



needed but to inquire from missionaries of the Society in and about London to know the facts of the case? For over twenty years Professor Browne, of Cambridge, has been writing on this subject. Has the Archdeacon no knowledge of the damning facts, set forth in his works, in regard to the character of Bahá? Did he wish to inquire from those in the neighbourhood of Acre? How easy would it have been to get information from the English and American missionaries of Syria and Palestine.

Eighteen months ago Archdeacon Wilberforce wrote to Abdul Bahá, saying, "We are all one, there behind the veil." Is this the teaching of the Word of God? Does the Apostle say that we should be unequally yoked with unbelievers, that righteousness hath fellowship with iniquity, light with darkness, Christ with Bellial, the temple of God with idols? That, indeed, is the teaching of the pantheism on which Bahá'ism and all its kindred sects are founded. From the hoary antiquity of 2,500 years, the beginning of Persian history, comes the blasphemous declaration, "God and devil yoked together." Men of upright character are, it is true, welcome to the ranks of these pantheistic sects. They make excellent stool pigeons. When, however, the deed of hell is to be done, another kind of man is needed; one whose conscience is seared as with a hot iron. Not what a man is, but what use can be made of him, is the determining factor. "Evil is a name of one of the conditions of progress — is as necessary, aye, more so, than what you call good, to your and our elevation to higher spheres." This idea is carried out in these pantheistic sects, in that the morally upright members are confined to the outer circle, the children of the evil one are admitted into the inner sanctuary. Here, then, we have the much vaunted unity, from which God preserve us.

Archdeacon Wilberforce calls Abdul Bahá, "Master." What about Christ? Does He teach that we can serve two masters? No. Then the archdeacon must choose whom he will serve, whether the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ or the Antichrist, Bahá. He cannot serve both. What say the people of England? Will they choose this modern Barabbas?

A word as to the bearing of the Archdeacon's declarations upon missionary work in Mohammedan lands. That work, as is well known, is not easy work. So difficult indeed is it, that men like Lord Curzon are utterly incredulous that anything can be accomplished. Surely, then, men who profess to be followers of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ — above all, those who are looked upon as leaders in the Church, should do nothing to make that work still more difficult. Whatever else may be said of the Bahá'ís, it cannot be said that they are not wise in their generation, quick to use every means, fair or foul, which will advance their interests. That Abdul Bahá has been greatly encouraged by what he has seen and heard here in England to persevere in his scheme to make Bahá'ism "the universal religion of the world, and the basis of the great universal civilization that is to be," is evident from his own words. That it will have a like effect upon his followers, to whom the news will be

transmitted, not in cold English, but in the glowing phrases of Oriental imagination, cannot be doubted. Like Paul, on the road to Rome, they too will be encouraged; but it will not be to advance the kingdom of God, but the reign of Antichrist.

#### The Babis of Persia

The origin of Babism is to be sought in Persian pantheism, a system which goes back more than 1,000 years, during which time it has produced many sects, of which Babism is one of the latest. All these sects hold one fundamental doctrine, viz., that the murid, or disciple, is to give himself up absolutely, body and soul, to the murshid, or guide. To say that the murshid is, to all intents and purposes, in the place of God to the murid is to understate the matter. When God speaks to us He speaks to us as men, honouring the faculties of reason, conscience, and will with which He has endowed us. Does anything claim to be a new revelation, it must meet the demands of the old revelation, and stand or fall thereby. The pantheistic idea is other than this. Revelation, conscience, reason, will, are all annihilated. At every moment of existence there is nothing but absolute power; bare power on the one hand, and absolute passivity and negativity on the other. The murid is not a man in any true sense of the term, but mere material, a mere receptacle which is constantly being created and then taken to pieces, or filled and then emptied. What he is has nothing to do with the nature of the communications or commands which are made to him or laid upon him. Judged by ordinary standards, they may be reasonable or unreasonable, wise or unwise, holy or unholy; but with all this he has nothing to do. Is he commanded to tell the truth, he tells the truth. Is he commanded to lie, he lies. Are counsels of wisdom given to him, he carries them out. Are the wildest vagaries of a madman enjoined upon him, this duty of obedience is exactly the same. Let me say —

First — The system is an essentially vicious one, based as it is on the degradation of the murid, who is robbed of all that makes him a man and reduced to a mere automaton. The honour and glory of the murshid is built up on the ruin of the murid. A more perfect contrast to Christianity it is impossible to conceive. "Because I live," says the Saviour, "ye shall live also" (John xiv. 19). "And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one; I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them as Thou has loved Me" (John xvii. 22, 23).

Second — It cannot be reformed, seeing that the first step in the way of reform is to destroy the system root and branch.

Third — Every attempt to carry out the principle of this system has been fraught with the most terrible evil. The career of Mokanna in the eighth century, of which we have a true and faithful description in Moore's "Lalla Rookh," that of Babek in the ninth, and of Karmath in the tenth, both of whom turned the Oriental world into an Aceldema, or field of blood; more than all,

that of Hassan Sabah and his followers, the Assassins, who for 170 years, from 1090 on, inaugurated a reign of terror compared with which that of the French Revolution was child's play. These and other instances which might be given, both in ancient and modern times, amply prove our assertion.

We are now asked to believe that Babism is an exception to the rule, that this devilish, this Satanic system — and no other words can describe it — has been

transformed; that the serpent has lost its fangs, and that the wolf has become the true protector of the sheep. Where, we ask, is the evidence for this amazing claim? Is it to be found in the blasphemous declarations of Bahá, that he was not only Christ, but God the Father? Is it to be found in his life, stained with the basest of crimes? Is the man that attempted to poison his own brother, whom he had invited to eat with him, the inaugurator of a new dispensation of peace on earth? And what, forsooth, have we on the other side? Naught but honeyed words. The wolf arrayed in sheep's clothing — ergo, he is not

a wolf. What makes the matter still worse is that no excuse can be pleaded for this man. He was a cold-blooded villain, not a madman, like the founder of the Druses, or a deluded enthusiast, such as we may suppose the original Bab to have been. Good men there are among the Babis, men who have been drawn towards the system, hoping to find in it truth which they had vainly sought in Mohammedanism; good, not because of the system, but in spite of it. Xavier was a holy man, but Jesuitism is anything but holy. We are to remember, moreover, that in all these pantheistic systems it is only a few who at first are fully initiated into "the depths of Satan," that it is the policy of the leaders to keep the multitude in ignorance, and to have some whose pure lives shall serve to mask their own corruption. In the case of the Assassins, the character of the sect was not fully exposed to the public view until more than seventy years after it was founded.

There is no need of wasting any sympathy on the sufferings of the Babis. That they have suffered terribly is true. That they have endured suffering with marvellous fortitude and constancy is also true. So, however, it has always been in the case of these sects. When the infamous Babek, whose rule was to cause the wives and daughters of his captives to be violated before their eyes, had his hands and feet struck off, "he laughed and smilingly sealed with his blood the criminal gaiety of his tenets" (Von Hammer's "History of the Assassins," p. 27). As teachers and practisers of assassination, the Babis richly deserve all they have been called upon to suffer.

It is idle to talk about their not interfering with governments, when, in the eyes of a Babi, there is no government but that of his leader. So long as that leader is in a state of semi-captivity, the exercise of his authority over rulers and countries may well slumber, lest he bring down vengeance on his own head. Let him, however, once become an independent sovereign, and we may then expect the return of that time when there was no security for sovereign or people; save as they became the slaves of the most awful despotism which ever

showed itself on earth. More freedom for women! Yes, but from the days of Mazdak these sects have taught the community of women. The millennium to be inaugurated is one of absolute science. (Von Hammer, pp. 105, &c.)

After reading this and much other such stuff which finds its way into the public Press, one wonders how it is that Christian men and women can be so deceived. Nevertheless, it is true that there is a terrible fascination about these pantheistic schemes, which does seem for a time at least to rob men of sight, hearing, and understanding. Unquestionably, too, they contain grand views of truth, but the pity of it, the horror of it, is that the truth, which should be so presented as to be uplifting and inspiring, is but the bait upon the hook to drag down the soul to hell.

Note:

1 Reprinted from Evangelical Christendom (Sept.-Oct., 1911), pp. 186-88.

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