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■ Necati Alkan (Germany).

"Midhat Pasha and 'Abdu'l-Bahā in 'Akkā : The Historical Background of the 'Tablet of the Land of Bā'"

In his *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi mentions various important political and other distinguished figures who met 'Abdu'l-Baha in the East and the West. Among them were several Ottoman officials who were friendly towards Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha. One of them was the outstanding liberal Ottoman statesman Midhat Pasha, who as the governor general (*vāli*) of Ottoman Syria invited the celebrated 'Abdu'l-Baha 'Abbas Effendi to Beirut. To date, there have been only very few references about this meeting between these two great figures. In the occasion of 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Beirut Baha'u'llah revealed the *Lawḥ-i Arḍ-i Bā*, the 'Tablet of the Land of Bā (Beirut),' in honour of his son. Hitherto, the circumstances and exact date of this remained unclear.

The object of this paper is to present the background of this episode in Baha'i history in the light of a manuscript by the eminent Baha'i Haji Mirza Haydar-'Ali that has surfaced recently. Here his as yet unknown account of the visit of Midhat Pasha to 'Akka during which he met 'Abdu'l-Baha prior to the latter's visit to Beirut, provides new information on the circumstances surrounding the revelation of the 'Tablet of the Land of Bā'. With the help of other sources we are also able to determine when this episode took place. Before this discussion, the life and activities of Midhat Pasha are briefly outlined. An annotated translation of Mirza Haydar-'Ali's account is appended to this article.

■ Seena Fazel (Oxford)

"Problems and Opportunities for Baha'i Studies"

Despite some discussion about review on internet-based lists in the mid-1990s and one article in the Bahā'ī Studies Review in 1995, there has been little else written about what is variously known as advance review, institutional review, or pre-publication review. This paper draws on recent developments in the Bahā'ī community

to discuss the appropriateness of review in relation to the current needs of the Bahā'ī community. It will highlight three recent developments that suggest that developments in review would currently meet the challenges of the Bahai world.

■ Stephen Lambden (Newcastle, UK & Athens Ohio)

"The Commentary of Sayyid Kāzīm Raḥsī (d. 1259/1843) upon the Graphical form of the Mightiest Name of God"

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"Bahā'-Allāh the יהוה Y-H-W-H, Tetragrammaton: Some Aspects of Judaism and the Bahā'ī religion"

The messianic claimant Mīrzā Ḥusayn 'Alī Bahā'-Allāh (1817-1892) the founder of the Bahā'ī religion and one time follower of the Sayyid 'Alī Muhammad the Bāb (d. 1850), came to write thousands of Arabic and Persian *alwāḥ* or scriptural Tablets to Iranian and other Middle-Eastern Jews from his various places of imprisonment in Ottoman Turkey (Edirne, 1863-68) and Palestine (Acre-Haifa, 1868-92). These *alwāḥ* very largely date from the time of the Persian Jewish conversions to the Baha'i religion in the 1870s and 1880s. While there seem to have been very few sporadic Jewish conversions to Bābism during the lifetime of the Bāb and in the decade or so following his martyrdom (July 9th 1850), most notably in the Persian province of Khurasan (Turbati Haydari, Mashad, etc), it was not until Bahā'ī missionaries began to teach Jews in Iran and Iraq from around the time of Baha'-Allah's declaration in the early-mid-1860s, that Middle Eastern Jews began to be addressed in weighty Tablets (*alwāḥ*) by the founder of the Baha'i religion. He lovingly called them to service and faith within the inclusive Bahā'ī religious universe of discourse which presupposed a full acceptance of all the major Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam as well as the religion of the Bab).

Bahā'-Allāh claimed to be the manifestation of the personal God of Israel, who revealed his Name to Moses on Sinai. He claimed to be יהוה the tetragrammaton, Y-H-W-H. This he related to long-secreted Islamic al-ism al-a`ẓam, the Greatest Name of God which is personified in his Logos-Reality as the radiant divine Beauty-Glory, the Arabic word Bahā'.

A copy of the important Tablet of Bahā'-Allāh to a certain Khalīl (translated from the Persian (+Arabic text) printed in the opening section (Pt.1) of *Isḥrāq Khāvarī*'s

compilation *Mā'idih-yi āsmanī* (vol. 4:38- 44), will be distributed and commented upon as it bears on the theme of Bahā'-Allāh the tetragrammaton, Y-H-W-H.

■ Moojan Momen (Biggleswade, UK)

"The Baha'i Schools of Iran"

Following the teachings enshrined in the scriptures of their religion, the Baha'is of Iran gave great importance to education. The earliest moves in this direction were the setting up of small traditional schools (*maktabs*) in villages such as Mahfuruzak where there were previously no educational facilities or in towns such as Qazvin where the Baha'is were prevented from attending the existing facilities. However the emphasis of learning useful arts and sciences in the writings of Baha'u'llah led the Baha'is to be at the forefront of a movement that emerged in Iran at the end of nineteenth century to establish new schools using the modern curricula and teaching methods devised in the West. In about 1900, the Baha'is of Tehran converted a traditional *maktab* that they had established into a school with a modern curriculum and called this the Tarbiyat School. Following on from this, Baha'i schools were soon established in most of the major cities in Iran and also in those villages where there were a large number of Baha'is. In some cases the schools were established by the Baha'i community and in others by wealthy individual Baha'is. Most of these were primary schools but in the larger towns secondary schools were also established. Since this was the first occasion in which Baha'is were establishing publicly recognised institutions, these schools faced much opposition and many problems in almost every location. With the importance given to the education of girls in Baha'i scriptures, there was a movement from the beginning of the twentieth century to establish girls' schools alongside boys' schools, led particularly by a group of Iranian and American Baha'i women in Tehran. However, it proved impossible to overcome the opposition to this until after the triumph of the Constitutional Revolution. The first girls' school was established in Tehran and soon this was followed by a girls' schools in most other localities where boys' schools had been established.

Most of the Baha'i schools were ordered closed by the government in December 1934, an event that appears to have been partly due to the nationalisation policy of Reza Shah and partly the enmity of Ali-Ashar Hikmat, the Deputy Minister of Education. A few of the schools escaped this due to local circumstances but these closed in later years as the national school-building programme rolled out across the country. The closure of the schools created a number of problems in some places where there were not alternative facilities, especially for girls. In these places, the National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is organized teaching in private homes until the situation could be resolved.

■ Moojan Momen

"The Bahā'ī Community of Kāshān"

The Baha'i Community of Kashan emerged from the Babi community there in the 1860s. There were three main concerns that affected the community in the first 50 years of its existence. The first was the split between the Azalis and the Baha'is. This split had emerged in the Babi community even before Baha'u'llah had put forward a formal claim in that the most effective Babi teacher in the area, Mulla Ja'far Naraqī was a strong supporter of Azal, but many of the Babis who visited Baghdad, returned as enthusiastic supporters of Baha'u'llah. The second concern was the rebellion of Shah Mirza in about 1870. This started as a dispute between Mulla Muhammad Naraqī and a Babi family who were his neighbours. It resulted in the son of that family Shah Mirza coming out as the leader of a rebellion which was described to the government in Tehran as being another Babi revolt. Sham as-Saltanih who was sent to quash this rebellion was a great enemy of the Baha'is and initiated a campaign against the Baha'is both in Kashan and Naraq.

The third area to be considered in looking at the Baha'i history of Kashan is the fact that Kashan may be said to have been the original point for the start of both Zoroastrian and Jewish conversions to the Baha'i Faith. The Jewish Bah'is in particular became an important element in the Baha'i community. The conversion occurred mainly in the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decade of twentieth.

■ Betsy Omidvaran (N. Ireland)

"Some Aspects 'Abdu'l-Baha's Contacts with Egypt"

The Century of Light, the review by the Universal House of Justice of the key developments of the twentieth century, contains a short description of 'Abdu'l-Bahā's sojourn in Egypt. This paper starts from the information contained there and follows its leads to investigate the contacts 'Abdu'l-Bahā had with a wide variety of influential people in Egypt, and the impression he made on them.

■ Roger Prentice (Northumberland, UK)

"The Still Quiet Centre and Its Disturbances: some immanent and transcendental elements in Bahā'ī theology relevant to a model of Bahā'ī-inspired education"

At the centre of the 'spiritualizing' model of education that I have been developing over the last decade there is a view of what it is to be human. This particular presentation looks at how theological principles might figure in such a view, and in the corresponding model of spiritualizing education. The primary aim is to describe how the divinely spiritual might be seen as a dimension and dynamic of classroom interaction.

The 'divinely spiritual' (as opposed to 'the human spirit' which is seen as 'caring, creativity and criticality') is seen immanently as insight flowing from discourse with the indwelling God. Transcendentally the divinely spiritual is seen as the presence of God experienced through 'a discourse' engendered via the ineffable states of awe and wonder.

A tentative taxonomy of the ways in which we might examine the spiritualizing dynamics of education is suggested, along with a tentative model of the dynamics of the divinely spiritual in the practice of learning and teaching. In addition to Bahā'ī writings I draw upon other writers, particularly the great Jewish mystical philosopher and social activist Abraham Joshua Heschel.

■ Erfan Sabeti (Lancaster, UK).

"Postmodernism: Some Bahā'ī Observations"

The postmodern condition is the moment in the evolution of the socio-cultural change associated with modernity in that it replicates a dialectic of power, knowledge and emotion. The recomposition of the religio-spiritual field reflects the exigencies of the present time. Since the Bahai Faith seeks to resolve problems of modernity by way of appealing to the spiritual character of man, it would be quite interesting to compare its approach with that of postmodernity which also deals with the same issue.

■ Nika Saeedi

"The Spread and Influence of the Bahā'ī Faith in Ardestan"

Ardestan is a small town north-east of Isfahan. The religion of the Bab arrived in this town at the very beginning of the ministry of the Bab. This paper looks at the establishment of the Babi community in the town and its development into the Baha'ī Community. A number of prominent residents of the town were converted and the Baha'is came to occupy Bab ar-Ruhā, one of the quarters of the town.

■ Oliver Scharbrodt

"Between Activism and Quietism: The political culture of the Bahā'ī community during the Constitutionalist Revolution of 1906"

This paper discusses 'Abdul-Baha's responses to the political developments in Iran prior and during the Constitutional Revolution of 1906-11. His writings will be used as a source to investigate how he viewed these developments and how he intended to position the Baha'is in them. This discussion begins with 'Abdul-Baha's response to the Tobacco Revolt in his Treatise on Leadership (*Risalah-yi Siyasiyyah*) and then looks at several letters he wrote in the course of the Constitutional Revolution. This paper argues that the failed participation of the Baha'is in the revolution gave the Baha'ī community an apolitical character. While initially, the Baha'is were more involved in the constitutional movement and their participation was not discouraged by 'Abdul-Baha, the apparent failure of the constitutional process and the political-cum-religious propaganda of the supporters and opponents of the process led 'Abdul-Baha to urge the Baha'is to abandon all participation whatsoever. He felt the need to provide the Baha'ī community with an explicit and uncompromising apolitical outlook in order to protect it from persecution and oppression and also to define its own sectarian identity distinguishing it from the more activist and revolutionary Azali-Babis.