for the venality and moral corruption of the mollahs and their disposition to the most vulgar fraud are proverbial. But, on the other hand, the clerical power and the right of asylum at Meshhed, Ḳum, and some other sanctuaries are the only protection of the masses against the arbitrary tyranny of the court and the officials. There is now a sort of truce between the Government and the clergy, though the former is always suspicious of the latter. Only the venality of the spiritual courts has led, as in Turkestan, to a limitation of their jurisdiction, and judicial decisions are given also by civil magistrates according to '*orf* or custom­ary law and, although their decisions are often arbitrary, they are commonly resorted to in cases affecting property, in which the spiritual judge would think it his duty to “eat up ” the sum in dispute. The main prop of the mollahs against the Government are the scum of the population, the *lúṭís* or foul rowdies. In 1862, according to Vám­béry, the imám-jum'a of Ispáhán had at his orders a thousand of these scoundrels.

The rivals of the clergy in popular influence are the dervishes, whose show of holiness cloaks an immorality and propensity to crime far exceeding what is found among their brethren in Egypt and Turkey. So it has been for centuries, as appears in Olearius’s account of the Calanders of his time (1637). Supported by popular superstition, the Persian dervishes are much more pretentious than those of the West. At the great feasts especially they quarter themselves impudently in wealthy houses and deafen the indwellers with their unceasing cry of *Yá ḥaḳḳ* (“O Truth ! ” the mystical equivalent of “ O God ! ”). The wise and modest dervish who in Sa'di’s poems tells the greatest sultan the truth as to the hollowness of his royal state has degenerated into the half-mad and insolent hanger-on who thrusts himself into audience-chambers and claims the seat of honour beside the grandees. The mul­titude of these motley vagabonds, some harmless, others dangerous, is explained by the love for idleness, buffoonery, and story-telling, which is even more marked in Persia than in other parts of the East.

The great practical difference between the Sunnite and Shi'ite communities is that among the former it is only with the upper classes, who are few in number, and with the worse sort of dervishes that obedience to the precepts of religion is a mere formal profession. Most of the ulema and the middle and lower classes are sincere Moslems. In Persia it is the other way ; the praise of religion is always on men’s lips, but the inner conviction is that it is all a mockery. The clergy laugh inwardly at their own func­tions; the educated classes either believe nothing at all or hold secretly to a Ṣúfí pantheism. Sa'di and Háfiz are much more to them than the Koran ; and, while the Sunnite takes his *sortes biblicæ* from the Koran, the Shi'ite uses a copy of the songs of Ḥâfiz. With the common people it is not the proper precepts of Islam, but the Shi'ite tenets directed against Sunnites and Jews, that find hearty ad­herence. The death-feast of Hasan and Hosain excites them far more than the great sacrificial feast ; and 'Alí, the national saint, is much more popular than Mohammed. Islam, as it was forced on Persia by Omar, was the faith of foreign conquerors and oppressors ; and the people have revenged themselves by travestying it and veiling their old convictions under its outward forms. And so Islam has never had any considerable influence on conduct save that it has confirmed the natural turn of the Persians for lying and hypocrisy. As it was long necessary to profess ortho­doxy for fear of the Arabs, it came to be an established Shi'ite doctrine that it is lawful to deny one’s faith in case of danger. This “ caution ” (*taḳíya)* or “ concealment ” *(ketman}* has become a second nature with the Persians. And with this it goes that no one shrinks from secret sins,

though outwardly professing the utmost devotion. The preparation of wine and spirits, for example, is confined to Jews and Armenian Christians, but private drunkenness is most common. Very conscientious or pious people, however—*e.g.,* the dervishes—use rather opium or *hashish* and confound the narcotic intoxication with mystic ecstasy. Another mischievous thing is the permission of temporary marriages,—marriages for a few hours on a money pay­ment. This legitimized harlotry *(mot'a)* is forbidden by the Sunna, but the Shi'ites allow it, and the mollahs adjust the contract and share the women’s profits.

With all this, modern observers are agreed that the middle and lower classes of Persia are not hopeless, and that their natural intelligence, though combined with lack of perseverance, would make it much easier for them than for the Turks to take a new start if they were freed from the wretched civil and ecclesiastical administration. There is still mental life and vigour among them, as appears— though in an unfavourable aspect—among the sects, which, allowance being made for “ takiya,” play no inconsiderable part. The Akhbárís (traditionalists), who adopt a semi- philosophical way of explaining away the plainest doctrines (such as the resurrection of the flesh) on the authority of false traditions of 'Alí, are not so much a sect as a school of theology within the same pale as the orthodox Shí'a or *mujtehidís.@@*1 A real dissenting sect, however, is the Sheikhís, of whose doctrines we have but imperfect and discrepant accounts.@@2 Representatives of the old extreme Shi'ites, who held 'Alí for a divine incarnation, are found all over Persia in the 'Ali-Iláhí or 'Alí-Alláhí sect (“'Ali deifiers”).@@3

Finally, in the year 1848 there broke out a violent reaction against the wretched condition of state and church at a moment when a new succession to the throne had (as is wont) involved great part of the land in anarchy (comp. vol. xviii. p. 651). As early as 1837 a young enthusiast, 'Ali (son of) Mohammed, imbued with pantheistic and commun­istic ideas,@@4 had begun a peaceable but zealous propaganda. Consistently enough with ultra-Shí'ite principles, he deemed himself inspired by the spirit of God, and claimed to be the Mahdi, the twelfth imám, issued from his obscurity to lead the world to salvation. He took the title of Báb al- dín (“portal of the faith”), and his followers are known as Bábís. Báb was a man of profound sincerity and averse to violent measures ; he avoided all open polemic against the Government, which in turn at first tolerated him in its jealousy of the clergy. In 1844 the too great zeal of his follower Mollah Hosain occasioned Báb’s im­prisonment ; but Hosain and his emissaries continued the propaganda and made many converts in all provinces. When the troubles of 1848 broke out Hosain raised open rebellion in Mazenderán. Terrible conflicts ensued, made only more bitter by the execution of Báb (18th July 1849). Apparently suppressed, the movement proved that it was not extinct in an attempt to assassinate the sháh in 1852. A new proscription followed ; but there is no doubt that Bábism still lives in secrecy, and the universal sympathy

@@@1 The orthodox are so called because they allow the authority of the mujtehid *(supra,* p. 664). See Gobineau, *Les Religions,* &c., *dans l'Asie Centrale,* Paris, 1866, p. 28 *sq.*

@@@2 Gobineau *(op. eit.,* p. 30) reckons them as orthodox; but see Polak, *Persien,* Leipsic, 1865, i. 348 ; comp. also Von Kremer, *Gesch. d. herrschenden Ideen des Islams,* p. 206 *sq.* (after Kazem Beg).

@@@3 See Polak, *op. cit.,* p. 349 ; Malcolm, *Hist. of Persia,* ii. 382 ; Rehatsek, in *Journ. R.S.A.* (Bombay branch), 1880, p. 424. Langles, in Chardin, *Voyages,* 1811, x. 241, says that at the beginning of the 19th century their chief seats were north of Kandahar and Kabul (Cabul), and at Kashan.

@@@4 The fusion of these two tendencies is in Persia as old as Mazdak (vol. xviii. p. 611). Communistic risings constantly took place in various parts of Persia under the caliphs, and that of Bábek endangered the empire for twenty years (till 837 a.d.). The communists were afterwards absorbed in the Ishmaelites (see vol. xvi. p. 593 *sq.),* whose power was extinguished by the Mongols (1256).