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THE BEHAIST MOVEMENT.

EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION.

We take pleasure in publishing a criticism of our article on the new

religious movements of the followers of Beha Ullah by Mr. Arthur Pillsbury

Dodge, who is obviously an adherent of Abdul Beha Abbas, also called Abbas

Effendi, of Acca. For the benefit of those not familiar with the transcription

of Arabic names, we add that “Beha” and “Baha” are the same word, mean-

ing “manifestation” (or “glory”). Further, Beha Ullah is commonly trans-

cribed “Beha ‘Ullah,” and an adherent of Beha, who according to English

custom is called a “Behaist,” is frequently styled (after the Arabic mode of

speech) a “Behai.” We have throughout preferred the simpler English form

“Behaist” and avoided any spelling that might be puzzling to the reader.

In reply to my comments on the spelling of “Beha” and “Behaist,” Mr.

Dodge writes:

“Originally I employed the spelling ‘Beha,’ but now always ‘Baha,’ which

I believe to be correct. Count Gobineau’s spelling, where the ‘e’ sound is

equivalent to our ‘a’ is evidently the source of Professor Browne’s former

practice, but the latter now declares that were he now commencing he should

certainly spell it ‘Baha.’ This has the same numerical value, of course, as

‘Abha,’ which forms a part of ‘The Greatest Name,’ as I will explain in a

future treatment. Strictly speaking, I understand that the best English form

is ‘B’haa,’ but practically I prefer ‘Baha.’ I also prefer ‘Bahai’ to ‘Bahaist,’

but recognize your point and do not object in this instance.”

Mr. Dodge feels that a historian or literateur is unable to understand

the significance of Behaism. He writes:

“I have been an earnest seeker after the truth for many years, dating

far back of my first knowledge of this great Bahai Revelation.

“It appears that about all writers have approached the subject with

scarcely an adequate apprehension of the vast inner significance and poten-

tial value of the proclamation or manifestation of this movement. It was so

with Professor Browne, whom, however, I esteem most highly. I passed a

few days with him, and a more delightful gentleman I believe I have never

met. He writes charmingly of the cause, approaching the matter as he does,

and as most writers and historians thus far have, from the view-point of

literature-history. Notwithstanding all this, it is apparent that greater jus-

tice is being done by current historians than was done in former centuries,

when, for instance, such noted historians as Tacitus and others denied Chris-

tianity and declared it should be abolished!”

THE BAHAI REVELATION.

BY ARTHUR PILLSBURY DODGE.

The interesting article entitled “A New Religion—Babism,” by Dr. Paul

Carus, the editor, in *The Open Court* of June, 1904, furnishes evidence that

the data of information was, as usual, based largely upon the almost uni-

versal misconception concerning certain features of this most important sub-

ject.

When, however, we consider the fact that Christianity was misappre-

hended and erroneously represented by the early historians, it is not strange

that in this day the reality of the Revelation of Baha ‘Ullah should be mis-

construed.

Let us start aright. First, the treatment of religion *per se* is usually

very unfortunate. From every source we hear of this, or that religion, as

though there were *several* religions, when, truly speaking, there never was,

and never will be, more than one religion! Let the reader pause and con-

sider before denying this assertion. Religion, in a word, is the truth and

knowledge of God. There being One Unchangeable God, His truth must of

necessity be and is One and Unchangeable; hence it is impossible that the

world has known or can know other than One religion! But it is true that

there have been many *revelations* of religion.

The statement that the Bahais “Believe in a personal God and positive

revelations” is true, though the words are scarcely adequate. The idea of

the human relation of parent and child, as a reflection, is a reasonable indi-

cation, in miniature if you please, of the far grander relation. The human

being is the *effect* of a *cause*. The “cause” must be greater, but possess all

the qualities manifest in the “effect.” The human being is the child of God,

the Father. The offspring of the human being has to be educated from in-

fancy to maturity. Who can say that the race of mankind, in the broadest

sense, does not require education from its infancy to a mature condition?

This being the case, is it not natural and logically correct that the world we

inhabit is a vast schoolhouse; the scholars, mankind; the principal, God;

and the educators or teachers, the prophets or messengers sent by God

during the ages of creation still in process?

In the rise and progress of this great Bahai movement, there was a time

when it was properly designated by the word Babism, but that was during

the early days of the cause, and prior to 1852. The word Babism was de-

rived from Bab, pronounced as though spelled “Barb” or “Bahb,” signifying

“gate” or “door.”

Mirza Ali Mohammed, signifying Elijah the Prophet, was born at Shiraz,

Persia, in the year 1235, A.H., on the first day of Muharram, corresponding

to our year 1819, A.D. He arose on the 23d of May, 1844, announcing him-

self as the one promised by Christ, who would come to herald the appearance

of the day of God, and the coming of “Him Whom God shall Manifest”

(Baha ‘Ullah), to establish the Kingdom of God on earth. He, Ali Moham-

med, became known as The Bab, and as such will be referred to hereinafter.

It is apparent that Elijah the Prophet, John the Baptist, and The Bab were

each, in turn, the recipients and manifestations of the Announcer Spirit to

go before the face of the Lord. (See Mal. iv. 5-6; Luke i. y(i-y Rotherham;

Matt. xi. 11-14.) Thus it will be seen that The Bab was the mere herald or

precursor of the dawning of this great revelation, bearing precisely the same

relation to Baha ‘Ullah as John the Baptist bore to Jesus Christ 1900 years

ago.

Comparatively few fully understand that the Bab literally fulfilled Bib-

lical prophecy, nor do many seem to recognize the logical sequence and in-

separableness of all the great prophetic revelations. He came to prepare the

way for the coming of the “Great and dreadful day of the Lord” on earth

and his appearance was rapidly followed by tens of thousands of believers,

drawn from all parts of Persia and elsewhere. The mission of The Bab was

concluded on the ninth day of July, A.D., 1850, when he suffered martyrdom,

being shot by a company of soldiers. His work was accomplished in a little

less than seven years with remarkable humility, patience, love, heroism, and

fortitude. The manner of his being murdered was prophesied twelve hundred

years before, and prior to the invention of guns and gunpowder! The proph-

ecy was by Mohammed and to the effect that The Bab (Imam Mahdi) would

be executed by a pestle issuing forth from a mortar with a loud noise!

Considering that this prophecy was made several centuries before the invent-

tion of firearms, it was most remarkable.

THE PERIOD BETWEEN THE BAB AND BAHA ‘ULLAH.

It is true that Subh-i-Ezel, now an exile on the island of Cyprus, was

the duly authorized head of the Babis for the short period of time from the

martyrdom of The Bab to the appearance and announcement of Baha ‘Ullah

in 1852. Subh-i-Ezel was a half brother of Baha ‘Ullah and was born at

Nur, in Mazandaran, Persia.

Baha ‘Ullah and The Bab never met. While they were confined in sep-

arate prisons, however, they were in communication with each other through

the mediumship of Mirza Abdul Karim, known as Mirza Ahmad, the amanu-

ensis of The Bab, and in this way it was arranged that Subh-i-Ezel should

be appointed as the temporary successor of The Bab to care for the “friends.”

This was done because the time was not then ripe for the Manifestation to

declare Himself.

The Bab declared that “He Whom God shall Manifest” was upon the

earth and would declare Himself and enter upon His great mission at the

proper time, and that this event would occur *within* nineteen years. In his

great work, the Beyan, originally regarded as the Babi Bible, The Bab de-

clared that under no circumstances was Subh-i-Ezel to be regarded as the

Great One, his mission being only a temporary one and as that of a “blind”

and protection of the true One. In the Beyan it is also stated that all of the

writings and utterances of its author would not equal in importance one verse

of Him that was to come after, that is, “He Whom God shall Manifest.”

BAHA ‘ULLAH, THE MANIFESTATION OF GOD.

The father of Baha ‘Ullah, of a house of Persian statesmen, was born in

Nur, near Teheran. His illustrious son, Mirza Huseyn Ali, later to be

known, in the days of The Bab, as Baha ‘Ullah, signifying “The Splendor of

God,” was born at Teheran, Persia, on November 12, 1817. Before His

declaration of His mission He was known as one of the humblest followers

of The Bab.

The Bab was uneducated of the world, and Baha ‘Ullah was not accounted

a learned man, but he was wealthy, possessing an estate valued at more than

a million dollars.

In 1852 Baha ‘Ullah and His family and the believers were exiled as

prisoners to Baghdad, His property first being confiscated by the Persian

government. On what ground? Simply this: that His pure Godly life and

utterances were too marked in contrast with and offensive to the mullahs

or priests and their practices.

But let us quote a few of His own words from *A Traveller’s Narrative*

By Edward G. Browne, M.A., M.B.:

“We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations

yet they, accusing us of stirring up strife, deem us worthy of bondage and

banishment. … That all nations should become one in faith and all men as

brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men

should be strengthened; that diversity of religion should cease, and differ-

ences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this? … Yet so it shall

be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous wars shall pass away, and the “Most

Great Peace” shall come. … Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not

this that which Christ foretold? … Yet do we see your kings and rulers

lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the

human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness of mankind

… These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men

be as one kindred and one family. … Let not a man glory in this, that he

loves his country; let him rather glory in this that he loves his kind. …”

On his arrival at Baghdad in 1852 Baha ‘Ullah first made a partial decla-

ration to the believers only, of His mission. Again at Baghdad, in the

eleventh or twelfth year of His remaining there. He made the announcement,

this time to the believers fully. The second announcement was made in the

garden of Najib Pasha, where He tarried about twelve days, just before de-

parting for Constantinople. On His declaration as “He Whom God shall

Manifest” the great majority of the believers at once acknowledged Him,

notwithstanding the fact that Subhi-i-Ezel had become selfishly and jealously

ambitious, seeking with desperation to maintain his claim that he was the

one prophesied of to come. Subh-i-Ezel, however, only succeeded in gathering

around his standard a comparatively small number of followers, but they

gradually became enlightened and left him. At the present time he has but

a mere handful of misguided devotees.

When Baha ‘Ullah’s possessions were confiscated by the Persian govern-

ment He is reported to have raised His hands and exclaimed: “Praise be to

God! I am now free!” It is a noteworthy fact that when Baha ‘Ullah took

up His Divine Mission there were many times “Ten Thousand Saints or

Angels,” meaning true and faithful believers, on earth, ready to receive and

follow Him. This was fulfilment of the passages in Deut. xxxiii. 2, Isaiah

ix. 6-7, Dan. vii. 18, Matt. xxv. 31, 1 Tim. iii. 16, Rev. i. 20, and other

prophesies.

The believers in the Orient usually refer to Baha ‘Ullah as “The Blessed

Perfection.”

With His party He remained in Baghdad about twelve years. They were

then taken to Constantinople, and from thence to Adrianople, and shortly

afterwards to the ancient prison city of Acca (Acre, Akka, Accho, etc.),

jutting out into “the tideless sea” at the base of Carmel, the famous “Moun-

tain of God” in Northern Palestine. The evil design since the exile was to

rid the world of these saintly, peaceful characters, and in this last move it

was the confident belief of the wicked captors that the holy people would

suffer speedy death from contact with this old pestilential place, of which it

was an old saying, “the foulness was so great that if a bird flew over the

city it would fall to earth dead.”

The officials were disappointed, for, ever since this imprisonment, con-

ditions have steadily improved, not only in Akka, but in all that region. In

this lapse of time it is readily seen that the long suffering holy land desolation

has ended, and the promised new order of things in actual restoration is

in process.

From this New Holy City in 1867-9 there went forth from Baha ‘Ullah

those famous “Letters to the Kings” inviting them to a Spiritual Banquet.

This was fulfilling the Christ parable of the Great Supper, and though the

Manifestation and followers were taken to Akka wholly on the motion of the

enemies of God’s Cause, the latter were thereby unwittingly fulfilling prophecy

of many centuries!

Governors, princes, and other notables learned to humbly bow before

Baha ‘Ullah, often waiting patiently for an audience.

Some might ask why did He submit to such indignities, persecutions,

and sufferings? He was no more obliged to do so than was Jesus Christ

compelled to endure outrage, persecution, torture, and crucifixion; save that

in both instances these things had to be done, not only to teach the world

lessons of humility, patience, meekness, love, courage, and obedience, but that

The God Plan should be fulfilled to the very letter as prophesied!

From the foregoing it is clearly erroneous to say: “This Mirza Huseyn

Ali (Baha ‘Ullah) suddenly came to the conclusion during his stay at Adria-

nople that he himself was Baha ‘Ullah, ‘The Glory of God.’” It will be re-

membered that the announcement was made before Adrianople, or even Con-

stantinople, was reached.

The Mission of this saintly Baha ‘Ullah lasted forty years, until His

departure on May 28, 1892. He appointed His eldest son, Abbas Effendi,

who is now known as Abdul Baha Abbas, to be His successor in charge of

the spiritual Kingdom of God on earth.

ABDUL BAHA ABBAS.

This beautiful, saintly soul, now residing in Akka, Syria, a prisoner

through the injustice and fanaticism of the Oriental “divines,” in much the

same way as was Jesus Christ in his time, is setting the world an example

in magnificent love, patience, humility, power, and grandeur of life without

a parallel.

Abdul Baha Abbas was born in Teheran, Persia, on May 23, 1844, the

very day of the announcement by the Bab of his mission. In this circumstance

the future will recognize a remarkable significance.

Abdul Baha signifies “Servant of God,” and this he truly is, and is

known by his “works.” He lives the life, utters the teachings, and is doing the

work of the Father where Christ left off nineteen hundred years ago. He

is the servant of mankind as well as the servant of God. He was recognized

as “The Greatest Branch” by Baha ‘Ullah, who appointed him The Center of

The Covenant of God’s Religion on Earth; the Commentator of the Books

and the one whom all should look up to, emulate and obey in the service of

the Kingdom. All of these and other names and titles were *given* to Abdul

Baha. He claims literally nothing for himself save being the humble servant

of all. In him is fulfilled the Biblical definition of the true *minister*—the ser-

vant of all, particularly the needy.

The devotion of Abdul Baha to Baha ‘Ullah, the Manifestation of God,

the Father, is sublimely indicated in the following few words from his pen:

“I swear by the One God, and there is but one, that, had each of us one hun-

dred mouths, and each mouth one hundred tongues, we could not praise God

as He should be praised for the great blessing and privilege of being on earth

in these days, the greatest days in all the history of the ages. But the world

does not realize it. You must not consider the present day, for the blessings

are not yet manifest. In the days of Christ, He was despised, cursed and

rejected, but after 1900 years people come from half around the world to visit

some stones upon which tradition says He once sat! How much greater will

these days be when they are once known!”

Abdul Baha is known and often spoken of as “The Master.” To enter

his presence is to love him and desire to follow his example—providing we

really love God. While Baha ‘Ullah is the promised “Spirit of Truth,” who

was to come and furnish the key of explanation of all mysteries in revealed

utterances, The Master is giving forth the explanations to the world in les-

sons of incomparable beauty and value. By carefully reading Daniel xii,

Revelation v, Isaiah ix. 6-7 and xxxv, and the Christ parable of the Lord

and the vineyard in connection with this article, some idea may be had of the

importance of these things.

The year 1844 will be recognized in all time to come as of vast import-

ance. Then was begun the mission of The Bab; then Abdul Baha, the

Master, was born, and this year dates the beginning of the remarkable “New

Heaven and new earth,” the Divine promise of the Christ or Word of God

manifested through Saint John, and recorded in the twenty-first chapter of

Revelation. Should any one feel disposed to make light of this matter, such

are advised to pause and reflect. It is a most serious matter, the importance

of which to all in the world was never before equaled. Regarding the new

earth, many changes have occurred within the past sixty years; changes in-

cident to the marking of a new era.

On the morning of May 24, 1844, Professor Morse took his seat at the

telegraphic instrument placed in the Supreme Court room in the Capitol.

Many of the chief officers of the Government were present. The Professor

pressed the key of the instrument with his finger. In an instant this mes-

sage was flashed along the wire to Baltimore and back, a distance of eighty

miles: “What hath God wrought!” (Numbers xxiii. 23.—Montgomery.)

This remarkable incident took place a few hours after the birth of Abdul

Baha and the proclamation by The Bab.

In 1843 Professor Morse prophesied the certainty of telegraphic commu-

nication across the Atlantic Ocean. This, as well as many other achieve-

ments, discoveries, and inventions, has been realized, marking complete revo-

lution in methods of communication, locomotion, in the manner of living

generally, etc., all tending to prove the fact of our now having a “New

Earth.”

Regarding the “New Heaven” it is likewise true that such is rapidly be-

coming a reality, for the truth of religion is already supplanting the colossal

error of past superstition and imagination. Heaven indicates the religion or

truth of God. Christ said, “Behold, the Kingdom of God is within you!”

(Luke xvii. 21.)

Another great work of importance was inaugurated in 1844, when Layard

commenced explorations which have, from that time to the present, revealed

in antique remains such wonderful corroborative proof of Biblical record.

There are many mistaken ideas concerning the Revelation of Baha and

of other Revelations. While true, of course, it is not sufficient to state that

Bahaism is the reformation of Mohammedanism. All Revelation has been

successively greater in extent of promulgation than was formerly manifested.

Judaism, Christianity, and Mohammedanism, each prophesied of and led up to

the Revelation of Baha ‘Ullah for the reformation of the entire world. All

former manifestations were much less in broadness of scope and effective-

ness, and quite naturally when we grasp, for instance the marvellous sig-

nificance of the parabolic utterances of Jesus Christ. Although this last

revelation is the greatest, all the prior revelations, as has been truly said,

are practically the same—as far as they go. The essence of all is, “Love the

good God and be good.”

The Bahai Revelation, as before stated, is the grand culmination, the

sum total of all that has gone before. It is the sublime climax of all that

Christ stood for. It is the veritable inauguration of the “Day of Most Great

Peace,” realizing the “Unity and solidarity of mankind.” It is the first in the

world history to unite the people of every race, of every nation, into one

belief and faith, one brotherhood of man under the Fatherhood of the One

God.

How do we know this? Because, first: The Manifestation has so de-

clared, and in every time of Revelation the word of the prophet or messenger

has invariably been found to be the greatest power of truth and authority

in the world. Second: The character of the life, works, and teachings of

Baha ‘Ullah and Abdul Baha proclaim their divine origin and authority.

Third: “Ye shall be known by your works,” and the irrefutable fact is that

there are now more than nine millions of united believers gathered from

Buddhists, Zoroastrians, Jews, Christians, Mohammedans, and other faiths,

presenting to the world a spectacle as new as grand.

At each time respectively when Moses, Christ, and Mohammed appeared,

the vast majority of mankind were doubters and deniers, but from this dis-

tant view-point it is readily seen that the prophets were right and the world

wrong. The people could not then see it, but we now realize that those and

other prophets or messengers carried with them the stamp of genuineness,

and represented the Invincible Truth and Power of God. Shall we profit by

the blunders of former ages?

All great epoch-making teachings have been departed from as time has

elapsed. If Mohammedanism is, as observed, wholly unlike the precepts

enunciated by its founder, can anything better be said respecting “Christian-

ity” in its present deplorable state of departure from the Christ standard?

The Jews erred greatly in denying Christ, but have not the Christians

offended even more seriously in rejecting a later prophet—Mohammed, whom

Christ foretold? By what right do the descendants of certain races ascribe

to themselves the lordship of the earth, ignoring the fact that all human

beings, in every part of the world, are children of One Father? By what right

have the creatures of God decided whom of His teachers to accept and whom

to reject?

“Do you know why We created you from one clay? That no one should

glorify himself over the other. Always be mindful of how you were created,

for as We created you from one substance, you must be as one soul, walking

on the same feet, eating with one mouth, and living in one land, that you

may be able to show from your being and your deeds and actions the signs

of the unity and the essence of abstraction. …” (Baha ‘Ullah.)

At the present time there are several false Christs in the world—people

who are vain or misguided enough to claim the divine station of Messiahship.

It is understood that there are six or seven of these claimants, and it is self-

evident that if any one of them were genuine, the others must be false.

The significant point of the matter, however, is this: that no one can

put forth such a claim without at the same time and thereby proclaiming

himself an impostor! This is apparent from the words of Christ, for He

said He would come like a thief in the night (Rev. xvi. 15), that is to say,

in a manner unexpected and surprising. He also declared: “Beware of false

prophets which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are raven-

ing wolves. Ye shall know them *by their fruits*.” (Matt. vii. 15-16.) Read

His warning (Matt. xxiv) against those who would falsely come in His

Name.

When Christ propounded this question to his disciples: “But whom do

you say that I am?” Simon Peter replied: “Thou art Christ, the Son of the

of the living God!” Jesus Christ answered: “Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-

Jona: because flesh and blood hath not revealed it to thee, but My Father

who is in heaven.” (Matt. xvi. 16.)

The world now has before it, nearly twenty centuries after Christ, the

magnificent spectacle of one residing in the New Holy City, who claims ab-

solutely nothing for himself other than being the humble servant of God

and of humanity, but who is doing the works and living that sort of life

that has alone impelled millions of people of every nation, religious faith,

and belief of the world to arise and declare, as did Peter of old, “Thou art

Christ (the Word or Spirit of Truth from God), the Son of the living God!”

While most people who go into the presence of Abdul Baha, the Master,

feel in their hearts the sentiments Peter expressed, still there are some who

do not, but this is certain that all, so far as the knowledge of the writer ex-

tends, admit that He continually urges everybody to love and serve God and

all mankind, and that he, himself, lives a humble, merciful, sacrificing, loving

serving life of incomparable devotion.

In conclusion let us quote a few of his words: “I have sacrificed my

soul, spirit, life, mention, honor, attributes, my comfort and my name in the

Path of God, and I have chosen no dignity or possession save the obedience

of Baha, and no name or title save Abdul Baha—servant of Baha. Therefore

be content with this and follow me in my words and wishes, because in so

doing the Blessed Trees of life, springing up in the Paradise of God, will

grow and become verdant.

“If you desire to speak in praise, praise the beauty of El Abha; if you

desire to commend, commend the Name of your Supreme Lord; for if you

exalt the ‘Tree’ you also exalt the ‘Branch’! If you mention the sea you

also mention its gulfs and bays (for they belong to it), therefore mention the

Beauty of Abha!” (Part of a Tablet to an American believer from Abdul

Baha Abbas.)