

Studies in Baháism

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PREFACE.

The purpose of this treatise on Baháism is to present a brief yet comprehensive discussion of the main tenets of Baháism, to serve as a handbook on this religion. Since Baháism has adherents in many countries, and questions concerning it are arising in many quarters, it seems quite necessary to have in brief form a comprehensive study of it. In this thesis, Baháism is presented as far as possible from a positive point of view, and controversial grounds have been avoided. There is no attempt to make an apology for Christianity, except in so far as Baháism and Christianity are contrasted in the chapter on the Philosophy of Baháism. In the preparation of this work, chief place as an authority has been given to Baha Ullah, and second place to Abdul Baha and others, who came in contact with Baha Ullah.

In the preparation of this thesis, my thanks are due to the American and English Bahais, who gave me a warm welcome to their meetings; to Professor Edward G. Browne of Cambridge for his writings on Baháism, and for his personal interest; to the many Bahais in Akka and Haiffa, who were most willing to discuss their faith, especially Muhammad Ali Effendi, Mirza Fazal Mazandarani, and Mirza Bahaj Bahai, the secretary of Baha Ullah. My thanks are also due to Paul M. Doany, Toufic Yazdi, Subhi Afnan, and Mousa Bahai for their patient hours of service as interpreters, and as guides in visiting the places of historical interest in connection with Baháism, in and around Akka and Haiffa. I am also indebted to Elias Massad for helping with the translation of Arabic manuscripts, and to missionaries in Persia for their answers to my questionnaires.

ABBREVIATIONS.

The abbreviations of authorities quoted in the thesis are as follows:—Tablets of Baha Ullah, Tab. of Bh. : Book of Iqan, Bk. of Ig. : Seven Valleys, Sev. Val. : Some Answered Questions, Some Ans. Q. : Tablets of Abdul Baha, Tab. of A-B. : Mysterious Forces of Civilization, Mys. F. of Civ. : Abdul Baha's Addresses in London, A-B. in London. : Divine Philosophy, Div. Phil. : Bahai Proofs, Bhi. Proofs : Brilliant Proofs, Brill. Pro. : The Life and Teaching of Abdul Baha, Life of A-B. : The Universal Religion, The Univ. Rel. : The Bahai Revelation, The Bhi. Rev. : The Bahai Movement, The Bhi Mov.

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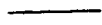
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PART I



BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

OF

BAHA ULLAH

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BAHÁ ULLÁH

Bahá Ulláh, whose legal name was Mirza Hussayn Ali, son of Mirza Abbas, one of the ministers of the Royal Court, was born in Teheran, Persia, Nov. 12, 1817. Although he claims in his writings to be unlearned, and his followers emphasise the fact that he was not trained in a school of higher education, yet like all Persian boys of the wealthier class, he was given a good foundation in Persian and Arabic by private tutors. Dreyfus tells us* that as a boy and young man Bahá Ulláh gave himself to a life of meditation. It is probable that this tendency to solitude and mysticism, which became so prominent in his later life, especially in Akka, was present in this earlier period. In Teheran he came in contact with many western influences though he knew neither French nor English.

In 1844, when Bahá Ulláh was twenty-seven years old, Mirza Ali Muhammad, the Bab, declared himself as Imam Mahdi whose appearance was expected by Islam. Bahá Ulláh became a Babi sometime before the martyrdom of the Bab in 1850, and probably had a rather prominent place as one of many leaders. His exact relationship to the Bab is rather difficult to determine because there is such a meagre amount of available unprejudiced information, and we do not know for certain that he met the Bab even once. Such things as his attempt to join the Babis in the castle of Sheykh Tabarsi, the meeting of prominent Babi leaders in his house, his mission to Badasht, and the Bab sending him his writings just before his martyrdom, show that he associated himself as a member of this persecuted sect, and this would mean sacrifice for one of Bahá Ulláh's social standing. However he did not play a prominent part in Babiism during the lifetime of the Bab, or he would have been made one of the eighteen letters, or appointed successor to the Bab instead of Subh-i-Ezel, his half-brother.

After the death of the Bab in 1850, Bahá Ulláh for some years became, as his writings show a loyal follower of Subh-i-Ezel. Following the attempt on the life of the Shah of Persia by a Babi named Sadiq, Subh-i-Ezel fled to Baghdad and escaped the great persecution and massacre which followed, but Bahá Ulláh was imprisoned in chains for four months. When freed he followed his brother to Baghdad, Oct. 14, 1852. On account of jealousy between the two brothers Bahá Ulláh withdrew into the mountains of

*The Univ. Rel. Bhi. 46.

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Sulaymaniyya in 1854. Here he remained about two years spending his time in writing and meditation, returning, as he tells us in the *Book of Iqan*,* only at the urgent request of his fellow Babis in Baghdad, since otherwise he had no intention of returning. He tells us also that although sometimes he was without food yet he continued in perfect happiness and joy, occupied with "Ourselves" and detached from all else. This mystical tendency and preference for meditation and seclusion is made evident in his writings, especially in the "Seven Valleys." His theology was certainly influenced by the Sufi mystics among whom he spent part of these two years.

When Baha Ullah returned to Baghdad, the Babi community was in a very unsettled state, for Subh-i-Ezel, a peace-loving, contemplative, gentle soul, wholly given to devotion to the memory of his beloved Master, the Bab, was incapable of exercising the authority necessary for a leader of the community of exiles, most of whom were, as Prof. Browne describes them,** religious enthusiasts, and revolutionary, visionary and speculative mystics. Thus it was comparatively easy for Baha Ullah, who was much more ambitious and resolute, to become the most prominent leader of the Babi sect whose centre was at this time in Baghdad. A short time after Baha Ullah's return, according to Dreyfus and others, he made his first declaration to his select followers, claiming to be the one prophesied by the Bab. From this time until about 1866, Baha Ullah had the direction of affairs in his hands, although he apparently did all in the name, and by the instruction, of Subh-i-Ezel, who lived a life of almost complete seclusion.

Just as Baha Ullah was about to be transferred from Baghdad by the Ottoman government, he made his second declaration to his select followers in the garden of Rizwan, so much emphasised by Bahais. Thus he showed conclusively that even before his public declaration, and while still, outwardly, at least, an adherent to Subh-i-Ezel, he was actually preparing to assume the leadership, which was virtually his already.

The colony left Baghdad in 1863 and arrived in Constantinople in May; and after four months they were transferred to Adrianople. According to Mirza Jawad when they knew they were

*Bk. of Iqan 180 **New Hist. of Bab (Intr.)

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leaving Constantinople Baha Ullah commanded Subh-i-Ezel to go to Persia and publish certain writings of the Bab, which pointed to Baha Ullah's supremacy even at that time. If Subh-i-Ezel had the privilege to return to Persia it would show also that Baha Ullah was the recognised head of Babi'ism, and it was he whom the government wished to keep in exile. Subh-i-Ezel did not go to Persia but joined his brother in Adrianople, where he shared with his brother the money sent to him from Persia, until the Ottoman government gave them an allowance.

Between 1863 and 1866 Baha Ullah published his "Tablet of Command" in which he proclaimed himself "Him whom God will manifest," prophesied in the Beyan of the Bab, and called on all the Babis in Persia, Turkey, Egypt, and Syria to acknowledge his supreme authority and accept his writings as God's word. He also sent tablets to the Pope and several world rulers proclaiming his mission. With this proclamation began a long struggle throughout the whole Babi sect, as well as a very disgraceful quarrel between the two brothers, who went so far in their bitterness as to try to kill each other. Several prominent Babis, who gave their allegiance to Subh-i-Ezel, were murdered, and these murders if not actually instigated by Baha Ullah were certainly not prevented by him.

The question at issue, as Prof. Browne so well summarises,* was not merely whether Baha Ullah was to replace Subh-i-Ezel as leader, nor was it a question of interpretation of doctrines, nor a question of change of ethics or practice of religion, but a change which cut to the very foundation of the religion. If Baha Ullah were accepted, it meant that the Bab, for whom the fathers of many of the Babis had given their lives, and for whom they would have been willing to die, was to be relegated to a position of mere fore-runner and precursor to Baha Ullah. It meant that the Supreme Pontiff, Subh-i-Ezel, was to be termed "The First Letter of Denial" because he had not at once accepted Baha Ullah. But in spite of all that was involved Baha Ullah gained the supremacy, leaving less than five per cent of the followers of Babi'ism to his brother. When Subh-i-Ezel died in Cyprus, his claims died with him, since none of his sons took up the prophetic mantle of their father.

*New Hist. of Bab XXIII

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BAHÁ ULLÁH

Having established his claim to be "Him whom God will manifest," Bahá Ulláh began to change and develop the doctrines of the Bab. His chief aims were to introduce a more settled order among the new sect, to discourage unprofitable speculation, to direct attention to practical reforms, to exalt ethics at the expense of metaphysics, to write in less mystical terms, to conciliate the government, even the Shah of Persia, to abolish useless and cumbersome regulations and restrictions, thus adapting the new religion to the needs of ordinary life, and making it more capable of becoming the universal religion which he intended to make it. He began to eliminate some of the Islamic influences and thought, especially of the Shi'ite sect, which Babi doctrines still retained. Further he incorporated more of Christianity, Judaism, and other religions, and urged his followers to associate on friendly terms with those of different religions.

When the quarrel between the two brothers reached a critical stage, the Ottoman government sent Subh-i-Ezel to Cyprus, and Bahá Ulláh to Akka, then in Syria. According to the accounts of Bahais who first arrived in Akka, the exiles had a very hard lot in the prison, which was within the city walls in these early days, especially as sickness broke out among them. But after they had recovered and were well established in the second storey of the prison, where they had at least eight rooms and a large court, they were able to live in some degree of comfort. Although life was certainly difficult at first, yet the exaggerated descriptions of imprisonment "in dungeons of the fortress" by Bahai writers are impossible. After a time Bahá Ulláh was allowed to live out in the city proper, and finally to have his own house, a palatial dwelling, about two miles from Akka, and to have his own large, beautiful gardens, and favourite seat by a running stream.

The Akka period of Bahá Ulláh's life, when he was well established as leader, is very illuminating when compared with the life of Muhammad in Medina. Each of them, finding his followers dependent on his advice in political and social, as well as religious affairs, became an opportunist. Bahá Ulláh being absent from the majority of his followers gave his admonitions and teachings in written form, instead of verbally as did Muhammad, but the result was the same. Religious, political, and social teachings

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BAHÁ ULLÁH

were all mixed together in an unsystematic manner, which makes it very difficult to organise. Some of the western Bahais seeing this characteristic of Baha Ullah's writings have correctly interpreted Baháism as a religion which makes no distinctions between religion, sociology and politics, thus reuniting church and state.

During the last twenty years of Baha Ullah's life in Akka,* he lived in seclusion apart from the world, seeing few people. Even his own followers were only given brief interviews, which they consequently considered a great privilege. This secluded life threw a veil of mystery around Baha Ullah, and made the teaching of his divinity more likely to be accepted. This tendency to separation even from his two wives and concubine, left one of them at least, in ignorance and doubt about religion. She asked a Christian missionary lady, who used to visit the home frequently, who or what God was, saying that her husband claimed to be God, but she knew he was not. This seclusion however had the distinct advantage of allowing Baha Ullah time to dictate answers to the many letters from his followers, asking questions on religion, sociology, philosophy, and politics. From internal evidence it is quite plain that most of the books and tablets were written to individuals answering specific questions. Thus the writings and teaching of Baha Ullah, like those of Muhammad, giving specific laws instead of principles, and definite regulations and interpretations of customs, ritual and doctrines, have developed a legalistic system, which differentiates them from the teachings of Christ, who did not embody His religious systems in specific injunctions, but in principles which are comparatively flexible and therefore much more capable of becoming universal.

Baha Ullah died in May, 1892, and was buried near his mansion about two miles from Akka. His tomb, like those of the Shi'ite leaders and saints has become a centre of pilgrimage for Bahais from all parts of the world.

To win the allegiance of the thousands of Babis, Baha Ullah must have had a very strong character. Professor Browne's description of Baha Ullah,** whom he visited in Akka, is that of a noble figure with a magnetic personality. But it would seem that

*A Brief Hist. of Bb. (Gazvini) **A Traveller's Narrative 39

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF BAHÁ ULLÁH

Bahai biographers failed to allow for the inheritance into which Baha Ullah came as a religious teacher of the long line of martyrs, who willingly laid down their lives in their devotion to their Master. After Baha Ullah became leader, although there was still much of this personal devotion among his followers, yet Baháism has somewhat lacked this heroic spirit of absolute devotion to a personality, which was the real driving force of Babism. This fiery spirit of martyrdom, which would have done much to make Baháism a success, has been lacking, especially since Baha Ullah made "tagiya," dissimulation, a duty for all.

Although Baha Ullah was a strong, active leader during part of his life, yet he was also of a retiring, mystical nature, a type entirely unqualified to establish specific laws for political and social life. He might have been able to enunciate broad, general, ethical principles to govern the making of such laws, but it would require a mind of infinite knowledge of history and legal codes, to lay down specific laws such as he tried to make. Hence the Bahais would find themselves in endless difficulties if they were to attempt to put the laws of Baha Ullah into universal practice.

PART II



TEACHING OF BAHAIISM

CONCERNING THE

FORMER PROPHETS

TEACHING CONCERNING THE FORMER PROPHETS

I. PROPHETS IN GENERAL.

Bahatism divides all the religious teachers of the world into two classes.* First the independent prophets such as Moses, Christ, Muhammad, and Baha Ullah, who appear on an average every one thousand years, and establish a new cycle by revealing a new law. Since the teachings of each of these manifestations is the same concerning the fundamentals of religion, it is possible to say that they are all the same manifestation, and that each is the resurrection of the one preceding. For example, Christ was the resurrection of Moses,** not the body or personality of Moses, but the spirit, sometimes called the Holy Spirit, an impersonal spiritual essence which enters each prophet and becomes the dominating influence of his life.

The mission of each of the independent prophets is three-fold.† First to fulfil the promises of the preceding manifestation. The writings of the Hebrew religious teachers were filled with assurances of a great manifestation, most but not all of which were fulfilled in Christ. The Christian dispensation in turn revealed pledges for the return of a great prophet, most of which were fulfilled in Muhammad. The Bab fulfilled many of the promises which were given by Muhammad, but like all the preceding manifestations he left much to be realised and completed in Baha Ullah, who came as the consummation of all that the former had revealed. The second duty of a prophet is to re-institute the fundamentals of the preceding revelation. All the religions‡ established by the major divine manifestations were pure at their source like a mountain stream gushing from the rocks, but after a time they became contaminated by the soil of the tributary streams. Christianity, for example, was represented by Bahai theology as a pure religion at first, but later religious teachers had departed from the fundamentals taught by Christ, which are common to all great religions, so that it became necessary for Muhammad to arise for the recall of Christians to the essential teachings of their Master.

The third essential of the work of a major manifestation is the preparation of the way for the next independent prophet.

*Some Ans. Q. 188 **Bhi. Mov. 39f. †The Bhi. Mov. 43 ‡Some Ans. Q. 190

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Moses prepared for Christ, who in His turn gave prophecies concerning Muhammad and prepared the world for his coming. In the same way Muhammad prepared for the manifestation of the Bab, who served as the herald, or John the Baptist, for Baha Ullah. The religious leaders or doctors in each of these cycles did not rightly interpret the signs revealed by the founder of their faith, concerning the next major manifestation, because they were veiled in allegories* and hidden words, which were interpreted literally. Thus the Christians expected the return of Christ in the same body and personality, hence they did not realise the fulfilling of their prophecies in Muhammad. For this reason each prophet not being recognised by the devotees of the manifestation who preceded him, were rejected by them and suffered ill treatment at their hands, since they were not willing to change their customs and ceremonies, nor relinquish their love and devotion to the founder of their cycle. The books of Baha Ullah,** like the Quran, contain innumerable references to the rejection of former prophets, which are quoted as examples to encourage steadfastness in devotion to Baha Ullah.

The dependent prophets do not institute a new cycle† but merely interpret the law of the founder of their dispensation, recall men to the fundamentals of their faith, and serve as great teachers for their age. They are like the planets, not a source of light in themselves but mere reflectors for the light of the sun of their epoch. The chronology of prophets according to Baháism, includes all the religious teachers between Adam and Baha Ullah. Following Adam comes "His Holiness Noah,"‡ at whose message the people scoffed and inflicted distress and injury upon him. After Noah come Hud, Saleh, and Abraham, who endeavoured to call men to righteousness and obedience to God. Baha Ullah accepted the prophet of the Zoroastrians*† and borrowed from his theological and ethical teachings. Abdul Baha*‡ and modern Bahais, who are ambitious to make Baháism attractive for and acceptable to the people of the Far East, include Buddha and Confucius, who they claim, established new religions, founded on the "Oneness of God," and renewed virtues among men. But their institutions have been

*Book of Iqán 35 **Bk. of Iqán 3f. †Some Ans. Q. 188f. ‡Bk. of Iqán 5 *†Tablets of Bh. 25
*‡Some Ans. Q. 189

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entirely destroyed, since their followers have not continued in accordance with their fundamental teachings, but have left the body of their religious system without the spirit.

2. THE BAHAI INTERPRETATION OF CHRIST.

The interpretation of Christ according to Bahatism varies from that of a mere man to the acknowledgment of his divinity and saviourhood in most orthodox Christian phraseology. The interpretation may be classified under three heads: Who was Christ? What was His mission? Was He superseded by Muhammad and Baha Ullah?

All Bahai teachers agree that Christ was an independent prophet,* who established a new cycle and gave a new law which was superior to and fulfilled those of all former manifestations. Baha Ullah said** “Christ and Muhammad are the same” so that Muhammad could say, “I am Jesus,” since he ratified the signs, records and Books of Jesus. They are the same in the sense that the sun of to-day can say, “I am the sun of yesterday.”† Yet the sun can also truly say, “I am other than the sun of yesterday.” The days of the week also are the same although they differ in name, quality, and designation. According to the teaching of Abdul Baha in London,‡ “Christ is an expression of the Divine Reality, the Single Essence, and Heavenly Entity. which hath no beginning or ending.” This Christ has appearance, a rising, manifestation and setting in each one of the cycles. He taught*† also that Christ was the greatest of the prophets excepting Baha Ullah. Mirza Abul Fazl represented Christ as an illiterate prophet, like all the other great manifestations, who was not helped by education, science or other men, but by the power of God, through His Holy Spirit, to establish a new independent religion in spite of the learned doctors or Pharisees. Thornton Chase wrote*‡ that Christ of Himself was not able to do anything, but did all through the help of God the Father. Christ is made dependent on Baha Ullah, since the difference between Christ and Baha Ullah is the same as the difference between the sun and the moon. The light of the sun subsists in itself, while the moon obtains its light

*Some Ans. Q. 171 **Bk. of Igan 15 †Bk. of Igan 15 ‡A-B in London 89 *†Some Ans. Q. 172

*‡“ Before Abraham was I am ”

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from the sun which it reflects to the earth. So Baha Ullah, the divine essence itself, was the light of all the prophets, and the source of the revelation of Christ. Therefore Christ did nothing of Himself but desired only the Father,* who is Baha Ullah.

The mission of Christ** like that of the other manifestations was to fulfil and complete the former prophecies concerning Himself to be the source of divine enlightenment for the world during His dispensation, which ended when Muhammad came, and to prepare the way for the coming of the great "Latter Day Messiah," Baha Ullah, God manifesting Himself as the Father, whose coming He and all other prophets foretold. When Christ came He found a Judaism† of utmost degradation, misery and decay. The pure religion of Moses having fallen into the hands of unscrupulous religious leaders had become so degraded that it was no longer capable of meeting the needs of men, so Christ by the help of supernatural power provided by the Holy Spirit, or Divine Essence which was within Him, abrogated the Mosaic law, reformed morals and taught universal peace. Baha Ullah was not able to differentiate the mission of Christ from that of other religious teachers, whose function consisted mainly in revealing a code of laws, with specific commands. For instance, he represented Christ as commanding His followers "to turn to Jerusalem as their Kiblah." Christ accordingly gave the same spiritual law‡ as Moses, Muhammad and Baha Ullah, although He changed some of the customs, ceremonies, and ethical laws; such as those concerning divorce. The Bahai interpretation of the work Christ came to accomplish is well summarised by Charles Remey.*† "The revelation of Jesus was for His own dispensation. Now it is no longer the point of guidance of the world. We are in total darkness if we are refusing the revelation of the present dispensation." The Bahai interpretation of Christ and His mission is so much at variance with that of orthodox Christianity that the claims of many Bahais to be both Christians and Bahais is absolutely impossible, since Christ becomes one of many prophets whose mission is now completed in Baha Ullah, upon whom must be lavished all the devotion and allegiance which was previously conferred upon Christ, and the Bible ceases

*Tablets of Bh. **Bhi. Mov. 43 †Some Ans. Q. 20f. ‡A-B on Divine Phil. 69 *†Star of West Dec. 13, 1913

TEACHING CONCERNING THE FORMER PROPHETS

to be the source of illumination for faith and practice, but gives place to the new Gospel revealed by the "Latter Day Messiah."

That Christ foretold the coming of Baha Ullah is not easy to prove conclusively. Baha Ullah claimed that Christ prophesied his coming in undeniable terms, and desired only his appearance; but this, like so many of his claims, consists largely of dogmatic statements, which are not followed by logical proof or systematic argument. Bahais bring forward several references from the Old and New Testaments, the most important of which are, Isaiah chapter eleven, foretelling the time when even the animals shall dwell together in peace, and other parts of the Old Testament of like import. Such passages were not fulfilled in Christ* but are interpreted allegorically as about to be realised and completed in the coming of Baha Ullah and his cycle of universal peace. Bahais interpret also all the references to the return of Christ as pointing to the coming of Baha Ullah, especially those who have come under western influence,** who take all the references of the Premillenarians from the Old Testament, particularly Ezekiel and Daniel, and the Revelation of St. John from the New Testament, and apply them en masse to Bahaism. These they interpret sometimes as a spiritual coming and at other times as a literal re-birth from the womb.

The parable of Christ concerning the coming of the owner of the vineyard to punish the wicked tenants after they had slain not only the servants sent but even His son, is interpreted as follows†:—The servants were the prophets who preceded Christ. The son was Christ, and the husbandman or "Father," who comes to call the wicked servants to account, is Baha Ullah. In the same way they interpret the statement of Christ that He had many things to tell His disciples which they could not receive at that time, as showing that there were many religious truths for which the world was not prepared in his day, which must be left until the fulness of time when Baha Ullah would reveal all things. The evidence which they are able to produce is not at all exhaustive, so that even Ibrahim Kheiralla, the great missionary of Bahaism in America, in his two volumes entitled "Baha Ullah," found himself limited to

*Bhi. Proofs 227 **"Baha Ullah," by Kheiralla, p. 345-386 †Bhi. Mov. 43

TEACHING CONCERNING THE FORMER PROPHETS

the Old Testament, a few references from the Gospels and Revelation, and the innumerable computations of Geikie and Cumming, when he tried* "to prove to the world from a Biblical standpoint, that the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, has appeared in the human form of Baha Ullah."

3. THE INTERPRETATION OF MUHAMMAD AND HIS MISSION.

This is not so varied nor so difficult to grasp as that concerning Christ. Muhammad is recognised as an independent prophet** although illiterate, like all other great manifestations, who revealed to the world a new law, which superseded that of Christ and of whom he was the resurrection, and established a new cycle, which found Arabia in ignorance, and soon developed it into the university of the world. This new law of Muhammad and the cycle of which he was the founder were superior to Christianity, since the world was prepared for a more advanced religion, because of the progress during the thousand years of the supremacy of Christianity. For this reason Islam would have universally superseded all other religions,† had not the leaders of these sects, especially the doctors of the Gospel, interpreted the "Holy Books" literally, thus misunderstanding their import, and withheld themselves and others from the river of the "Muhammadan Bounty." Instead of accepting Muhammad they were demanding signs, and rejecting the Quran,‡ which was ordained for the guidance of all in the heavens and earth until the coming of the next major manifestation. In turning away from the Quran they rejected the Bible and other religious books, since according to Baha Ullah,*† "whosoever hath not acknowledged the Quran hath not in reality accepted the books which precede it."

In brief, the mission of Muhammad like that of every major prophet,*† was threefold. First, to fulfill the prophecies of Christ and Christian writers concerning Him. Second, to reveal a law which should govern the world during His cycle, which ended when the Bab re-instated the same fundamentals of religion as those established by former manifestations, but which had been lost

*"Baha Ullah" 2 vol. Intr. IX** Bhi. Proofs 169 †Bk. of Igan 19f. ‡Bk. of Igan 143f. *†Bk. of Igan 145 *†Rev. of Bh. 22

TEACHING CONCERNING THE FORMER PRÖPHETS

through the misunderstanding and false teaching of religious leaders, into whose unscrupulous hands all former religions had fallen. In this legal code certain alterations in social, ethical, and ritualistic precepts were made, such as the changing of the *Libla* from Jerusalem to Mecca, the ceremonies during prayers, and the laws concerning fasting. The third part of the work of Muhammad as a prophet is dealt with very exhaustively in the *Book of Igan** which is written to Mirza Seyd-Muhammad, the maternal uncle of the Bab, in answer to questions concerning the signs and evidences of the expected manifestation from the standpoint of Islam, but consists largely of allegorical interpretations and illogical inferences from quotations. The *Quran*, like the books of the Jews, Christians, and other sects, is still considered of value and importance as throwing light upon the origin of Bahaism, the most perfect Revelation, but it cannot any longer hold its elevated position as the absolutely infallible rule of faith and practice, since it must give way completely to the new Law revealed by Baha Ullah. Likewise Muhammad is no longer the final prophet, but takes his place among the others, such as Moses, Christ, and Buddha. Hence it is impossible for one to hold the complete tenets of orthodox Islam and at the same time be a Bahai.

4. THE BAB.

Bahaism has relegated the Bab to a place of relative unimportance by declaring his revelation to have been in power only from his declaration in 1844, until the declaration of the mission of Baha Ullah a few years later. The station of the Bab, was merely that of pre-cursor, or forerunner, to proclaim and prepare for the coming of "Him Whom God will manifest" as Baha Ullah in the tablet of *Ishrakat* stated clearly that God made the Point (the Bab) the Herald or the Precursor to His Most Great Manifestation, saying,** "Oh people of El Beyan! Fear the Clement One! This is the One Whom Muhammad the Messenger of God made mention, and before him the Spirit (Christ), and before Him the Interlocutor (Moses)." According to Baha Ullah, the *Beyan*, the chief book of the Bab, is not considered to be a legalistic code which is to have any permanent supremacy, but is merely an

*One of the chief polemical books. **Tablets of Bh. 98.

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introductory chapter to the law of the Master Prophet of the ages, Baha Ullah, who wrote, "Verily it (the Beyan) was not revealed save only for the sake of My Celebration, the Mighty, the Impregnable. Nothing was intended by him (the Bab who wrote the Beyan) save My Beauty . . . verily he lamented over our separation and came before me to preach to the people of My Kingdom." Other quotations from the Beyan, which Baha Ullah applied to himself, show this same spirit, such as,* "Verily I (the Bab) am the first of those who worship Him."

Although Abdul Baha** assigned the Bab a place among the major manifestations since in him was realized the completion of some of the Islamic prophecies concerning the Twelfth Imam, and since he instituted new laws and a new religion, and announced the glad tidings of the rising of the Sun of Baha Ullah, yet he declared he was merely a star or moon who drew his light from Baha Ullah, and whose dispensation ended with the rising of that Sun. But even though the Bab did not claim that his religion or his books were final, and urged his followers continually to expect the coming of a great prophet, yet he made claims of divinity for himself† as the promised Mahdi of Islam, and that in a very full sense, which claims are too easily dismissed by Bahai writers. From the writings of the Bab, the Manifestation need not, and in fact it seems that he should not, have appeared so soon after his own declaration, since the promised one might delay his coming for 1511 years or even 2001 years. The most important work of the Bab for Bahaism was to leave Baha Ullah, the inheritance of a long line of noble martyrs, one of whom was a woman Kurat-ul-Eyn, whose stories are told and retold as examples of what Bahaism has been, the like of whose heroic lives they seem to be unable to boast in the present time. .

5. ABDUL BAHÁ.

According to the will of Baha Ullah, his eldest son, Abbas Effendi who assumed the title Abdul Baha, was named as his successor.‡ "This is the Testament of God that the Branches,

*Tablets of Bh. 78f. **Some Ans. Q. 30f. †New Hist. of Bab by E. G. Browne. ‡Three Tablets of Bh. 152.

Twigs and relations must each and every one look to the Greatest Branch. Reflect upon that which is revealed in My Book, the Akdas. When the ocean of My Presence hath disappeared and the Book of Origin is achieved to the end, turn your faces toward Him whom God hath purposed, who hath branched from the Pre-Existent Root. The aim of this blessed verse hath been the Greatest Branch." Thus Baha Ullah has handed on his prophetic mantle to Abdul Baha, allowing one to build much on his interpretations of the religion which centres about his father, and with whose history he has had a close association since his earliest childhood.

The divinity of Baha Ullah in the fullest sense was readily accepted by Abbas Effendi, but repeatedly in addresses in London and America, he repudiated all claims of divinity as far as he himself was concerned saying,* "I am no prophet, only a man like yourself." Yet in the title of Abdul Baha or "Servant of Baha," he left room for himself as the Lamp of Universal Salvation, Ensign of the Most Great Peace, Herald of the Kingdom, and Ransom to the Believers. He denied that he was the "Second coming of Christ," as is claimed for him by some of the American Bahais,** but applied the "Tablet of the Branch" to himself in which he claimed no one else had the authority to speak a single word in interpretation of the texts of Baha Ullah, and that whatever his pen recorded was correct, since he was the Centre of the Covenant† and the Promised One. But the Tablet of the Branch, revealed in Adrianople to Mirza Ali Riza, could not, primarily at least, have had any connection with Abbas Effendi, since it was revealed during the period when the contention for supremacy between the two brothers was at its height, and the fate of Baha Ullah was far from determined. It seemed that the Bahais of London were quite content to accept Abdul Baha merely as a medium of interpretation, and were somewhat offended with the American Bahais, who were not satisfied with less than ascribing divinity to him.

In fact it seemed that Abdul Baha held an even more prominent place in the minds of some of the American Bahais than

*A-B in London 132. **Bhsm. and Its Cls. 94 †The Bhi. Mov. 26f.

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Baha Ullah himself. In his will Abdul Baha has broken the Covenant or will of his father, which explicitly stated* that after the Greatest Branch (Abbas), the Greater Branch (Muhammad Ali) was to have the leadership, since he appointed Shauky Effendi, the eldest son of his eldest daughter, as his successor.

*Three Tablets of Bh. 152.

PART III



ATTITUDE OF BAHAIISM

TO

FORMER RELIGIONS

ATTITUDE TO FORMER RELIGIONS

Although the interpretation of other religions by Baháism has much in common with their interpretation of the founders of these religions, yet a discussion of them is essential since they all served as a preparation for Baháism. This is their only value at present because Baháism has superseded all other religions, and its laws, ceremonies, and books take precedence over those of all others.

I. RELIGIONS IN GENERAL.

According to Baháism, religions in general are divided into two classes,* the seven great religions, and those of lesser importance. Each of these carries a specific message** for a definite period of time and gives place to the next great religion after completing its †cycle of birth, development and decay. These religions are all pure in the beginning, ‡teaching the oneness of God; but after a time, when they fall into the hands of professional religious leaders they degenerate, as Christianity has done, *† until men know only the name of the Founder or lamp, and worship the dawning point instead of the Sun. Yet these religions all worship the same God, *‡ seek the same salvation and have the same fundamental laws, although they differ as to the name of the founder, and the books which they consider as sacred, and have minor differences in laws, ordinances, rites and customs. In brief, all religions, § like the sides of a pyramid, lead to the apex, where God may be found.

The mistakes common to all former religions are, firstly, that all these religions believe that their particular laws are to be final, *§ as the Moslems with the Quran and the Christians with the Bible. Secondly, that all religions have misinterpreted their religious books, because they interpreted them literally, †§ when in reality they are all in symbolical and allegorical form, even such common terms as resurrection and judgment, Fatherhood and Sonship (of God and Christ). Thirdly, all religions are expecting the return of some certain person, †§ who was on the earth in bygone ages. For

*Bhi. Proofs 13. **Bhi. Mov. 74. †Bhi Mov. 38. ‡A-B in London 132. *†Table Talks with A-B 1904. *‡Bhi. Proofs 32. §Bhsm. Univ. Rel 24f. *§Bhi. Proofs 166. †§A-B on Div. Phil. 36. ‡§Bhi. Proofs 73.

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instance, the Jews expect the return of Elias the prophet, the Christians the return of Christ, and the Moslems the return of the Twelfth Imam. All of them, expecting the return of the individual personality, failed to recognise Baha Ullah, who was the fulfillment of the prophecies of every religion, although he did not have the same body as any one of them. Fourthly, the devotees of these religions worship the dawning places or signs of the Zodiac,* instead of the sun. For instance, Christ was a dawning point but Christians worship him instead of God. Baha Ullah avoided this difficulty by proclaiming himself to be not only a dawning point, but in a peculiar sense, the very essence of God or the sun itself.

The attitude which Baha Ullah wished his followers to assume towards other religions was one of tolerance, since he urged them to** “Consort with the people of all religions.” Such references as this are interpreted by Bahais to mean that when one becomes a convert to Bahaism, he is to keep as much as possible of his old religion, or as M. Gabrail de Sassy represented, †the first step in making a Bahai convert is to confirm him in his own religion in order that he may understand the new faith. This may be acceptable since the Old Testament of Bahaism consists of all the former heavenly books, or previous revelations which serve as an introduction to the New Testament (the books and tablets of Baha Ullah).

The use which Bahaism makes of other religions is twofold : Firstly, to serve as examples for Bahaism ; secondly, to serve as a preparation for the coming of Baha Ullah. In the book of Igan,‡ Baha Ullah endeavoured to show, that just as Noah, Moses, Christ, and Muhammad were compelled to face, singly and alone, those who were hostile to their teaching, so he would have to face the opposition of the world, and especially of the religious leaders. Similarly, he declared that Bahaism, like other religions, would have a small beginning, but would continue to spread until it became universal.

The second adaptation of other religions to further his own teaching*† is by far the more important of the two. He declared

*Table Talks with A-B. 1908. **Tablets of Bh. †Bhi. Proofs 73. ‡Bk. of Igan 2f. *†The Bhi. Mov. 41f.

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that they prepared for his coming by their prophecies concerning him, and by the evolution of the world under their administration.

2. JUDAISM.

The oldest religion of which Baháism takes serious account is Judaism. This religion, founded by the interlocutor Moses, in its early state of purity,* when it taught the oneness of God, was, especially through its law, the cause of the advancement of the Hebrew people to a very high stage of civilization, which having reached,** they forgot the fundamentals of religion and steeped themselves in superficial ceremonies and heathen customs. However, in spite of its decay, Judaism left a heritage of prophecy concerning the coming of a great prophet, much of which was fulfilled in Christ,† but a great deal of which remained to be realized in Baha Ullah, especially the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31, portions of Isaiah, much of Ezekiel and Daniel,‡ and the prophecies concerning the coming of the Lord after the dispersion of the Jews, to restore their former glory in the Holy Land.

3. CHRISTIANITY.

Christianity is cited as an example for Baháism, in that it grew from a small beginning into a universal religion and its founder was rejected by contemporary religious leaders.

The purpose of Christianity while still in its pure, primitive state, was to teach the "Oneness of God" and to establish the "Law of the Hebrews" on firm spiritual foundations, providing specific laws, ritual, and customs, which were to supersede the law revealed by Moses, and were to govern the actions of men until the coming of the Islamic dispensation. But as soon as it had fallen under the control of leaders, who cared more for the triumph of the faith than for the teaching of the truth,*† its period of decay began and has continued ever since, until to-day men know only the name of Christ*‡ without knowing anything of His reality, and the fundamentals upon which the faith was founded have, especially in the East, entirely disappeared. After a lapse of two thousand years, there is a need for a renewal of religion, since no tree which is two thousand years old will bear fruit.

*Mys. Forces of Civ. 87f. **Mys. Forces of Civ. 89. †Bhi. Proofs 234. ‡"Bh." by Ibr. Khr. 345-387. *†Bhi. Proofs 230. *‡Table Talks with A-B 1908.

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Bahais object very strongly to two Christian doctrines in particular, the Trinity and Miracles. Bahatism emphasises the "Oneness of God" and interprets the Trinity, which is found in every prophetic cycle,* in a symbolic sense. During the Judaic dispensation, there were God, Moses, and the Burning Bush. In the Islamic cycle, there were God, Muhammad, and Gabriel; and in the Christian period God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. These trinities are illustrated by the sun, its rays, and the heat resulting from it. Or again, they are the sun, a mirror to reflect the sun, and the resulting light and heat. As the sun does not come down** to dwell in the mirror, we cannot say that there are two suns, one in the sky, and one in the mirror; and yet strangely enough if we do say this we speak truly. But just as the sun in the mirror is only a reflection of the real sun, a medium of revelation for it, so Christ did not claim to be God, but only a revelation or manifestation of Him.

Bahatism also strongly objects to a literal interpretation of miracles,† asserting that God does not violate the laws of nature. The Book of Iqan,‡ one of Bahatism's chief polemical works, affords many instances of such allegorical interpretations of signs and wonders. When Bahai writers mention the miraculous events in connection with the history of Bahatism or Christianity, they are careful to explain that miracles do not prove the truth of a religion, a principle first set forth by Mirza Abul Fazl.*† Abdul Baha explained that Christ did not eat a literal supper of bread and wine with His disciples on the evening of His betrayal,*‡ and that the miracles recorded as taking place at the crucifixion of Christ, were such phenomenal events that had they really occurred, they would have found a prominent place in the history of the time. Kheiralla well summarises the Bahai position in regard to the miracles of Christianity:§ "We do not accept the miracles of the Old and New Testaments in a literal sense, but interpret and explain them as symbolical expressions of spiritual truth."

This disapproval of literal interpretation applies also to other portions of the Biblical text so that even the story of Adam and

*Tablets of A-B. I 117. **Some Ans. Q. 129f. †Some Ans. Q. 45. ‡Book of Iqan 28 etc. *†Bhi. Proofs 13. *‡Tablets of A-B. III 514. §"Baha Ullah" p. 105.

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Eve becomes symbolical.* Adam signifies the spirit of Adam, and Eve signifies his soul. Baptism with water is no longer necessary** since it is a symbolic act. The New Jerusalem of revelation, chapter XXI,† is the new law of Baha Ullah, and the woman of chapter twelve is the Islamic law, the sun being Persia, the moon Turkey, and the twelve stars the twelve Imams. The child born of the woman was the Bab, the dragon was the dynasty of the Umayyads and the seven heads, the seven kingdoms.

Christianity, like the other great religions prepared for Baháism, by its laws, customs, and ritual, which were the cause of progress in the world, and by its epistles which told of the coming of the Day of God. Baha Ullah represented Christ as desiring "naught but My Person," and condemned the Christians, who read the Gospels and expected the return of the "Spirit," but did not confess the Glorious Lord when He came.

4. ISLAM.

Muhammad arose to fulfil the prophecies of Christianity but was not accepted by Christians, because of the degenerate state into which their religion had fallen,*† and because of the opposition of the clergy. Islam came at a later date when the world had made considerable progress, hence it was able to reveal advanced religious truths, for which the world was not prepared when Christianity was being instituted. Islam elevated Arabia to the highest position in the world and left its impression even in Europe. But, when it reached its zenith, it abandoned its high ideals and so failed to conquer the world, and has ever since continued in its decline. The Quran is still of considerable value as a source of proof for Baha Ullah and his mission, but Baha Ullah's way of quoting it and his allegorical interpretations are not conducive to acceptance as logical proof by orthodox Moslems.

5. BABI'ISM.

Although Babi'ism is named as one of the seven great religions, in reality it is relegated to a position of unimportance, since

*Some Ans. Q. 140f. **Table Talks with A.B. 1904. †Some Ans. Q. 78f. ‡Lawh-el-Akdas 160.
*†Book of Iqan 19f.

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the Bab has been declared a mere herald of Baha Ullah. His law has given place to the law of Baha Ullah, and his followers must accept the new Prophet.* Bahaism now interprets Babi'ism merely as a reformation within Islam, since only Moslems accepted it** and repudiates the crimes and political insurrections for which its enthusiastic but ignorant adherents were responsible. The noble line of martyrs however, are readily accepted as members of the Bahai circle.

6. ALL OTHER RELIGIONS.

Buddhism, Confucianism, Brahmanism, Zoroastrianism and Sabeanism were all originally inspired by God, and taught pure monism. Idolatry was not an essential part of any of them,† but now these religions are so steeped in ignorance and superstition that it is necessary for Bahaism to re-establish the fundamental laws common to all of them. The books such as the Vedas of the Hindus, and the Zend-Avesta of the Zoroastrians, although not at the present time in their originally pure state, are from divine inspiration and contain many prophecies‡ fulfilled in Baha Ullah.

*Tablets of Bh. 99. **Bhi. Proofs 66. †Bhi. Proofs 176. ‡Tablets of A-B. III 565.

PART IV



THEOLOGY OF BAHAIISM

THEOLOGY OF BAHAIISM

I. TEACHINGS CONCERNING GOD.

(a) *The Existence of God.*—Baha Ullah wrote no systematic theology by which to prove the existence of God, and by logical proofs and systematic arguments to formulate his doctrines concerning Him. The attitude of Baha Ullah is practically that of the Old Testament theologians, such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Amos, and Hosea who do not argue concerning the existence of God, but take it for granted as already accepted. Abdul Baha however, confronted with the questions raised by Western converts, in his chapter* on “Proofs for the Existence of God,” presented a restatement of the cosmological argument, that everything which began to be must have had a sufficient cause, the teleological argument—reasoning from law and order, and a very diluted form of the anthropological argument.

(b) *The Nature of God and His Relations to the Universe.*

(aa) *The Nature of God.*—There is no part of the Bahai system of theology more vague than their teachings concerning the nature of God, which vary from an impersonal, all pervading pantheistic essence, to a God who could be described by an absolute monistic definition. The Gnostic definition of God, which Baha Ullah gave as unknowable, leaves room for varied interpretation, by those who are not content with the picture of God as** “everlastingly hidden in His Own Essence.” This Gnostic definition of God is most clearly set forth in the Book of Igan, and other texts from his writings concerning God are largely in the same terms and express the same idea.† “It is evident to the possessors of Knowledge and illumined minds that the Unseen Divinity and Essence of Oneness hath been holy beyond emanation and appearance, ascent and descent, ingress and egress; is exalted above the praise of every praiser and the comprehension of every comprehender. He hath been and is everlastingly hidden in His Own Essence and will be eternally concealed from eyes and sight in His Own Identity. The sight comprehendeth Him not, but He comprehendeth the sight; He is the Gracious, the Wise,” (K. S. 6).

*Some Ans. Q. 5-7. **Book of Igan 69. †Book of Igan 68f.

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“No relation, connection, separation, union, nearness, remoteness, position, or reference is possible between Him and the contingent thing, in as much as all in the heavens and earth have become existent by the word of His Command and have stepped forth from utter and absolute non-existence and nothingness into the court of the existent and visible, through His Desire which is the Will Itself.”

“Glory be to God! Nay, even there hath not been nor will be any connection or relation between the contingent things and His word. ‘God warneth you to beware of Himself’ (K. S. 3) is a clear proof of this fact, and ‘there was God and nothing whatever was with Him’ is obvious evidence thereof. Therefore all prophets, successors, divines, sages, and wise men confess their lack of attainment to the knowledge of that Essence of Essences and admit their inability to know and reach that Truth of Truths.”

Both Abdul Baha and Mirza Ab'ul Fazl approved this interpretation of the unknown, unseen Essence of Divinity,* incomprehensible in its own innermost identity, whom even consciousness cannot reach since it is in an entirely different world. The existence of God is all Bahai philosophy authorises us to affirm.** “This much is known. It (the Essence of Divine Entity) exists and its existence is certain and proved—but the condition is unknown.” The Bahais pray to an unknown God, as the secretary of Baha Ullah acknowledged. But although the Bahai philosophers claim God is unknowable, they are like the Gnostic writers who affirm on the first page that God is unknowable and then proceed to write volumes concerning Him. From the unknowableness of the nature of God which is the starting point of Bahai Theology, they endeavour to show the necessity for a manifestation† who shall reveal Him to men. But even this revelation is not in reality of the nature of God, except in so far as these manifestations are God, since‡ “all that the human reality knows, discovers and understands of the names, the attributes and the perfections of God, refer to these Holy Manifestations. There is no access to anything else: the way is closed and seeking is forbidden.” However when we look into these mirrors we see something of the nature of the sun,

*.***Tablets of A-B. III 562. †Bk. of Iqan 69f. ‡Some Ans. Q. 169.

and these attributes so revealed are treated as if they apply to God. They may be divided for convenience into classes, those which apply to himself and those which apply to His relationship with others.

The attributes which apply to God Himself.

Life and Personality.—That God has life is one of the simple ideas which are incapable of definition, and so taken for granted, like the existence of God. The attributes which Baha Ullah applied to God such as power, wisdom, and creationship cannot be a mere process without a subject, otherwise we should have a product without a producer.

Although it seems difficult to imagine a highly developed form of life without personality, yet among Bahai adherents there is a variety of opinions concerning the personality of God. Baha Ullah accepted the doctrine according to the testimony of his secretary, Bahij Bahai, who quotes that no one knows or understands God's "Personality," (literally what he looks like) and that** "there is no God but He, that He does not have a partner, and no counterpart, and no minister, and no match or equal. He is still, as He was, one in Himself, in His own names and attributes," and from the Quran, "There is no God but God the creator of everything." He concludes,† "These verses and their like are very numerous in the holy divine books in which everything points very plainly to and explains very clearly His true personality. That is to say His own holy Oneness concerning Himself and His attributes and all His affairs." If we receive Baha Ullah's teaching concerning the unity and Oneness of God, as accepting the doctrine of the personality of God, there is an abundance of evidence. But this "Oneness" having much the same connotation as the "Oneness" of pantheistic Sufi mystics will not bear too definite an interpretation as teaching that God has personality.

Muhammad Ali Effendi and many other Bahais frankly deny that God has personality‡ in any sense connoted by Christian phraseology. With others it is an inferential denial of personality

**Arabic mnsct. of ans. questions 3-5. †Questions ans. by Bahij Bahai 3-5.

‡In conversations and letters.

by representing and defining God in impersonal terms. This, Abdul Baha represented as being identical with His attributes.* “The essential names and attributes of God are identical with His Essence and His Essence is above comprehension.” This will allow a Bahai to assert that God is for instance, an Impersonal Power. In the same tone he wrote,** “Know that the Reality of Divinity or the substance of the Essence of Oneness is pure sanctity and absolute holiness: that is to say it is sanctified and exempt from all praise. The whole of the supreme attributes of the degrees of existence, in reference to this plane, are only imaginations. It is invisible, incomprehensible and inaccessible, a pure essence which cannot be described: for the Divine Essence surrounds all things.” This representation of God as an elusive essence which surrounds and invades all things rapidly lapses into pantheism as Abdul Baha asserted,† “All that exists is God. Pantheism which identifies God with the totality of things and considers the universe as the development of one impersonal, intelligent and voluntary substance leaves no place‡ for God’s personality.

Unity of God.—According to Bahaiism the fundamental attribute of God is unity. In the “Epistle to the Shah,” Baha Ullah taught a monotheism almost as rigid as that of Islam or Judaism, “We hereby bear witness that there is no God but Him. He is independent of the worlds. No one hath known Him . . . † God singly and alone abideth in His own” place which is wholly above space and time . . . The way is closed and seeking is forbidden.” Abdul Baha and other Bahai writers*‡ emphasise the universal acceptance of the unity of God to the extent of acknowledging that even the pagans believe in the§ “Oneness and Singleness of God,” and that their idols are visible representations of that holy Essence. That God reveals Himself through many different manifestations, does not destroy His unity, any more than the sun would be pluralised by being reflected from many mirrors, or because it has many signs of rising in the zodiac.

Attributes of God revealed in names and objectives applied to Him.—Many names are ascribed to God in the Book of Igan

*Some Ans. Q. 170. **Some Ans. Q. 170. †A-B. in London 8. ‡Strong’s Syst. Theol. *†Bk. of Igan 68f. *‡The Bhi. Proofs. §Tablets of A-B. I. 3.

such as King of Names, Creator of the Heavens, the One, the Single, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent, the Powerful, the Mighty, the Independent, the Grand, the Magnificent, the Bounteous, the Beloved of the Heart of the Knowing, the Gracious, the Commander, the Wise One, the Conqueror, the Potent, the Forgiving, the Helper, and the Confirmer. Mirza Ab'ul Fazl told us,* that in Baha Ullah, God manifested His knowledge, power, wisdom, dominion, grandeur, unity, will, beauty, glory, grace, perfection and beneficence.

The Attributes of God which apply to his relationship to others, are his moral attributes of truth, love and holiness. This phase of theology does not occupy an important place in the writings of Baha Ullah. His conception of God as an unknowable Essence or Entity is not conducive to a close bond of love between God and man. Hence his representation is that of a powerful, mighty and sublime being. Thus the only warm, living, vital connection possible between God and man is through the manifestations,** who act as God's counsels. In the writings and thought of western Bahais, the truth, love and holiness of God are strongly emphasised, so much so that Phelps† seems to reduce the Essence of God to these moral attributes.

(bb) *God's Relationship to the Universe.*—Creation is by emanation from God. “The first thing which emanated from God was that universal reality which the ancient philosophers call the ‘First Mind’ and which the people of Baha call the Primal Will.” Cf. the discussion of the works of God.

Bahatism teaches that God penetrates and fills the whole universe. Also Baha Ullah taught the omnipresence of God in such words as the following. ‡“I know it has been decided that God surrounds everything and knows these things, and that he is nearer to everything than these things to themselves, as is said in the Quran, ‘Wherever you go there is the face of God.’”

The doctrine is restated by Baha Ullah that all things whether actual, or possible, past, present or future, are known to God. This omniscience is in the following quotation.*† “It is

*Bhi. Proofs 146f. **Lawh-el-Akdas 158. †“Abbas” 153f. ‡Questions Ans. by Bahij Bahai 6.
*†Quest. Ans. Sect. 7.

said that God knows what you hide in your breast or what you disclose. He has knowledge of the heavens and the earth and of everything else, the knowledge of what has been, and what will be."

The power of God was one of the attributes most emphasised by Baha Ullah. This omnipotence is represented in such words as *"Everything is in the grip of God's power. He can do just as He chooses with the kingdoms, and rules with power according to His desire." And again, "Say that the power of God is just like the sea; does it decrease if small cupfuls are taken from it?" Baha Ullah exalted the power of God so much that after all He became practically the same arbitrary Ruler as that presented by Islam. Baha Ullah also presented God as Ruler of the Universe. God gives to whom He pleases, and withholds from others, who are predestined to an evil fate. Surat-ul-Heykel** Baha Ullah wrote, "Glory to Him who quickeneth whom he wisheth by merely saying. 'Be,' and it is. Who elevateth whom He willeth to the heaven of bounty, and bringeth down that which He pleaseth to a predestined measure. Blessed is he who doth what He pleaseth by a command on his part." He continued with the same thought in his teaching that God gives and takes away at will, and no one has the right to ask why or how, since † "Verily we are the doers of that which we please and will not be questioned as to that we have done." This representation of God as an arbitrary ruler is adopted by Abdul Baha, ‡ although modified when writing to his followers in the West. In the thought and the writings of Bahais, who have been living in the atmosphere of the New Testament instead of that of the Quran, this autocratic picture of God is so much modified that it is Christian rather than Bahai.

According to many of the American and English Bahais, the fatherhood of God, together with the brotherhood of man is the keynote of Bahaism. Although the term Fatherhood was used by Baha Ullah in Lawh-el-Akdas, "Surely the father has come and fulfilled that whereunto you were promised in the kingdom of God," yet the connotation of the word Fatherhood in this and other references is by no means the same as that designated in Christianity. When Baha Ullah used the term Fatherhood of God he was speaking of himself.

*Quest. Ans. Sect. 8. **Surat-ul-Heykel. 43f. †Surat-ul-Heykel. 44. ‡Tablets of A-B, I. 50.

(cc) *The Manifestation as God.*—The claims of divinity in the writings of Baha Ullah are of two kinds, direct claims and passages from which divinity may be inferred.

Direct Claims of Divinity.—Baha Ullah applied to himself the prophecies of the Bab* concerning “Him whom God will manifest.” “Verily He will utter in every state, verily I am God, there is no God but me, the Protector, the Self-Subsistent, and all besides me are created by me. Oh, ye my creatures! Ye are to worship me.” Baha Ullah wrote to the Christians in the *Lawh-el-Akdas*,** “What maketh you to doubt, ye have called for your Lord, the Self-dependent, night and day, and when he hath come from the heaven of pre-existence in the greatest glory, ye have not approached him and were of the heedless.” In another place in the same epistle, Baha Ullah declared himself the Father.† “Surely the father has come and fulfilled that whereunto you were promised in the kingdom of God. This is the Word the Son veiled, when he said to those around him that at that time they could not bear it, but when the time came the Word shone forth.” Further in his Tablet to the Pope, Baha Ullah claimed to be the return of Christ ‡ “Verily He hath come from heaven another time as He came the first time, beware lest ye oppose Him as the Pharisees opposed Him without evidence or proof.” Again he claimed to be God the Creator, when he referred to himself as*† “He who created the world and left it.” When Baha Ullah laid his claim to be God, he did not thereby impair his humanity*‡ “It (the Divine Essence) hath descended into the form of man in this time.”

Indirect Claims.—In addition to the direct claims of divinity made by Baha Ullah himself, there are a number of statements in his writings from which divinity may be inferred. For instance he claimed that the attributes, which are ordinarily applied only to God, might be applied equally to himself. He seemed to infer omniscience in the words. §“He hath indeed appeared from whose knowledge naught is concealed.” He claimed that men should worship him when he declared himself, *§“The worshipped of whomsoever is in the heaven and the earth, and the adored of the ancients and moderns.” Also he maintained that he came for the

*Surat-ul-Heykel 43f. and Tablet of Tarazat. **Lawh-el-Akdas 159. †Lawh-el-Akdas 159.

‡Letter to Pope “Bh.” by Khr. 533. *† and *‡ “Baha Ullah” 534f. §Tablets of Bh. 98.

*§Surat-ul-Heykel 62.

salvation of men.* “We have come unto you and have endured the abominations of the world because of your salvation. Do ye flee from him who hath sacrificed his soul for your lives.” Further he assented that turning to him was equivalent to turning to God. **“Whosoever turns to him (Baha Ullah) hath surely turned unto God, and whosoever turneth away from him hath turned away from God and is among the transgressors.”

Bahai writers teach the divinity of Baha Ullah by quoting the many claims of divinity in his tablets and by restatements of his claims, Abdul Baha wrote, †“The Father of Christ hath come among you,” and again, “The manifested God Himself hath come.” He cabled back to America after his voyage across the ocean, “Thanks to Baha Ullah we arrived safely in Liverpool.” Muhammad Ali accepted the divinity of Baha Ullah‡ in Orthodox Bahai phraseology both in conversation and in letters. M. Abdul Kareem taught this same doctrine in these words, to followers in America. *† “Upon the day, when God Almighty, in the form of man known as Baha Ullah, declared himself and said, ‘I am God, ever there is no God but me, the old heaven and old earth passed away and all things became new.’” Ibrahim Kheiralla called Baha Ullah the *‡“Anointed One, Everlasting Father and King of Kings,” contending that his personality was “a sufficient proof and witness of his divinity.” Bahai teachers and writers apply all divine attributes to Baha Ullah, by which they declare his divinity.

On the part of some of the Bahais of the West there is a tendency to under-emphasise the divinity of Baha Ullah and even at times to deny it. For instance Charles Remey§ claims that the divinity of a manifestation does not mean that the essence of the Infinite Deity is contained in his personality, but that he is as a clear mirror which reflects the sun. The sun does not come down to dwell in the mirror which reflects it, so God does not dwell in the manifestation. Again the manifestation is like the rays of the sun, which are from it, but in their essence are not the sun itself. Abdul Baha, writing for western Bahais, says, *§“Divinity could not descend into the conditions of existence, which is imperfection, since He is perfection.” Mirza Fazil Mazandarany

*Lawh-el-Akdas 158. **Tablet of the Branch 143. †Bhi. Rev. 178. ‡Letters and Conversations
*†Addresses in N.Y. and Chicago 1900. *‡“Bh. 446f.” §Bhi. Mov. 35. *§Some Ans. Q. 129f.

who had just returned to Haifa from an extended missionary tour of America, likened the divinity of Baha Ullah to an electric bulb. This bulb was only the means of conveying the light of the dynamo and did not in any way produce the illumination. Therefore as the bulb was not the dynamo and did not have the essence or attributes of the dynamo, so Baha Ullah, represented by the bulb, was not God. But these negative interpretations of the doctrine of Baha Ullah's divinity are very few and unconvincing, when compared to the abundance of positive evidence. At the first interview with some American and English Bahais, they would seem to deny all divinity to Baha Ullah. But if one returns and appears to have accepted the first lesson, they would begin to teach his divinity, until finally it is presented in the orthodox Bahai form. This is permitted and even encouraged by Baha Ullah since he taught "Tagiya" (dissimulation regarding one's religion).

(*dd*) *The Holy Spirit.*—Although Bahaism in some places teaches a Manotheism similar to that of Judaism and Islam, yet there is evidence that the Holy Spirit is God. Sometimes this Holy Spirit is considered as an absolutely impersonal substance or Essence of God, which enters each major manifestation.* When it takes control of these, it enables those, who without the Holy Spirit would be ordinary persons, to accomplish a work otherwise impossible for them, namely to establish a new law which is superior to all former codes and which governs the world during this new cycle. This representation of the Holy Spirit might be likened to a fluid poured into certain individuals. At the death of each of these manifestations it goes back into the ocean of God's Oneness to be resurrected, or returned, when it is poured into or enters the next prophet. In this way Bahaism explains the divinity of Moses,** Christ and Muhammad, and gives a figurative or symbolical meaning to the terms resurrection and judgment, since each independent prophet has in him this same Holy Spirit, and establishes the same fundamental law.

But when all the references to the Holy Spirit are carefully studied it becomes quite clear that there is a differentiation between the Holy Spirit and the Essence of God; and that a definite work

*Bhi. Proofs 162. **Some Ans. Q. 122ff.

is assigned to this Holy Spirit as an active agency, in terms having very much the same connotation as those used in the same connotation in Christian theology. According to Baha Ullah,* the Holy Spirit gives to certain men new life, convinces them of the truth of religion, and confirms them in their acceptance of the Divine Manifestation.

The work of the Holy Spirit is that of a mediator between God and man. The grace of eternal life is given by this Spirit, as Baha Ullah expressed it the giving of a new life, and interpreted in later Bahai writings as rebirth. Abdul Baha wrote, **“If a soul does not receive grace from bounties of the Holy Spirit, he remains deprived of the divine gift and the banishment itself puts the soul beyond the reach of pardon.” Again according to Abdul Baha the Holy Spirit frees men from carnal desires, †“Man cannot free himself from the rage of the carnal passions except by the help of the Holy Spirit.” According to a Bahai pamphlet, “The Bahai Movement: Its Spiritual Dynamic,” the Holy Spirit is the driving force, now at work in the world, to make Bahaiism the universal religion. The Holy Spirit is the source of all revelation, which makes the ignorant wise, and purifies and sanctifies those who gain eternal life, according to the testimony of Abdul Baha in some Answered Questions. ‡ In addition, the Holy Spirit serves as the medium to transport to men all religious teachings and interpret the sacred books of Baha Ullah, as well as the source of all scientific discoveries. Again the Holy Spirit acts as the medium of healing, and Bahais, especially in America, emphasize spiritual healing and quote many examples.

In the tablets of Baha Ullah, attributes are applied to the Holy Spirit which ordinarily are applied only to a being who has a personality. For instance he spoke of him as envying and enjoying,*† and designated him as a herald. Abdul Baha ascribed to him one of the divine attributes, when he said that the Holy Spirit had neither beginning nor end. These, and many other references, show that Bahai theology by no means limits the Holy Spirit to an absolutely impersonal essence or substance, which is the fluid or invading Essence of God.

*Bk. of Igan 139. **Some Ans. Q. 146. †Some Ans. Q. 105. ‡Some Ans. Q. 165. *†Bk. of Igan 43.

(c) *The Works of God.*—The Bahai system of theology includes the same works of God as those found in Christianity, of creation, preservation, and revelation, although the method of accomplishing them is somewhat different.

(aa) *Creation.*—This is by emanation from God, very similar to that pictured by Gnosticism, in which God is the creator or First Principle, from whom all things proceed. Baha Ullah's description of creation is represented by the following quotation, **"All in the heavens and earth have become existent by the word of his command and have proceeded from the utter and absolute non-existence and nothingness, into the court of the existent and visible, through his desire."* This quotation, when taken in its context, is not unlike the pantheistic philosophy of Buddhism which taught that the original Source of all was a nameless being, devoid of all qualities, and to whom relationship was in no way possible, except by this flowing out, or procedure from Him. Abdul Baha approved this interpretation of creation, when he wrote, ***"Creatures emanate from God as the light emanates from the sun, and the human spirit emanates from God like the action from the actor, the discourse from the speaker, or the writing from the author."* Again he said, †*"The first thing which emanated from God was that universal reality which the ancient philosophers called the 'First Mind' and which the people of Baha call the 'Primal Will.'"*

However Bahaiism at times teaches a dualism which would eliminate the doctrine of creation. Wilson's criticism of the philosophy of Baha Ullah was that he affirmed the eternity of matter. In the Divine Philosophy of Abdul Baha this idea is clearly stated. ‡*"The universe has never had a beginning."* Phelps adopted the same philosophy when he wrote, *†*"Matter, reflecting the negative aspect of God, is self-existent, eternal, and fills all space."* In these references we find the two self-existent principles, God and matter, distinct from and co-eternal with each other. Matter however in the quotation from Phelps is a negative, imperfect and unconcious substance, hence subordinate to God.

(bb) *Preservation.*—In the theology of Baha Ullah there is very slight emphasis given to any form of foresight or preservation

*Bk. of Iqan 69. **and †Some Ans. Q. 236f. ‡A-B. on Div. Phil. 107. *†"Abbas" 154.

exercised by God towards his creatures. In fact the vital relationship of preservation represented by Christianity is quite impossible if we conceive of God as being a far-off, unknown, and unknowable divinity, with whom no relation or connection is possible. His picture of God withdrawing from the universe after he had created it, still further eliminates the possibility of emphasizing this doctrine of preservation. Abdul Baha and others represented God as controlling nature in a description which is very like that of Christianity. **“Nature in its own essence is in the grasp of the power of God, who is the Eternal Almighty One: He holds nature within accurate regulations and laws, and rules over it.”* But when Baha Ullah emphasized the teaching that God is unknowable and has no relation with contingent things, and prohibited his followers from seeking God, he intended thereby to proportionally emphasize the doctrine that men were dependent on himself for their knowledge of God** and their relationship with him. Thus he represented himself as accomplishing this work of continually exercising this foresight and care, which is delegated to Christ in Christian theology. He claimed also that the purpose of his coming to the earth was to protect men who are as a tender branch, and to raise all creatures by his hand. Moreover he represented himself as the ruler of all men, not in temporal but spiritual things, and claimed that he was the commander of all things, and that he could reject anyone on earth. He even made the relation of men to God dependent on their attitude to himself,† pronouncing woe‡ on those who reject him since he came for the salvation of men, and opened to them the gates of the Kingdom. In the “Tablet of the Branch” he stated *† that those who turned to him turned to God, and that those who withdrew from him rejected God, and were among those that perish.

In addition to the protection, forethought and care of men exercised by the Divine Manifestation, this work is also accomplished through angels. Abdul Baha wrote a prayer for Persian believers,*‡ *“Oh my God, assist them in all cases, through the angels of thy sanctity, who are thy invisible hosts,”* and in many tablets to his followers in America, *“Verily the angels in heaven*

*Some Ans. Q. 1. **Tablets of Bh. 61, Tablets of Bh. 144, Surat-ul-Heykel 33f. †Surat-ul-Heykel 18, Lawh-el-Akdas 158f. ‡Tablets of Bh. 71f. *†Tablets of Bh. 143. *‡Tab. A-B. II. 368.

bless thee." Baha Ullah represented the angels as testifying to truth,* "Thereunto testifies God, then his angels, then his messengers and then his holy servants." Abdul Baha sometimes represented angels as heavenly powers and as holy souls. But not all the angels belong to this helpful class for some have evil designs. Baha Ullah used the plural of "AHRIMAN" the tempter,** demon or evil spirit of the Zoroastrians, when he warned men that "The Ahrimans are lurking in ambush." In the Surat-ul-Heykel† he pictured Satan as appearing in a supernatural form with power for the purpose of commanding men to commit iniquity and injustice, and to keep them from doing the right, and warned men not to follow him. In the book of Igan‡ he declared that knowledge was of two kinds, "Divine and Satanic."

(cc) *Revelation.*—When Bahai theology teaches that God is absolutely unknowable as far as His real Essence is concerned, it leaves Him dependent entirely on the Manifestations, their writings and nature for the revelation of Himself to man.

(dd) *Revelation by Manifestations.*—Bahaiism divides the former prophets into two classes*† the independent or major Manifestations such as Christ and Mohammad, who established a new law, and the dependent prophets such as Daniel and Hosea, whose influence did not reach beyond their own community. Although Bahais claim to accept the revelation of God contributed by every former manifestation, yet practically they make the world dependent on the revelation of Baha Ullah, as can be seen in the chapter on the "Interpretation of former prophets by Bahaiism."

Consequently as far as the Bahai system of theology is concerned the discussion of God's revelation in a manifestation may be limited to that of Baha Ullah. When Baha Ullah put forth his claims as a revelation of God he realized that there were many prophets who had made the same claim before him, and to whom millions of people were giving their allegiance. Hence he found it necessary to convince men that he was sent from God, and to establish his claim to be the only one who fulfilled the prophecies of all the former messengers, and therefore to be the universally ac-

*Tablet of Bh. 143. **Tablets of Bh. 25. †Surat-ul-Heykel 61. ‡Bk. of Igan 50. *†The Bhi. Mov. 38.

cepted, and clearly to set forth the works he claimed to accomplish. However Baha Ullah did not agree that the proofs for his mission were necessary since the "cause of a manifestation is clear as the sun." He continually emphasised the claim that no one had any right to question him** even if he declared water to be wine, heaven to be earth, virtue to be error, or infidelity to be faith. When he and his followers found that men continued to question in spite of these declarations, then they began to appeal to arguments.

The principal proofs employed by prophets and their adherents to prove the validity of their claims as a revelation of God are very well summarised by Mirza Ab'ul Fazl† as the fulfilling of prophecy, the working of miracles, logical proofs, and writings revealed by the prophet. Of these proofs the two which are most emphasised in Bahai writings are the fulfilling of prophecy, and the books which were revealed by Baha Ullah, in fact his followers claimed that all prophecies were fulfilled in him. The claims, as the realisation of Islamic prophecy in Baha Ullah, centred largely around himself as the fulfilment of the millennial hopes in the Shi'ite sect, and in the return of Imam Mahdi, or the Hidden Imam. His fulfilment of Islamic prophecies has also much of the atmosphere of the dreamy mysticism of Sufi philosophers and allegorical fancies of the Moslem poets. The claim to fulfil Christian prophecies centred around the return of the Word or Christ, the coming of the Father of Christ, and the promised Spirit or Comforter. As to the fulfilment of the prophecies of Babi'ism, the claim is made that Baha Ullah was "Him whom God will manifest" promised by the Bab. In addition Baha Ullah's followers claim that he is Shah Bahram, expected by the Zoroastrians, the fifth Buddha anticipated by Buddhistic prophecies, and the reincarnation of Krishna for the Brahmans.

In addition to the evidence presented in the chapter on the Bahai interpretation of former prophets, many Bahai writers give much weight to numerical calculations from prophecy, to show that Baha Ullah was to come on a prescribed date. For instance, Abdul Baha‡ presented a very lengthy discussion in which he endeavoured to prove that the dates of the declarations of the Bab

*Tablets of Bh. 67. **Tablets of Bh. 104-6. †Bhi. Proofs. ‡Some Ans. Q. 43f.

and Baha Ullah were foretold in Daniel. Kheiralla in his two volumes entitled "Baha Ullah"* gave a very long discourse on the time of Baha Ullah's coming, in which he presented minute calculations to prove that 1260 A.H. or 1844 A.D. were foretold in Scripture, and that the Bab was the return of Elijah promised by the prophecy of the one thousand two hundred and sixty days of Revelations which are counted in lunar years. He gave very careful detailed calculations from the prophecies of the Bab for the three successive declarations of Baha Ullah, which he stated were first 1268 A.H. or 1853 A.D., second 1863 A.D. in Baghdad, nineteen years after the beginning of the Bab's ministry, and third 1867 A.D. in Adrianople, when he revealed his divinity to the whole world. He claimed that 1867 fulfilled the prophecy of "The Great Tribulation," and of the Revelation of St. John, 12:14, when the woman flew into the wilderness for a time and times and half a time, and quoted, as proof for this, the calculations of the Rev. John Cumming and the well-known Guinness. Much of this discussion on the time of the coming of Baha Ullah consists of quotations from these men, although neither of them had any connection with Bahaiism. This proof, by Bahai writers, by numerical prophecy, is not especially convincing, since they choose all kinds of strange and inconsistent starting points, and interchange lunar and solar years at will.

Although Bahais reject a literal interpretation of all the miracles of former religions, yet they do not deny the power of a manifestation to work a miracle. When Baha Ullah was asked by a delegation for a sign or miracle** to prove his mission, he issued a challenge to them, to the effect that he would perform any sign they would name if they would agree to accept him and his mission, when the miracle had been completed, but his challenge was not accepted. The revelation of his tablets, especially the speed at which they were written, such as the claim of the completion of the "Book of Iqan" in a single night, are often given a miraculous interpretation. Bahais also claim that the giving of a law such as that revealed by the uneducated prophet Baha Ullah, † who was not helped by knowledge or science, can only be explained by the intervention of God. There are many wonderful signs according to his tablets re-

*"Baha Ullah" 475f. **Bhi. Proofs 252, Bk. of Iqan 135. †Bhi. Mov. 36.

presented as adding their testimony to the truth of the claims of Baha Ullah, **“All trees and stones are calling out with their loudest voice ‘Surely the Lord hath come.’”* Other signs are the falling of idols, and the raising of the dead, all of which are given a figurative interpretation. So on the whole we may say that, except for the miraculous interpretation sometimes given to the writings of Baha Ullah, his followers base practically no proofs on miracles. In fact they declare with Mirza Ab’ul Fazl,** that miracles do not prove the claims of a prophet to be a revelation of God.

Early Persian Bahai adherents placed very little, if any, emphasis on logical proofs of Baha Ullah, but limited themselves to the proofs of prophecy concerning him, and his writings. Later Bahais however, especially those of the West and those who have been subjected to western influence, place some value on logical proofs. For instance, Darab Khan of London, who is a Professor of the Persian language, laid down a series of requirements which a prophet must fulfil in order to prove himself a revelation sent by God. These are also given in the *“Revelation of Baha Ullah”*† and are as follows:—Fulfilling the signs of former prophets, declaring his mission with persistency, having knowledge of the laws of nature, having power of healing and prophecy, so as to be able to foretell future events, using his divine power not for himself but for others, and establishing a new cycle. The claim is made that Baha Ullah satisfied all these requirements, and hence is to be accepted as a Manifestation of God. Abdul Baha and others accepted the test given by Christ,‡ *“By their fruits ye shall know them,”* and claimed that all men should accept Baha Ullah, because of the fruits he has produced as a revelation of God.

The most conclusive proof of any manifestation should be the merit of the teachings and the advanced revelation of God which is contained in his writings, and the one which should be most carefully investigated. Bahai theologians may be able to establish the claims of Baha Ullah as a revelation sent from God, by allegorical, symbolical, and poetical interpretations of the sacred books of the past, and by numerical computations from prophecies,

*Tablets of Bh. 62, Lawh-el-Akdas 161. **Bhi. Proofs 13f. †The Rev. of Bh. by S. Brt. ‡Bhi. Mov. 111.

which are often weak and inconsistent, yet such proof will not be absolutely conclusive. Again, even though Baha Ullah is so close to us that any miracles claimed for him could be more or less satisfactorily investigated, yet in the future a fabric of miraculous proof could be woven about him, but such proof would always be far from satisfactory. In like manner a logical test for a prophet might be formulated in which no statements were made which could not be met by Baha Ullah, yet this would not convince the world. But when Bahais claim that the writings of Baha Ullah are conclusive proof that he was sent from God, since the teachings of these books are superior to those of the Quran or of the Bible and contain a much more advanced revelation of God, we must impartially investigate this claim before we are in a position to pass judgment.

It was claimed by Baha Ullah that his writings, which were the greatest cause of progress for the world, were a witness to the true believers, when he wrote, **“This day is your day, and a thousand tablets are your evidence.”* In his *“Divine Philosophy”* Abdul Baha urged men to read the books written by Baha Ullah. ***“The philosophers and savants in the Orient will bear witness to his eloquence and learning.”* In the Orient this is a proof of his divinity. There they say, *“If some one can write a letter like Baha Ullah, then the divinity of the latter can be denied. No one has yet competed.”* In the Bahai proofs it is stated that while miracles are only temporary signs, the *“Words of God”* are universal and everlasting testimony. The claim that Baha Ullah proved himself by his writings to be a revelation sent by God, is so universal among Bahais that it needs no further discussion.

The nature and value of these writings can only be proved by each individual comparing them with the Bible and Quran for himself, but it would seem that they have four chief characteristics—a pleasing poetical style, they are clothed in the language of mysticism, they suffer from verbosity, and they lack originality as far as the subject matter is concerned. The strength and charm of Baha Ullah's writings lies in the fascinating style in which a great deal of it is embodied. With the Oriental mind, the beauty of language

*Tablets of Bk. 22. **A-B. on Div. Phil. 54.

and method of expressing thought appeals as much as if not more than the logic of the subject matter presented. For instance, Darab Khan of London expressed* what seemed to him to be the contrast between the writings of Christianity and those of Baháism in these words, "When I read the Bible I find in it matter-of-fact statements which can easily be understood by all, but when I read the books of Baha Ullah, which are written in such beautiful Persian and Arabic language, and expressed in such perfect poetical style, etc. . . ." and then he lost himself in ecstasy in his attempt to describe the effect that these writings had upon him. There is certainly a real charm in a book such as the Seven Valleys, even in a translation, when it is read, not as a book of logical theology, but as a picture of life as a pilgrimage, like that described in "Pilgrim's Progress." If the writings of Baha Ullah are to be enjoyed, one must be content to read them as a whole, like some of Browning's poems, not attempting to analyse their separate parts or to determine their exact meaning in every detail. Likening men who do not follow Baha Ullah, to mouldering bones, which spring into life when they come in contact with him and his law, is a very effective way of presenting teaching, especially when read in its Oriental setting describing the family tomb, in which many caskets having fallen into decay have left the bones to moulder together on the ground. His representation of himself as a city of refuge from the storms which rage without its walls, and a shady tree in a desert, which serves as a protection for the weary traveller from the burning heat of the sun of the Orient, appeals to all of a poetic temperament. However with all the beauty of style and poetic imagery of the writings of Baha Ullah, they by no means surpass, if they even favourably compare with, the Psalms and prophetic books of the Old Testament, or the poetical sketches in the parable of Christ.

According to Professor Browne, **Baha Ullah did much to lessen the mystical character of the Babí writings. Yet the ideas of Baha Ullah are so wrapt up in poetic garb and so involved in mystical phraseology, that it is very difficult for an analytical Western mind to disentangle them satisfactorily.

*In Conversation. **"Abbas" Introd. XXII.

Verbosity is another of the outstanding features of the writings of Baha Ullah and one of the chief sources of their weakness. Many of the sentences are so involved, and so full of bombastic words, that it is almost impossible to follow the thread of the argument. It seems many times that Baha Ullah himself had not clearly formulated in his own mind the ideas which he intended to convey, but wrote with volume rather than clearness as his aim. The Bahais boast concerning the number of books and tablets he revealed, and Abdul Baha used this as a proof of the superiority of Baha Ullah over Christ, since Baha Ullah revealed sixty volumes and one thousand tablets while all the extant words of Christ do not exceed a dozen pages. It would have been a distinct advantage to Bahaiism, if Baha Ullah had revealed a smaller number of words and a much clearer and more logical system of theology. Paul Doany of Haifa who used to discuss theological questions with Abdul Baha, found that the latter would always lapse into most eloquent and elusive Arabic when asked a difficult question. Verbosity is a characteristic of Bahais all over the world, and it is their chief pride to be able to discuss their faith fluently.

The writings of Baha Ullah lack originality, as every one agrees who investigates them, in fact one can find all their terms and phraseology in former books.* The revelation contained in these writings has no new light to offer on two of the most important subjects of theology, i. e., God and the future life. There are however a few original sociological laws, such as branding "thief" on the forehead of the one who has committed this offence three times, burning the one guilty of arson, substituting a system of nineteen units for the metric or decimal system, changing the places, times, and ceremonies connected with pilgrimages, fasting, and prayers and reorganising the world on a succession of courts called "Houses of Justice."

(d) *Work Baha Ullah claims to accomplish.*—The work which Baha Ullah claimed to accomplish as a Manifestation of God was to serve as the medium between God and man, which work in

*Cf. chapter "Phil. of Basm."

THEOLOGY OF BAHAIISM

Christian theology is delegated to Christ as Saviour. In addition to this he maintained that the laws, which he revealed were to govern the world during the cycle thus established.

(aa) *Baha Ullah as Saviour of Man.*—Bahaiism is essentially a religion which centers around the law and personality of Baha Ullah, who claimed to be the channel for all Blessings, especially the knowledge of God and the relationship with Him, which will ensure happiness for the present life and for that of the future. Baha Ullah stated* that the purpose of his coming and enduring the abomination of the world, was that he might become the Saviour of man. By his life and revealed words, he held that he opened to men the gates of the kingdom and uncovered the mystery concerning God, by removing the veil which former prophets either purposely placed or were unable to draw aside. These claims were set forth in such references as the following. **“Thou hast no more sin nor error; God hath indeed purified thee through the Kawther of His utterances in His Great Prison, (i.e. Baha Ullah) . . . Knowledge of the King of Pre-existence cannot be obtained except by knowing the Greatest Name (i.e. Baha Ullah) . . . except through believing in all that hath proceeded from him and by practising all that he hath commanded and all that is revealed in the book from the Supreme Pen . . . Light is on those who confess and acknowledge the truth of his revelation, and fire is on those that oppose him.” In the Seven Valleys, the faithful man was represented as seeking the beloved One everywhere, and when he had found him, he saw naught in existence but the countenance of His Highness. In the Tablet of the Branch,†; Baha Ullah claimed that through himself every mouldering bone was quickened, by which he implied that all men were dead until they had received new life from himself. In the same Tablet, he invited all men to enter the Shelter of the Branch against the burning heat of the day, when none can find protection except in him. In the Surat-ul-Heykel, Baha Ullah represented God as saying that when his (i.e. Baha Ullah’s) hands were raised, then the hands of all men were lifted to God, since ‡ “he who advances, does so by the

*Lawh-el-Akdas 160f. **Tablets of Bh. 59, 143. †Tablets of Bh. 143. ‡Surat-ul-Heykel 53.

bounty of Baha Ullah." Further, he likened himself to a Temple, which was the sign of God's power, and to a guide to lead men to God. Again he represented himself as a city of refuge.* He went so far as to claim that even though one gave his life and all his wealth in service for God, and the number of his prayers were as the sands of the sea, but yet rejected Baha Ullah he would not be accepted by God.

The later leaders and adherents of Bahatism have accepted this interpretation of salvation through belief in Baha Ullah and the following of the law revealed by him. This plan of salvation has neither the Christian conception of atonement by a mediator, nor the Moslem idea of expiation by works of merit or its equivalent.

(bb) *Baha Ullah as a Lawgiver.*—According to Bahatism every major prophet must institute a new law, which does not change any of the essentials or fundamentals of preceding codes, but only those of customs, ritual, ethics, and sociology. So Baha Ullah, the climax of the prophetic series, has instituted a new law revealed mostly in the "Most Holy Book" or Al-Kitab-al-Akdas. This law is to supersede those of all former prophets, and to be the infallible source of authority during the new cycle. Bahatism is a legalistic religion, although this is ardently denied by Western Bahais, who are either ignorant of its real nature or purposely misrepresent it. Bahatism lays down exacting laws** for obligatory prayers three times a day with specified ablutions, and postures, and nineteen days of fasting every year. Even in the final stage in the evolutions of religious life,† the "traveller must not deviate, even for a hair's breadth from the law, but in all stages must cling to the hem of obedience to the commandments." All the leaders of Bahatism in Haiffa agree that there are two essential requirements for one to be a real Bahai, accepting Baha Ullah and obeying his commands.‡ Wilson pronounced Bahatism a religion of laws not of principles *†

Revelation of God in Sacred Books.—Bahatism claims to accept all the revelation of God*‡ contained in the books which are

*Surat-ul-Heykel 27f. **Al-Kitab-al-Akdas, etc. †Seven Valleys 51. ‡The Brilliant Proofs 31f.
*†Bahatism and its claims 48. *‡The Bhi. Proofs, 73.

held as sacred by all former religions. These they claim have become the Old Testament of their faith, just as the sacred books of the Hebrews became the Old Testament for the Christians. According to Bahai teaching, since Baha Ullah is no longer in the world, his writings become* the only remaining source of revelation of God, hence they are the most valuable and important thing in all the world. The supreme revelation of God is contained in what they claim has become the true New Testament, or in the books and tablets of Baha Ullah.

Revelation of God in Nature.—This was entirely foreign to the theology of Baha Ullah. To him God is an unknowable first cause, who has no relation or connection with contingent things. Abdul Baha adopted this position that God does not reveal Himself in nature, when he wrote** “the universe emanates from God but does not manifest Him.” However when speaking and writing to Western Bahais, he represented God as revealing Himself through nature, and in the same way Western Bahai authors unhesitatingly speak of God as revealing Himself in the Universe.

2. BLESSINGS PROMISED IN BAHAIISM.

The means of happiness and welfare, and the beneficent gifts which Bahaiism claims to offer to the world are of two kinds, those which relate themselves to the present life and those which are connected only with future existence as rewards, and escape from punishment.

(a) *Blessings pertaining to this present life.*—Some of the blessings enjoyed in the present state of existence extend into the future also, such as the knowledge of God, and union with the manifestation; but others are limited very largely to this present life, such as spiritual healing of the physical body, since there is no physical resurrection, and the benefits of social welfare. According to Charles Remey,† the greatest blessing Bahaiism or any other religion can offer is the knowledge of God. Men of every age and every stage of civilization have within them an innate desire to know the Supreme Being, God. Therefore the most essential duty and

*Tablets of Bh. 24, 28. **Some Ans. Q. †The Bhi. Mov. 83.

fundamental privilege of any religion is to make God known to men. Bahaiism asserts the claim that it is the supreme religion because it has the most complete revelation of God ever given to men. The truth or error of this claim can only be tested by a thorough investigation of the revelation of God contained in the Bahai system of theology.

Another beneficent gift offered by Bahaiism is union with the Manifestation Baha Ullah, like a lover who has but one aim, to attain the beloved. In the "Seven Valleys," a very graphic picture is presented of a soul journeying on the steed "Patience" through the "Valley of Search," until he finds the "Beloved One" and enters the "Valley of Love." This union can only be attained by sacrificing all and seeking the "Beloved One" in every place, and, when he is found, entering into a union which makes the lover oblivious of all else, save the Loved One. This relationship with the manifestation has a mystical element of losing the self in the manifestation, thus becoming a kind of passive absorption of the human into the divine Baha Ullah. The final stage which the soul is to reach according to Baha Ullah is the "Valley of Poverty and Annihilation," where it is freed entirely from the limitations of the world. This annihilation is not "Nirvana" however, since it is not an emancipation from transmigration, which is not taught in Bahaiism. This two-fold mystical relationship of immediacy of divine experience and freedom from worldly limitations probably came into Bahaiism through the Persian Sufis, with whom Baha Ullah associated during the Baghdad period of his life. These Sufis held a system of mystical pantheism in which they conceived the bond between God and man as love, and aspired to a mystical absorption of the human soul in the divine. While Bahaiism does not go so far in this direction as to substitute pantheistic absorption for spiritual communion, yet it certainly has a tendency to teach a mystical pantheistic Oneness with Baha Ullah as God. This has been no doubt a source of strength, since this mystical union with Baha Ullah supplies a need felt by some for a more vital alliance with God than is possible under the relationship of fear of Allah. Many of the rationalistic Western Bahais, and Abdul Baha, when he wrote for the West, placed little or no emphasis on the mystical

side of the relation to Baha Ullah, in fact they seem at times to deny it entirely. But with the early Oriental followers, who gave themselves in absolute devotion to Baha Ullah, the mystical side was present. This mystical element was not always emphasised by Baha Ullah, since he often represented his relationship with men in such pictures as a city of refuge from the storms, or a shady tree to the traveller.

Great emphasis is placed on Bahaiism as a religion which is to institute the Utopian age by its social and ethical laws.* During this age there is to be universal peace, universal education, equality of men and women, and an ideal government free from graft and injustice. This element of the Bahai faith is not prominent in the Bahaiism of the East, since, as Professor Browne declares, ethical and social reforms are largely by-products of Babi'ism and Bahaiism. The Bahais of Persia are not credited with any phenomenal reforms in education or social service. The social service of Abdul Baha was limited almost entirely to relieving the temporal needs of a few hundred people mostly in Haiffa and its vicinity by the giving of alms, which has not been continued since his death, on anything like the same scale.

Baha Ullah laid great emphasis on the claim that he was sent to "quench the fire of hatred." He seemed however to have a very native idea that all he needed to do to make this a reality was to proclaim to the world that this is the age of love instead of hatred.** "The virtue of this Most Great Manifestation is that we have effaced from the Book whatever was the cause of difference, corruption and discord, and recorded therein that which leads to unity, harmony and love." Charles Remey stated† that the purpose of the Bahai faith was to unite the men of all nations, religions and races in the love of God and brotherly affection of man. This principle is to usher in the age of universal peace. Although Bahaiism is doing something through societies in America such as the "Rainbow Circle" of New York City, to make love of others, including even our coloured brothers, the predominant factor of our age, yet one is far from being favourably impres-

*Bhsm. the Modern Social Rel. etc. **Tablets of Bh. 34. †The Bhi. Mov.

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sed with the Bahai effort in this direction by the Bahai leaders in Haifa and Acca, after one has visited and obtained an inside glimpse into the quarrels between the hostile camps into which they are divided.

In America especially, great claims are made for Bahaiism as a means of spiritual healing for the physical body. At a meeting in their Library in New York City, Mrs. Mary H. Ford spoke on spiritual healing and practically everyone present claimed they had been restored to health by reading the tablets of healing revealed by Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha. Although Bahai writers emphasize spiritual healing, it would seem that the only justification for it, is that Baha Ullah revealed a tablet of healing* during the epidemic of sickness in the 'Acca prison, and also the claim that every manifestation must have the power of healing. There are no actual records of his performing miracles of healing.** This power of healing by the manifestation is limited by many Bahais to the spiritual realm.

(b) *Future Blessings.*—Blessings of the future existence are of two kinds, entering the condition of joy and rewards in heaven, and escaping the punishment of hell. Baha Ullah taught two conditions † for souls in the future, "Paradise" and "Hell." He promised †* light to those who accepted his teachings, and threatened with "fire" those who rejected them. When Baha Ullah was asked concerning his teachings as to the future he wrote, ‡ Know that the soul ascends until it reaches the presence of God in a temple which cannot be changed by the centuries. It is impossible for the pen to describe this condition . . . Blessed is the spirit which has gone out from the body freed from all worldly limitations, for it moves in the atmosphere of the will of God, enters the supreme paradise and becomes acquainted with the prophets and blessings of God and his people, speaks with them and tells them what happened to him during his life on earth. According to Mrs. Grundy, †* Baha Ullah wrote such a beautiful description of Heaven that all who read it desired to leave this world, and that after reading it one man went insane and another

* Bhi. Book of Prayer, Materials for Study of Babism 47 ** Bhi. Proofs 274 † Tablets of Bh. 117
†* Tablets of Bh. 75 ‡ Quest. Ans. by Bahaj Bahai

committed suicide. But there is no subject in Bahai theology more vaguely treated both by Baha Ullah and by all his successors than the subject of the future life. However three things are clear. They denied the resurrection of the physical body, literal paradise of the Quran, and the literal city with golden streets such as that described in the Revelation of St. John. Yet they affirm that there is a distinction of some kind between souls in the future existence. There is so little of the positive element in the teaching of Baha Ullah concerning future conditions and he has allegorized* so much on the teachings of other prophets concerning heaven, that it has left much confusion of thought among his followers, even as to the doctrine of personal immortality. In fact some have understood the doctrine of "Return" as teaching transmigration of souls, or, as Mrs. Mary Ford represents it, **"Reincarnation through the elements, electrons or atoms, which constitute soul and body alike, until the soul has been purified into essential spirit by the white fire of the divine ray."

The teaching of Abdul Baha concerning future life is as indefinite† as that of Baha Ullah. He seemed to deny any distinction between heaven and hell when he taught, that although the difference between souls in the future state will be realized, ‡ yet it is not a distinction of place. The only discrimination is of soul and conscience, or degree of attainment, as in this world, and that only those of the same degree of development will be re-united immediately after death. This seems inconsistent in that it teaches that the distinction of degree is also a distinction of place. Another of Abdul Baha's positive declarations concerning the future state was that there was an evolution or progress in the heavenly life, and some would progress until they knew all mysteries. Other Bahais, such as Phelps,*† affirm that created beings are enveloped by the divine or Absolute Being, who flows out and permeates all things. Mirza Jenabe Fazal claimed *‡ that the spirit does not go out into another world at death, like one going to another room, but lives in the heart of this world like a room within a room, inside of which the spirit lives in a heaven or hell made for itself.

*Book of Iqan, etc. **"Reincarnation" Reality N. Y. †Tablets of A-B. I. 92f. ‡Tablets of A-B. I. 205. *†"Abbas" 178f. *‡Lecturer in Am., Oct., 1920.

The punishment which one escapes, according to Bahai theology, has exactly the same indefinite nature as paradise. Baha Ullah issued the warning,* “Woe to all deniers and doubters...** Hell is their portion. Woe to the infidels who denied the signs and now in hell fire cry for help. Woe to the polytheists who drink from fiery water.” From these references and those of like import, quoted by Bahaj Bahai in answer to the question † as to whether or not Baha Ullah taught that there is a hell, it would seem that he taught a hell for unbelievers, infidels and rejectors of manifestation, such as the hell pictured in Christian or Moslem theology. However Baha Ullah interpreted so much allegorically, that we seem justified to do little more than assert that he taught a punishment of some kind in the future. The teaching of Abdul Baha is so indefinite that it becomes like the heaven described by him, a kind of colourless enclosure for all kinds of souls. In his “Divine Philosophy” he claimed that Baha Ullah united into one class all mankind who were divided by former religions into the two classes of those accepted by God, and those rejected by Him. This same idea is expressed again in the Bahai faith. The doctrine of the Oneness of the world of humanity, taught by Baha Ullah in the words,*† “Ye are all the fruits of one tree and the leaves of one branch,” is interpreted as doing away entirely with the distinction between men made in other religions, whereby some were consigned to the mercy of God, and others were considered as objects of the wrath of the Creator. This new doctrine “submerged all mankind in the sea of divine generosity.”

3. MEANS OF ATTAINING BLESSINGS ACCORDING TO BAHAIISM.

The gift of God in the revelation of Himself is offered to men through the divine Baha Ullah, ‡ God the Father made manifest in the flesh, and his writings which make God known to men. The union of the believers with Baha Ullah, the one who is worshipped by all, and to whom prayers are offered, is thought by some to be made through a mystical relationship, and by others through a mere rationalistic alliance. The new Utopia of society according

*Lawh-el-Akdas 162. **Tablets of Bh. 75 and 117. †Cf Ans. Q. in appendix. *†Tablets of Bh. ‡Tablets of Bh. 64,74f., Lowh-el-Akdas 158f.

to Abdul Baha is to be ushered in "when the laws of the Most Holy Book are enforced.

The Bahai doctrine of the means of attaining the blessings of the future life can only be understood after a discussion of their interpretation of anthropology. All Bahai teachers agree that man is a creation of God, at least in so far as his physical body is concerned. As to the origin of the soul there is a difference of opinion. Again they all accept the unity of the human race* and claim this as the first of their twelve new fundamental principles. Baha Ullah taught this doctrine in his much quoted simile, "Ye are all the fruit of one tree and the leaves of one branch."

The nature of man is two-fold,** body and spirit. The physical body is inherited from Adam and is not resurrected after the separation of the soul from it at death. This physical nature of man is the source of all evil according to Abdul Baha,† because the animal nature in man is the cause of such imperfections as anger, sensuality, avarice, etc. Such characteristics in men are not conceived as sin according to the connotation of that word in Christian theology, but are merely defects or absence of perfection.

The soul of man is pure spirit,*† and constitutes the third and fourth grades of spirit. The first grade is the vegetable spirit, the second the animal, the third and fourth are the spirit of man and the heavenly spirit. The highest form of spirit is the Holy Spirit. The human spirit has two aspects, "One divine and one satanic," which was interpreted by Abdul Baha as implying that man's spiritual nature was capable of the highest perfection or the greatest imperfection. This human spirit does not seem necessarily to have an eternal existence, since it must advance to the fourth stage of spirit if it is to have eternal life. This gave rise to the teachings by Phelps‡ of the annihilation at death of the wicked, or those who do not advance to the fourth stage, which is denied by Abdul Baha. The fourth degree of spirit, or the heavenly spirit, is spirit of faith, and comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit. This spirit is the cause of one's entering eternal

*Tablets of Bh. 27. **A-B. on Divine Phil. 128. †Some Ans. Q. 136. *†Some Ans. Q. 165.
‡"Abbas."

life being the power which makes the imperfect, perfect, and the ignorant, wise. This, in the writings of Western Bahais, is called re-birth.* For instance, Thornton Chase gave a whole chapter in his book to the discussion of "Ye must be born again," if you would have this highest kind of spirit, that of faith which comes from the breath of the "Divine Spirit of Holiness." Abdul Baha taught** "that the spiritual nature is born from the bounty of the Holy Spirit."

Although Abdul Baha sometimes accepted the doctrine that the soul of man had a beginning, yet he, like many of the Bahais both in America and Haiffa, taught at other times that the souls of men existed from eternity. This they claimed was involved in the very nature of God. For instance, if God was the Creator or Father, souls must have existed with Him from all eternity,† just as the existence of a teacher involves the existence of pupils. Moreover they held that, "Absolute non-existence cannot become existence. If beings were absolutely non-existent, existence would not have come into being." The pantheistic conception of the relationship between God and men, necessitated for some of the other Bahais the eternal existence of the souls of men. Since God existed from all eternity the souls of men, which form a vital part of God, could not be conceived as a later creation. The Bahai system of theology includes the moral nature of man and teaches that he has an intellect and will, to choose between one thing and another, especially to accept or reject the divine Manifestation, but it does not play a very important part in the teachings of Baha Ullah. According to the latter, men must accept without questioning the laws and regulations of a manifestation.*† even though he declared heaven to be earth, or infidelity to be acceptance of God. So all man's life even to his worship was to be governed by the "Book" thus leaving little scope for the exercise of the function of free will. Abdul Baha adopted this same position, teaching that all men must look to him for interpretation of the doctrines and laws for governing life, propounded by his father. Since the death of Abdul Baha this important work has been entrusted to the‡

*Bhi. Rev. 119, 131 **Some Ans. Q. 165. †Some Ans. Q. *†Tablets of Bh. 100.
‡Bhsm. Univ. Rel. 119, Some Ans. Q. 199.



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“Houses of Justice,” which are to furnish the infallible guide for faith and practice.

The original state of man is that of a clean page, since the soul in early infancy is perfect until the animal nature develops and perfection gives place to imperfection, and purity to impurity. Baha Ullah taught that all things are created equal according to their kind,* “so that all have an equal chance in life.” The imputation of Adam’s imperfection to his posterity is denied, since there was no fall as pictured in the Bible. Keiralla in his two volumes, “Baha Ullah” declared, “the fall of man was a fall upward” since man by choosing became cognizant of this great power of free will, which differentiates him from the animal kingdom.

But although men begin equal, yet during life there is an evolution whereby some men reach a high plane of perfection, and others degenerate to a very low state. This brings us to the Bahai doctrine of sin. Bahaiism does not teach sin as lack of conformity to the law of God in act, disposition, or state, similar to that taught in Christian theology. Abdul Baha gave a chapter to the discussion of the non-existence of evil,** in which he sets forth very clearly the Bahai interpretation of evil or sin. He declared that the only positive reality is perfection, and that evil is simply its non-existence, just as ignorance is the lack of knowledge, blindness the absence of the power of sight, illness the want of health, or death the absence of life. Again he taught that there can be no evil or sin since things are only relatively good or evil. For instance a venomous serpent might be considered evil to men but not to itself. This interpretation by relativity of values is consistent with the whole spirit of the religion revealed by Baha Ullah. No act is right or wrong within itself, but becomes so by the command of the manifestation.† So if the manifestation commands his followers to eat no meat, eating meat becomes wrong. In like manner, if the manifestation commands one to deny his religion when it furthers his interests, doing so becomes a duty. Consequently Baha Ullah practically adopted the doctrine that there is really no distinction between good and evil. Although he used the terms sin and error in his tablets, urged his followers to ask

*Surat-ul-Heykel 34, The Revel. of Bh. 2. **Some Ans. Q. 30: †Tablets of Bh. 75

forgiveness direct from God,* and revealed a prayer which is very Christian in its confession of sin,** yet in all his writings there is no evidence that he felt a need of atonement for sin or error. Consequently there is nothing in Bahaiism to take the place of the Jewish sacrificial ritual to purify from sin or the atoning work of Christ in Christianity.

This interpretation of sin explains very largely the means of salvation or means of gaining eternal life taught in Bahaiism. As sin or error (the thing which keeps men from being perfect) was considered merely as mistakes due to ignorance, therefore men had need only of a teacher. Hence Baha Ullah proclaimed himself as the supreme educator for mankind† who was to lead them by his example and written words until they became perfect. As men were sick, not physically but spiritually, they had need of a physician*† to restore them to health, and so Baha Ullah claimed to be a great physician, not for men's bodies but for their souls. As man was considered weak he needed a protector, hence Baha Ullah urged all to come into the protection of himself and his law, as a shady branch or a city of refuge from the storm. Baha Ullah, not because he made atonement for men, but because he claimed to hold the key of eternal life, became the means of salvation to men, and to him was given the power to reject or accept anyone. He taught that there is no other means of gaining entrance to the kingdom of heaven, except faith in himself, when he claimed that even though‡ one gave himself and all his wealth in service to God and the numbers of his prayers were as the sands of the sea, and yet rejected Baha Ullah, he would not be accepted by God.

But when Baha Ullah urged men to accept him as the means of obtaining eternal life,*† he included in this the acceptance of his law. This makes the observance of pilgrimages, etc., obligatory for all. These commands*‡ are not to be observed with the idea of expiation through them for faults and sins committed, or of laying up merit for the next life, earning an entrance into heaven. These precepts are to be kept in the spirit of service to God and in the

*Tablets of Bh. 86f. **Tablets of Bh. 88f. †Bhi Proofs 204. *†Bhi. Proofs 161

‡Surat-ul-Heykel 53. *†Tablets of Bh. 75,59. *‡Tablets of Bh. 145.

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love of the divine Baha Ullah. This difference of motive for obeying the law as well as the requirements of faith in Baha Ullah, which has no equivalent in Orthodox Islam, differentiates the Bahai means of salvation, from the means of gaining future life by works of expiation taught by Muhammad. Even though the motive for observing the law is somewhat different, its commands are all obligatory, and Bahaiism falls in the same category as other legalistic religions.

PART V.

SOCIOLOGY OF BAHAIISM

SOCIOLOGY OF BAHAIISM

The Bahais hold that* all former religions have so degenerated from their original purity that they are no longer able to maintain the social order of the world on a high level. Hence they claim that Bahaiism has arisen as a new system of education in sociology, to usher in the Utopia so long awaited by the world. It would require a specialist in the field of sociology, as well as an expert in legal codes, to write a comprehensive criticism of the system of sociology set forth by the Bahais of the world, but the outstanding features are quite evident.

I. THE FAMILY.

In the Bahai sociology the family is still the centre of the social order, as it has been since the days of the Hebrew people. The Oriental family life, with its marked respect for parents by children, even when they are grown, is very satisfactory, especially when compared with that of a certain type found in the West. In some of its other characteristics however, the family life set forth and practised by Bahais, does not compare at all favourably with the ideal found in Christianity. For instance, Baha Ullah confined his wives in an Oriental harem, and Bahai women of the present day wear veils similar to their Moslem sisters, even in Haiffa. Marriage is by the consent of the parents and in no way a reformation of the custom already practised in the East. In *Al-Kitab-al-Akdas*, marriage is urged for all, especially for priests. Bigamy is permitted according to *Al-Kitab-al-Akdas*, and was practised by Subh-i-Ezel, and by Baha Ullah who had two wives and a concubine. Divorce is according to the Moslem custom of the husband putting the wife away, as set forth in *Al-Kitab-al-Akdas*.** “If quarrels arise between man and wife he may put her away. He may not give her absolute divorce at once, but must wait a year, that perhaps he may become reconciled to her. At the end of this period, if he still wishes to put her away he may do so.” Abdul Baha taught inter-marriage of races.† “Gather together these two races, white and black, into one assembly, and put such love into their hearts that they shall even inter-marry.”

*Tablets of Abdul Baha, Vol. I. p. 36. **Bahaiism and Its Claims, p. 165. †“A Heavenly Vista,” p. 31. Tablets of Abdul Baha, Vol. I. p. 50.

2. WOMEN.

The sixth new principle which Bahaism is claimed to institute is the equality of men and women. This principle is not taught in the writings of Baha Ullah, but was innovated by Abdul Baha. The majority of the followers in America are women, and to these Abdul Baha wrote a tablet entitled, "Women's great place in the Bahai dispensation," but it consists of mere platitudes giving nothing additional to the privileges already enjoyed under Christianity. Bahais lay great stress on the education of girls, but in Persia they have done little to put this into practice.* In reality Bahaism does not give women an equality with men, either in the domestic rights of the family or the political rights of the state, since bigamy is allowed for men but not for women, and divorce is by the husband putting away the wife and never vice versa. The "House of Justice" which is to have charge of all departments of life is** composed only of men.

3. SOCIAL DUTIES OF A BAHAI.

Both Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha urged men to keep the ethical laws of society, which are common to all ethical religions. For instance every Bahai must live a pure, honest and upright life, love all men, care for the sick, educate his children, and have a desire for sacrifice and martyrdom. Men must not be murderers, slanderers, or back-biters, but must seek to promote unity, and improve the world, which Baha Ullah came to preserve from all harmful things. Men are encouraged to have a productive occupation by Baha Ullah when he wrote,† "Every soul who occupies himself in an art or trade will be accounted as worshipping God, and the most despised is he who has no trade." Wealth acquired through a craft or profession‡ was highly approved by him. In the writings of Abdul Baha to the West, and of Bahais of Socialistic opinions, this principle of universal work is represented as one which will eliminate the idle rich, and eventually equalise the distribution of wealth. The most important duty of a Bahai however, is to live in accordance with Al-Kitab-al-Akdas,‡ and to en-

*Questionnaires sent to Persia. **Tablets of A-B. I. 90, Al-Kitab-al-Akdas. †Tablets of Baha Ullah, p. 89. ‡Tablets of Baha Ullah, p. 6.

courage others to do the same." If he lives according to the laws of Al-Kitab-al-Akdas, keeping the ritual of prayers and fasting, he may consider himself a Bahai, otherwise he can make no such claim, since Baha Ullah taught* that even in the stage of highest religious development, one is not to deviate one hair's breadth from the requirements of the law.

4. THE POLITICAL ORGANISATION OF SOCIETY.

According to the statement of Abdul Baha,** Bahaism is not a political religion or organisation, and yet if the laws of this religion were put into operation the world would undergo a complete political revolution. The new political system would be by a series of courts or councils, known as "Houses of Justice." For instance the local districts of the city of London would each have a House of Justice or court of appeal, composed of nine men, who would deal with all local matters, and elect the House of Justice which should rule the whole city. The city council would help to elect the House of Justice for their section of England, who in turn would elect the council for the whole of England. The House of Justice for England would elect, in co-operation with the other parts of the empire, the national one, which would, by the aid of all other national Houses of Justice, elect the supreme Council of the world to meet in Haiffa, with Shauky Effendi, the successor of Abdul Baha, as its head or president, to decide all international problems.

It would be the duty† of these Houses of Justice to decide all questions both civil and religious, and they would be infallible‡ in their decisions. All problems would come before them concerning property, tithes, inheritance, taxes, divorce, war and peace, and they would have full control of the educational system, and the management of the press. The supreme Council would have the final decisions of all international questions. Since the affairs of the people would be absolutely in their hands and all would be compelled*† to give unquestioning obedience to these courts, they would have an authority which would be greater than that of kings,

*Seven Valleys. **Tablets of A-B. III. 491. †Bhsm. Univ. Rel. 131-144. ‡Bhsm. and Its Claims 58. *†Tablets of Bh. 130.

parliaments, president and congresses, and reign absolutely supreme, not restrained by anyone or anything except the writings of Baha Ullah, especially Al-Kitab-al-Akdas.

Thus Bahaiism returns to the union of the Church and State, since it has the same law for both religious and civil affairs. Everything, from the transference of property to the ritual of worship, would be done according to the directions of the law of Baha Ullah. Thus the ideal of regulating public and private customs would be so complete that it would be impossible for any man to swerve one hair's breadth from the right path, even should he endeavour to do so. In contradiction of this fundamental characteristic of the Bahai religion, the Western Bahais are teaching Bahaiism as a faith in which perfect liberty in religious doctrine and practice is allowed to every one. Dreyfus, realising that Bahaiism was a union of church and state declared* that the separation of the two could only be temporary, for which reason Bahaiism had arisen as a modern re-union without the limitations of priest-craft. Abdul Baha wrote,** "The House of Justice is endowed with a political as well as a religious aspect." Again he wrote, "The Kings and rulers of the world will find their true authority under the rulings of the House of Justice. It will decide between kings and kings." The Houses of Justice having charge of all departments of life—religious, social, political, educational, financial, and judicial, are to be composed of the faithful followers of Baha Ullah. Hence the world would again be under the control of a religious sect, which could enforce an autocracy much more drastic than that exercised by the Roman Church in the most powerful days of Papal supremacy, and the flag of Baha Ullah would overcome every other, and all peoples and rulers would do homage to it.

5. INTERNATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

According to Bahai enthusiasts, when the series of Houses of Justice, local, sectional, national and international are in absolute control of all the affairs of the world, international peace will be assured. Baha Ullah began to emphasise universal peace during

*The Universal Rel. Bhsml. 113. **Grundy Ibid.

his stay in Adrianople, and laid even greater stress upon it in Akka when he endeavoured to make his religion universally acceptable. According to Baha Ullah,* the means of bringing about the condition of universal peace is the elimination of racial hatred and misunderstanding, which is the cause of war. This he attempted to do by revealing such verses as the following :—** “Glory is not to him who loves his native land ; but glory is to him who loves his kind.” “The fire of love,” which was to be instilled in the hearts of men by following the precepts and examples of Baha Ullah, was to be the means of removing hatred, and assembling all the peoples of the world into a court of peace. Another means of bringing about international peace was a universal language.† This agency would enable men of every nationality to converse together freely and thus be able to understand each other better, since men‡ “are all the leaves of one tree and the drops of one ocean.” This universal language, according to Abdul Baha, is not Esperanto,*† but one which has not yet been built.

6. THE RITUAL OF BAHAIISM.

Although Bahaiism claims to be free of ritualism, yet in practice it would probably develop a ritual as hard and fast as that of any legalistic system. Baha Ullah commanded his followers to worship according to the Book, by which he meant that men were to follow the ritual provided by Al-Kitab-al-Akdas and other of his writings. In these writings we find a ritual very similar to that of Islam, only with the times and places changed.

(a) *Fasting*.—According to Bahai writers all great manifestations instituted fasting as part of their ritual. Baha Ullah reinstated fasting in Al-Kitab-al-Akdas in connection with the new system of reckoning time, by nineteen months of nineteen days each. The month “Ala,” March 2 to 20, is to be kept as a fast in accordance with the command of Baha Ullah*† “Thus ordaineth the Lord of men ; abstain from eating and drinking from dawn until the sun hath set.” Fasting is obligatory after the age of fifteen, but the traveller, the sick, pregnant and nursing women are excused.

*Tablets of Bh. 85f. **Tablets of Bh. 128. †Tablets of Bh. 84. ‡Tablets of Bh. 90. *†Tablets of A-B III. 692. *‡Bhism and Its Claims 121.

(b) *Feasts*.—Every nineteen days* the people of Baha Ullah are urged to meet together for the observance of the feast, which was instituted by the Bab. This feast, according to Abdul Baha was to be observed in such a manner as to resurrect the "Lord's Supper," since the chanting of tablets, and explaining and reading the exhortations of Abdul Baha cause everlasting life. At such a feast, held in the Bahai Library in New York City, there were about sixty persons present. One of the members spoke on the unity of Bahaiism, and others read tablets from Abdul Baha. Two Persians who had just arrived from Haiffa chanted prayers in Persian, and then a social gathering followed. The feast of "Rizwan," †April 21 to May 2, commemorates the declaration of Baha Ullah, to a few select followers in the garden "Rizwan" in Baghdad, that he was "Him whom God Will Manifest," prophesied by the Bab. Other feasts which are sometimes observed in the Bahai ritual are‡ the Anniversary of the declaration of the Bab, May 23, 1844, the birth of Baha Ullah, November 12, 1817, and the intercalary days, February 26, to March 2, which immediately precedes the fast.

(c) *Pilgrimage*.—According to Baha Ullah*† pilgrimages are not necessary, but were considered meritorious, and have been very popular among American as well as Persian Bahais. The chief shrine is the tomb of Baha Ullah near the palatial house "Bahja" in which he lived for many years, and is surrounded by a large beautiful garden and is lighted by an electric plant installed by a rich American. Pilgrims remove their shoes when they enter this tomb for meditation and prayer. Since the death of Abdul Baha, his tomb in Haiffa, which he prepared for himself and the body of the Bab, has become an important centre for pilgrimage. This tomb is even more elaborately decorated with costly chandeliers, vases and rugs than that of his father. A shrine, which is visited only by Bahais, is in an inner room of the house in Haiffa, in which Abdul Baha formerly lived. A description of a pilgrimage to this shrine is given by three American ladies,*‡ who entered this

*Tablets of A-B. II. 468. **Tablets of A-B. 149. †Tablets of A-B. I. 101. ‡Bhsm. and Its Claims 122. *†Tablets of Bh. 90. *‡Flowers from Akka.

room. Having first removed their shoes, they were anointed by the sister of Abdul Baha and then knelt before the "Majestic likeness of the Blessed perfection Baha Ullah and the Bab."

(d) *Alms.*—In the "Hidden Words," *Baha Ullah urged his followers to "distribute my possessions among my poor, that in Heaven thou mayest receive the stores of Eternal Bliss." Giving alms was part of the daily programme of Abdul Baha, and during the war he did a noble work in Haiffa, saving several hundred people from starvation.

(e) *Prayer.*—The Bahai ritual of prayer** is very similar to that of Islam. For instance, one of the attitudes during prayer is to kneel with the forehead touching the ground. Ablutions are required preliminary to the obligatory prayers† which must be offered at least three times daily.‡ If water cannot be obtained Al-Kitab-al-Akdas permits one to substitute the saying, "In the name of God, etc." which must be repeated five times. A certain formula is prescribed in the prayer book to be observed during the ablution and the prayer which follows, such as *†"while washing the hands say . . . while washing the face say . . . stand facing Akka . . . bowing down with the hands on the knees, etc." Prayer is directed to Baha Ullah*‡ who is to be, "the Worshipped One of all." Prayers repeated at the shrines are supposed to have special merit, **† especially those offered in the tomb of Baha Ullah. Most Bahais use a rosary of ninety-five beads,**‡ in saying the "Greatest name" ninety-five times (5 × 19). The use of rosaries was encouraged by Abdul Baha, who sent them to some of his followers in America. There are in the Bahai ritual several prayers of healing,§ which when repeated nine times in faith restore to health. Also prayers are offered for the dead.*§

There are other customs which have in them a ritualistic tendency, for instance, the wearing of the ring**§ of "The Greatest Name" (Baha Ullah), with two stars to represent the Bab and Abdul Baha, on the little finger of the right hand. Abdul Baha

*Hidden Wds. 9. **&†Bk. of Prayers Revealed by Bh. 1-107. ‡Tablets of A-B. II. 464. †Bhi. Bk. of Prayers 8. *‡Star of West, Feb. 7. 1914, p. 298. **†Tablets of A-B. I. 115. **‡Tab. of A-B. 190. §Bhi. Bk. of Prayer 58 f. *§Tablets of A-B. I. 153. **§Tablets of A-B. I. 178.

encouraged the use of symbols* as aids to religious worship. He prohibited certain things, such as pulpits and church bells, and the removal of bodies after burial. According to the Tablets of Baha Ullah his followers must worship according to his Law,** which will necessitate the following of a prescribed or at least authorised ritual according to the interpretation of Abdul Baha and the House of Justice, since there can be no private interpretation of the writings of Baha Ullah. In England and America, the Bahai worship is developing into such a ritualistic form of service, consisting of chanting prayers, reading tablets, singing hymns and delivering prepared sermons on Bahai theology.

* A-B. in London 95 ** Tablets of Bh. 90

PART VI.

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THE PHILOSOPHY
OF
BAHAISM

THE PHILOSOPHY OF BAHAIISM

It is difficult to organize Bahaiism into an orderly system of philosophy, because of the variety of its concepts. For instance, its teaching concerning God vacillates between a rigid monotheism and a very elusive mystical pantheism. In the hands of Western rationalistic Bahais, it has become little more than a new system of sociology. However, there are some distinctive philosophical claims and tendencies, which are essential to a clear understanding of Bahaiism as a religion.

I. GNOSTICISM.

From a careful study of the writings of Baha Ullah, it becomes clear that his position was practically the same as that of the Gnostics,* as far as his teaching of God is concerned. He represented God as an unknowable Being, who "hath been and is everlastingly hidden in His Own Essence,"** a God with whom no relation, connection or union is possible, a Being whose attributes are not known except as they are revealed by His divine manifestations. Thus Baha Ullah unconsciously took the same position as Herbert Spencer and Hamilton, who affirmed a consciousness of the Absolute,† but declared that the reality underlying appearances is totally and forever inconceivable to us. Baha Ullah setting out from these same premises re-affirmed Mansel's demand for an unreasoning faith in revelation, especially through himself as a Manifestation of God. Such a system of philosophy does not seem one which would be especially attractive to Western thinkers, since the Infinite Being who does not enter into relationships, and cannot be understood through the rational form of thinking is a mere creation of philosophical imagination. Although a religious mind might affirm the existence of such a Being, yet in the nature of things it could not worship such a One. Yet Bahaiism is trying to do this very thing as Bahaj Bahai, who really knows and lives Bahaiism, acknowledged when he said,*† "Bahais pray to an unknown God."

In Bahai writings practically all the tenets of Gnosticism may be found. Dualism. God and matter are represented as being

*History of Phil, by Ueberweg. **Bk. of Iqan 69. †Phil. of Rel. (Galloway) 326

*†During one of my visits to Haifa.

co-eternal with each other, since* “the world of existence, that is to say this endless universe, had no beginning.” God and matter are not only co-eternal but distinct from each other also, although matter is an unconscious, negative and imperfect substance, which is subordinate to God and made the instrument of His will. This is the position set forth in the following quotation, ** “Matter reflecting the negative aspect of God is self-existent, eternal, and fills all space. Spirit flowing out from God fills all space.” Thus some of the Bahai philosophers have adopted the same form of dualism as that held by the Alexandrian Gnostics, who attempted by this system of thought to escape the difficulty of imagining a creation without the use of pre-existent materials, and to account for the existence of evil. Abdul Baha used the first of these methods of explanation, when he maintained that creation would not have taken place if beings had been absolutely non-existent, because † “absolute non-existence cannot become existence.” He adopted the same explanation of sin as that of the Alexandrian Gnostics, when he declared that avarice, hatred, etc., which is commonly called evil, came from the animal spirit of man, which was composed of the combination of matter. At times the Gnostic type of dualism, influenced by Hindu philosophy, is almost indistinguishable from pantheism.

Creation by Emanation.—The creation described in the Book of Iqan* † is that of emanation from God. Abdul Baha re-iterated this when he said “creatures emanate from God but do not manifest Him.” His representation of creation is an emanation such as light from the sun or action from the actor. Wilson designates Bahai philosophy as affirming the eternity of matter and the emanation theory of divine manifestation. ‡ The creator according to Bahai theology is not God Himself. This tenet of Gnosticism is found in the following words, * † “God is the source of all, and all things are mirrors reflecting His Glory. But God does not create, since Love is the creative principle. Love is an outpour from God and is pure spirit. It is one aspect of the Logos, the Holy Spirit.’

*Some Ans. Q. 209. **“Abbas” Phelp 153. †Some Ans. Q. 209f. *†Bk. of Iqan 69.
‡Bhsm. and Its claims. *†‘ Abbas’ Phelp 153

Grades of spirits.—Abdul Baha taught that there were five grades of spirit,* the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the heavenly spirit (which is instilled into man by the breath of the Holy Spirit, and becomes in him the cause of eternal life) and the highest grade of spirit, the Holy Spirit. Another tenet which Bahai philosophy holds in common with Gnosticism is the denial of the resurrection of the physical body, after the separation of the spirit from the body at death.

2. PANTHEISTIC TENDENCIES.

The writings of the Bab, and early Bahais were clearly pantheistic. Although pantheism is not prominent in the writings of Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha, yet there are tendencies in this direction. In the "Seven Valleys," Baha Ullah adopted the doctrine of the "Oneness of Existence" held by the pantheistic Sufi mystics. This doctrine, in brief, was that all that exists is God, who is in all things, and apart from whom there can be no real existence. Abdul Baha accepted this pantheistic doctrine of the "Oneness of God," when he said in an address in London,** "All that exists is God." Again the teachings of Baha Ullah were pantheistic when he proclaimed the chief end of life to be the pursuit of absorption into or union with the Divine, by likening life to a journey through seven valleys, the last of which was the Valley of annihilation or absorption into God. These seven valleys even in their names are very similar to and no doubt taken from the eight stages along which the Sufi mystics sought to advance to union with God. Moreover the doctrine that God does not have personality, but is pure essence which invades all matter, and flows out into all space, certainly has in it pantheistic elements. Also the American Bahais, who spoke† of developing the spark or small grain of the divine which was found in every one, were holding a pantheism which if not borrowed from the evolutionary pantheism of the Theosophical Society, at least had much in common with it.

3. MYSTICISM.

The writings of the Bab were so mystical in character as to be almost unintelligible to and unattractive for anyone outside the

*Some Ans. Q 163. **A-B, in London 8. †During conversations.

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circle of Persian Mystics.* The writings of Baha Ullah, although not in the same degree, still have a large mystical element in them. The "Seven Valleys," written in answer to questions asked by Sheik Abdur Rahman, a great Moslem mystic Sufi leader, is practically a re-wording of the eight stages by which the Sufi mystics represented the journey of man to union with God. The Book of Igan, the substance of which at least, if not the actual writing, was prepared during Baha Ullah's voluntary exile among the Sufi mystics, is full of mystical expressions. For example,** "They journey in the land of spirit without the motion of foot, and fly upward to the summit of Oneness without wing. In every breath, they transverse the world of creation east and west, and in every moment pass through the kingdom of the Seen and the Unseen." To accomplish this, one must remove the dust of prejudice and comprehend the symbols in the sayings of the manifestations. Also he must destroy, with the fire of severance, the veils of learning which will allow him to become the recipient of the invisible inspiration, and the treasury of the mysteries of "Supreme Knowledge," and soar in the atmosphere which is hidden from the eyes, etc.

As well as adopting the phraseology and style of mysticism, Baha Ullah maintained that the mystical relationship with the divine by direct contact, could be established through himself. This element was prominent among the Persian Sufis who were not content with the orthodox Moslem attitude of abject fear of Allah, but sought by the bond of love between God and man to reach a mystical absorption of the human soul in the divine. Baha Ullah claimed to establish this mystical relationship between men and God through himself as the "Divine Manifestation of God." The individual, who had immediate personal contact with him, had by this medium direct contact with God, since he was God. Some of the Western types of theology under-estimate the best element of mysticism, and reduce religion to cold, clear-cut theological creeds, and fine distinctions in the method of church ordinances, thus dividing into sects whose differences are largely theoretical, which if not unintelligible are often unedifying for the average person. For

*New Hist of Bab. XXVI. **Bk. of Igan 48.

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some, who see in the church only consent to creeds and unessential divisions, it becomes unsatisfactory, and does not seem to meet their needs. When Bahaiism was presented to such persons as a religion which neglected all unessential distinctions, and offered the means of a vital relationship with God, through Baha Ullah and Abdul Baha, it seemed to be something new and superior to Christianity.

4. LOGIC OF BAHU ULLAH.

Baha Ullah was a child of the East, not a product of the West, hence he did not feel the compulsion of corroborating his claims by logical proofs, or of organising his religion into a logical system of philosophy. Even though he had attempted to do so, he did not have the equipment of a systematic training in logic, which would have made it possible. Consequently there are many fallacies in his thinking. For instance, he attempted proof by similes, declaring that Christianity was no longer capable of producing results, since a tree two thousand years old will not bear fruit. Abdul Baha subjected himself to the same fallacy when he affirmed that Baha Ullah was as much a manifestation of God as Christ, since light is the same from whatever lamp it shines, failing to realize that there is a vast difference between the light of a whale oil lamp in the ice hut of an Eskimo, and the light of the most powerful arc light. Again Baha Ullah failed to realise that every reform must have a logical and sufficient cause. He heralded the day of universal peace, an ideal as old as Isaiah, but provided no new agency for its realisation, except a Supreme Council which has no important features not found in the League of Nations, which originated quite independent of his influence. He proclaimed that education must be universal, but gave no new light on school systems, except to endorse a method of public taxation for education, already in practice in the west. He entirely misunderstood human nature and failed to grasp rightly the philosophy of history, when he imagined he could remove all differences of creeds, by merely revealing the verse,* "We have effaced from the Book whatever was the cause of difference." The fundamental fallacy of his philosophy was that truth grows old, and must be renewed.

*Tablets of Bb.

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5. HARMONIZING SCIENCE AND RELIGION.

Bahaism is represented especially in the west as a system of philosophy which bridges the gulf between science and religion. This so-called conflict came into prominence in the middle of the last century,* and was due largely to the fact that theology failed to advance with scientific and philosophical knowledge, in consequence of which, its doctrines on the nature and origin of the world and man no longer harmonised with the knowledge of the age. Theology, being dogmatic, pushed forward, under the shield of religious authority, doctrines which really came within the province of science. This so-called conflict between faith and reason, much over emphasized, has been practically settled in Christian philosophy. But Bahaism, coming into being during this conflict, declared in the words of Abdul Baha,** “Religion must be reasonable; it must agree perfectly with science, so that science shall sanction religion and religion sanction science,” and men must realize that there is no conflict between the material and spiritual realms. Baha Ullah claimed in his “Tablet of the World” that he uttered† “that which is the key to the doors of science,” yet he was not in a position to do any serious work in this field, since he did not have a scientific training and was practically ignorant of all modern scientific teachings. Although Abdul Baha was fluent in two languages, well versed in history, and knew something of the philosophical and theological thought of both the East and West, yet he wrote and spoke in mere scientific platitudes. Thus neither Baha Ullah nor Abdul Baha were really capable of harmonizing science and religion, since one who is to work towards this ideal, while not being necessarily an expert, must yet have an adequate knowledge of several sciences, and cannot be absolutely ignorant of any science.

6. RELIGION AS SOCIOLOGY.

There has been an attempt in quite recent times to treat religion on purely sociological lines. Although this is rather a new movement, it may have a prominent place in the future

*Phil. of Rel. (Galloway)236f. **A-B. on Divine Phil. †Tablets of Bh. 37.

especially in the West, among those who are unwilling to be bound by the religious dogmas of the past. These free thinkers, being often outside any organized religious body, ally themselves with practically any new sect which enables them to publish their views on socialism or sociology.* Some of these joined themselves to Bahaiism, and have so divorced it from its original oriental setting, that the system of thought, which they present, may justly merit the criticism which is sometimes made, "Bahaiism is not a religion but a society for social welfare." Such a criticism does not do justice to the Bahaiism of the East, which claims to be a religion as much as Christianity or Islam, and in which social reforms are mere by-products; nor is it appropriate for the Bahaiism of many in the West, who find satisfaction for their religious needs in this faith.

7. BAHAIISM AS A UNIVERSAL RELIGION.

When Baha Ullah won the leadership of Babism from his brother, he immediately set about making the scope of the claims of this new faith universal. Bahai adherents of the present day emphasize this universality, since this is an age when men are thinking and acting not as individuals, groups, or nations but as part of one great world unit, wherefore the time has come, for the promulgation of a world faith. How far Bahaiism will succeed as a universal religion only time can reveal, but there are certain outstanding features which enable us to predict its future, especially when they are contrasted with the preceding historical religions, which claim to be universal,—Christianity, Buddhism and Islam.

The main source of strength of Bahaiism, like that of Christianity, comes from devotion to the personal founder of the faith. The first instance of the success of Babism was due to the intense religious consciousness of the Bab, and the vital sense of his divine mission, as well as the devotion he inspired in those who came in contact with him. When Baha Ullah, who had a magnetic personality and a strong will, became leader of the sect, this devotion was transferred from the Bab to himself. This bond of personal devotion became even stronger, when Baha Ullah proclaimed himself as the divine Manifestation or medium through

*Bhsm. the Modern Social Rel.

whom a relationship could be established with the unknown God. This was especially true for the Shi'ite sect, which revolted against the representation of God as the abstraction of omnipotence in orthodox Islam, and disobeyed the stringent prohibition against saint worship, which is merely an attempt to reach the Divine through the medium of an individual, by deifying the twelve Imams and other heroes of the faith upon whom, especially Hasan and Husain, great devotion was lavished. In such an environment it was comparatively easy for Baha Ullah to gather about himself a body of followers through the medium of personal devotion. On account of this element of devotion to the founder of Bahaism, it is not difficult for converts in the West, many of whom do not really know either Christianity or Bahaism, to substitute Baha Ullah for Christ, as the medium for establishing their relationship with God.

This element of personal devotion, which has contributed so much to the success of Bahaism and Christianity is found in Buddhism also. Although Buddhism was originally* merely a way of living and was free from all personality, yet in after days Buddha himself grew into a divine heroic figure, which supplied a personal centre about which the religion revolved. If Bahaism is to become universal, it must transfer to Baha Ullah the devotion of the millions who are at present following Buddha, as well as the millions who are now giving their devotion to Christ, and the millions of orthodox Moslems who are giving their allegiance to Muhammad, as the final prophet of God. Bahaism has also something of the spirit of Buddhism in laying stress upon and appealing to the inner spirit of man. Baha Ullah like Gautama realised that an elaborate order of sacrifice was unnecessary and self-torture vain, and has adopted a more positive goal of life than that of Nirvana.

When contrasted with Islam, Bahaism has the advantage of freedom from many anthropomorphisms, especially in connection with paradise, and is not hampered by its atmosphere of miracles and its intolerance of other religions. But although Bahaism allegorises the representation of the paradise of Islam, with its

*Geden Rel. of the East.

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sensualistic pleasures and the description of heaven presented in the Bible, yet it suffers severely from the poverty of its own idea of heaven, since it presents little or no positive description of the condition of souls in the future life. Again, although Bahaiism does not hold the same spirit of intolerance of other religions as that found in Islam and Babism, yet it lacks the positive element provided by clear-cut differentiations. Consequently some of the Bahais, who attend the mosques and claim to be Moslems, seem more Moslem than Bahai, while others who study Christianity and incorporate it into their faith, even declaring themselves to be Christians, seem nearer to Christianity than to Bahaiism.

Bahaiism has two of the most serious limitations of Islam, the poverty of its idea of God and the limitations common to all legalistic religions. These two deficiencies practically eliminate the possibility of its gaining absolute supremacy over all other faiths. Bahaiism, with its teaching of an unknown and forever unknowable God, will never make phenomenal progress among well-informed Christians, since the degree of light a religion is able to give, concerning the nature of God, must be the main attraction for thinking men. The second limitation on the inward or spiritual side is even more serious for a religion claiming universality. The conception of piety in Bahaiism is in the end external since stress is laid on unquestioning submission and obedience to the law of Baha Ullah, the writings of Abdul Baha and the infallible interpretations of the House of Justice: If the Bahai system were absolutely put into force it would develop into a mechanical obedience to a law.

The most serious limitation of Bahaiism however is the lack of a distinctive doctrine or doctrines, which will furnish a dynamic and inspire its devotees with missionary zeal to make it a universal religion. The followers of Muhammad, setting out with the religious battle cry, "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet," conquered a large part of the world. Christianity with its distinctive doctrines of the Fatherhood of God, brotherhood of man, and escape from merited punishment for sin through Jesus Christ has grown into a world-wide religion. But Bahaiism has little or nothing new, in fact everyone of its doctrines may be found

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in the teachings of other sects, sometimes even more clearly stated than in Bahaiism itself. Its idea of establishing a relationship with God through a "Bab," Imam or Manifestation, is borrowed from the Shi'ite sect of Islam. The Bahai doctrines of "Oneness of Existence," Oneness of God, creation by emanation, non-distinction between good and evil, pre-existence of souls, spiritual union or absorption into God, and its seven stages by which the traveller reaches this union, may all be found as tenets* of Sufi'ism. Its teaching of God as an unknown and unknowable Being was held by the Gnostics of the early Christian centuries, and most of the premises held by Baha Ullah in regard to God, were much more clearly stated by such thinkers as Hamilton and Mansel than by Baha Ullah himself. Bahaiism may have some original ideas in sociology, but socialistic opinions, ethical teachings which may be paralleled or surpassed by those of Christianity, Buddhism or Islam, and the revelation of a new ritual for prayer and fasting, will not provide a permanent foundation for any religion, especially for one which claims to supersede all others.

*Hughes Dict. of Islam.

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