

historian who was attracted to it by the dramatic features of the movement and the heroism of its martyrs. His reports were completed and brought up to date by Prof.

Religions et Philosophies dans l'Asie Centrale

Edward G. Browne, Lecturer in Persian at the University of Cambridge, England, who

studied it with great sympathy and made through English translations the main sources

of these remarkable historic events accessible to Western readers.

Concerning the significance of Babism, Professor Browne says: "Here is something,

whether wise or unwise, whether tending towards the amelioration of mankind or the

reverse, which seems to many hundreds, if not thousands, of our fellow-creatures worth

[page 356]

suffering and dying for, and which on this ground alone, must be accounted worthy of

our most attentive study."2

This Episode of the Bab, which is so extremely interesting on account of the development of a religion in the 19th century before our very eyes and under conditions

which still allow a careful investigation of the historic facts, is briefly told as follows:

Mirza Ali Muhammed was born in Shiraz, Persia. In 1844, when about twenty years old, he was possessed of great religious enthusiasm and became a source of inspiration

to all the people whom he met. When asked whether he was the manifestation of "the

Glory of God," he declared that they should not worship him as the one whom God

shall manifest, "for," said he, "I am only the gate through which man can come to the

love of God." His adherents spread all over the country, and he selected eighteen from

his disciples who were considered the main supporters and apostles of the new faith. He

called them "the Letters of the Living," referring to the eighteen letters of the Persian

alphabet, and included himself as the nineteenth of that number, calling himself the

"Point"; and these nineteen persons constituted the sacred hierarchy called "the First

Unity."

Now it happened that an avowed Babist, but one of those unfortunates who should be confined in lunatic asylums, made an attack upon the Shah of Persia, and thus Babism excited the suspicions of the Persian government. Although the assailant of the Shah expressly declared that he had committed the crime not at the instigation of any other person, the Persian officials believed in the existence of a great conspiracy and proceeded with great severity against all Babists. The Bab himself and other devotees of the new faith were imprisoned and those only were set free who recanted. Seven of the leaders could not be prevailed upon to abandon their belief, and so they died gladly and joyously for the faith that was in them. Adherents of orthodox Islam, the national faith of Persia, witnessed with admiration the death of the Babists, and many among them became convinced that it was a spark of divine inspiration that gave them the power to face death so boldly and so joyfully.

A Traveller's Narrative, Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab. Edited in the original Persian and translated into English, with an introduction and explanatory notes by Edward S. Brown, M.A., M.B.

The Bab himself was also condemned to die. He with one of his favorite followers was hung up on a rope at the entrance of their prison and a troop of soldiers fired a volley at the command

[page 357]

of their officer. When the smoke settled the witnessing crowds saw to their great astonishment the two men quite unharmed, for none of the balls had taken effect, but had only severed the ropes on

[photo of A Group of Believers in Port Said, with Sayid³ Nor Ul-Din, a first cousin of the Bab, in the center.]

which they had been suspended. The officer in charge declared that he had attended to his duty and refused to continue the execution.

[page 358]

He was supplanted by another and the prisoners were again suspended on ropes. A second volley ended the lives of these two martyrs of the new faith.

The Bab was dead, but his religion had become an established fact by his martyrdom.

During the time of his imprisonment the Bab had frequently written letters to his

eighteen favorite disciples whom he called "the Letters of the Living," to strengthen

them in their faith under the persecution of the powers of this world. The first and

second of the "Living Letters" had died a martyr's death. They belonged to the seven

great martyrs and the one who held the fourth place in the Babist hierarchy was Mirza

Yahya, called by the Bab Subh i Ezel, that is "Morning of the Eternal;" or Hazrat, that

is "Highness of the Eternal;" or Ism i Ezel, that is "Name of the Eternal." He left

Persia, disguised as a dervish, and went to Baghdad, where he joined his exiled brother

Mirza Huseyan Ali. When the Turkish government sent his brother to the city of Akka

he was sent to Famagusta, Cyprus, where he is still living.

During Mirza Yahya's leadership of the Babists, Mirza Huseyan Ali, a half-brother

of Yahya, rose into prominence. He had endured much persecution at the hands of the

Persian government, and after imprisonment of a few months he was finally exiled into

Baghdad. He stayed there for about twelve years, under the supervision of the Turkish

police. Two years out of the twelve of his exile at Baghdad, he spent in the mountains

near where the Kurds lived, not a far distance from the city of Souleymaniah.

Then he

Sayid is a title meaning "lord." All members of the Koreish tribe, to which the family of

Muhammed belonged, claim a right to the title.

was summoned to Constantinople, and was removed to Adrianople. The Turkish government did not deem him sufficiently dangerous to have him executed, but banished him to Acre, Syria, and he lived comparatively at peace with the government.

In Acre he was restrained in all his actions and limited to a special territory, but he

showed so much lovingkindness to all the people around him, especially to the

poor and
suffering, that even the Turkish police respected him and thought him a saint.
He lived
in poverty. Whatever he owned, he gave away to those whom he saw in need of
assistance, and he died peacefully at an advanced age, leaving four sons and
three
daughters.

This Mirza Huseyn⁴ Ali suddenly came to the conclusion during his stay at
Adrianople that he himself was Beha Ullah, “the Glory of God,” the
manifestation
whose appearance the Bab had foretold. The members of his party who had
followed
him

[page 359]

[photo of A Group of Believers in Egypt.]

[page 360]

into exile recognized his authority and other Babists in Persia followed their
example.

[photo of A Meeting of Believers in Ashkabad, Russia.⁵]

Huseyn Ali is now almost universally recognised as Beha Ullah, that is the one
in
whom God’s glory has become manifest.

[page 361]

In the meantime his half-brother Mirza Yahya continues to regard himself as the
legitimate leader of the Babists. His adherents have dwindled down to a small
minority,
but their arguments as to the justice of the claims of the fourth “Living
Letter” who by
right of

[photo of A Group of Believers at Akka.⁶]

Note – change of spelling in published article.

The portrait which appears above the assembly is that of Abbas Effendi, one of
the sons of
Beha Ullah.

The young man in the center is the son-in-law of Abbas Effendi.
priority has ascended to the first place in the hierarchy of the Babists and
was actually
recognised as the legitimate successor to the leadership by the Bab himself
before he
suffered martyrdom, avail

[page 362]

nothing. The Babists of Persia interpret the undeniable facts of their history in a different way. They declare that Mirza Huseyn Ali had been recognised by the Bab himself and that for the sake of protecting the one in whom God would manifest himself, from the persecution of the government, he misdirected the hostility of spies and persecutors, and addressed Mirza Yahya with such terms as would indicate him to be the leader of Babism, second in authority to no one but to himself, the Bab. Mirza Yahya according to the partisans of Mirza Huseyn Ali was merely “a man of straw” and the prominence given him by the Bab was a mere blind. Whatever the truth may have been, Professor Browne believes that Mirza Yahya held the first position among the Babists next to the Bab himself. The Bab did not claim that his revelation was final and demanded of his followers that they should continually expect the advent of him whom God shall manifest. The Bab had extended to his disciples the hope that God would not delay his manifestation for more than 1511 or 2001 years (numbers calculated after a complicated fashion from some significant words), but there is no historic evidence that he had recognised the manifestation of the “Glory of God” in Mirza Huseyn Ali. “Yet,” declares Professor Browne, “in spite of facts the future of Babism seems to belong to the latter and the adherents of Yahya are rather decreasing than increasing.” The adherents of Mirza Yahya are called the Ezelis and the adherents of Mirza Huseyn Ali are called the Behais, or Anglicised, Behaists, since they believe that the Glory of God, Beha Ullah, has become manifest in Mirza Huseyn Ali. It is of great interest to study the growth of the movement and to watch the development of its historical documents. Among the older sources of information is a manuscript entitled Tarikh i Jadid which the history of Babism describing the conditions of Babism at the time of the Bab. Here the difference between the Ezelis and the Behais has not yet made its appearance. The two brothers are merely prominent leaders and both considered as shining lights among the disciples of their great master, the Bab. It is instructive to notice how both the Ezelis and the Behais reject the

authority of the Tarikh i Jadid, and thus it is probable that no copies will be preserved except the three which by fortunate accidents found their way West, viz.; the one in possession of Professor Browne, one belonging to the British Museum, and the third one acquired by the Institute of Oriental Languages of St. Petersburg. It is not likely that the manuscript will be propagated in the original home [page 363]

of its author, Persia. The author claims to be a foreigner, but as Professor Browne has convincingly shown, he is a Persian who for good reasons has to conceal his name, and Professor Browne seems to think that he knows the name of the author, or, as he suggests, the two authors.

[photo of Ibn Abher, a Teacher of Behaism, in Chains.]

Among other histories of Babism, we have the reports of the Persian government, written by historians who, though recognising the courage of the Babists martyrs, misrepresent the movement almost as badly as Christian authors decry the gnostic and other sects which have now disappeared and can no longer be studied in their own original documents.

[page 364]

The Behaist sources, which become more and more numerous, speak of Mirza Yahya with indifference and almost slightlyingly, while they extol from the beginning the name of Mirza Huseyn Ali whom they recognise as Beha Ullah, the manifestation of the Glory of God.

* * *

To characterise the enthusiasm engendered by Babism, I will quote from a lecture⁷ delivered before the International Congress of the History of Religions, held at Paris in 1900, by Monsieur H. Arakélian, who had just come back from Persia where he had devoted himself to a study of this new religion. He says: "The Shah [intent on checking the spread of heresy] tried first peaceful methods. He sent Seid Yahya Darabi, the high priest, (Mousted) of Teheran, and head of the

Shiite

hierarchy, a wise and great theologian, and of repute, with a great following of eminent doctors of theology for a religious discussion with the Bab to Shiraz. Darabi was sure that even in the first meeting he would succeed in demonstrating to the people that the Bab was a false Mahdi, a charlatan and a distorter of the sacred dogmas of Islam and that he deserved to suffer the punishment of stoning; but imagine the surprise of Muhammed Shah, of his viziers and his mullahs, when after a few meetings Darabi declared that the Bab was the true Mahdi who was expected by the faithful and sent by the omnipotent Allah to preach the truth. Darabi not only gave up his sacerdotal

“La Légende d’Alexandre-le-Grand chez les Arméniens,” Actes du premier Congrès

International d’Histoire des Religions. Paris: Ernest Leroux, Éditeur. 1902. functions, but after the manner of a true and zealous apostle began to travel over Persia

and to preach the commandments of the Bab. The scandal for the Islam and Shiite clergy was immense. The clergy hurled its thunders of anathema against every Shiite

who would give his adhesion to the new heresy. The government declared that all belongings of a Moslem who was suspected of favoring Babist ideas should be confiscated, and the clergy went further still. They preached that to kill a Babist was an

act agreeable to Allah, and the murderer in recompense for his deed would enjoy all the

happiness of true Moslems in Paradise. But the persecution, as is always the case, had

quite contrary results from those expected. The number of proselytes increased from

day to day.”

Another incident quoted from the same source is not less characteristic:

“The greatest sensation was caused and an extraordinary im-

[page 365]

pulse was given to the propaganda of Babism among the Persian women by the young

daughter of the famous Mousted of Kazvine. a city where are concentrated the theological schools of Shiitism, highly celebrated among the Moslems. The young heroine whose name was Kourrat-el-ayné (i e. “light of the eyes”), was the first Persian

Musselman woman who revolted against the yoke of Islam

[photo of Mirza Badi, the Carrier of the Message to the Shah of Persia, in Chains.]

and defended the rights of women. She refused to wear the customary veil or charshave and appeared in public with uncovered face, a thing unheard of in Persia. She wrote verses and composed songs in glorification of the liberty and equality of men and women. Her songs and verses were of great literary finish. They are today

[page 366]

still read and admired. Her eloquence, her zeal, and the profound ardor with which she preached the new doctrine in the streets of Kazvine, and above all her marvelous beauty attracted multitudes of proselytes; and when her uncle, the successor of her father in rank of Mousted of Kazvine, cursed and excommunicated her, Kourrat-el-ayne was obliged to leave the city, but an overzealous Babist, and admirer of her talent and beauty took revenge by killing her uncle, who was forthwith regarded by the Shiites as a martyr. Kourrat-el-ayne was obliged to leave the city, but an overzealous Babist and8 persecution of Babists in 1852 on the order of Nassredin Shah and her body thrown into

Note – error in published article.

a pit. Her literary works, her religious hymns, her mystic philosophical verses have been published, and are admired by Babists and even by the Moslems.” Monsieur H. Arakélian, whom we quoted above, believes that Babism or rather Behaism will by and by become the religion of Persia. At the same time, he believes that Behaism is a higher development of Babism. Here are his own words, quoted from his lecture delivered in 1900 at the International Congress of the History of Religions: “Persia, this deplorable wreck of the ancient kingdom of Iran-Turan, of yore so glorious, at present confesses the religion of Shiite Muhammedanism. Shiitism preaches that after the twelve preachers called Imams, the gate (Bab) of science and truth has been closed to man; and this doctrine engendered various sects and heresies, several of which (for instance, the Sufis, the Dawudis, the Dahrists, the Ali-Allahis)

continue their existence to the present day, but none of them has attained so great a development or counts so many numbers of adherents as Babism or Behaism, for the number of Babists is actually calculated to be three millions in Persia, and two millions in Caucasia, in the trans-Caspian countries, in Bukhara, Central Asia, and in Asia Minor, among the Musselman countries, which is together about five millions. Since the total population of Persia is merely seven millions we find that almost half of them confess, although in secret, Babism, and, in the opinion of those who have visited Persia and have come in contact with the people, there is no doubt that Babism is the future religion of the country.

“Babism is a reaction against the enslaving regime of Islam, a protest against the moral oppression which it has exercised and is still exercising over the poor Persian people, otherwise so intelligent, so peaceful, so capable of developing a high culture, not inferior to other races. Shiite Islam has, through its antihuman and retrogressive ideas, through its principle that the gate of science and truth is shut

[page 367]

forever to men since the twelve imams, by its disdain and contempt of other nations and of secular sciences, thrown Persia and the Persians into a state of economical poverty and in a deplorable moral and intellectual condition. The yoke of Islam has been so crushing that it has become insufferable, and now Babism rises with vigor against it and opposes to it its two principles Ihtihade and Ittifak

[photo of One of the Later Martyrs.]

(the unity and solidarity of the human race), for these two principles constitute the essential doctrines of Babism, principles which are diametrically opposed to the principles of Islam.”

Monsieur Arakélian judges of Babism more from the standpoint of the Persians themselves than of Christian outsiders. He recognises Babism as a progress from the

traditional Muhammedanism

[page 368]

and thus the significance of Babism appears to him in a different light than it would to

Christians of Western countries, who will naturally be inclined to regard it as a rival of

Christianity. M. Arakélian points out that the religion of the Bab forms a transition only

to the broader religion of Beha Ullah. The Bab is in all essential points still a

Muhammedan, while the doctrines of Babism have broadened out into an altruistic and

universal religion. Mr. Arakelian says:

“The founder of Babism has not freed himself of several traditions of Islam.

The

revolution which he inaugurated in the Moslem religion retains certain fundamental

principles of the faith of Muhammed. (1) The Bab gives preference to the Arabian

language in which the Koran is written and which is considered sacred among the Musselmans. (2.) The Bab preached that one should conquer also the kingdom of this

world and that one ought to propagate the new religion by force. One should follow in

this respect the example of Muhammed. (3) He recommended the custom of the hadj pilgrimage. (4) He forbade severely the study of foreign languages, above all the dead

languages. He even recommended in the Beyane to burn secular books and requested

his followers not to study the secular sciences. (5) He declared his desire not to tolerate

any individual of another religion in the future kingdom of the Babists. Upon the whole

he never intended to substitute a new religion for Islam but only proposed to reform the

religion preached by Muhammed.

“The work of his successor Beha Ullah was a thorough revolution which upset the

foundation of Islam. Beha Ullah endows Babism with a cosmopolitan, a truly liberal

humanitarian, and philanthropic, spirit. He modified Babism in the line of the evolution

which all universal religions have taken, and if he did not succeed in every point, (for

he was not a scholar versed in the history of religions and knew only the religions of

Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed) we must grant that the doctrine preached by him, Behaism, is one of the most altruistic religions.

“Two principles constitute the basis of Behaism Ihtihade and Ittifak, unity and

solidarity (viz., of mankind). Its aim is “the kingdom of hearts.”

Therefore, there should

be no conquest, no dominion, and no adhesion to political ideas. All men are equal and

brothers. There are no great ones, no small ones, no nobility, no plebs. All men are

children of one great country, the earth. There is no special country, — that is to say,

the idea of patriotism does not exist among the Behaists; the cosmopolitan idea dominates entirely. With this respect Beha said that it would be better if all nations, all

[page 369]

mankind, would use one language and one universal writing. All the nations are good

before God. There are no preferred ones. There are no chosen people, no such claims

are allowed as were made by the Jews and the Moslems. There is no difference between

the human races, white and negro and yellow; all are equal.

“Woman is respected, and she enjoys the same rights with man. Marriage cannot be

contracted without the consent of the young couple. Monogamy is recommended. There

is only one exception made. If a wife be barren, a man is allowed to take a second wife

without separating from the first one, but concubinage is strictly forbidden.

Women can

have property in their own right.

“The study of the secular sciences and of foreign languages is considered indispensable. Babists are held to be under obligations to obey and respect the laws of

the country which they inhabit. Among the forms of government, republicanism is deemed the best, or, at any rate, such a form under which all citizens should have the

same rights and the same duties. Even war for the sake of the faith, the sacred war,

should be abolished, and Beha recommends to regulate the differences between nations

by an international tribunal.

“Beha not only forbids lying of every kind, even where it would serve a good purpose, but he remonstrated also against flattery and against a habit of Moslems, that

of kissing the hands of the clergy or of persons of respect. He forbade asceticism and declared that the celibate was not agreeable to God. Babists believe in three prophets. Moses, Jesus, and Muhammed, and they regard them to be of equal dignity. The believer in the Bab or Beha must first of all believe in the three prophets. Jesus is called 'the Son of God.' Pilgrimages and masses for the dead or requiems are regarded as useless. Fasts are not required. "The Babists believe in a future life and in eternity, but they do not admit the existence of Hell, or of Paradise, or of Purgatory. Everyone will receive his rewards and punishments according to his deeds, but no man knows in what way. As a child in the womb of its mother has no idea of the outer world to which it will go, so man of the present world can not have any idea of the life after death."

Monsieur Arakélian concludes his article with the following comments: "There are many stories invented by the malevolence and fanaticism of the Moslems concerning the Babists, the Bab and Beha, but a careful study of their sacred books puts to naught all these legends. Babism is founded upon altruistic, humanitarian, and peaceable principles. It has nothing in common with Islam and agrees according

[page 370]

to my opinion much better with the character and inspirations of the Aryan Persians.

Babism may be regarded as the future religion of Persia and its final victory would in my opinion be a great blessing for that country."

BEHAISM IN CHICAGO.

Babism has been introduced into the United States and it may count several thousand adherents. The preacher of Babism at Chicago is Ibrahim Kheiralla, and he

has published a statement of his belief under the name "Beha Ullah." which means "the Glory of God."⁹

Mr. Kheiralla was born in Mount Lebanon, Syria, and is now a citizen of the United

States. He received his instruction from Abd-el-Karim Effendi Teharani at Cairo,

Egypt, and restates the belief of the Babists in its purity, adding thereto his

own private

reasons such as he found necessary to convince himself of the truth of his religion. Mr.

Kheiralla's teacher was a Mohammedan and so he stated the doctrine from the Mohammedan standpoint, while he himself was a Christian from Syria, and thus he deemed it necessary to restate the foundations of his faith with a view of refuting

Christian errors and establishing the Babist conviction as unequivocal truth.

The present

book is meant to be a proof of Babism, which, at least to the author, seems irrefutable.

Critical minds, however, will naturally find flaws in the few assumptions from which he

starts, and so his arguments will fail to be convincing to a great number of people.

Mr. Kheiralla starts his argument with a chapter on the soul. He opposes Rev. Philip

Moxom, who declares a scientific proof of immortality at present to be impossible. Mr.

Kheiralla proposes to offer scientific proof. He thinks there is no need of resorting to

occultism, and trusts that the solution of the difficulties is at hand. He recapitulates the

evidence which Babism offers as follows: "We possess nine intellectual faculties. They

cannot be the result of the combination of material elements, which compose the body.

Back of them must be an intelligent essence, which possesses and exercises these nine

faculties, and which they qualify. Something cannot come from nothing. This proves

the existence of the soul."

The second chapter deals with the mind, the third with life, sleep, breathing and the

involuntary motions, descending also on insanity. Having established the reality of the

soul and its immor-

[page 371]

ality he proceeds to speak of God in chapters 4 and 5, where he rather assumes than

proves his existence and perfection. He says: "God is one. From Him proceed all things

which exist, and all His laws, spiritual and material, are in perfect harmony."

Beha 'U'llah (The Glory of God), by Ibrahim George Kheiralla, assisted by

Howard MacNutt.

1900. I. G. Kheiralla, Publisher. Chicago.

Babism rejects miracles, but not from unbelief. Babists argue that it would not be

impossible for God to do miracles, but God being perfect, His laws must be perfect and

cannot be annulled, or changed, or temporarily laid aside. The miracles related to in the

Bible are not meant to be understood in a literal sense. They are “symbolical expressions of spiritual truth.”

One instance will be sufficient. Mr. Kheiralla says of the burning bush of Moses:

“In order to explain to the Israelites, how God had appeared to him, Moses used the

‘bush’ as a figure of speech to represent his heart. The symbol is a perfect one. As many

branches spring from the bush rooted in the earth, so, from the heart, spring the arteries

and veins which run through the body. Therefore, God appeared to Moses in his heart,

in the form of fire. ‘Fire’ is the symbol of the spirit of God, and of His love toward His

creatures; and as every symbol has two points, positive and negative, so ‘fire’ means

sometimes ‘love’ and sometimes ‘hatred.’”

The stick of Moses and Aaron, Jonah and the whale, Joshua commanding the sun to stand still, the Tower of Babel, the Apostles speaking many languages, Christ changing

water into wine, the loaves and fishes, the devils going into the swine, the raising of

Lazarus, and the Star of Bethlehem, are explained in a similar way.

Babism is opposed to the doctrine of resurrection. Paul’s explanation of the spiritual

body in I Corinthians, xv.50. concerning the spiritualised resurrection bodies, is spoken

of as illogical and false. Mr. Kheiralla says: “Scripture, science and philosophy clearly

prove the impossibility of the resurrection of the body. That souls return to earth in new

and different bodies, however, is demonstrable from the light of all inquiry.

Furthermore, it can be shown that this is the true resurrection of Scripture.”

The Babist view of prayer is perhaps not different from the Christian view.

“Prayer

is worship * * * God does not need our worship * * * We worship God and petition

Him for our own interests and benefits, for powers, gifts, and higher

development.” God has promised to hear and answer our petitions and thus the benefit we can derive from prayer is “absolutely certain, for He never fails in the fulfillment of His promises.”

The Babist views differ most essentially from the Christian

[page 372]

in the conception of salvation and vicarious atonement. Salvation by blood is rigorously rejected, and thus we are told that Christ’s death was not a payment of our sins: “The heavy yoke imposed upon Christians of the present day, arises from their claiming Messiahship for Jesus.”

Jesus is regarded not as the Saviour of the world but after all as the Christ. Mr.

Kheiralla says:

“We fully believe in our great Master, Jesus the Christ, and in all His teachings. He

is the highest among all the creatures in the great universe; the first begotten Son of

God, and His Agent; the Creator is His God, and He is His dearest Son. But we know

that our salvation is not through His death, but through the great mercy of the Father.

“Salvation is not escape or exemption from the everlasting torture of hell.

True

salvation is the victory of accomplishment by the soul; the attainment of a privilege

afforded us by God, in allowing us to come upon the earth.

“Hell is eternal regret for the loss of that privilege; hell is the soul’s failure to accomplish.”

As to the Bible, we are told that “The truth is in the Bible, but all the Bible is not the

truth.” The great revelation of God on earth had not been manifest when Christ

appeared, and Mr. Kheiralla takes great pains to show that none of the prophecies had

been fulfilled on the appearance of Christ. On the other hand he endeavors to prove that

the great revelation of God has become manifest in Beha Ullah. Here the typical characteristics of the Babist faith appear.

The Babists in Chicago belong to the branch of the Behaists, that is they believe that

Beha Ullah was the manifestation of God, the coming of which the Bab had

prophesied.

Mr. Kheiralla proves by arguments which seem to be very convincing to him and to

Babists that no other interpretation of the signs by which we shall know Him shall be

permitted. Beha Ullah, that is "the Glory of God," was exiled from Persia and lived

during the end of his life at Akka (Acre), and he must have died there. His sons and

daughters have inherited spiritual dominion over the Babists. Beha Ullah left four sons,

called the "Branches," and three daughters, called the "Leaves." The oldest son is called

the "Greatest Branch," the second the "Mightiest Branch," the third the "Holiest

Branch," and the fourth the "Most Luminous Branch." They are not like their father, a

manifestation of "the Glory of God," but they are simply men to whom the Babists look

up to with reverence.

Mr. Kheiralla's book embodies a number of interesting pictures, among which we

will mention portraits of the four branches, a tablet with the handwriting of the Bab in

the shape of a pentagonal star, the tomb of Beha Ullah.

[TO BE CONCLUDED.]

The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

?? E. C. Hegeler.

Editor: Dr. Paul Carus Associates: ??

?? Mary Carus.

VOL. XVIII. (no. 7) July, 1904.

NO. 578

A NEW RELIGION.

BY THE EDITOR.

[concluded.]

ABBAS EFFENDI.

Babism counts more adherents in Persia than one might expect considering the fact that

it is a proscribed faith. It counts adherents also in Mesopotamia and in Syria

and other parts of the world. Even America can claim a goodly number of adherents to the new faith. In Chicago there is a Babist congregation, the speaker and representative of which is Ibrahim George Kheiralla, and a New York lawyer, Mr. Myron H. Phelps, visited Abbas Effendi, the present representative of Mirza Huseyn Ali's family. We shall in the following pages present a resumé of both books, that of Mr. Phelps, which gives a description of the life and teachings of Abbas Effendi. and that of Mr. Kheiralla, which describes the faith and doctrines of the Babists who believe in Beha Ullah. Mr. Myron H. Phelps believes that the Christian idea has lost its hold on the Western nations. Materialism is increasing and the ethical, social, and political standards need some fresh spiritual impulse, but where shall we find it, if Christianity itself cannot give it. Mr. Phelps believes that it may be supplied by the teachings of Beha Ullah and his son and spiritual successor Abbas Effendi. Convinced of the importance of the Babist faith, Mr. Phelps went on a pilgrimage to Acre and visited the present representative of the most prominent branch of the Babist faith, Abbas Effendi, the son of Beha Ullah, and he undertook to write down for Western readers his life and teachings as he had it stated by Abbas Effendi himself. The introduction to the book has been written by the Nestor of the Babist religion, Professor Edward G. Browne, whom he had the good fortune to meet in Cairo. Professor Browne in the preface dwells on the continued spread of the Babist faith, and he asks:

[page 399]

“How is it that the Christian Doctrine, the highest and noblest which the world has ever known, though supported by all the resources of Western civilisation, can only count its converts in Muhammedan lands by twos and threes, while Babism can reckon

[photo of Abbas Effendi. Gusn-i-Azam (The Greatest Branch). Taken over thirty years ago.]

them by thousands? The answer, to my mind, is plain as the sun at midday.
Western
Christianity, save in the rarest cases, is more Western than Christian, more
racial than
religious; and, by dallying with doctrines plainly incompatible with the
obvious
meaning

[page 400]

of its Founder's words, such as the theories of 'racial supremacy,'
'imperial destiny,'
'survival of the fittest,' and the like, grows steadily more rather than
less material. Did
Christ belong to a 'dominant

[photo of Muhammad-Ali Effendi. Gusn-i-Akbar (The Mightiest Branch) . Taken
1900.]

race,' or even to a European or 'white' race? Nay, the 'dominant
race' was represented
by Pontius Pilate, the governor, who was

[page 401]

compelled to abandon his personal leanings toward clemency under constraint of
'political necessities' arising out of Rome's 'imperial destiny.'
"It is in manifest conflict with several other theories of life which
practically
regulate the conduct of all States and most individuals in the Western world.
"Many even of the most excellent and earnest Christian missionaries — not
to speak
of laymen — whom Europe and America send to Asia and Africa would be far less
shocked at the idea of receiving on terms of intimacy in the house or at their
table a
white-skinned atheist than a dark-skinned believer. The dark-skinned races to
whom the
Christian missionaries go are not fools, and have no object in practising that
curious
self-deception wherewith so many excellent and well-meaning European and
American
Christians blind themselves to the obvious fact that they attach much more
importance
to race than religion; they clearly see the inconsistency of those who, while
professing
to believe that the God they worship incarnated Himself in the form of an
Asiatic man,
— for this is what it comes to, — do nevertheless habitually and almost
instinctively
express, both in speech and action, contempt for the 'native' of Asia."

There is an additional reason which gives the advantage to the Babist propagandists over the Christian missionary. While the latter explicitly or by implication rejects the Koran and Mohammed's prophetic mission, the former admits both and only denies their finality. Christian missionaries waste most of their efforts in proving the errors of Islam, but they forget that in destroying the Moslem's faith in their own religion, they are mostly making converts to scepticism or atheism, and they very rarely succeed in convincing them of the truth of Christianity. The Babist does not destroy but builds upon the religious convictions of people. He finds a foundation ready laid, but the Christian missionary deems it necessary to destroy the foundation and finds himself incapable of laying another one. Babism makes a new synthesis of old ideas. It is the entire Eastern civilisation united into a new yet thoroughly consistent system. Not only do the Babists incorporate in their faith the traditions of the Old and New Testaments, and of the Koran, but also some most significant documents of the Manichaeans of the Ismaili propagandists, the early Sufis, and also the spirit of profane poets such as Hafiz, the immortal poet of love and wine. Professor Browne in his introductory comments to Mr. Phelps' book further

[page 402]

calls special attention to the attitude of the Babists with whom love of Beha Ullah is paramount. It is interesting to notice first, their uncertainty as to the authorship of many of their own religious

[photo of Zia 'Ullah Effendi. Gusni-At'har (The Holiest Branch). Departed October, 1898.]

books; second the unfixed character of most important doctrines such as immortality of the soul; third, their inclination to ignore

[page 403]

and even suppress facts which they regard as useless or hurtful to their present aims. All

these marks are characteristic of a growing faith. The Babists are by no means broad and tolerant. If they came into power in Persia, a case which is by no means impossible, the persecuted would be apt to turn persecutors. The Behaists are especially fond of listening to the reading of the epistles of Beha Ullah which are mostly rhapsodies, interspersed with ethical maxims, rarely touching on questions of metaphysics, ontology, or eschatology. They show a dislike to historical investigation and says Professor Browne, "Some of them even showed great dislike at his attempts to trace the evolution of Babi doctrine from the Shia sect of Muhammedans through that of the Shaykhi school (in which the Bab and many of his early disciples were educated), to the forms which it successively assumed in the hands of the Bab and his followers." An English diplomat who knew the Babists thoroughly once said to Professor Browne: "They regard you as one who, having before his eyes a beautiful flower, is not content to enjoy its beauty and fragrance, but must needs grub at its roots to ascertain from what foul manure it derived its sustenance."

The first part of Mr. Phelps's book is devoted to Beha Ullah's life which we learn here from the lips of his daughter Behiah Khanum, one of the Three Leaves, so-called, of the new prophet's family. The story is interesting in so far as it adds the zest of a personal narrative to the history of Beha Ullah as related by Professor Browne in his several accounts of the Babist movement. We learn also of the accusations made against Mirza Yahya who is supposed to have poisoned Beha Ullah, the father of Abbas Effendi, but the attending physician walked around the bed of the patient, and repeated three times, "I will give my life — I will give my life — I will give my life." Nine days later the physician died. Another physician was called in, but he looked upon the case as hopeless. Nevertheless Beha Ullah grew stronger and finally overcame the effects of the poison. A footnote informs us that the Ezelis, the adherents of Mirza Yahya, claim that

Beha Ullah had prepared the poison for the purpose of killing Mirza Yahya, but the dish of rice containing the poison was prepared with onions, a taste which Yahya disliked; and Beha Ullah, thinking that his scheme had been betrayed, deemed it best to take a little of the poisoned rice, whereupon he almost died of its effects. Mr. Phelps simply states the narrative without giving his own opinion, and there is no need to believe the accusa-

[page 404]

[photo of Badi 'Ullah Effendi. Gusn-i-Anwar (The Most Luminous Branch). Taken 1900.

[page 405]

tion of either party. It is quite common that fanatics are apt to accuse their rivals in dignity of the absurdest crimes, and we have here a highly colored story on both sides which may be paralleled in almost all the religions of history. The fact that Beha Ullah fell sick cannot be doubted; that he had eaten rice together with his half-brother, his rival in the leadership of the Babist faith, may also be true, but that either had made an attempt to poison the other may be regarded as highly improbable. When Beha Ullah died a new schism split up the Babist church, and Abbas Effendi, the "Greatest Branch," became the recognised leader of one party, and Mohammed Ali Effendi, the "Mightiest Branch," the leader of another party. The philosophy of Behaism, especially its psychology and its ethics, are related by Mr. Phelps, and he adds a few discourses all of which are greatly interesting on the standards of truth, on the nature of God and the universe, on spirit, the parable of the seed, reincarnation, heavenly wisdom, on heaven and hell, on love, talks to children, the poor, the prayer, and similar topics. A most charming picture of Abbas Effendi's daily life is given in the first chapter and brings the personal appearance of the man more home to us than can be done by an exposition of his philosophy and psychology. Mr. Phelps describes the master of

Akka
in the first chapter of his book.

THE MASTER OF AKKA.

“Imagine that we are in the ancient house of the still more ancient city of Akka, which was for a month my home. The room in which we are faces the opposite wall of a narrow paved street, which an active man might clear at a single bound. Above is the bright sun of Palestine; to the right a glimpse of the old sea-wall and the blue Mediterranean. As we sit we hear a singular sound rising from the pavement thirty feet below — faint at first, and increasing. It is like the murmur of human voices. We open the window and look down. We see a crowd of human beings with patched and tattered garments. Let us descend to the street and see who these are. “It is a noteworthy gathering. Many of these men are blind: many more are pale, emaciated, or aged. Some are on crutches; some are so feeble that they can barely walk. Most of the women are closely veiled, but enough are uncovered to cause us well to believe that, if veils were lifted, more pain and misery would be seen.

[page 406]

[photo of Mousa Effendi, El Kaleem. The Eldest Brother of Beha Ullah.”¹⁰

[page 407]

Some of them carry babes with pinched and sallow faces. There are perhaps a hundred in this gathering, and besides, many children. They are of all the races one meets in these streets — Syrians, Arabs, Ethiopians, and many others. “These people are ranged against the walls or seated on the ground, apparently in an attitude of expectation; — for what do they wait? Let us wait with them. “We have not long to wait. A door opens and a man comes out. He is of middle stature, strongly built. He wears flowing light-coloured robes. On his head is a light buff fez with a white cloth wound about it. He is perhaps sixty years of age. His long grey hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquiline, his moustaches and beard, the latter full though not heavy, nearly

white. His eyes are grey and blue, large, and both soft and penetrating. His bearing is simple, but there is grace, dignity, and even majesty about his movements. He passes through the crowd, and as he goes utters words of salutation. We do not understand them, but we see the benignity and the kindness of his countenance. He stations himself at a narrow angle of the street and motions to the people to come towards him. They crowd up a little too insistently. He pushes them gently back and lets them pass him one by one. As they come they hold their hands extended. In each open palm he places some small coins. He knows them all. He caresses them with his hand on the face, on the shoulders, on the head. Some he stops and questions. An aged negro who hobbles up, he greets with some kindly inquiry; the old man's broad face breaks into a sunny smile, his white teeth glistening against his ebony skin as he replies. He stops a woman with a babe and fondly strokes the child. As they pass, some kiss his hand. To all he says, 'Marhabbah, marhabbah' — 'Well done, well done!' "So they all pass him. The children have been crowding around him with extended hands, but to them he has not given. However, at the end, as he turns to go, he throws a handful of coppers over his shoulder, for which they scramble. "During this time this friend of the poor has not been unattended. Several men wearing red fezes, and with earnest and kindly faces, followed him from the house, stood near him and aided him in regulating the crowd, and now, with reverent manner and at a respectful distance, follow him away. When they address him they call him 'Master.'

"This scene you may see almost any day of the year in the

[page 408]

Mousa means "Moses," and El Kaleem "Speaker With God."

[photo of Khadim Ullah. The Servant of Beha Ullah.11 Khadim Ullah served Beha Ullah

faithfully for over forty years. He survived his master and died in 1901. We

are

informed that he supported the cause of Mohammed Ali Effendi.]

[page 409]

streets of Akka. There are other scenes like it, which come only at the beginning of the winter season. In the cold weather which is approaching, the poor will suffer, for, as in all cities, they are thinly clad. Some day at this season, if you are advised of the place and time, you may see the poor of Akka gathered at one of the shops where clothes are sold, receiving cloaks from the Master. Upon many, especially the most infirm or crippled, he himself places the garment, adjusts it with his own hands, and strokes it approvingly, as if to say, 'There! Now you will do well' There are five or six hundred poor in Akka, to all of whom he gives a warm garment each year. "On feast days he visits the poor at their homes. He chats with them, inquires into their health and comfort, mentions by name those who are absent, and leaves gifts for all. "Nor is it the beggars only that he remembers. Those respectable poor who cannot beg, but must suffer in silence — those whose daily labor will not support their families — to these he sends bread secretly. His left hand knoweth not what his right hand doeth. "All the people know him and love him — the rich and the poor, the young and the old — even the babe leaping in its mother's arms. If he hears of anyone sick in the city — Moslem or Christian, or of any other sect, it matters not — he is each day at their bedside, or sends a trusty messenger. If a physician is needed, and the patient poor, he brings or sends one. and also the necessary medicine. If he finds a leaking roof or a broken window menacing health, he summons a workman, and waits himself to see the breach repaired. If any one is in trouble, — if a son or a brother is thrown into prison, or he is threatened at law, or falls into any difficulty too heavy for him, — it is to the

Master that he straightway makes appeal for counsel or for aid. Indeed, for counsel all come to him, rich as well as poor. He is the kind father of all the people. “This man who gives so freely must be rich, you think? No far otherwise. Once his family was the wealthiest in all Persia. But this friend of the lowly, like the Galilean, has been oppressed by the great. For fifty years he and his family have been exiles and prisoners. Their property has been confiscated and wasted, and but little has been left to him. Now that he has not much he must spend little for himself that he may give more to the poor. His garments are usually of cotton, and the cheapest that can be bought. Often his friends in Persia — for this man is indeed rich in friends, thousands and tens of thousands who would eagerly lay The name Khadim Ullah means “Servant of God.”

[page 410]

down their lives at his word — send him costly garments. These he wears once, out of respect for the sender; then he gives them away. “He does not permit his family to have luxuries. He himself eats but once a day, and then bread, olives, and cheese suffice him.

[photo of A Preacher of Behaism.]

“His room is small and bare, with only a matting on the stone floor. His habit is to sleep upon this floor. Not long ago a friend, thinking that this must be hard for a man of advancing years, presented him with a bed fitted with springs and mattress. So these stand in his room also, but are rarely used. ‘For how,’ he says,

[page 411]

‘can I bear to sleep in luxury when so many of the poor have not even shelter?’ So he lies upon the floor and covers himself only with his cloak. “For more than thirty-four years this man has been a prisoner at Akka. But his jailors have become his friends. The Governor of the city, the Commander of the Army Corps, respect and honour him as though he were their brother. No man’s opinion or

recommendation has greater weight with them. He is the beloved of all the city,
high
and low.

“This master is as simple as his soul is great. He claims nothing for himself

—
neither comfort, nor honour, nor repose. Three or four hours of sleep suffice
him; all the
remainder of his time and all his strength are given to the succour of those
who suffer,
in spirit or in body. ‘I am,’ he says, ‘the servant of God.’
“Such is Abbas Effendi, the Master of Akka.”

THE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS OF BEHAISM.

For the sake of completeness we have to add that the Behaist Church has been
rent
again by a schism which at first sight seem to be a personal matter, —
question of
leadership.

For a long time Abbas Effendi, the oldest son of Beha Ullah, has been the
recognised head of the Church. He is the son of the wife whom Beha Ullah
married
first, some time before he had declared himself to be the Manifestation of God,
and this

Abbas is known to Behaists as “the greatest branch.” Three young
half-brothers of

Abbas Effendi were born to Beha Ullah by another wife and among them Mohammed
Ali was called by his father “the mightiest branch.”

For a long time the leadership of “the greatest branch” was accepted
without

objection, but finally a dissension arose between Abbas Effendi on one side and
his

younger half-brothers on the other, and the Behaists in Persia and other
countries began

to doubt the divine inspiration of “the greatest branch.” In fact some of
them declared

that Abbas Effendi has changed the doctrine of his father and has introduced
some

innovations which are contrary to the spirit of Behaism. It seems that several
Behaists,

including some of the congregations that exist in the United States, no longer
recognise

Beha Ullah’s oldest son “the greatest branch,” but look to Mohammed Ali,
“the

mightiest branch,” as their spiritual guide and head of the Church. Abbas
Effendi claims

that his authority is absolute and that it rests on the testament left him by
his father

[page 412]

[photo of The Tomb of Beha Ullah. The Interior of the Tomb. The Palace of Behji.]

[page 413]

Beha Ullah, and it is true that Beha Ullah declared that his sons, among them “the

greatest branch,” should spread his fragrances, but similar declarations have been made

of the other branch, and so the opponents of Abbas Effendi claim that Beha Ullah

intended to have his son, Mohammed Ali, succeed Abbas Effendi, and that the leadership at present has passed to “the mightiest branch.”

We here will omit as much as possible purely personal complaints and limit our report to matters of doctrine.

The report of Mr. Phelps already indicates that Abbas Effendi must somehow have become acquainted with ideas that seem to be Buddhistic, and a critical reader of Mr.

Phelps’ book might be inclined to think that these thoughts were imputed to him by his

interviewer, for Mr. Phelps is well acquainted with Buddhism, and so he might have

suggested some of the answers that indicate a similarity with Buddhist doctrines, but

such is not the case. Abbas Effendi has actually gone away from the simple Semitic

soul conception, and teaches a theory of reincarnation that might not be unacceptable to

the disciples of Shakya Muni. On the other hand, he surrenders the rigidity of monotheism, which has always been the cardinal point in the religion of the Semites,

the Jews as well as the Mohammedans, and propounds a philosophical trinity that would appeal to Christians influenced by modern philosophy.

A lady, Mrs. Rosamond Templeton, who visited Acre and showed great interest in Behaism, although she herself is not a Behaist but a Christian, tried to reconcile the two

parties and proposed that the brothers should meet on a certain date at the tomb of their

father, which is considered as their common shrine, and show their testaments because

Abbas Effendi bases upon his testament the claim of leadership. But Abbas Effendi

would not accede to the terms. He insisted on his claims and refused to show his

father’s testament to his brothers. Mrs. Templeton’s correspondence is published as a

pamphlet¹² and we here reproduce the most essential passages of her letter to Abbas

Effendi:

“The principal accusation which you made against your brothers was that they have

refused to obey you as the chief of the religion of ‘Bab’ at d’Acre.

“You state that your authority is based on a Testament given by your venerable

father, and you say that this Testament is in your possession and that it has been read by

Colonel Bedrey-Bey. On leaving your house I went directly to the house of your brothers in order to present to them your objection. Their answer is that they

[page 414]

are absolutely ready to obey the Testament, which has been given by their father on

condition that they can see this Testament written by the hand of Beha Ullah.

This

question, therefore, is a simple one. Effendi; I propose that you, Abbas

Effendi,

Mohammed Ali Effendi,

[photo of A Tablet in the Handwriting of the Bab.]

Beha Ullah Effendi and myself, with three witnesses chosen by you and three chosen by

your brothers, an interpreter, an English photographer whom I will bring — I propose

that these twelve persons shall meet at the sacred tomb of your father at noon on the 7th

day of

[page 415]

December to read the Testament of Beha Ullah and to take a photograph of that Testament. You said that I had judged between you and your brothers without hearing

the two sides, your side and theirs; therefore, Effendi, in order to avoid this fault with

which you justly reproach me I have written to Mohammed Ali Effendi and to Beha Ullah Effendi, asking that they also shall present their Tes-

[photo of A Letter of Beha ‘U’llah to Ibrahim Kheiralla.]

taments during the reunion at the tomb of your father. Will you be good enough to give

me your answer, written in Arabic, in your own handwriting, as I have asked the same

courtesy from your brothers?

Facts for Behaists. Translated and edited by I. G Kheiralla. 1901.

“If you refuse to show and to photograph the Testament upon which you found your authority, you cannot require the acceptance of that authority, for it is certain that if the Testament gave you

[page 416]

this authority you would be quite ready to read it before witnesses and to send photographic copies of it to Persia.”

Having refused to submit his father’s Testament to the inspection of his brothers,

the opponents of Abbas Effendi declare that he cannot make good his claim.

Moreover,

they believe the Beha Ullah was the great and only manifestation of God and that his

sons are only venerable expounders of his doctrines but not new manifestations.

In

other words, they are regarded as inferior to him, and Beha Ullah alone is believed to be

‘exalted above all those who are upon the earth and in heaven.’ Mr.

Kheiralla in the

name of the Behaists that have rejected Abbas Effendi’s claim declares:

“Beha Ullah, since He declared Himself, has conclusively proved from all Scriptures that He was the Promised One. He has uttered tablets and written epistles

which attracted the hearts and refreshed the souls. The noble life He lived astonished

and impressed the people, and His fame spread to all countries. All who knew him

acknowledged His Supremacy and were awed by the loftiness and greatness of His character.

“His claim that He was the Promised One of the Holy Scriptures and that His Appearance was the Greatest, and that it will take place only once in every five

thousand years, may be found in His many writings. He also proved that a higher virtue

and greater grace distinguished His day.”

The teachings of Abbas Effendi may be characterised by the following quotations:¹³

Abbas Effendi, in reply to a question of a Behaist concerning the return of spirit (i.e.

reincarnation), distinguishes five kinds of spirit. He says:

“As to what thou askest concerning the Spirit and its return to this world of humanity, and this elemental space, know that the Spirit in general is divided into five

sorts, the Vegetable Spirit, the Animal Spirit, the Human Spirit, the Spirit of Faith, and

the Divine Spirit of Sanctity.”

For the three first spirits there is no light, for they are subject to “reversions,

production and corruption.” In other words they are mortal. They originate and pass

away. There is immortality only for the Spirit of Faith and the Divine Spirit of Sanctity.

Abbas Effendi says:

Tablets from Abdul Beha Abbas to some American Believers in the Year 1900. The Truth

Concerning: (A) Re-Incarnation; (B) Vicarious Atonement; (C) The Trinity ; (D) Real

Christianity. Published by the Board of Counsel, Carnegie Hall, New York, 1901. [page 417]

“The Spirit of Faith, which is of the Kingdom (of God) consists of the all-comprehending Grace, and the Perfect Attainment (or salvation, fruition, achievement,

etc., as above), and the power of Sanctity, and the Divine Effulgence from the Sun of

Truth on Luminous, Light-seeking essences, from the Presence of the Divine Unity.

And by this Spirit is the Life of the Spirit of man, when it is fortified thereby, as Christ

(to whom be Glory!) saith: ‘That which is born of the Spirit is Spirit.’

And this Spirit

hath both restitution and return, inasmuch as it consists of the Light of God, and the

unconditioned Grace. So, having regard to this state and station, Christ (to whom be

Glory!) announced that John the Baptist was Elias, ‘who was for to come’ before

Christ. (Matt. xi:14.) And the likeness of this station is as that of lamps kindled (from

one another): for these, in respect to their glasses and oil-burners, are different, but in

respect to their Light, ONE, and in respect to their illumination, ONE; nay, each one is

identical with the other, without imputation of plurality, or diversity, or multiplicity, or

separateness. This is the Truth, and beyond the Truth there is only error.”

The idea of trinity appeals to Abbas Effendi and he defends it on the following considerations:

“There are necessarily three things, the Giver of the Grace, and the Grace, and the

Recipient of the Grace; the Source of the Effulgence, and the Effulgence, and the

Recipient of the Effulgence; the Illuminator, and the Illumination, and the Illuminated.

Look at the Mosaic cycle — the Lord, and Moses, and the Fire (i.e., the Burning Bush), the intermediary; and in the Messianic cycle, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy

Ghost the intermediary; and in the Muhammedan cycle [sic], the Lord and the Apostle

(or Messenger Mohammed) and Gabriel (for, as the Mohammedans believe, Gabriel brought the Revelation from God to Muhammad,) the intermediary. Look at the Sun and its rays, and the heat which results from its rays: the rays and the heat are but two

effects of the Sun, but inseparable from it and sent out from it; yet the Sun is one in its

essence, unique in its real identity, single in its Attributes, neither is it possible that

anything should resemble it. Such is the Essence of the Truth concerning the Unity, the

real doctrine of the Singularity, the undiluted reality as to the (Divine) Sanctity.

“As to the question concerning the Atonement on the part of the Holy Redeemer, I

have explained this to thee by word of mouth in a plain and detailed manner, devoid of

ambiguities, and I have made it clear to thee as the Sun at noonday, (1.)

“And I ask God to open unto thee the Gates, that thou mayest

[page 418]

thyself apprehend the true meanings of these mysteries: Verily. He is the confirmer, the

Beneficent, the Merciful.”

While he approaches Christianity in the question of trinity, Abbas Effendi rejects

“Vicarious Atonement.” He says:

“There is no such thing as ‘Vicarious Atonement,’ as held and taught by the

theologians and ‘Churches.’ As it was the custom in the old times to offer sacrifices for

sins, so did Christ (Glory be to Him!) say in substance, ‘I offer myself as an example

and as a sacrifice for the safety and salvation of the people, i.e., I am willing to accept

every disaster and calamity for the sake of guiding the people’ — even death, for He

was necessarily opposing everybody. I have accepted all things that the people may

know the Truth as it is. If I wish to guide you to Jerusalem, I must personally

accept the hardships of the journey first. So Jesus Christ first accepted all the trials, sufferings and death for the purpose of quieting the people. Had He not so accepted He could not have finished His Work.”

Reincarnation is explained by the instance of John the Baptist who according to Christ was Elijah. Abbas Effendi says:

“John the Baptist was right in saying that he was not Elijah, considering material

body, name, time (he came 900 years after Elijah), place, etc. Christ was right in

declaring that John the Baptist was Elijah in Spirit; thus both were right. The Divine

Spirit is One only, no matter how many it is manifested in or through.”

Mr. Kheiralla had visited Acre after he had become a believer in Beha Ullah. He saw Abbas Effendi and accepted him at the time as the representative of Behaism, but

when he became acquainted with Abbas Effendi’s doctrine of immortality which to him

implies destruction of personal identity, and when he heard of the complaints of Abbas

Effendi’s younger brothers, he changed his mind and became an adherent of “the

mightiest branch.” Mr. Kheiralla says in his Behaist pamphlet which appeared under the

title “The Three Questions”:

“While I was in Syria visiting, I was not allowed by the diplomatic policy of Abbas

Effendi to meet any of the Branches, his brothers, or any of the family, or any of their

followers, just like all those who went there and visited him. So I remained ignorant of

the facts.

“Abbas Effendi had, while there, honored me to the utmost degree in the presence

of his followers. This was the chief cause of my delusion. It is the case of all those who

have been there to visit him.

[page 419]

For he and his followers are past masters in the art of treating visitors wonderfully

fine.”

As to points of doctrine the views of Behaism represented by Mr. Kheiralla may be

condensed in the following quotations:

“Abbas Effendi has taught plainly that the human spirit is perishable, like the vegetable spirit, and the end of it is corruption or mortality; and that it ‘consists of the rational (or logical, reasonable) faculty which apprehends general ideas and things intelligible and perceptible.’

“The Pre-existence of man’s soul was taught by Beha Ullah, by the prophets and by Christ.

“Beha Ullah taught us in the book of Heykle, that there are some souls in the Pavillion of Greatness and Might, who though they have never been upon the earth, yet

they shall come here to help the Cause of God and promulgate His Word.

“Beha Ullah taught us also, that if we come to this earth and do not attain the truth

for which we came, we shall return to the spiritual realms and resume the positions in

which we were before our coming to this earth.

“The Bible, as well as the Koran, teaches, that God cometh to judge the living and

the dead. How can this be true if there were no Return of the Soul?

“So we see, that the teachings of Abbas Effendi are not in accordance with the

teachings of Beha, neither with the teachings of Christ whom he quoted. Christ taught

us, as did Beha, that the human soul or spirit is immortal, and that it keeps its identity

after death and that it has its own existence and is distinguishable from all other spirits

or souls. For Christ taught that the soul of the rich man, after death, went to Hell, and

there it kept its own individuality and was separated from the Spirit of Abraham, and

from that of Lazarus; and that it conversed with Abraham from Hell to Heaven, and that

it was not ‘the Spirit of Faith, which is of the Kingdom of God.’

“Beha Ullah taught, that His appearance has ended the manifestations, for one complete thousand years; but He foretold us that somebody will claim to be a manifestation, and warned us from following him.

“Abbas Effendi has proved beyond doubt, that he is the one against whom the warning was uttered.

“Beha Ullah strictly taught us, in nearly every tablet He uttered to observe the

Oneness and Singleness of God. He declared Himself to be the Father and Comforter.

In the letter to the Pope,

[page 420]

He said: 'This is indeed the Father, whereof Isaiah gave you tidings, and the Comforter whom the Spirit (Christ) promised.'

"Beha Ullah taught, in many of his utterances, that there is no son to Him, no successor, no equal, no agent.

"Abbas Effendi teaches, that he is divinely the son of Beha Ullah, and His successor. If he is the successor of Beha, he is equal to Beha, for the successor is not

less than the succeeded. Also the son is not less than the Father. In both cases. Abbas

Effendi is a claimant; and the teachings of Beha Ullah do not permit this.

"Beha Ullah had foreseen the probability of the schism and so he left the following

rule for the settlement of disputed points in Kitab-i-Ackdas, p. 20; he said:

"If ye differ in a matter, bring it to God, so long as the Sun is shining from the

Horizon of this heaven; but when He sets, bring it to what he uttered, verily it suffices

the worlds.'

"Abbas Effendi, and his disciples teach that Beha Ullah was like all the other

prophets; only he was a greater Manifestation, because He was a larger Mirror.

According to their teachings we must conclude that Beha Ullah was not what He claimed, and was not the Father whom the Christians expected. If Beha Ullah was like

Jesus, He would be merely a vine, like Jesus, though a larger one. But He cannot be the

Lord of the vineyard, because the Lord of the vineyard cannot be one of the vines which

He planted. Jesus said, that He was the vine, the disciples were the branches, and the

Father was the Husbandman, There is a great difference between the vines and the Lord

of the vineyard or the Husbandman. Beha's superiority is not realized by Abbas

Effendi, or for some reason he does not wish to confess it.

"This point is the greatest one in this religion; for the followers of Beha must

believe, that Yahoah, the 'Everlasting Father,' Beha, is the known God who appeared

and spoke in Jesus Christ, in Moses, in Abraham, who were His ministers, and at the

latter days He came himself in the flesh, to judge the living and the dead; and that the

Unknown Being which cannot be known from the beginning which has no beginning
to
the end which has no end, hath appeared and spoke in Beha Ullah just as Beha
Ullah
appeared and spoke in Jesus Christ and in the other prophets. This Infinite
being, the
'Unknowable' Creator of heavens and earths is called by Beha Ullah the
'Eternal
Identity.' Beha said: 'Zatul Azel cannot be seen.'"

— A New Religion, Babism (Used by permission of the curator)