets.

Topics will include, for example, current world issues; social concerns such as drug abuse, marriage, equality of men and women; philosophical and spiritual questions, and books for readers of different educational and ethnic backgrounds. In short, we intend to provide a much greater variety of literature, designed more specifically for the needs and interests of non-Bahá'ís.

## COMMERCIAL OUTLETS

As publishers, it is our intention to devote a considerable amount of time and money to the task of securing inroads into the non-Bahá'í markets, such as bookshops, libraries, schools and universities, in order to ensure that our books are more effective at reaching the people for whom they are intended — the general public!

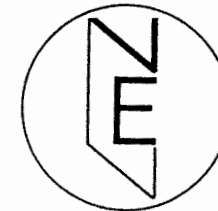
## YOUTH

The formative years of youth may be considered critical in terms of spiritual development, and never more so than in this decadent age which witnesses the progressive disintegration of the old world order.

For this reason, and because books for youth have received inadequate attention in the past, we feel that to contribute to the provision of new and appropriate literature both for Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í youth represents a vital objective.

We would like to take this opportunity to invite your comments and ideas. Those wishing to be placed on our mailing list or to become involved in this new venture may contact us at the address below:

P.O. Box 5118  
Limassol,  
Cyprus.  
Tel: (051) 65580





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## CIRCLE OF UNITY Bahá'í Approaches to Current Social Problems

*Edited by Anthony A. Lee*

The same critical social issues seem to grab the headlines and occupy the attention of the world's leaders day after day—year after year. These problems continue to perplex and frustrate us: world peace, nuclear weapons, poverty, racism, feminism, Marxism . . . Where do the Bahá'í's stand on these pressing issues?

This book is an attempt to answer that question. Included are essays by various authors who offer unique and profound insights gleaned from the Bahá'í teachings. The articles include:

- The Antinuclear Movement and the Bahá'í Community* by Robert T. Phillips.
- Race Relations in the American Bahá'í Community* by Richard W. Thomas, Ph.D.
- Poverty and Wealth in America: A Bahá'í Perspective* by June Manning Thomas, Ph.D.
- Human Rights and the Bahá'í Faith* by Juan R. Cole, Ph.D.
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**Retail price: \$9.95, paperbound only.**

## FROM IRAN EAST AND WEST Studies in Bábí and Bahá'í History, Volume Two

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## Coming soon:

**WAGING PEACE: SELECTIONS FROM THE  
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Danger" (war) and the means for its elimination.

**MÍRZÁ ABÚ'L-FADL: LETTERS AND ESSAYS,  
1886–1913.** Translated and annotated by Juan R.  
Cole. More of the philosophy and wisdom of the  
greatest Bahá'í scholar.

**MULLÁ HUSAYN: THE STORY OF A BÁBÍ HERO,**  
by Ruhu'lláh Mehrabkhani. A biography of the  
first Letter of the Living.

**'ABDU'L-BAHÁ IN AMERICA: MAHMÚD'S  
DIARY.** Translation corrected and annotated by  
Sammi Anwar Smith. An eye-witness account of  
'Abdu'l-Bahá's trip in America.

Susan Sundback (1980) New religious movements in Finland Temenos  
16: 132-39.

Sundback reports on a number of papers presented at a conference on new religious movements in Finland which was arranged by the Finnish Society for the Study of Comparative Religion and held in Tvärminne on 9-10 November 1979. Two waves of movements were identified. The first wave, which included Theosophy (1907- ) and Anthroposophy (1913- ), occurred during the critical period of Finnish political and cultural turmoil at the beginning of the century. Finnish Theosophy at least was now culturally isolated and slowly disintegrating as a movement. The second wave, which included both neo-Pentecostalist and eastern groups, reflected wider trends in Western society during the late 1960s and 1970s. At least in Helsinki, this period was characterized by declining participation in the established churches (Lutheran, Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic). By contrast, after an initial gradual diffusion into Lutheranism, neo-Pentecostalism underwent a significant expansion, particularly after 1977, when it assumed a popular and distinctively Finnish form. Older forms of evangelical revivalism also prospered at this time, as did the Jehovah's witnesses and Mormonism. There was also a wave of charismatic Catholicism as part of an international trend (1967- ), but in Finland this declined after about 1973 and was confined to members of the urban middle-class. As to the eastern groups, with the exception of Transcendental Meditation (c.1976- ), no large scale expansion appears to have occurred. Indeed, the Friends of the World Buddhist Order (1973- ) had only about sixty members and supporters. TM, by contrast had perhaps

96.  
5,000 active meditators (?), a further 5,000 having undergone some instruction. The presence of the Divine Light Mission (1973- ) and the Baha'i Faith (1963- ) was also noted.

The paper on the Baha'i religion was presented by Harri Peltola who described the international developments of the religion since 1921; noted its expansion of membership in and around 1970; and attributed this growth to a natural interest stemming from the youth culture of the 1960s and to massive educational campaigns in the Third World.

Peter Smith

February 1984

Baha'i Studies Register

Due to unforeseen circumstances the Register of Academic work in Baha'i Studies has been much delayed-- the Register is designed to provide information on work accomplished or in progress connected with "Baha'i Studies", as well as a convenient means of increasing communication between scholars working in this field. It is hoped that the Register will be published in a future issue of this Bulletin.

Anyone wishing to submit information for the Register should supply the details indicated in the 'Baha'i Studies Register: Questionnaire' ( see opposite [p.93]). If you can please send your entry to Dr. Peter Smith (new address below ), ideally by 30th July 1985.

Change of Address

Dr. Peter & Sammi Smith's new address, from 28th April-- 30th September (1985) will be,

40/5 Sukhumvit Soi 46

Bangkok 10110

THAILAND

After September 1985 they may be contacted c/o

KALIMAT PRESS (Address on p. 88 [below]).

All this information may be published.

1. NAME (PROF/DR/MR/MS) .....
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- .....
7. (A) PUBLICATIONS ON BAHA'I STUDIES (Continue on back if necessary and include unpublished higher degree dissertations)
- .....
- (B) It would be appreciated if short abstracts (c.200 words) of publications could be included on a separate piece of paper.
8. RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:
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10. DO YOU WANT ME TO SEND YOU A COPY OF THE REGISTER (AT COST)?

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