

been largely caused by political reasons, their steadfastness and martyrdoms have sprung from their religious beliefs. Notwithstanding the death, or, as they phrase it, ascension, of their Divine incarnation, Mirza Husain Ali, Baha'ullah (the light of God), on May 16th, 1892, in exile at Aecho, they continue to hold together and in some places to increase. Information is most contradictory as to their character and numbers. I am assured that their inner circle practice a community of wives, and approve of assassination as a means of freeing themselves from enemies. Their numbers are often stated at from 500,000 to 1,000,000. If so, the New Dispensation is already firmly established, and can claim a tenth or twelfth of the Mohammedans of Persia. They are struggling for religious liberty, and the influence of so large a body must weaken the resisting power of Shiahism. Tho bent on achieving their own triumph, they profess great friendship for Christians, and are earnest students of the Bible to find proofs for their own revelation. Their belief in the divinity of Jesus and of Baha is a strong doctrinal link with Christianity. Some of the best converts to Christianity have been from this new religion. One of these lately said to me : "There are many who are convinced that the best and only true religion is Protestantism. They admire the conduct of the Protestants, and refer to it as an example in contrast with their own actions."

The work of the Bible societies continues to be one of the best agencies for the diffusion of the truth in Persia. The sales of Scriptures are not as large as in many countries. The total number circulated during the past ten years is estimated at 60,000. The report of the British and Foreign Bible Society says : "What have these 60,000 copies done for Persia? Have they in any way helped to bring one sinner to Christ? Yes, not only one, but a very large number. 1. There are many of whom we have heard, and some whom we have met and know personally, who are real and true Christians. 2. There are hundreds of men who, while accepting the truth as it is in Jesus, and believing in the doctrines of the Christian religion, are afraid openly to confess their faith. 3. There are thousands who have got a glimpse of the truth and become anxious inquirers, and who are 'not far from the kingdom of God.' 4. Thousands there are who at one time were bitter enemies of the Gospel, trying to hinder the work in every possible way, but whose hearts have been softened. People who knew nothing of the Bible or Christianity will be seen now discussing these topics in order to find out the truth." Another report of the same society says : "Some, and I think the majority, of the most interesting cases are the result of the study of the Word of God alone, without comment or word from any man. For instance, a sheikh of an Arab village paid us a visit at the beginning of 1889. He told me that about ten years before he had received an Arabic Bible. He studied it, and after a while, being the mollah of the village, he began to read it to his people. I asked him if he had read the whole of it, and he said,