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Die altarabische Mondreligion und die mosaische Ueberlieferung, von DITLEF NIELSEN, Karl J. Trübner, Strassburg, 1904. pp. 221.

In this very scholarly work we have a clear and luminous story told of the deepest and most widespread of all the religions of the moon. Its cult centered in southern Arabia and was as distinctive there in pre-Mohammedan days as solar worship was in Babylon. The latter country was agricultural and therefore stationary, whereas in the earliest times the Arabs were shepherds migrating constantly with their flocks and usually, owing to the heat, by night so that the moon became their time measurer. Here it was, he thinks, that our week and lunar month was developed. Perhaps the title of his book might as well have been "The Sabbath Question." In the second part, devoted to the Mosaic tradition, the writer shows how much Moses and the early Israelites were indebted to the Egyptians. Partly here, but more in the Arabian desert, they were also infected with the moon cult of which he gives very many illustrations from the Pentateuch. All this, however, was before their experiences at Sinai, and after this every trace of this cult and every allusion was sedulously eliminated.

Life and Teachings of Abbas Effendi, by MYRON H. PHELPS. With an Introduction by Edward G. Browne. G. P. Putnam's Sons, New York, 1903. pp. 259.

Mr. Phelps is a New York lawyer, who was fascinated by Babism or Behaism through reading the works of Professor E. G. Browne, and who spent the month of December, 1902, in Akka in making the acquaintance of Abbas Effendi, "easily the most remarkable man whom it has ever been my fortune to meet," and collecting material for his book. The biographical matter was furnished by Abbas' sister through the Countess Canavarro. Mr. Phelps worked diligently with the aid of an interpreter, took down everything, and has certainly written a fascinating book. Abbas, who, since the death of his father, Beha Ullah, whom Bab (=Gate) himself, executed in 1850, named as his successor, is third and last of the divine messengers by whom this dispensation is introduced. It has several million adherents in Persia, is rapidly increasing, and missionaries have planted the seed in many countries, even in this where it claims several thousand inhabitants. Mr. Phelps thinks that Akka is the most interesting spot on earth to-day for students of religion because we see at its youth, for it was founded only in 1844, the developmental stage of a religion destined to become one of the greatest. By familiarity with what can be seen here we can understand, he says, such lives as Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ and Mohammed. It is said that more than ten thousand have suffered martyrdom in Persia alone. No Mohammedan sect has ever begun to make such advances. Babism has its own religious books but no canon and does not desire one; neither does it wish settled doctrine. The Babists have "no fixed or prominent idea of personal immortality or rewards in future life," and yet they meet martyrdom with equanimity and exultation. In 1852 one eminent leader was pierced with deep wounds in each of which was thrust a lighted wick but "he hastened as a bridegroom to his bride to the place of execution singing with exultation,

"Grasping in one hand the wine-cup, clinging to my darling's hair,
Dancing would I thus confront the scaffold in the square."

Another, at the place of execution, was smitten by the headsman from behind. The blow only wounded the old man's neck and cast his turban to the ground. He raised his head and exclaimed "Oh, happy that intoxicated lover who at the feet of his beloved knoweth not whether it be his head or his turban which he casteth."

Babism perhaps does not go so far as Mr. Phelps who says, "God and religion are but names and shadows to the western world," but it does assume that all the great religions tend to decay and are more or less advanced in the stages of decay so that a great witness of God is occasionally necessary, perhaps especially now. Babism recognizes every other religion as equally divine in origin with itself. No man is asked to desert his own faith but only to live up to its ideal. Indeed, it professes only to renew the message formerly given by other divine messengers which has become more or less forgotten. Throughout the world religion is stagnant and faith is dead. The Behas conform to Mohammedanism and do not entirely agree among themselves. In the struggle between two leaders we see a very similar conflict to that which took place in the early Christian church between Peter and Paul.

Babism, like Mohammedanism, knows no distinction of race or color. The negro is not debarred from intermarriage but is respected. Our missionaries, says Professor Browne, begin by attacking either explicitly or implicitly the inspiration of the Koran and the prophetic function of Mohammed. If he destroys these he destroys the recognition of Jewish and Christian dispensations which the Koran emphatically proclaims and really converts Moslems to atheism. If the Koran is a lie what value will those who have believed it attach to its powerful witness to the truth of Christ's mission? The Babist, however, denies nothing in the Koran except its finality and does not discredit its own witness. The western world needs a fresh, spiritual impulse to repel the barren systems of agnostics and mere humanitarians "who would give us rules to regulate a life which they have rendered meaningless." One thing is certain, that most Babists are converts and are not what they are by the mere circumstances of birth.

The philosophy, psychology and ethics of this movement are high, pure and inspiring. Love is at the root of it. It condemns gambling, slavery, opium, intoxication, theft, adultery, and discourages polygamy. It recognizes evolution. There can be, it teaches, no contention where there is true religion and high conceptions of truth. Tolerance impels us to say, in view of other religions, "How like my own." It would fill every old faith full of impulses of its best period. All great teachers of religion have been inspired of God. Buddha appeared to men of a higher culture than any other, Mohammed to those most barbaric. The countrymen of Jesus were intermediate. Babism does not claim that its leader is divine but only that it is a true and modern manifestation of God in the world. "God is to every human being as great as the individual, mental capacity permits one to see him." His preaching is to all men that they are not living up to the moral, educational or religious precepts which they themselves think they hold. They never exhort others to become Babists. Their missionaries must always teach the truth of the religion maintained by the people to whom they go. It is of little consequence what they call themselves. The great object of life is to build character. Every one must find his weaknesses and recognize that every act strengthens or weakens. Self knowledge is of course essential.

We have no space to epitomize the discourses and the various tablets reproduced in this interesting book. There is certainly nothing to jar the modern consciousness. Even reincarnation is set aside with a few incisive and convincing statements. To say that there is nothing in the life or teachings of the leader that jars on the Christian consciousness, unless it be the breadth of its toleration, is to say much.

Aus der Indischen Kulturwelt, von ARTHUR PFUNGST. Fr. Frommanns, Stuttgart, 1904. pp. 201.

Fausbell, in 1875, and Oskar Peschal, in his ethnographic studies about the same time, called special attention to the Jataka book, since translated into English by Richard Morris. This is the oldest collection of popular stories in the world and was written between 300 and 400 B. C. Here are found in their earliest form such tales as the judgment of Solomon, the pound of flesh in Shakespeare's "Merchant of Venice" and many others. Pfungst gives us some very interesting side lights not only upon this volume but upon many other interesting facts in new fields opened by East Indian studies. He holds that, for instance, all lands that very closely connect the hare with the moon are Buddhistic in their origin. He finds them among Mohammedans, Japanese, Siamese, Mongols and others. The hare, in the story, was one of Buddha's many incarnations. He made the jackal, the ape and the otter, kind and considerate, and when Indra came down and refused to accept the only food offering he could make, which was of grass, he prepared a pile of fagots and, shaking himself three times that the vermin in his pelt might be spared suffering, was about to leap in to roast himself for the palate of the goddess when he was prevented. To commemorate this deed Indra extracted all the juices of the mountain and with them painted a figure of the hare in the moon. Sometimes he is charged with a message to men, that as the moon dies and lives again so shall they. In other tales the king of the hares lives in the moon.