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SIGNS OF THE TIMES*

ASIA AWAKENING

The most encouraging thing in India is the present unrest, says Sherwood Eddy. Cause for hope is found in the conflict of the new civilization with the old, the working of a new principle, the upheaving of a new life. Five causes have led up to this, namely: Western education, the nation's antipathy for foreign rulers, the poverty of the masses leading to natural dissatisfaction, the agitation of the educated Indians for self-government, and the dissatisfaction of the people with the old order, both political and religious.

England is doing much for India, but the marvelous thing is the awakening of that empire—an awakening, first, within the Church; and second, without the Church in the leavening of the life of the people. It is an awakening involving the reaction of Christianity upon the non-Christian religions and upon the whole nation.

The empire is surely becoming Christian. While during the last decade the population has increased $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., the Parsees have gained 4 per cent., the Jews 6 per cent., the Mohammedans 8 per cent., while the Protestant native Christians increased 63 per cent., more than 20 times as fast as the population.

The great mass movements in India are full of encouragement as well as full of danger. More than half a million have been gathered in from the out-castes of India, and fifty millions of this class are at the door of the Church to-day. The mass movement is occurring, not only among the out-caste class, but also among the middle class, the great backbone of India.

There is also manifest within the Church a new missionary spirit. In the pagoda, where, one hundred years ago, Henry Martin went and prayed—Henry Martin, who said that he would as soon expect to see some one rise from the dead as to see a Brahman become a Christian—I saw converted Brahmans, converted Mohammedans, men from every province of India, met to organize a native missionary society, under native management and supported by native money.

Greater still is the effect of the awakening outside of the Christian Church. It is resulting in a new ideal of life. The changeless life of contemplation is giving place to one of activity, of self-realization, of progress. There is a new national consciousness, a new patriotism sweeping over the country. There is a new demand for reform, a new attitude toward woman. The old caste system is

* The editors seek to preserve accuracy and to manifest the spirit of Christ in the pages of this REVIEW, but do not acknowledge responsibility for opinions expressed, or positions taken by contributors to these pages.—EDITORS.

BAHAISM AND ITS CLAIMS

BY REV. WILLIAM A. SHEDD, D.D., URUMIA, PERSIA

Bahaism, both in its Eastern and in its Western development, is one of the significant facts in modern history. It originated in the claim made in 1844 by Sayyid Ali Mohammed, a young merchant of Shiraz, Persia, to be the Bab or medium of communication with the hidden Imam. It received a new form in 1866, when Mirza Husain Ali Nuri claimed to be the Manifestation of God promised by the Bab, and took the title of Baha Ullah. Under his leadership and that of his son, Abbas Effendi, Abdul Baha, it claims to be "religion renewed and revived," "the one goal toward which Truth has always worked," "the universal religion of the world, and the basis of the great universal civilization that is to be." Such claims might be quoted indefinitely, but the following may be noted here:

1. That it contains the essential teachings of all other religions.
2. That it is for the present age the highest manifestation of truth.
3. That it is the foundation not only of individual welfare, but of intellectual and social progress. An era of universal peace and right is to be brought in by the acceptance of the authority of Baha.
4. That it is the fulfilment of prophecies contained in other religions, and that it replaces those religions, especially Judaism, Christianity and Mohammedanism.

It is difficult to make even an approximate estimate of the number in Persia. Most of the figures given are gross exaggerations. Persia is not a populous country, and the Bahais of Persia are found among certain classes only. It is not an easy question to de-

cide what constitutes a Bahai. For example, the writer had with him as an assistant in school work a Persian, with whom he discust religious topics freely. For years he disavowed belief in Bahaism, but finally he appeared in the role of an active propagandist of that faith. Concealment of religious faith is a common practise in Persia, and it is approved and recommended by the Bahais. The following line of investigation is sound in principle, and is offered as the best available. The nomad population (whether Sunni or Shia), the Kurds, the Arabs and other Sunnis, can be left entirely out of the account, as there are no Bahias among them. These make up from a fourth to a third of the whole population. The mass of the people in the villages, except in a few districts in the south of Persia and along the Caspian, are unaffected by the propaganda. There remain the cities and towns having populations of five thousand and more. The total in habitants of these centers is not above two millions. One million or more of these must be eliminated, for the ignorant day-laborers and similar classes in the cities are not influenced by Bahaism. Of the remaining million, certainly not more than one-tenth are Bahais, which would give about one hundred thousand as the maximum number. A similar result is reached by stating positively that Bahais are found only among the more intelligent classes, *i.e.*, the merchants, mollahs, mirzas, land-owners, officials, etc., and that not more than one in ten of these are Bahais. Probably the proportion is even smaller. Some Jews in Teheran and Hamadan are Bahais, as are some

Zoroastrians; but the former number in all only about 30,000, and the latter about 8,000. Their influence is out of proportion to their numbers, and that the actual numbers show a remarkable growth for the period of their existence.

Outside of Persia there are Bahais in Burma, in India, in Syria and some other parts of the Turkish Empire, in Florence, Paris, Stuttgart, and some other continental cities, in London and in the United States. The religious census of the United States for 1906 gave the following figures: Organizations, 24; halls, 23; members, 1,280, of whom 438 were men, 842 women. The largest number is in Chicago. Illinois (including Chicago), reports 492 members; New York 23, and Massachusetts 70. This represents over fifteen years' growth. There is no reason to suppose that the growth has been rapid since 1906. Since then at Washington a new center has been founded for the Bahai propaganda, and an association formed for the support of a school in Teheran, which, while not openly declared to Bahai, is controlled by them. In this school there is one American teacher, and in Teheran are one or two other American Bahais engaged in philanthropic work. The difference between Christian mission work and that of the Bahais in Persia is that the former is openly Christian, while the latter is professedly Mohammedan. A man in becoming a Bahai is urged not to break publicly with the past, while on the contrary, no one can become a Christian and remain a Mohammedan. This difference was illustrated in a mission school when the Bahai pupils presented a complaint to the Government on the ground that they as good

Mohammedans were offended by having to study the Christian Scriptures.

While the claims made by Bahais of millions of adherents are clearly wrong, they are widely scattered, and are found among intelligent people. They have published both in English and in French books and tracts intended to present their teachings to others, and almost altogether from these are drawn the statements below as to their beliefs. By these teachings rather than by numbers the religion must be judged, altho no argument is prest more often in argument than the rapid spread of the religion.

Origin and History

One of the ordinary titles given to Mohammed by his followers is that of the Seal of the Prophets, which is interpreted by the vast majority to mean that he is the last of the prophets, his predecessors being the great prophets Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus, besides thousands of lesser authority. The Shia Moslems, however, claim that altho Mohammed was the last of the prophets, after him there is an order of infallible Imams, beginning with his son-in-law Ali, and continuing in the line of Ali. The twelfth Imam is believed about the year 260 of the Mohammedan era to have disappeared, and to be still alive in some mysterious place. His return is looked for constantly. An instance of this expectation is found in the new Persian constitution, in which it is specified that a certain provision is valid perpetually till the appearance of the Hidden Imam. The honor given to these Imams approaches in many cases deification, and the popular religion of Persia is largely connected with them. Besides expecting his appearance,

there is also the attempt to maintain a connection with the Hidden Imam; and there has been in some sects a belief in certain intermediaries between him and his followers. This intermediary was called the Bah, an Arabic word meaning gate.

One of the sects that hold the Imams in special honor is the *Shaikhi* sect. Seventy or eighty years ago they were very active, and stories are still told of the disturbances caused by their activity in many cities of Persia. They are marked by austerity of life, a fondness for metaphysical discussion, a figurative interpretation of the sacred books, and a belief in the "perfect Shia," who is always existent, and is the channel of grace from the Hidden Imam. Their leader, Haji Sayyid Kazim Rashti, about 1840, aroused in his disciples an intense expectation of the speedy appearance of the Imam. He died in 1843, and the next year, Sayyid Ali Mohammed, who had for a time attended his lectures, claimed to be the Bah, or gate, and later the promised Imam, taking finally the title of *Nukta* (or point of manifestation). His history was brief but intense, and ended in martyrdom by the Government at Tabriz in 1850. He claimed for himself to be the inaugurator of a new dispensation, and so not only the Imam but also a great prophet in the line of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. He further predicted the coming of "Him whom God would manifest," who should be a prophet of equal rank with the greatest. His death only increased the enthusiasm of the followers his lofty personality had drawn to himself. Struggles followed in several places, many died for the faith, and the leaders were exiled.

The claim of the Bah had caused a bitter schism among the Shaikhis, and a few years after the Bah's death a division occurred among his followers. The leaders were in exile at Bagdad, whence they were removed by the Turkish Government to Constantinople and Adrianople. Before leaving Bagdad in 1866, Husain Ali claimed to be the prophet promised by the Bah. He assumed the title of Baha Ullah. From Adrianople the Turkish Government removed the rival leaders to Acre in Syria, and to the island of Cyprus. Unfortunately, but in very oriental fashion, some of the followers of each were sent with the other leader. Those who went to Acre with Baha were later murdered by some of his followers, a crime for which Baha himself disclaimed responsibility. The large majority of the Bahais (as they were called) accepted Baha, and hence are known as Bahais. He lived in Acre under government surveillance and annoyance until his death in 1892, directing from there the vigorous propaganda of his followers and issuing books and epistles stamped with the claim of divine authority. His death was followed by another schism, two of his sons being rivals for the headship; but the majority accepted Abbas Effendi, who has taken the title of Abdul Baha. Since the Turkish revolution he has been free from government surveillance, but he still lives in Acre, where recently a house has been given him by an American lady. There seems to be no definite statement of the character of his authority, but it is more than mere leadership. He impresses those who meet him with personal ability, and in his hands the affairs of the sect have been managed with great success.

The Teachings

When one attempts to give an account of the teaching of Baháism he is met at the outset with the claim that they have no dogmas. Just what is meant by this claim it is a little difficult to understand, for their books contain much fairly definite teaching and a very definite claim to supernatural authority. The three leaders of the religion, the Bah, Baha Ullah, and Abdul Baha, have all written numerous treatises and letters; and inasmuch as the first two claim definitely to be supreme manifestations, and the latter in some sense to possess divine authority, all are to be taken into account. The writings of the Bah, however, are superseded by those of Baha, and as a matter of fact are not used. None of them is presented to the public by the western Bahais, altho his Beyan, both in the Arabic and the Persian form, has been translated into French by M. Nicolas. The Igan (or Ighan), the Book of the Covenant, and various extracts from letters, are the works of Baha that are accessible in English and French. The Ktáh ul Akdas, or Most Holy Book, is referred to as the most important writing of Baha, but it has not been translated as yet. An abstract has been printed by Professor Browne of Cambridge. A number of brief works by Abdul Baha and one considerable book have been published in English and French. The latter is called "Answered Questions," or "Les Leçons de St. Jean d'Acre." There are also several books by western Bahais giving a general account of the faith, numerous tracts, and a life of Abdul Baha in English. It will be seen that there is a considerable apologetic literature. For our purposes, however, the books

of the masters are important, and the following sketch of their teachings is drawn from them. It does not claim to be complete, but it does claim to be careful and fair.

The teaching as to God is hard to grasp, and perhaps it should be, for it starts from the assumption that God is in His essence unknowable. His existence is assumed rather than proved. We are told that it "is evident that 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." This seems to indicate personality. The following seems decidedly pantheistic: "The reality of Divinity or the substance of the essence of Oneness is pure sanctity and absolute holiness. . . . It is invisible, incomprehensible, inaccessible, a pure essence which can not be described, for the Divine Essence surrounds all things."

In the English Bahai works God is occasionally spoken of as It; but stress can not be laid on this, perhaps, as in Persian the same word serves for He and It. Whatever God is, we are told again and again that "the way is closed and seeking is forbidden." There is no direct relation between the soul and God. The sum of the divine bounty is the Holy Spirit, which is described as an emanation of the divine unity, but not in a material sense. In order to be known to men, who are incapable of knowing the divine essence, the manifestations are the medium used by God. These are the highest of humanity, perfectly free from sin, and are the mirrors in which the divine attributes are reflected through the Holy Spirit. The following quotation expresses this doctrine: "The

splendors of the perfections, bounties and attributes of God shine forth and radiate from the reality of the Perfect Man—that is to say, the Unique One, the Universal Manifestation of God. Other beings receive only one ray, but the universal manifestation is the mirror for this Sun, which appears and becomes manifest in it, with all its perfections, attributes, signs and wonders. The knowledge of the Reality of the Divinity is impossible and unattainable, but the knowledge of the manifestations of God is the knowledge of God, for the bounties, splendors, and divine attributes are apparent in them.” The reality or essence is unknown, but the attributes are known through the mediation of the manifestations, which are perfect mirrors of the divine glory.

The relation of this unknowable and yet manifested God to the universe is not that of Creator, altho God is called Creator and things are called creatures. The material universe has neither beginning nor end. Matter changes in form from simple to complex, under the operation of universal law the forms dissolving and recomposing. The source of this change and the composition of the forms is not fortuitous. Man’s body belongs to this material universe, and is subject to its laws. There is no resurrection of the body, and the soul is an independent entity. The spirit or soul is said to have a beginning but no end, and as its future state is said to be one of growth, we may probably conclude that its existence is individual and not merely verged in the divine reality. This, however, is not entirely clear, as heaven, hell, judgment and the other conceptions pertaining to the

future life are all explained in a figurative way.

Man is in need of divine help, not in the way of redemption but of enlightenment. The divine Manifestations are educators and lawgivers. Man needs education, material, intellectual and spiritual; and with such education the woes of life may be expected to disappear. Little is said of sin, but much of ignorance and error. In order to furnish this enlightenment God has raised up the Manifestations, who make known the truth to men in all that is necessary to their welfare. This work is very broad, as is shown in the following quotation: “He will teach men to organize and carry out physical matters, and to regulate the form of society with regard to the establishing of help and assistance in life, so that material affairs may be organized and regulated for any circumstances that may occur. In the same way he will establish human education . . . so that knowledge and science may increase and the reality of things, the mysteries of being, and the properties of existence be discovered. . . . He must also impart spiritual education, so that intelligence and comprehension may penetrate the metaphysical world, and may receive benefit from the sanctifying breeze of the Holy Spirit, and may enter into relationship with the Divine Concurrence.” The educators named are Abraham, Moses, Christ, Mohammed, the Bah, and Baha. Besides these an indefinite number of lesser prophets, such as the Old Testament prophets and the apostles, are recognized.

The way of salvation is described in a book by an American Bahai under the heads of faith, which “is to devote the entire being to the Will of God,

as exprest in His commands"; knowledge, which comes through the Manifestation of God; prayer and obedience. Among the Hidden Words of Baha is this: "The principle of religion is to acknowledge what is revealed by God and to obey the laws established in His Book." Repentance has little place in the scheme, and from all the Bahai literature is absent any deep sense of sin or unworthiness. The new birth or regeneration is the transformation of life and character, which is the result of salvation and not its beginning. It is characteristic of the religion that it seeks after knowledge of God's commands and not union with Him. It is not mystical, and the knowledge sought after is objective and external. It is not without prayer and ritual, and among the prayers are many beautiful aspirations, as there are in Islam and every other religion; but the following is given as the center of this faith: "God, singly and alone, abideth in His own place, which is holy above space and time, mention and utterance, sign, description and definition, height and depth." In their own phrase, "The way is closed, and seeking is forbidden."

Ethics plays a large part in the religion, and moral exhortations make up a large part of their writings. For the most part the ethical ideals are Christian. Love is emphasized, as are service for others, self-sacrifice in the form of devotion to God, but not in the form of giving up for others, and national peace. In theory the teachings of the Manifestation of God should cover the whole range of human life, and as a matter of fact the "Kitab ul Akdas," which seems to be ignored by western Bahais, contains

precepts on a great variety of subjects. Some of these are the following: Prayer is to be said three times each day, facing toward Acre, and each prayer is to contain three parts. The vernal equinox is to be a new-year festival, and the days of manifestation of the Bah and of the Baha are also festivals. The year consists of nineteen months of nineteen days each, and five extra holidays. The last month of the year is a month of fasting from sunrise to sunset. The use of perfumes is commended; the materials to be used in dress are regulated, and the clothes of the dead are specified. The law of inheritance is laid down, teachers ranking as heirs in the seventh and last degree. These laws are said by Professor Browne to be complicated and obscure. Divorce is permitted for desertion for a period of over nine months, and also for persistent quarreling after a year of trial. Wine and opium are forbidden. Each community is to have "a house of justice," composed of not less than nine members, and these houses of justice are to go up in ascending degrees till the universal house of justice is reached. The numbers nine and nineteen are of special sanctity. Polygamy was practised by Baha Ullah, and is allowed to his followers under certain restrictions. Education is encouraged for girls as well as boys. A universal language is enjoined.

How it Works

Does this religion bring about a reformation of life and character? The reports given by Bahai travelers are glowing, but long residents in Persia have no such tale to tell. The Bahais are drawn from the more intelligent classes, and are more progressive

than most. Among the Persians the desire to get rid of the intolerable obstacle to social progress found in the traditional law of Islam is one of the most potent influences leading to the acceptance of Bahaism. But the Bahais are not noticeably more honest, more truthful, more sober or more reliable than others. Zeal for education is a mark of all progressive Persians, whether Bahais or not. The future will reveal whether it has a useful role to play in modern history. One can only hope that this may be the case, and especially that it may enlarge the narrow bounds of freedom, and there are reasons for this hope. Professor Browne, however, who is both sympathetic and well-informed, expresses the doubt whether its triumph would establish freedom, and thinks also that its influence in the emancipation of woman has been exaggerated. Generally the Bahais have held aloof from the revolutionary movement in Persia, and by many in Persia they have been regarded as partizans of the old régime.

Can Bahaism make good its claim to be the fulfilment of and substitute for Christianity? The answer is that it can not, and some reasons may be given for this answer.

In the first place, the conception on which Bahaism bases its claim is false. Truth does not grow old, nor is it possible to change the religion with the growth of the race. A universal religion must present truth in a form that will reach men in every stage of civilization, for the reason that in every period of the world since the dawn of history there have been simultaneously men in every stage of intellectual development. A universal Gospel must be the power of God unto

salvation for all—Jew, Greek and barbarian. Christianity is based on an entirely different conception—the gradual growth of revelation and its organic relation to human history until it reaches completeness. Specifically Bahaism is irreconcilable with Christianity in its relation to Mohammedanism, in the difference between its teachings and those of Christianity, and in its exclusion of whole areas of Christian teaching.

Bahaism is tied to Mohammedanism beyond all possibility of release. It recognizes this fact in the defense of Mohammed's character by Abdul Baha. This carries with it also the defense of whatever belongs properly to Islam. Much that is traditional in Islam it can reject, but polygamy, *e.g.*, must be defended. Further, the fundamental conceptions of Bahaism are Mohammedanism rather than Christianity. In both religion is a way of enlightenment and not of redemption. In both morals are based on the commands and not on the ideals of humanity. In both religion includes a law made up to a greater or less degree of ritual precepts, as the form of prayer, time of fasting, etc. This relation is strikingly illustrated in the argument from prophecy. The period of 1,260 days, or three years and a half, whenever it appears in Daniel or in Revelation, is made to refer to the time that elapsed between the appearance of Mohammed and the Bah. Similarly the promised Paraclete is Mohammed. In other words, the acceptance of Baha includes the acceptance of Mohammed in a sense not really required by the Koran, for the Koran really implies Mohammed's need of forgiveness, while Baha Ullah postulates Mohammed's sinless-

ness. Such a fact inevitably lowers morals to the Mohammedan level.

Bahaism ignores the fatherhood of God. A distant unknowable being can not be the heavenly Father. It has no place for Christ except as one of a series, one, moreover, whose brief day of authority closed when Mohammed began to preach in Mecca. God is not love, for love is one of the attributes, the essence being unknowable. Nor is He holy in His being, only in His attributes. Sin is ignorance, not perversion of nature. The Holy Spirit is impersonal, not a living power. Church and State are identified, and hence freedom of religion is impossible.

Bahaism rejects not merely the theory but the fact of the Atonement. If the claim be admitted that Bahaism is a republication of Christianity, the whole interpretation of the death of Christ contained in the Epistles must first be rejected. It knows nothing of the imminence of God as a living presence. The only presence known is in unchanging natural law, and in

the reflected glory in the manifestations. The living presence of the story must be denied. In brief, not one single clause of the Apostle's Creed can be retained in any sense that has been accepted by Christians, if Bahaism is received as true.

And what is given in return? There is a plentiful use of the Christian vocabulary, but words are of value only if ideas lie back of them. To call God Father, and then to remove Him by an inaccessible gulf is worse than useless. The apparent gifts of Bahaism are empty. This is the case even with the much-exalted name of Baha Ullah. He is said to be the supreme and sufficient manifestation of God; but we search in vain for any real picture of His character. Eulogy and boasting pretension are found in abundance, but no narrative, no Gospel wrought in deeds of daily life.

NOTE.—The above is written with reference to western Bahaism; and while it is mostly applicable to Bahaism in Persia, the proportion of teaching is very different there and here. Indeed, Bahaism as offered to a Jew, a Christian, and a Mohammedan varies greatly. One might argue that western Bahaism is only in name Bahaistic.

THE RELIGION OF THE DERSIM KURDS

BY REV. HENRY H. RIGGS, HARPOOT, TURKEY

In the course of a journey in eastern Turkey I once came to a ferry on the upper Euphrates River. The water was high and swift, and the prospect was that, in the antiquated tub that served as a boat we should have, to say the least, an exciting passage. While we were arranging our horses in the boat a man, evidently of great age, rode up and was helped into it by his attendant and the boatman, who showed him every mark of respect, almost reverence. As he took his place

the old gentleman saluted me, and recognizing me as a Christian teacher, he said, "Shall we call on the Prophet Jesus?" I, of course, heartily assented, and as the boat was pushed off and plunged down the boiling current, with upturned face the old man prayed, "O Lord Jesus! save us, Lord Jesus!"

Yet that man was not a Christian. In the rough classification of religions common in Turkey he is classed as a Mohammedan. He was a high religious dignitary, too, of a Kurdish tribe.