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BOOK REVIEWS

Search for Values: Ethics in Baha'i Thought. Edited by John Danesh and Seena Fazel.
Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2004, xii + 239 pp. ISBN 1-890688-32-0.
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Baha'i ethics as an object of academic study has not yet been given much attention in Baha'i scholarship. Apart from some preliminary discussions in the form of articles by Udo Schaefer in the *Baha'i Studies Review* (nos. 4 and 5), systematic discussions on Baha'i ethics in general and different aspects of it in particular are missing. The volume of several articles edited by John Danesh and Seena Fazel under the title *Search for Values: Ethics in Baha'i Thought* might appear to fill this gap. However, the reader hoping to gain new insights into Baha'i ethics will be disappointed. Only the first two articles of the volume deal with Baha'i ethics itself while all the other articles cover various aspects of Baha'i doctrines and history but not, as the title of this volume would suggest, Baha'i ethics explicitly. Most of the contributions are revised versions of articles that have already been published in the *Baha'i Studies Review*.

Udo Schaefer's contribution, 'Towards a Bahā'ī Ethics', is one of the articles providing a systematic discussion of Baha'i morality. Originally published under the title 'The New Morality: an outline' in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 5 (1995), it does not provide a comprehensive introduction to Baha'i ethics but identifies some of its characteristics. According to Schaefer, the Baha'i Faith offers a complete ethical system that is based on divine revelation transmitted to Baha'u'llah. This moral system is not really novel but aims, like other religious traditions, at the moral transformation of the individual through following the divine commandments and assuming a virtuous character. In order to provide Baha'i morality with a theoretical structure, Schaefer refers to the teleological and deontological character of Baha'i ethics. Baha'i ethics is teleological in the sense that it stipulates the acquisition of a good character as a moral objective. It is deontological as it contains moral laws that must be obeyed by virtue of being based on divine revelation. In addition to this distinction, Schaefer offers a hierarchy of virtues in Baha'i ethics. 'Theocentric virtues' (p. 8) hold the highest rank and are virtues that relate to God, like love of God, trust in God or steadfastness. Schaefer calls the second class of virtues 'virtues of the Path' (p. 8). They refer to those qualities human beings are supposed to assume in order to realize their divine potentials. Detachment, purity and chastity belong to this category of virtues. Finally, there are 'worldly virtues' (p. 10) which determine social relations, like truthfulness, trustworthiness, justice and moderation.

Schaefer's article is certainly a good starting point for a systematic discussion of Baha'i morality. However, further discussion needs to proceed from it. Schaefer argues, on the one hand, that Baha'i ethics contains the very same values laid down by other religious traditions but, on the other hand, that 'the new revelation [of Baha'u'llah] ... provides these values with a new language, with new meanings and nuances and, above all, with a new spiritual power' (p. 7). Future studies on Baha'i ethics need to address to what extent Baha'i morality offers a 'new dimension' (p. 6). With the exception of some ritual particularities, Baha'i ethics seems to promulgate the same moral values as the Judaeo-Christian and Islamic traditions. Finally, to denounce the moral decline of the modern Western world is to some extent legitimate; but to contrast a perceived moral laxity in the contemporary world with

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moral laws in the Baha'i Faith which stand in direct contradiction to current moral trends, alone, gives the impression that Baha'i morality is merely a conservative reaction against the decline of traditional morality. Such an approach runs the danger of disregarding the potential new elements of Baha'i ethics.

William P. Collins, in his article, 'Baha'i Family Life: Beyond the Traditional', shows that the Baha'i understanding of family life is not simply a conservative reiteration of traditional patriarchal family structures in opposition to their erosion in the modern world. The basic thesis of Collins' article is that 'Baha'i family life is not traditional' (p. 26). Despite the stress on the family as the nucleus of society and the centrality of marriage in Baha'i ethics, the principles and laws informing the Baha'i conception of family do not follow traditional patriarchal patterns that are part of the Jewish, Christian and Islamic understanding of family and marriage. According to Collins, the Baha'i writings offer a new vision of family life and marriage that – though not legitimizing non-marital relations – is guided by principles that transcend the traditional understanding. Marriage and family are not solely social institutions to provide economic security and to satisfy mutual romantic feelings. The Baha'i family has the purpose of conveying and practising values which are important for the interaction of the family members with the wider society. Two of the guiding principles that should be realized in the family and in the society at large are unity and gender equality. In the Baha'i understanding of family life, authority is not based on gender, physical strength or economic power. The Baha'i principles of unity and gender equality require consultative decision-making within the family without favouring the opinion of either husband or wife: 'Since men and women are equal, so then do husband and wife have reciprocal and co-equal rights and duties' (p. 34). Collins makes an interesting proposal for the legal exegesis of those laws in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* which disfavour women, like the inheritance laws. Collins follows Shoghi Effendi's interpretation that laws that address men alone can be applied *mutatis mutandis* to women. As the inheritance laws in the *Kitab-i-Aqdas* favour male heirs, an extended application of 'the *mutatis mutandis* principle' (p. 35) would allow female heirs to be privileged if the deceased is a woman. Collins' article, as one of the two newly published articles in this volume, is an original contribution to the development of Baha'i ethics in relation to family and marriage, providing new insights into the structure and role of family life and marriage in the Baha'i Faith.

The other contributions in the volume do not really deal with issues regarding Bahā'ī ethics. Franklin Lewis, in his 'Discourses of Knowledge', explores how Abdu'l-Baha's statements about modern academic methods inform the Baha'i attitude towards knowledge produced by these methods. Lewis begins his contribution with the observation that Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha employ different modes of discourse depending on the presuppositions of their audience. When Baha'u'llah addresses Shiites and Babis he uses Islamic and Shii eschatological terminology referring to the return of the Twelfth Imam and the rise of the Mahdi. In his correspondence with Zoroastrians, however, Baha'u'llah does not put forward his messianic claims within the Islamic framework but argues within the parameters of Zoroastrian eschatology. For Lewis, Baha'u'llah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's adaptation to the expectations and assumptions of their addressees has two consequences for the understanding of these different discourses. First, one needs to distinguish between two kinds of truth: 'propositional' and 'metaphorical' (p. 54). When Baha'u'llah chooses a specific kind of discourse, like the discourse of Islamic philosophy in the Tablet of Wisdom, the propositions he makes in the tablet should not necessarily be considered to be facts that are absolutely true. Rather, Baha'u'llah intends to convey spiritual or metaphorical truths that lie behind the mere propositions he makes in the tablet. Second, when Baha'u'llah

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refrains from any reference to Islamic beliefs in his tablets to Zoroastrians, he does not deny these beliefs but just brackets them in order to make his message relevant to a different audience. Consequently, Lewis argues that when, in academic discourse, Western Baha'i academics exclude their beliefs, they do not deny them but simply bracket them to gain recognition in the intellectual and academic world that does not share these beliefs.

Lewis further justifies the legitimacy of academic Baha'i studies with a survey of Baha'ullah's and 'Abdu'l-Baha's statements on knowledge. With the spread of the Baha'i Faith in the West, 'Abdu'l-Baha comments on the post-Enlightenment discussion of the relationship between science and religion. Not only does he propose the unity of science and religion, but he also suggests science as a necessary corrective to counter religious fanaticism. Furthermore, 'Abdu'l-Baha not only distinguishes different kinds of knowledge and discusses their advantages and disadvantages but also gives precedence to logical proofs and empirical evidence. While intuitive knowledge and religious beliefs are subjective, logic and empirical methods are commonly shared among all humans and are therefore a solid foundation for an open discussion. For Lewis, 'Abdu'l-Baha's statements on different kinds of knowledge and methodologies to acquire it suggest that academic methods are not discarded but endorsed from a Baha'i perspective. Lewis's article was originally published under the title "First we speak of logical proofs": discourse of knowledge in the Bahā'ī writings' in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 10 (2001/2002). The article is very comprehensive and well argued and successfully counters the assumption that the Baha'i Faith is hostile towards academic methods, or that devout Baha'is cannot engage with the academic world without denying their beliefs.

John Hick's contribution, 'Can There Be Only One True Religion?' (first published in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 10, 2001/2002), contains a short and accessible summary of his pluralistic theology. To relativize claims of exclusivity common to many religious traditions, Hick attributes the differences among them to historical and cultural contexts in which they emerged. According to Hick, such a perspective would respect the individuality of each religion and allow its followers to participate in an interfaith dialogue. Unfortunately, Hick's article does not relate his own pluralistic theology with the Baha'i understanding of salvation history, although there are obvious parallels. Such a comparison would not only have been interesting but also quite appropriate, given that the article is published in a Baha'i studies series.

The last three articles in the volume deal with Baha'i individuals who translated doctrines of the Baha'i Faith into the intellectual, social and religious environment in which they lived. Christopher Buck provides an intellectual biography of Alain Locke (1885–1954), one of the leading Afro-American philosophers of the 20th century who became a Baha'i in 1918. Locke studied in Harvard and Oxford and pursued a distinguished academic career. He became the intellectual motor of the Harlem Renaissance, an aesthetic movement of the 1920s to promote the emancipation of Afro-Americans by artistic means. Buck gives new insights into a neglected aspect of Locke's life, providing an overview of his activities in the Baha'i community and discussing the 'synergy' (p. 109) between his religious beliefs as a Baha'i and his philosophical ideas. Although Locke's philosophy was shaped by various influences, Buck traces his notion of cultural pluralism back to the Baha'i principle of unity in diversity. Buck's article is one of the very rare discussions of how Locke's commitment to the Baha'i Faith affected his philosophy. Being a revised version of an article on Locke which was published in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 10 (2001/2002), it contains new archival material that gives further insights into Locke's relationship to the Baha'i Faith.

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Moojan Momen's contribution, 'Jamāl Effendi and the Baha'i Faith in Asia', provides an overview of the missionary activities of Jamal Effendi (d. 1898) in South Asia and South East Asia. The article gives a travel itinerary of Jamal Effendi's journeys to India, Burma, Thailand and Indonesia, describing his activities and methods used to promulgate the Baha'i Faith. Momen's discussion of the strategies Jamal Effendi employed to win new adherents constitutes the most interesting part of the article. Jamal Effendi presented himself as a Sufi shaykh and in targeting the Muslim population in India and South East Asia presented the Baha'i Faith not as a new religion but as a Sufi order with Baha'u'llah as its spiritual master. Only a small number of the new converts were initiated into the full impact of Baha'u'llah's theophanic claims. Momen's article (first published in the *Baha'i Studies Review* 9 (1999/2000)) is not only a valuable study of the history of the Baha'i Faith in Asia but also opens the discussion on how Baha'u'llah, 'Abdu'l-Baha and contemporary missionaries like Jamal Effendi used esoteric strategies to present the Baha'i Faith to a Muslim audience that would have been scandalized by Baha'u'llah's claims to a post-Quranic revelation.

The American equivalent of Jamal Effendi is Ibrahim Kheiralla. Richard Hollinger, in "Wonderful True Visions": Magic, Mysticism, and Millennialism in the Making of the American Baha'i Community', re-assesses Kheiralla's importance in the establishment of the Baha'i Faith in North America. The article provides information on Kheiralla's religious background and his early missionary efforts in the USA. Hollinger examines the interaction between Kheiralla and his first American disciples and how, through their interaction, a distinct American Baha'i community was formed. While initially Kheiralla gave lectures and classes on Eastern religions in general and on occult knowledge, referring only marginally to Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, the increasing interest of his disciples in the history of the Baha'i movement and Baha'u'llah's messianic claims created the nucleus of an American Baha'i community, whose members established a link between biblical prophecies and early Baha'i history. Hollinger's contribution – the second newly published article in this volume – sheds new light on the early history of the American Baha'i community and relativizes Kheiralla's importance in its formation.

The articles collected in this volume are all useful contributions to various fields of Baha'i scholarship. Only John Hick's article stands out in this collection as a rather cursory summary of his theological ideas. There are however two caveats. The title of the book is somewhat misleading. Only two articles really deal with ethics while the others discuss doctrinal and historical questions. Furthermore, one wonders why articles which have already been published and are to a large extent available online (<http://www.breacais.demon.co.uk/abs/bsr.htm>) have been printed again. Instead of recycling articles, Baha'i studies series, like the one of Kalimat Press, should be used for new contributions. One would hope that future Baha'i scholarship will proceed from these pieces of research and make original contributions, as William Collins and Richard Hollinger did with their articles in the present volume.

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The Poetry of Tāhīrih. By John S. Hatcher and Amrollah Hemmat. Oxford: George Ronald, 2002. ix+202+45 pp. ISBN 0-85398-460-3. £18.95, US\$36.95

Tāhīrih: A Portrait in Poetry. Edited and translated by Amin Banani. Studies in the Babi and Baha'i Religions, vol. 17. Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2004. 145 pages. ISBN 1-890688-36-3 \$23.95

The publication of two books within two years on the subject of Tahirih's poetry is to be welcomed by all those who are interested in the life and poetry of this great female personality of nineteenth-century Iran. Recent decades have seen the publication in English of some valuable works on the life of Tahirih.¹ But the study of her poetry has been understandably lacking because, in dealing with Tahirih's poetry, we encounter three main problems.

First, the number of poems attributed to Tahirih is not many. As Dr. Banani puts it,

the short and tumultuous life, the beleaguered circumstances of the Bābī community, the clandestine handling of Bābī manuscripts, the scattering of her possessions, and the hostility of her immediate family members, who may have destroyed or suppressed her papers – all these mitigate against any sense of assurance that we now have access to all the poems that she wrote.²

The second problem concerns the authenticity of some of the poems attributed to Tahirih. It is now certain that some pieces that for years were considered to be hers actually belong to other poets. Therefore a thorough investigation is needed to verify the genuineness of the rest of the poems attributed to her.³

The third problem resides in the difficulty of the mystical and religious language employed in her poetry. Unlike a small group of Tahirih's poems that are easily understood by any literate Iranian, most of her poems depend on a rather ambiguous and complicated language. Therefore, a good knowledge of the Qur'an and the Hadith, as well as of the mystical expressions of the Sufis, is needed to understand them.

Bearing all this in mind, we can better appreciate the appearance of two books of Tahirih's poetry translated into English verse by two eminent scholars of English literature.⁴

¹ See Abbas Amanat, *Resurrection and Renewal: The Making of the Babi Movement in Iran, 1944–1850* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1989) 295–331; Farzaneh Milani, *Veils and Words: The Emerging Voices of Iranian Women Writers* (Syracuse University Press, 1992) 77–99; Moojan Momen, 'The Family and Early Life of Tahirih Qurrat al-'Ayn', *Baha'i Studies Review* 11 (2003) 35–52 and idem, 'Usuli, Akhbari, Shaykhi, Babi: The Tribulations of a Qazvin Family', *Iranian Studies* 36/3 (September 2003) 317–337.

² Banani, p. 4. For the historical overview about collecting Tahirih's poems see Banani, 'The Survival of the Poems,' pp. 8–11.

³ See N. Dhukā'i Baydā'i, *Tadhkirih-yi shu'arā-yi qarn-i avval-i Bahā'ī* (The biographies of the Baha'i poets of the first Baha'i century), vol. 3 (Tehran, 126 B.E./1969) 107–133; and Vahid Rafati's article on this subject: 'Ash'ār-i mansūb bih haḍrat-e Tāhīrih' (Poems attributed to Tahirih), *Payām Bahā'ī*, no. 251 (Oct 2000) 11–13.

⁴ John S. Hatcher is Professor of English literature at the University of South Florida and the author of several books, among them the life and poetry of American poet Robert Hayden (1984). He has written more than 100 poems and articles that have appeared throughout the world in refereed literary journals. Jascha Kessler, who has turned Banani's translation into verse, is Professor of English and Modern Literature at University of California, Los Angeles. Besides his three volumes of poetry, he has translated, with Amin Banani, Forough Farrokhzad's *Bride of the Acacias* (from Persian) and has collaborated on several volumes of poetry translated from Hungarian, Serbian, Bulgarian and Greek.

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Hatcher and Hemmat start with a chapter that is based mostly on quotations from Abdul-Baha and Shoghi Effendi on the life of Tahirih. These, together with the description of her religious background in the Shaykhi-Babi milieu, acquaint the reader with Tahirih's personality and help to understand her position in the nascent Babi community.

The next chapter, 'Translating the Poetry of Tahirih', deals primarily with the problem of poetry in general and ends with a discussion of the characteristics of Tahirih's poems. In his essay Dr. Hatcher vividly explains the difficulty of translating any poetry that is culturally based, such as Tahirih's poetry. He has found it useful to devote a few pages to explaining the foundation of mysticism and the inner meaning of such words and idioms as 'Beloved', 'Path', and 'Seeker'. Finally, he explains the method adopted by the authors to solve the problem of translation:

We have not tried to imitate the metrical pattern or rhyme scheme used by Tāhirih ... We have attempted to capture the meaning and feeling of the original without translating the poetry out of her rhetorical devices. By doing this, we feel, we have better captured the tone, the spirit and the overall sense of the piece than had we attempted to imitate poetics alone.⁵

The translation of the poems follows. The 43 poems by Tahirih in Hatcher and Hemmat's book are divided into four categories: The Day of Resurrection, The Ecstasy of Nearness, The Praise of the Abha Beauty, and The Voice of God's Command. Each group contains between 7 and 11 poems, and each poem is assigned a title reflecting the taste and understanding of the authors. Each entry starts with an effort to unearth the hidden intentions of the poet in creating that particular piece.

This part of the book ends with an extensive appendix, sources of poems, bibliography, and notes. The next part contains the original texts of the poems in Persian – correctly without the titles, since classical Persian poems were never given titles.

Amin Banani's book starts similarly with a 30-page description of Tahirih's personality, her poems, the classical tradition of Persian poetry, the question of the survival of her poems and their cultural and historical context. He ends this first section with a description of a few of Tahirih's poems, trying to discern the secret of the great popularity these pieces enjoy among the Iranian public.

In the following chapter, 'On Translating a Persian Mystical Poet', Jascha Kessler and Anthony A. Lee, who have rendered Banani's translation into English verse, discuss the problems facing any translator in conveying the mystical and ecstatic poetry of Tahirih to the reader of contemporary English. To elucidate these problems, Jascha Kessler discusses different methods by which he could have translated Tahirih's poems and comes to this conclusion:

My decision was therefore to carry her over into our vernacular in both form and content, deliberately risking the exotic, sometimes anachronistic, effect. I see nothing to be gained by removing her altogether from the forms of her nineteenth century Persian world, which most assuredly would have occurred in any free-verse translation ... If the reader can believe that it is Tāhirih who is speaking in these poems, Tāhirih as she stands in the Persian, then I have succeeded in my aim to represent her – again, as *she* is, and not as she would look garbed in the casual American dress of fashion today ... So, let us take the risk of exhibiting her in the costume of the forms she

⁵ Hatcher and Hemmat, *ibid*, p. 29.

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employed, so that we may read and admire and come to understand her rather more as she was, and somewhat less as we might see her in our time.⁶

Then follows the translation, in verse, of 23 poems by Tahirih. Each piece bears a title and appears together with the original Persian text in calligraphy. The book ends with notes for each poem by Amin Banani, in which he explains the different literary aspects of that piece.

In order to show how the two books have treated Tahirih's poems I quote here one short poem, first in transcription, then in its literal translation followed by the English translation. The piece in question is no. 2 in Banani's book, entitled 'Just let the Wind...', which appears as no. 12 in Hatcher and Hemmat, where it is entitled 'For Love of My Beauty'.

*Agar bih bād daham zulf-i anbar āsā rā
 Asīr-i khīsh kunam āhūvān-i šahrā rā
 Vagar bih nargis-i shahlā-yi khīsh sormih kisham
 Bih rūz-i tūr-i nishānam tamām-i dunyā rā
 Barāy-i dādan-i rūyam sipihr dar dam-i šubh
 Burūn bar-āvarad āyini-yi muṭallā rā
 Guzār-i man bih kalīsā agar fitad rūzī
 Bih dān-i khīsh baram dukhtarān-i tarsā rā.*

Literal Translation:

If / to wind / I give / hair of / amber / scent
 Captive / of mine / I would make / deer of / wildness
 If / to / narcissus (eyes) / blue-black / mine / collyrium / I would draw
 To / day of / dark / I would set / entire / world
 For / seeing / my face / sphere / every / early / morning
 Outside / brings out / mirror of / gilt
 Path / mine / by / church / if / should fall / one day
 To / religion / mine / I would take / girls of / Christian

Banani:

Just let the wind untie my perfumed hair,
 My net would capture every wild gazelle.

Just let me paint my flashing eyes with black,
 And I would turn the day as dark as hell,

Yearning, each dawn, to see my dazzling face,
 The heaven lifts its golden looking-glass

If I should pass a church by chance today,
 Christ's own virgins would rush to my gospel.

⁶ Banani, *ibid.*, pp. 36–37.

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Hatcher and Hemmat:

If I blandish my tresses
 So that the wind extracts their fragrance,
 I will capture
 The gazelles of the plains.

If I line my eyes
 With collyrium,
 I will distract the whole world
 With my beauty,
 Each morning heaven
 Brings out its golden mirror
 Only that it might
 Observe my face.

If one day by chance
 I should pass by the church
 I would convert to my Faith
 All the Christian girls.

Comparing the two commentaries on the same piece, we will see how differently the two authors have understood Tahirih's poems. This pattern repeats itself almost constantly in relation to the other texts. Banani studies the piece in the context of classical Persian literature and points to the images that Tahirih uses, such as perfumed hair, gazelles in the wilderness, painted eyes, dawn and mirror. He finds the piece 'an exceptionally forceful poem in which Tahirih celebrates her own charismatic power'. He continues: 'A few women poets in Persian history – among them Rābi'ih and Mahsati of Ganja – have pursued this theme in their work, insisting on the power of their gender to attract and subdue. Being female, far from becoming a disability, becomes the source of power and dominance...'

Hatcher and Hemmat consider the images used by Tahirih 'outlandish hyperbole' and write: 'the point of view or persona employed by Tāhirih is not the poetess herself but that of the Prophet ... Most immediately it reminds the Bahā'ī reader of the statement by Bahā'u'llāh in the Kitāb-i-Aqdas that the goal of the believer is to "Observe My commandments, for the love of My beauty."' After quoting a verse from Kitāb-i Aqdas, paragraph 4, there comes yet another philosophical explanation: 'Of course, since every Prophet states that His power and attraction derive from the capacity to manifest the attributes of God, the frank confession of His attracting power is naught but praise of God – the source of all beauty (or "forms" of beauty, as Tāhirih states in another poem).' (p. 57)

It is beyond the scope of this review to assess the literary value of each translation, but a few general remarks would be pertinent. As we saw, Hatcher and Hemmat treat Tahirih's poetry only (and sadly) in a religious context. They have created a Tahirih from a Babi-Baha'i point of view, who, in the state of ecstasy, either praises the new revelation or chants verses glorifying the Bab or Baha'u'llah. The titles of the four categories into which her poems are divided, the names assigned to the poems, as well as the commentaries at the beginning of each piece, all direct the reader to one point: Tahirih is a passionate religious poet who sees nothing but the glorified new revelation. At the same time, at that early stage in the history of the Faith, she is well aware of the role of the Bab as the inaugurator of a new religious epoch,

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and of Baha'u'llah as *man yazhiruhullāh* (the one whom God shall make manifest). No doubt Tahirih does allude in some of her poems to Bab and Babi leaders such as Baha'u'llah, Quddus, Mulla Husayn, Subh-i Azal and others. Yet Hatcher and Hemmat believe that she addresses only the Bab and Baha'u'llah.

Banani's book considers Tahirih as a Persian Babi poetess and studies her as such. In his commentaries on her poems, Banani provides ample reference to other Persian literary traditions, locating Tahirih in a sequence of other Iranian women poets. When raising the question of to whom Tahirih addressed her poems, Dr. Banani writes:

Except for her versified correspondence with Bihjat, the Bābī poet of Shiraz,⁷ very little internal evidence can be deduced from the poems of Tāhirih regarding the time, identity of addressee, if any, or other specific circumstance surrounding their composition. Persian poetic traditions and practices being what they are, such ambiguities are not unusual.⁸

Similar to the works of many Iranian poets the authorship of some of Tahirih's poems is subject to dispute. She was loved and respected by Baha'is, and enjoyed high esteem among Iranian scholars. By the time her popularity grew, more poems were attributed to her either by carelessness or by the over-enthusiasm of subsequent generations of Baha'is. Some of these pieces were used to reflect her eventful life, and some to mirror the love and devotion she felt for her religious beliefs.

In the recent decades, two new trends can possibly be discerned. One is that some Baha'i scholars – as will be seen later - have tried to find out who are the actual authors of some of the disputed poems of Tahirih; and the other is from opponents of the Baha'i Faith. The latter group either deny that Tahirih was ever a Babi and also a poetess, or doubt the authorship of some of the poems that are almost certain to be hers. This is a familiar approach and in the case of Tahirih it needs to be researched in more detail.

Any editor of the collection of Tahirih's poems, when facing these problems, needs to be more critical in the selection of poems and in introducing them as hers. Awareness of the dating of publications is important in this task. For example, it is possible that poems of Tahirih are wrongly assumed not to be hers if they can be found in the works of poets contemporary to her or of previous generations. Therefore it is necessary for the editor to check the authenticity and accuracy of such *publications* or possibly refer to the original manuscript.

Hatcher and Hemmat are somewhat uncritical in their selection of poems. On page 30 the question of sources is discussed, and in referring to Baydā'i and Rafati (see note 3), the authors ascertain that of eight poems credited to Tahirih in Fadil Mazandarani's *Zuhūr al-Haq*, only three are actually hers (nos. 7, 14 and 24 in Hatcher and Hemmat). According to Rafati, three more belong to Fayd-i Kashani (1598–1680) (nos. 2, 5 and 26), and the authenticity of the two others is in doubt. Hatcher and Hemmat have included even the three poems belonging to Fayd-i Kashani ('This Longing for You', 'Arise!' 'The Love of Baha'), arguing that

⁷ Hatcher and Hemmat, quoting Dhuka'i Bayda'i, on p. 128, state that Bihjat was the pen name of Karīm Khān Māfī, a famous Baha'i from Qazvin. (Dhuka'i Bayda'i, himself a poet, is the author of a 4-volume biography of the Baha'i poets of Iran.)

⁸ Banani, *ibid.*, p. 20.

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the disputed poems which we have included as hers should at the very least tell us something about Tāhirih's interest, her state of mind and her thinking. Furthermore, Tāhirih could have applied a poem in a way not intended by the original author. For example, Tāhirih might have employed the term Bahā as an allusion to Bahā'u'llāh even though the word in the original poem was used in its denotative sense of 'glory', 'light', or 'splendor'. (p. 31)

This rather odd statement disregards the fact that the identity of the three poems belonging to Fayd-i Kashani is not 'disputed' – it is beyond any doubt that those pieces belong to him and not to Tahirih. Moreover, in making this statement the authors assume that Tahirih had in her lifetime a *Dīvān* (collection of poems) and that she deliberately included such poems in the corpus of her own poetry. We know very well that no such thing – even if it ever did exist – has come down to posterity, and the whereabouts of Tahirih's original papers are unknown. Her poems were saved thanks to oral tradition, and different people have added poems, as is the custom with most Iranian poets.

Another case is attributing to Tahirih some of the poems of Suḥbat-i Lārī, a leading Mulla of Fars who died nine years before the declaration of the Bab. In his poems Suḥbat-i Lari makes astonishing prophecies about the coming of the Bab and the events related to His life. No wonder Tahirih would memorize and recite them and people would consider them as being her poetry.⁹ Hatcher and Hemmat, as well as Banani, have attributed one of the poems by Suḥbat-i Lari to Tahirih (Banani, pp. 66–67 'You Brilliant Face'; Hatcher and Hemmat, p. 112 'Meditation on My Death'). However, the author of *Fārs-nāmih-yi Nāṣiri*¹⁰ records the verse in question as belonging to Suḥbat.

Hatcher and Hemmat also include for the first time as a poem by Tahirih a short verse entitled 'The Footsteps of Bahā' (no. 20), provided to them by an individual Baha'i. A Baha'i singer sang this popular verse at the Baha'i gatherings in Tehran about 30 to 40 years ago. At that time no one assumed this verse to be by Tahirih or to be of any Baha'i significance. The inclusion would be more understandable if the person who provided this verse was an authority on Tahirih's life and works, but this is not the case. The introduction to the verse in question, relating it to the gathering of Badasht, exceeds the wildest imagination: 'three tents or pavilions were rented in three separate gardens.'¹¹ In this poem we are to imagine that Tahirih hears the footsteps of Baha'u'llah outside her pavilion. Fully aware of Baha'u'llah's station, she speaks of this sound as causing rapture in her heart... (p. 88). And all this is imagined in nineteenth-century Persia, where it was considered blasphemous for a man to enter the area in which a woman resided.

Still another verse (Banani pp. 69–70 'In Pursuit'; Hatcher and Hemmat pp. 106–7 'A Shameless Servant Am I?') is attributed to Iṣmat Khānum Tihrānī (under the nom de plume Tā'irih, 1861–1911), a Baha'i woman of the late Qajar period who had become engaged in women's rights by writing articles, forming women's societies and writing poems.¹²

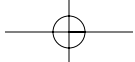
Apart from these points, the authors of both works should be complimented for their endeavour of translating into verse the large body of poems attributed to Tahirih. In Amin

⁹ For more on Suḥbat-i Lari see Rouhollah Mehrabkhani, *Ilhām-i Shu'arā* (The inspiration of poets), Darmstadt, Germany: Asr-i Jadid Publishers, 2004, pp. 98–108.

¹⁰ By Mirza Hasan Fasā'i (1821–1898), on the history and geography and the notables of the province of Fars.

¹¹ For Baha'u'llah, Tahirih and Quddus.

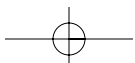
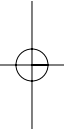
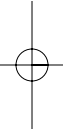
¹² For more on Ismat Khanum, see Juan R. I. Cole, *Modernity and the Millennium* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987) 180–81.



REVIEW OF HATCHER AND HEMMAT, *THE POETRY OF TAHIRIH*

Banani's work, Kalimat Press has produced a beautiful book imbued with good taste in its layout, typography, design, etc., a book that not only exhibits Tahirih's poetic ability but also represents by its appearance the femininity of the poet.

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Religion and Society in Qajar Iran. Robert Gleave (ed.). London and New York: Routledge Curzon, 2005. xiv, 482 pp., 12 illustrations, index. ISBN 0-415-33814-X (Hbk) £65.00.

This book is a collection of twenty papers on Qajar Iran, all but two of which were originally presented at an international conference held in September 2000 organized by the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Bristol University, England, and representing the culmination of a project sponsored by the British Institute of Persian Studies.

In terms of Babi-Baha'i studies, four papers are of particular interest: Todd Lawson's 'Orthodoxy and heterodoxy in Twelver Shi'ism: Aḥmad al-Aḥsā'ī on Fayḍ Kāshānī (the *Risālat al-'Ilmiyya*)'; Juan R. I. Cole's 'The evolution of charismatic authority in the Bahā'ī faith (1863–1921)'; Moojan Momen's 'The role of women in the Iranian Bahā'ī community during the Qajar period'; and Sohrab Yazdani's 'Heterodox intellectuals of the Iranian Constitutional Revolution'.

Lawson's piece deals with a polemical work by al-Aḥsa'i, the *Risālat al-'Ilmiyya* (1815), directed against Mullā Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī (1597–1680), and through him a long tradition in Islamic philosophy. For al-Aḥsa'i, Kashani was to be stigmatized as a believer in *waḥdatu'l-wujūd* (existential monism) and as one who had implied that humans might know God's knowing – two forms of knowing which were totally incommensurate. Lawson suggests that al-Aḥsa'i's critique was a means to safeguard God's utter transcendence from what he saw as the contamination of the Mullā Ṣadrā school of philosophy, noting a certain similarity here with the likewise uncompromising attitudes of the contemporary Sunni Wahhabi movement in al-Aḥsa'i's own homeland, and drawing parallels with the views of 'Alā'u'd-Dawlih Simnānī (d. 1336) in his defence against Buddhist thinkers at the time of the Il-Khānids. He alludes to Ismā'īlī motifs which he perceives in al-Aḥsa'i's thinking, as well as in that of the heterodox movements that came after him.

Lawson emphasizes al-Aḥsa'i's importance in modern Iranian religious history. Thus, during his lifetime, al-Aḥsa'i was enormously popular among the political and religious leaders of Iran, in part perhaps because his mystical Shi'ism offered a potentially powerful counter to the growth of the Sufi orders. He was also important in his claims to experiential authority based on his own spiritual encounters with the Hidden Imam in the interworld, and the challenge this posed to the authority claims of the Uṣūlī clerics of the time, and in the influence which he later had on the Babi and Baha'i movements as well as on wider currents in the Islamic world. Of course, Usuli clericism eventually prevailed, and al-Aḥsa'i himself came to be increasingly regarded as heterodox – as Lawson notes, his attack on Kashani had the effect of making the latter appear more orthodox than he in fact was.

As is often the case with histories of ideas, Lawson's account is suggestive but elusive: a stimulus to fresh thinking about the sources, context and impact of al-Aḥsa'i's ideas, but an as yet fragile intellectual structure which future research will doubtless flesh out and make more substantive.

Cole takes as his theme changes in the authority structures in the Baha'i Faith during the lifetimes of Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha, referring in particular to the importance of the charismatic authority accorded to the two leaders by their followers. Thus, from the beginning of his prophetic ministry, Baha'u'llah was seen as possessing extraordinary authority as a divine revelator. He was the spiritual centre of the religion he had founded. During his years in Edirne and 'Akka, he also identified six other sources of authority for various matters: his own writings; the two eldest of his sons, 'Abdu'l-Baha and Muhammad-'Ali; the collectivity of his [male] children, the *Aghsān* ('Branches'); 'the people' and the various national

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parliaments functioning as their representatives; the Baha'i 'learned' (*ulamā*); and the general [international] House of Justice, several of these assuming some importance during his own lifetime. Local Houses of Justice were also referred to. After Baha'u'llah's passing (in 1892), however, tensions arose which led to significant changes in the Faith's authority structures, indicating the inherent instability of designating so many varied sources of authority.

After outlining Baha'u'llah's own designations of these various authorities, Cole seeks to account for the changes they underwent under the leadership of 'Abdu'l-Baha. The structure of his essay makes this account more complex than it need be, however, as neither the International House of Justice (only established in 1963) nor the world's parliaments had any bearing on Baha'i authority structures during the period covered by this paper. Interesting though Cole's discussions of these topics are, they are effectively digressions from his stated purpose – and make an account of his paper more difficult.

As I understand Cole's argument, he points to two profound changes in the framework of Baha'i authority structures which Baha'u'llah had outlined. First, Baha'u'llah's appointment (revealed only in his will) of 'Abdu'l-Baha as his successor and as the expounder of his teachings set in train a series of events which transformed the position and role of Baha'u'llah's sons. Although accepted by the mass of the Baha'is, 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership was challenged by his half-brother, Muhammad-'Ali, who had been specifically designated as the next in line to the succession and resented 'Abdu'l-Baha's pre-eminence – as well as wishing for a share in the control over financial contributions from the Baha'is. When the dispute became public, 'Abdu'l-Baha cut off funding to his brother and those who had followed him, while the majority of the Baha'is shunned them. Furthermore, in his own will, 'Abdu'l-Baha denounced Muhammad-'Ali and declared that he had forfeited his successorship, appointing instead his own grandson, Shoghi Effendi, to serve as 'Guardian' of the Baha'i Cause and interpreter of its scriptures. As the other half-brothers and their families had also sided with Muhammad-'Ali, they were also disinherited, and the role projected for them by Baha'u'llah ended.

Second, Baha'i authority structures in Iran also changed. During Baha'u'llah's lifetime, certain prominent Baha'is with Islamic clerical training had exercised great influence over the Baha'is (all the more so in that Baha'u'llah's exile prevented immediate contact with him and enhanced the role of intermediaries), but Baha'u'llah had also called for the establishment of local Baha'i Houses of Justice to oversee Baha'i activities, and as these began to form, tensions between them and a few of the Baha'i 'clerics' developed, both Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha supporting the Houses of Justice (local assemblies) in these instances. Later (under Shoghi Effendi), the role of these individuals was further diminished.

Both these points have been made by other writers elsewhere, but Cole finesses them by considering relevant financial flows and controls. Baha'u'llah himself ordained that his followers should pay *Huqūqu'llāh*, essentially a religious tax on net profits over a certain amount, and somewhat similar to the Shi'i payment of *khums*. These funds provided Baha'u'llah with a source of revenue additional to the stipend he received from the Ottoman government, and could be used to support the activities of the Baha'is. Correspondingly, the support of wealthy Baha'i merchant clans was important in consolidating 'Abdu'l-Baha's leadership, as they were able to fund his initiatives and to block funding to those who opposed them, as in the case of the Baha'i cleric Aqā Jamāl Burūjirdī, which Cole examines in detail.

Cole makes a number of interesting points which seem to be subsidiary to his main argument, notably about 'Abdu'l-Baha's discussions of law and government – which Cole interprets as calling for a sharp separation between civil and religious authorities in the

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contemporary Middle East as well as envisaging that future Baha'i Houses of Justice would only be concerned with spiritual issues and matters of personal status such as marriage (pp. 322–27); and the practical sociological tensions between Baha'u'llah's injunction to his followers to consort with the followers of all religions and the shunning of Covenant-breakers, and between the assertion of 'blind obedience' to the Covenant and Baha'i emphasis on personal conscience.

For this reviewer, Cole's lengthy asides detract from the paper's value and could more usefully have been discussed in separate essays. By packing so much into one paper, Cole obscures his main argument. Again, in sociological terms, what is key here is the actual realities of authority and power within the Baha'i Faith as it developed up to 1921: ideals for the future propounded by the religion's leaders are only relevant in so far as they relate to those realities.

From a sociological viewpoint, a second weakness of the paper is Cole's use (and overuse) of the term 'charisma', which becomes almost a synonym for 'authority'. Although Weber identified different kinds of charisma, he also stated that charisma was only one form of authority, and indeed one of the main developments in Baha'i history is the 'routinization' of charismatic leadership into rational–legal authority. It is true that there were a number of conflicts over authority in Baha'i history, but only some of these can be usefully discussed in terms of charismatic competition: thus training in Islamic studies (p. 317) was not sufficient in itself to endow an individual with charisma, and a local House of Justice (p. 322) bears rational–legal, not charismatic, authority. Again, while it was significant that Baha'u'llah called on the world's parliaments to undertake certain social policies, and that he assured individual Baha'is that they could receive some measure of divine inspiration (p. 318), this does not entail charismatic authority in Weberian terms.

Regrettably, there are hardly any published studies of the Iranian Baha'i community in European languages (and even in Persian, while there are many community chronicles, there are no analytical community studies), and so Momen's study of Baha'i women in the late Qajar period is to be greatly welcomed. Focusing on a number of prominent Baha'i women of the period (Varaqtu'l-Firdaws – the sister of Mullā Husayn (c. 1815–1902); Shamsu'l-Duḥā – another Babi who later became a Baha'i (d. 1890s); Fā'izeh Khānum (c. 1854–1927); 'Alaviyyih Khānum (c. 1855/6–1921); the poetess Tāyirih Khānum (1861/1865–1911); and Fāṭimih-Sulṭān and Ummu'l-Awliyā' (no dates given)), he uses their stories as exemplars of the various activities and achievements of Iranian Baha'i women at this time. Necessarily, this technique yields a somewhat impressionistic account of developments, but prior to more detailed research appearing, it is a valuable start.

Momen's main observations are that leading women sometimes played a very significant role in the Baha'i community of the time, in some instances even acting as the leaders of the entire community in a particular locality. Several were also active in promoting education among girls and in teaching the Baha'i Faith to other women (and sometimes to husbands). Some deliberately challenged social convention by urging fellow Baha'i women to abandon the veil in certain circumstances, and one (Tāyirih) was active in the national women's movement that was then beginning to emerge in Iran. Several faced persecution, and in some instances were severely beaten because of their Baha'i activities. Two were able to assist persecuted Baha'i men in Tehran through food deliveries and other means. Momen also notes the sociological importance of women's networks as a basis for action and the spread of the Baha'i Faith; the reputation which Baha'is had already begun to gain among Europeans in Iran by the 1870s for allowing women greater freedom relative to prevailing social norms; the

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inspiration provided by the Baha'i ideals of female advancement found in the writings of Baha'u'llah, and even more particularly in those of 'Abdu'l-Baha; the role of women in sometimes pressuring Baha'i men to implement 'Abdu'l-Baha's injunction to pay special attention to the education of girls; the impact of links with Western Baha'is, particularly the arrival in Tehran of a small number of American Baha'i women to promote Baha'i education and health care in the capital; and the symbolic importance of the Babi leader Tāhirih (1817–50) as an inspiration for the Baha'i women. The article also includes some interesting historical photographs.

As a minor criticism, Momen seems to assume a fairly close linkage between the presentation of particular Baha'i teachings (such as Baha'i family law and the injunction on all Baha'is to propagate their religion [pp. 347, 358]) and the implementation of these teachings by the Baha'is, whereas impressionistic evidence suggests that throughout the development of Baha'i communities a considerable range of practice, including deviation from officially desired norms, has been usual. Again, an inevitable weakness of Momen's study is its concentration on leading Baha'i women and its neglect of the rank and file, but, given the literary sources available for his study, this neglect is presumably unavoidable. As he himself admits, his study provides us with 'glimpses' (p. 347) of what was probably a far more complex situation.

In short, this is a valuable pioneering study that draws attention to a topic which demands far more attention from historians. Further research could usefully examine more closely any linkages between the moves towards women's activism in wider Iranian society evident from the 1890s onwards and the ideas and actions of the Baha'i women; any changes over the period in the role of Baha'i women in the family (the prohibition on concubinage and temporary marriage; the eventual insistence on monogamy; the discouragement of divorce; etc.) – a topic deliberately excluded by Momen from his study; and some attempt to construct a general historical narrative of the overall role of women in the Iranian Baha'i community. More generally, of course, there is an enormous need for detailed historical studies and sociological analysis of the overall development of the Iranian community, as well as of its location and interlinking with wider developments in Iranian society. While most studies of modern Iranian history and society consistently marginalize the importance of the Babis and Baha'is (a foolish neglect in my opinion), Baha'i historians have a tendency to confine themselves to rather inward-looking and contextless biographical studies.

Yazdani's piece attacks the view advanced by some historians that Azali Babi intellectuals played a prominent role in the Iranian Constitutional Revolution, arguing that with the exception of Mīrzā Yaḥyā Dawlatābādī, there is no evidence that these men were actually Azalis, and that even if they originally came from an Azali background, the political and social views they expressed were so far removed from traditional Babi doctrines and so evidently influenced by the ideals of the European Enlightenment, modernism and socialism, as to make any supposed Azali linkages meaningless. While agreeing with Yazdani that there was a disjunction between Azali religious thought and the socio-political views of men such as Sayyid Jamāl Iṣfahānī and Mīrzā Jahāngīr Shīrāzī, this does not necessarily nullify the hypothesis of an Azali link – it is perfectly plausible that these men were exercising *taqiyya* (dissimulation of belief) in order to exert greater influence on contemporary society. The question does not yet seem to have been conclusively decided, and their 'true' religious beliefs will perhaps always remain a matter of speculation. Certainly, there are earlier instances of Azali political radicals with complex beliefs (notably Shaykh Aḥmad Rūḥī and Mīrzā Aqā Khān Kirmānī), but Yazdani does not mention them in his argument.

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Readers of *Baha'i Studies Review* will also find the article by Haideh Sahim ('Jews of Iran in the Qajar period: Persecution and perseverance') of interest in the parallels which can be drawn with persecutions of Baha'is in Iran. Sahim focuses on the persecution of the Jews of Hamadan in 1892–3 instigated by a certain Mullā 'Abdu'llāh Burūjirdī, noting that the incident illustrated both the ability of a minor cleric to make a name for himself by attacking a minority and the ineffectiveness of Qajar government, and arguing that it became a role model for similar assaults elsewhere – including one against the Jews of Tehran in 1897 led by Sayyid Rayḥānu'llāh Darābī (younger brother of the Babi leader Vaḥīd).

As to the rest of the book, the coverage is diverse, the essays being grouped into five sections. First, there are four articles on various aspects of the relationship between Twelver Shi'ism (particularly as represented by the *ulamā*) and the Qajar state: Saïd Amir Arjomand on the development of what we might describe as political theory in the early Qajar period; Robert Gleave on the juristic theory of *jihād*; Mansur Sefatgol on the role played by some ulama in the administration of the Qajar state; and Irene Schneider on the work of the religious and state courts during the reign of Nāṣiru'd-Dīn Shāh.

A second section contains four essays on 'religious thought'. Apart from Lawson's and Yazdani's work reviewed above, these comprise: Sajjad Rizvi on the ideas of being (*wujūd*) and sanctity (*wilāya*) in the writings of three late Qajar philosophers (Sabzavārī, Qumshihī and Zunūsī); and Andrew J. Newman on the anti-Akḥbārī sentiments of Muḥammad Bāqir al-Khwānsārī (d. 1313/1895).

The third section deals with aspects of lay religiosity (and exemplifies the creative use of archival materials), with Roxane Haag-Higuchi examining the religious interests of a literary figure (Yaghmā-yi Jandaqī (1781–1859)) who was also a mid-ranking Qajar bureaucrat; Christopher Werner looking at the religious sentiments of some Tabrizi merchants as revealed in their wills; and Nobuaki Kondo describing the life of Manūchihr Khān (d. 1847), the one-time advisor to Fath-'Alī Shāh who subsequently became governor of Isfahan, and discussing his religious patronage. (This is the same man who came to the support of the Bāb, but this episode in his life is not discussed in the article, other than to note Manuchihr Khan's apparent religious liberalism.)

The fourth section deals with religious minorities: Abbas Amanat on the Shi'ite response to the Christian missionary Henry Martyn (1781–1812); Florence Hellot on the impact of Western missionaries in the Urumia region of western Azerbaijan; Haideh Sahim on the Jews of Hamadan; and the two Baha'i studies by Cole and Momen reviewed above.

The book's final section deals with several aspects of religion and culture: Kamran Aghaie on the wider significance of Muharram passion plays in Tehran; Pardis Minuchehr on the presentation of religious themes in the exile press during the period of Constitutionalist agitation; Hormoz Ebrahimnejad on the impact of Western medical practice; and Jennifer Scarce on religious and nationalistic iconographic motifs in Qajar tilework.

As the editor himself notes, the essays in the book comprise a series of case studies on various aspects of religion in the Qajar period and not a comprehensive or systematic survey – indeed, such a survey has yet to be written. Inevitably, then, some important topics are more or less neglected, including Sufism, the Zoroastrian and Christian minorities, and tribal and peasant religion. The episodic nature of the book can therefore perhaps be seen as a goad to further research.

One final point: given that the book is expensive, I was a little surprised when it fell apart on first reading due to the poor quality of its binding. Perhaps it was just my copy, or maybe this reflects the exigencies faced by the modern book industry. By contrast, my library

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contains numerous volumes (including Browne of course), which were printed in the nineteenth century and are still in good condition, despite many years of use and the travails of a tropical climate.

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