



BAHĀ'-ALLĀH

BAHĀ'-ALLĀH MĪRZĀ ḤOSAYN-'ALĪ NŪRĪ (1233-1309/1817-92). Iranian notable and founder of the Bahai religion or **Bahaism**. He was born 2 Moḥarram 1233/12 November 1817 in Tehran into the household of a notable family from Māzandarān. His father, Mīrzā 'Abbās Nūrī (d. 1839), known as Mīrzā Bozorg, served the court of **Fath-'Alī Shah Qājār** (1797-1834) in several capacities. He was appointed vizier to the shah's twelfth son, the il-khan of the Qajar tribe. He grew close to First Minister Mīrzā Abu'l-Qāsem Qā'emmaqām, and in 1834 he was appointed governor and tax-farmer of Borūjerd and Luristan (Lorestān). But in 1835 the new monarch Moḥammad Shah (1834-48) had Qā'emmaqām executed, and the new first minister, Ḥājī Mīrzā Āqāsī, removed Mīrzā Bozorg from his posts and stopped his salary (Bāmdād, *Rejāl* VI, pp. 126-29). The family retained lands around its ancestral village of Takor in the Nūr district of Māzandarān.

In his youth Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī demonstrated pacifist tendencies, and was disturbed when he read an account of the early Muslim execution of the Banū Qorayṣa in Medina (Bahā'-Allāh, in Ešrāq Kāvarī, ed., *Mā'eda-ye āsmānī* VII, p. 136). At the wedding of one of his brothers he received a lesson about the world's ephemerality when he saw that, after a puppet show about a royal court, all the pomp was packed into trunks at the end (Bahā'-Allāh, "Lawḥ-e ra'īs," in *Majmū'a-ye maṭbū'a*, pp. 107-10). Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī, the future Bahā'-Allāh, was just reaching adulthood when his father fell from power and the experience may have further disillusioned him with worldly politics and predisposed him to a meditative spirituality, and, later, the adoption of the



radical religion of **Babism**. Bahā'-Allāh wrote, late in his life, that Moḥammad Shah committed two “heinous deeds,” the banishment of the Bāb to Azarbaijan and the murder of Qā'emmaqām, and this consideration appears to have partially underpinned his advocacy from the 1870s of constitutional constraints on the monarchy (“Kalemāt-e ferdowsīya,” in *Majmū'a-ī az alwāḥ*, pp. 35-36; tr. Taherzadeh, p. 65). Indeed, many of Mīrzā Bozorg's children reacted against the orthodoxies of Qajar Shi'ism. Of Mīrzā Bozorg's thirteen children by four wives and three concubines, at least one adopted Shaikhism (q.v.) and at least six others Babism.

The new first minister, Āqāsī, offered Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī his patronage, despite his being the son of an enemy, but the young Nūrī proved uninterested, and the two later fell out when Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī refused to sell some land and villages to the rapacious Āqāsī. (Moḥammad “Nabīl-e A'zam” Zarandī, *Maṭāle' al-anwār*, MS. International Bahá'í Archives, Haifa; partial Eng. tr. [Shoghi \[Šawqī\] Effendi Rabbani](#), *The Dawn-Breakers*, New York, 1932; repr. Wilmette, 1974, pp. 120-22.) Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī was in contact with Shaikhis from Nūr and from Tehran, a natural development given the popularity of esoteric Shaikhism with Qajar-era notables and his own speculative bent. When Mollā Ḥosayn Bošrū'ī came to Tehran in 1844 to spread the new beliefs of Babism, centered on Sayyed 'Alī-Moḥammad Šīrāzī the **Bāb**, he met with local Shaikhis. One of them, Mollā Moḥammad Mo'allem Nūrī, became a Babi and consented to contact Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī for Bošrū'ī. Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī in this manner accepted the Bāb's claims to religious authority as the gate of the Twelfth Imam. Soon thereafter, late in 1844 or in 1845, Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī returned to his village of Takor, where he endeavored to spread Babism in Nūr and in Māzandarān. His prestige as a local notable gave him many openings, and this missionary journey met with some success, even among some members of the religious class. Through him, as well, his brothers Mīrzā Yaḥyā (whom Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī raised, aged 14 in 1844) and Mīrzā Mūsā became Babis (*Ketāb-e noqṭat al-kāf*, ed. E. G. Browne, E. J. W. Gibb Memorial Series 15, 1910, pp. 239-40; Zarandī, *Maṭāle'*, tr. pp. 102-20; 'Abd-al-Bahā', *Maqāla-ye šakṣ-ī sayyāḥ*, E. G. Browne, ed. and tr. as *A Traveller's Narrative*, Cambridge, 1891, pp. 72-78, tr. pp. 56-62).

Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī used his position and his contacts in Tehran, not only to spread Babism, but to protect his coreligionists. He did so at some risk, however, since the aid he gave the poet Qorrat-al-'Ayn and other Babis after they were accused in the slaying (actually by a Shaikhi) of Mollā Taqī Baraḡānī



caused him to suffer temporary imprisonment in Tehran. In 1847 the government exiled the Bāb to imprisonment in Azarbaijan. In the summer of 1848 eighty-one prominent Babis gathered for twenty-two days in Khorasan in the village of Badašt. Mīrzā Ḥosayn-‘Alī and his young brother Mīrzā Yaḥyā both attended. Mīrzā Ḥosayn-‘Alī played a low-key role, renting gardens for Qorrat-al-‘Ayn and others, and suggesting theophanic names for some of the Babis, whom the Bāb had encouraged to glorify God by adopting divine names. From this point Mīrzā Ḥosayn-‘Alī adopted the name Bahā’ (the glory, [of God]). Mīrzā Yaḥyā became Ṣobḥ-e Azal (The morn of eternity). In the conflict at the conference between those who wanted to retain the Islamic law (*Šarī‘a*) and those who knew of the Bāb’s recent announcement that he was the messianic Mahdī or Qā’em, empowered to begin another dispensation, Bahā’-Allāh took the side of the pro-change group, who won out (*Noqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 145-54, 240-41; for Bahā’-Allāh’s role see Zarandī, *Maṭāle’*, tr. pp. 278-300, 459-61, 584-85).

Violence broke out between the Babis and the Qajar government in the second half of 1848, and Bahā’-Allāh and several companions, including his half-brother Yaḥyā (then aged 17 or 18), set out from Nūr to help the besieged Babis at Šayḳ Ṭabarsī near Bābol, Māzandarān, in early December, 1848, but they were arrested and imprisoned in Āmol (*Noqṭat al-kāf*, pp. 242-43; Zarandī, *Maṭāle’*, tr. pp. 368-77, 461-62, 583-84; Mīrzā Ḥosayn Hamadānī, *Tārīḳ-ejadīd*, ms., Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. F. 55/9, tr. E. G. Browne, *The New History of Mīrzā ‘Alī Muḥammed, the Bāb*, Cambridge, 1893; repr. Amsterdam, 1975, pp. 64-65). The following three years witnessed a series of disasters for the Babis, whom government troops besieged and then massacred in Māzandarān, Nayrīz, and Zanjān. On 9 July 1850 the government had the Bāb executed, but only after he had declared himself an independent manifestation of God (*mazḥar-e elāhī*) and had written a book of laws, the *Bayān-e fārsī* for the new religion he founded.

The Bāb had been in correspondence with the Nūrī brothers from his prison, and after the death of many prominent disciples in 1848-50, they emerged as the most likely leaders. Bahā’-Allāh, then aged thirty-three and a well-known notable, might have been expected to become the leading Babi. But surprisingly, the Bāb appears to have indicated for Mīrzā Yaḥyā Ṣobḥ-e Azal (then around nineteen) a high station or leadership position, at least nominally, in Babism. The young Azal, however, seems to have possessed little widespread authority or legitimacy, and the 1850s saw the Babi community



splinter into a number a regional sects headed by various claimants to theophanic status. The Bāb's works emphasized that another messianic figure, "He whom God shall make manifest (*man yoẓheroh Allāh*)" would appear. More important, the disheartened Babis seem to have been looking for charismatic leaders to replace the Bāb. Azal at first refused to denounce these rivals outright, rather incorporating them into a "theophanic field" with himself at the apex. Later in the 1850s Azal became more intolerant of rivals. Bahā'-Allāh, on the other hand, attempted to deflate Babi "manifestations" (*ẓohūrāt*) even in early 1851, asserting his own high station. He snubbed the Babi disciple Sayyed Baṣīr-e Hendī of Multan when he came to visit Nūr, because the Indian made grandiose claims. Finally, Bahā'-Allāh "took pity on him and manifested upon that temple of servitude, [Sayyed Baṣīr] the effulgences of divinity, [*tajalliyāt-e robūbiyat*] from that glory of paradise (*Bahā' al-reẓwān*, [i.e., Bahā'-Allāh])." (*Noqṭat al-kāf*, p. 258; see also pp. 238-61).

In June, 1851, Bahā'-Allāh left Tehran for Karbalā' in Iraq at the suggestion of First Minister Amīr Neẓām Taqī Khan (later Amīr[-e] Kabīr), who attempted to co-opt him by offering him a government post whenever he should return. Bahā'-Allāh refused the post, but took the hint that he should leave Iran for a while. Bahā'-Allāh found Babis in Karbalā' following a Sayyed 'Oloww, who claimed to be a divine incarnation until Bahā'-Allāh's greater prestige caused him to renounce his pretensions. While in Karbalā' in 1851, according to his companion Shaikh Ḥasan Zonūzī, Bahā'-Allāh said he was himself the return of Imam Ḥosayn (whom many expected to appear after the Mahdī, whom Babis identified with the Bāb), though he kept this "messianic secret" from most of his associates. In public, Bahā'-Allāh supported Azal, in the interests of unity, and worked to spread Babism in Karbalā' (Zarandī, *Maṭāle'*, tr. pp. 32, 587, 593-94).

The fall of Amīr Kabīr and the rise of Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī E'temād-al-Dawla as first minister under Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah had the potential for changing Bahā'-Allāh's political fortunes. The first minister wanted a rapprochement with Bahā'-Allāh, a relative from his region of the country, and with the Babis. He wrote Bahā'-Allāh asking him to return to Tehran, and the latter complied. The first minister's brother lavished hospitality on Bahā'-Allāh in Tehran for a month, after which the Babi notable retired to a summer house in Šemrān. On the way, he met briefly with Shaikh 'Alī 'Aẓīm, learning that 'Aẓīm and other radical Babi leaders in the capital had planned the assassination of the shah in



retaliation for the execution of the Bāb. Bahā'-Allāh condemned the plan. On August 15, 1852, Babis did attempt to assassinate the shah, but failed (Zarandī, *Maṭāle'*, tr. pp. 595-602; Ḥasan Fasā'ī, *Fārs-nāma-ye nāṣerī*, tr. H. Busse, *History of Persia under Qajar Rule*, New York, 1972, pp. 302-04; Sheil to Malmsbury, correspondence August 1852, FO 60/171 in M. Momen, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions, 1844-1944: Some Contemporary Western Accounts*, Oxford, 1981, pp. 128-46).

Though he knew suspicion would fall on him, Bahā'-Allāh declined to go into hiding. He went to Zarganda, staying with his brother-in-law, Mīrzā Majīd, who acted as secretary to the Russian ambassador. His presence was reported to the shah by Ḥājī 'Alī Khan Ḥājeb-al-Dawla. Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah demanded that the Russian legation hand Bahā'-Allāh over, but the ambassador insisted on delivering him to Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī, who sympathized with Bahā'-Allāh. Mīrzā Āqā Khan, however, proved unable to protect Bahā'-Allāh when anti-Babi riots broke out in Tehran, and Bahā'-Allāh was arrested and made to walk in chains to the Sīāh Čāl (black pit) dungeon. At length he was found innocent. His stay in the crowded, filthy dungeon, where he watched several Babi friends being executed, proved important for Bahā'-Allāh's spiritual development. He later wrote that he at that point decided to "undertake, with the utmost vigor, the task of regenerating" the Babi community (Bahā'-Allāh, *Lawḥ-e Šayk*, pp. 14-16; tr. Shoghi Effendi, pp. 20-22). He had several mystical experiences and dreams of a visionary nature while in prison. Despite having found him innocent, the government exiled Bahā'-Allāh, who chose to return to Iraq in the Ottoman empire, arriving in Baghdad on 12 January 1853. In Iran, the aftermath of the attempt on the shah's life saw widespread massacres of suspected Babis, and pillaging of the Nūrīs' property in Takor (Zarandī, *Maṭāle'*, tr. pp. 602-50; Moḥammad-Ḥasan Khan E'temād-al-Salṭana [*Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, ed. Ī. Afšār, Tehran, 1350 Š./1971, p. 957] asserts that Mīrzā Āqā Khan Nūrī, who remained in power until 1858, offered his resignation over the issue of Bahā'-Allāh's imprisonment).

A small number of other Babis chose to follow Bahā'-Allāh into exile in Iraq, including his half-brother Mīrzā Yaḥyā Šobḥ-e Azal, who arrived a few months later. Azal tended to distance himself from the community, spending his time in disguise and dealing with affairs through proxies, including Bahā'-Allāh, who publicly deferred to his brother. In Baghdad during 1853 differences arose between Bahā'-Allāh, and Azal and his close disciples. A close companion, Dahajī, wrote that Bahā'-Allāh disagreed with Azal's policy of



remaining incognito, and left Baghdad in order to distance himself from Azal. He retired for two years (1854-56) to Kurdistan, living the life of a Sufi dervish. Azal's continued attempts to assassinate the shah, of which Bahā'-Allāh disapproved, may have been another source of contention. Prominent Babis in Baghdad, feeling a need for Bahā'-Allāh's stabilizing influence, pleaded with him to return from Solaymānīya, which he did in 1856 (Mīrzā Mehdī Dahajī, "Resāla," ms., Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. F. 57, p. 48; Mīrzā Javād Qazvīnī, "Resāla," ms., Cambridge University Library, Browne Or. F. 26, tr. E. G. Browne in *Materials for the Study of the Babi Religion*, Cambridge, 1918, pp. 7-9; Bahā'-Allāh wrote an important mystical poem while staying with the Kāledī Naqšbandīs in Solaymānīya, that mentions his "mission" [*be'tatī*], "al-Qaṣīda al-warqā'īya," *Āṭār* III, pp. 196-215).

From 1856 to 1863 Bahā'-Allāh lived in Baghdad, building up an increasingly loyal following in Iran through his elegant mystical aphorisms and crisp doctrinal treatises in Persian or Arabic such as the *Kalemāt-e maknūna* (Hidden words), *Haft wādī* (Seven valleys), and *Ketāb-e īqān* (Book of certitude). He took very seriously a widely believed Muslim prophecy that the Mahdī or Jesus Christ would appear in 1280/1863-64, and put off making any public announcement until then, though evidence abounds that he kept a "messianic secret" for years before (for the wave of millenarianism that swept the Muslims of Arabia and India in the years just before 1280, see O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth Century India: the Tariqah-i Muhammadiyyah*, Ph.D. dissertation, Duke University, 1979, pp. 211-12). Bahā'-Allāh replaced the disastrous militancy of the Babis to which leaders like Azal were still committed with an emphasis on internal personal transformation similar to Sufi ethics and mysticism.

In the 1860s, Bahā'-Allāh's gatherings attracted many local notables and Iranian pilgrims, lending him greater influence in Iran as well as in Baghdad. Despite his emphasis on communal harmony, however, sporadic communal violence broke out between Shi'ites and Babis, and among factions of Babis, especially among unruly tradesmen and religious students, and Ottoman and Persian officials often laid this violence at his door. Bahā'-Allāh's influence worried his enemies in the Iranian government and among the Shi'ite clerics, and he narrowly escaped assassination at the hands of a man hired by the Iranian consul in Baghdad, Mīrzā Bozorg Khan. Mollā 'Abd-al-Ḥosayn Ṭehrānī, Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah's religious envoy to the shrine cities, cooperated with the consul, and began a major Shi'ite drive against Bahā'-Allāh and the fifty or so



Babis in Iraq that lost steam when **Shaikh Mortazā Anṣārī**, the leading *marjaʿe taqlīd*, refused to join in on the grounds that he knew nothing about the Babis (Bahāʾ-Allāh, *Ketāb-e īgān*, pp. 210-12; tr. Shoghi Effendi, pp. 249-53; ʿAbd-al-Bahāʾ, *Maqāla*, pp. 107-18, tr. pp. 82-88; Dahajī, “Resāla,” pp. 81-82; Ostād Moḥammad-ʿAlī Salmānī, *Kāṭerāt*, ms., International Baháʾí Archives, Haifa; Eng. tr. M. Gail, *My Memories of Bahāʾullāh*, Los Angeles, 1982, pp. 15-20; Mīrzā Abuʾl-Faẓl Golpāyegānī, “Resāla be Aleksandr Tumanskii,” R. Mehrābḳānī, ed., *Rasāʾel wa raqāʾem*, Tehran, 1978, pp. 65-76; tr. J. Cole, *Letters and Essays 1886-1913*, Los Angeles, 1985; “Two State Papers of 1862,” in Browne, *Materials*, pp. 270-81).

Alarmed at the revival of Babi activity under Bahāʾ-Allāh’s de facto leadership, and at the easy access to Iranians enjoyed by the Babi leaders situated so near the Shiʿite shrine cities, Mīrzā Ḥosayn Khan Mošīr-al-Dawla (q.v.), the Iranian consul in Istanbul who at that point considered the Babis subversive, pressured the Ottomans to exile Bahāʾ-Allāh farther from Iran. The Ottomans complied, calling Bahāʾ-Allāh to Istanbul in the spring of 1863. Before he left Baghdad, Bahāʾ-Allāh camped for twelve days at the Garden of Necip Paşa, where a large number of friends came to bid him farewell. During these days, to intimates, “he would speak of the Bāb’s Cause and declare his own” (Salmānī, *Kāṭerāt*, tr. p. 22; see also Dahajī, “Resāla,” pp. 65-70, 153-54; Qazvīnī, “Resāla,” p. 16). In late April, 1863, Bahāʾ-Allāh declared himself, to a handful of close followers, the promised one foretold by the Bāb. Perhaps because the year 1280 had not yet begun, he delayed any written declaration for almost a year.

After a four-month journey overland, Bahāʾ-Allāh and his entourage arrived in Istanbul. He had chosen twenty Babis to accompany him, in addition to his own family and muleteers; these were often men he thought might make trouble if left to themselves. Azal voluntarily accompanied his older brother, traveling incognito. Bahāʾ-Allāh met with a few Ottoman officials who came to visit him, but refused to seek audiences with the sultan or first minister. In Istanbul in 1863 he first gave evidence of thinking about the global social reforms that he advocated in later years. He told former First Minister Kemal Pasha that the Ottomans, and the world, should adopt a universal auxiliary language to be taught alongside local languages in every nation, so that “the whole earth would come to be regarded as one country” (Bahāʾ-Allāh, *Lawḥ-e šayk*, p. 90, tr. p. 38.) Because he refused to build alliances with Ottoman politicians, Bahāʾ-Allāh had no means of resisting Mošīr-al-Dawla’s pressure on



the sultan to exile him still farther away. Sultan ‘Abdūlaziz (‘Abd-al-‘Azīz) commanded that Bahā’-Allāh be banished to Edirne in Rumelia, a common site for the exile of political prisoners. Bahā’-Allāh at first refused to leave Istanbul, and wanted to make a stand against the Ottomans, seeking either to overturn the sultan’s edict or to attain martyrdom when troops came to arrest the Babis. But such a plan required unanimity, and when Azal declined to go along it fell through (Salmānī, *Kāṭerāt*, tr. p. 39-41, Qazvīnī, “Resāla,” tr. pp. 18-19). Bahā’-Allāh and his entourage, as well as Azal and his, lived in Edirne from 12 December 1863 to 12 August 1868. They received an Ottoman stipend for their support. In the winter and spring of 1864/1280, Bahā’-Allāh gradually began announcing himself to friends in Iran. In the “Sūrat Damm” (Sura of blood), written twenty years after the Bāb’s declaration (1260/1844) for Mollā Moḥammad “Nabīl” Zarandī, then in Iran, Bahā’-Allāh said he was the return (*raj’a*) of the Bāb, that is, “He whom God would make manifest” (*Āṭār* IV, pp. 1-15). Close disciples of Bahā’-Allāh in Iran like Mīrzā Ḥaydar-‘Alī Eṣfahānī received such letters and began increasingly passing them on to other Babis. For his followers, Bahā’-Allāh’s assertion that he was an independent manifestation of God able to found a new dispensation made Azal’s position as head of the old Babi religion irrelevant. Bahā’-Allāh and his supporters in any case held that the Bāb’s appointment of Azal had been a ruse to draw the fire of Iranian officials from Bahā’-Allāh. In spring of 1866 Bahā’-Allāh moved to a separate house from that of Azal, saying that Azal had attempted to have him killed, and, meeting with failure, had then imputed similar plots to his older brother. Bahā’-Allāh began more openly proclaiming his status as an independent prophet, writing suras he said were divine revelation (*waḥy*). In September, 1867, he decisively broke with Yaḥyā, addressing to him a letter in which he set forth his station and demanded his brother’s obedience. Yaḥyā refused, challenging Bahā’-Allāh to a test of the divine will (*mobāhela*) at the mosque of Sultan Selim, but Azal lost face when he changed his mind and did not appear (Bahā’-Allāh, “Lawḥ-e Naṣīr,” in *Majmū’a-ye maṭbū’a*, pp. 166-202; see Bahā’-Allāh’s many Edirne-period works in *Āṭār*, vol. 4; Dahajī, “Resāla” pp. 35-38, 283-85; Salmānī, *Kāṭerāt*, tr. pp. 42-48, 93-105; Qazvīnī, “Resāla,” tr. pp. 19-27).

From 1866 Bahā’-Allāh began addressing a series of letters to world leaders, announcing his advent as the promised one of all religions. His first was a long general letter of moral exhortations, the *Sūrat al-molūk* (Sura of the kings, 1866). Specific individuals therein addressed were Sultan ‘Abd-al-‘Azīz and the Iranian ambassador, Mošīr-al-Dawla. In 1868 he wrote a long letter (*Lawḥ-e*



solṭān) to Nāṣer-al-Dīn Shah, saying Babis under his leadership were not militant, and requesting an end to their persecution in Iran. The shah had Bahā'-Allāh's emissary bearing this letter tortured and killed. Bahā'-Allāh also wrote Napoleon III, elliptically proclaiming himself the return of Christ (Bahā'-Allāh, *Alwāḥ-e nāzela ketāb be molūk*, pp. 3-70, 91-117, 143-201; for Western diplomatic correspondence on Bahā'-Allāh in the Edirne period, see Momen, *The Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 185-200).

In 1868 the Ottoman government exiled the Babis once more. Bahā'-Allāh and his followers, along with a few Azalīs, were sent to the prison city of 'Akkā on the coast of Palestine, while Azal, his companions, and a few Bahais were sent to Famagusta, Cyprus. Bahā'-Allāh was imprisoned in the citadel for over two years, where some of his followers died from the unsanitary conditions. There he continued his proclamation to world leaders, including Queen Victoria, Tsar Aleksandr II, and Pope Pius IX. From 1870 to 1877 Bahā'-Allāh was kept under house arrest in the old city of 'Akkā. In the late 1860s and early 1870s most Babis in Iran went over to Bahā'-Allāh, becoming Bahais. These believers in a new revelation asked for a new code of religious and ritual law. Around 1873 Bahā'-Allāh in 'Akkā set down a new book of law and ritual, the *Ketāb-e aqdas*, which he said derived from divine revelation, meant to replace both the Qur'ān and the *Bayān* (Aleksandr Tumanskiĭ, *Kitabe akdes*, Mémoires de l'Académie impériale des sciences de St. Petersbourg, 8th ser., vol. 3, no. 6, 1899; Dahajī, "Resāla," pp. 154-56; Qazvīnī, "Resāla," tr. pp. 27-52).

His improving relations with local officials were only disturbed once, when some of the rougher of his followers in 'Akkā, unbeknownst to Bahā'-Allāh, plotted and carried out the murder of several Azalīs who had been spying on the Bahais for the Ottomans and stirring up local inhabitants against them. Bahā'-Allāh denounced the murderers in no uncertain terms, but the incident revived restrictions on his movements. In 1877, however, the Pasha gave him permission to live in a mansion outside 'Akkā, at Mazra'a till 1879, then at Bahjī until his death in 1892. His advocacy of social reforms in the 1870s won him new respect from old foes like Mošīr-al-Dawla. Bahā'-Allāh gradually convinced many Qajar notables that he represented no political threat (E'temād-al-Salṭana wrote in 1892 in his *Rūz-nāma-ye kāṭerāt*, 1st ed., p. 957: "Mīrzā Ḥosayn-'Alī, an old man, was no assassin"). In the 'Akkā period his financial support probably came from believers' contributions as well as from the Ottoman stipend. Bahā'-Allāh married three times, once in Iran (Āsia "Nawwāb" Kānom), once in Baghdad, a cousin (Mahd-e 'Olyā) whose family



had been martyred, and once in 'Akkā (Gowhar Kānom). In accordance with Babi law, he had only two wives at any one time (Bahai law later required monogamy). He had fourteen children, four of them girls; five sons predeceased him (Qazvīnī, “Resāla,” tr. Browne, pp. 45-65; Dahajī, “Resāla,” pp. 285-91; Western primary accounts of 'Akkā period in Momen, *Bābī and Bahā'ī Religions*, pp. 201-40). Before his death Bahā'-Allāh appointed his eldest son, 'Abd-al-Bahā' 'Abbās Effendi to head the Bahai faith after him (“Ketāb 'Ahdī,” in *Majmū'a-ī az alwāḥ*, pp. 134-38).

Religious doctrines. Bahā'-Allāh taught a theological *via negativa*, writing that God's essence is unknowable, and he is simply the absolute truth (*al-ḥaqq, al-'amā*). Following the theology of Mu'tazilism and Shaikhism, Bahā'-Allāh teaches that God's essential attributes (*ṣefāt al-dāt*) are identical to his essence (“Lawḥ madīnat al-tawḥīd,” *Mā'eda-ye āsmānī* IV, p. 321). According to Bahā'-Allāh, both God and the universal matter have always existed temporally, though God is essentially prior to matter, which is essentially originated (*maḥdat dātī*: Bahā'-Allāh, “Lawḥ al-ḥekma,” *Majmū'a-ye maṭbū'a*, p. 4b; this is Avicennian). He rejected the Sufi doctrine of existential monism or *waḥdat al-wojūd*, and denied that God becomes incarnate (*ḥolūl*) in the world, or manifests (*zohūr*) his essence corporeally (Bahā'-Allāh, *Haft wādī, Āṭār-e qalam-e a'lā* 3:114-15; *Ketāb-e īqān*, p. 79; “Lawḥ-e Salmān,” *Majmū'a-ye maṭbū'a*, pp. 140-42).

The transcendent essence of God and the originated material world are bridged in Bahā'-Allāh's thought by the Word of God (*kalemat Allāh, kalām Allāh*; also called *ketāb Allāh* and *amr* or divine command), a temporally preexistent principle whereby God created composite creatures. The Word of God manifests (*zahara*) itself in human form, in the shape of prophets and messengers (“Lawḥ al-zohūr,” ms. AB 201, Bahā'ī World Centre, Haifa; “Lawḥ al-ḥekma,” pp. 41-42; “Lawḥ Ašraf,” *Majmū'a-ye maṭbū'a*, p. 212; “Sūrat al-ra'īs,” *Majmū'a-ye mobāraka*, p. 87). Bahā'-Allāh distinguished between prophets (sing. *nabī* [y]) who simply came with a mission to their people and “prophets endowed with constancy” (*anbīā' olu'l-azm*), who revealed new religious legislation abrogating that of the previous dispensation. He wrote of the Zoroastrian, Mosaic, Christian, Islamic, and Babi dispensations, recognizing all of them as divinely-ordained religions progressively leading up to his own (he did not exclude other world religions, and his son 'Abd-al-Bahā' later incorporated Buddha and Krishna into the schema). He taught the sinlessness (*al-'esma al-kobrā*) of the legislating prophets, though he wrote that their



human souls could progress and be purified. The purpose of the advent of prophets is to transmit God's grace and educate souls for their own spiritual advance in this world and in the afterlife (Bahā'-Allāh, "Ešrāqāt," in *Čand lawḥ*, pp. 54-59; "al-Qašīda al-warqā'īya," *Ātār* 3: 198; *Ketāb-e aqdas*, Bombay, n.d., p. 51; *Ketāb-e īqān*, pp. 82-83).

Bahā'-Allāh's doctrine of prophets is theophanic. He held that prophets manifest the active attributes (*zohūr-e asmā' wa šefāt*) of God into the material world, though he denied that God's essence (*dāt*) itself could ever be manifested, differing in this regard from Druze and other Shi'ite esotericists. In neo-Platonic fashion, he sometimes refers to the totality of God's active attributes as the "self" (*nafs*) of God. Only through the prophets and messengers of God, he wrote, could human beings attain a knowledge of God's attributes, which his envoys mirror forth. He said that prophets have a two-fold nature (*do 'onšor*), one physical and the other divine (*elāhī*), corresponding to two stations (*maqām*), the human, and the station wherein his voice is the voice of God. The doctrine of the divinity (*olūhīyat*) of all the prophets does not imply incarnation, but refers to the manifestation of the active attributes of God. Explaining his own station, he compared God's manifestation in him to the divine effulgence in the burning bush of Moses, and wrote of divinity, "This station is the station in which one dies to himself (*fanā*) and lives to God. Divinity, whenever I mention it, indicates my complete and absolute self-effacement." (*Lawḥ-e šayk*, p. 30; see also *Majmū'a-ye maṭbū'a*, p. 340; "Tajalliyāt," in *Čand lawḥ*, pp. 203-05). Because all prophets manifest the same divine attributes, in Bahā'-Allāh's doctrine they are all metaphysically identical, though their human personalities differed. Thus, each is a "return" of the previous prophets (but this does not imply reincarnation of the human soul, a doctrine Bahā'-Allāh rejected).

Social teachings. Bahā'-Allāh's enunciation of steps for social reform dates to his arrival in the Turkish-speaking provinces of the Ottoman empire in the mid-1860s, and continued during his Palestine exile 1868-92. He was in Edirne during some of the Ottoman debate on constitutionalism, and around 1868 wrote Queen Victoria that the parliamentary form of constitutional monarchy she presided over was the best type of government. In 1866 he had denounced the international arms race, urging that the money poured into it be instead spent on the poor. Later in 'Akkā he advocated the convening of an international parliament that would guarantee peace through the principle of collective security. He urged the adoption of one universal language



throughout the world, and of uniform weights, measures, and currency. He forbade religious and racial prejudice, and discouraged nationalist chauvinism (“Glory not in this that you love your country, glory in this that you love mankind”). He urged universal education of children, and his insistence that daughters be educated along with sons is only one of many indications that he supported an improved status for women. He advocated the adoption of modern technology in the Middle East, arguing that it was only an extension of Greek science and philosophy, which Middle Easterners had long accepted (“Lawḥ maleka Vīktūrīa,” *Alwāḥ-e nāzela*, p. 133; “Sūrat al-molūk,” *ibid.*; *Ketāb-e aqdas*, pp. 52-53; other quotes and points in “Lawḥ al-ḥekma,” *Majmū‘a-ī az alwāḥ* and tr. Taherzadeh; this entire volume has these reformist emphases).

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