

KENOSHA, 1893-1912:  
HISTORY OF AN EARLY BAHÁ'Í COMMUNITY  
IN THE UNITED STATES

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STUDIES IN BÁBÍ AND BAHÁ'Í HISTORY  
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During the final years of the last century, the Baha'i Faith was introduced into the United States, with few exceptions, in large cities such as New York and Chicago.<sup>1</sup> One of the exceptions was Kenosha, Wisconsin. It was the second city in America to have Baha'is in residence; it had either the first or the second elected Baha'i institution—a forerunner of the present Local Spiritual Assemblies—in the United States; and it was the only city in Wisconsin visited by 'Abdu'l-Baha. Until the 1920s, Kenosha was the only sizable Baha'i community in Wisconsin, and for many years it was the third largest community in the United States. Therefore, the history of the Kenosha Baha'i community is an important part of the early history of the American Baha'i community and sheds light on the development and diffusion of the Baha'i Faith in North America.

### **Kheiralla's teachings establish a community**

Although the Baha'i religion had been frequently mentioned in the West, and particularly at the World's Parliament of Religions in Chicago in 1893, systematic teaching of the Faith did not begin until 1894, when Dr. Ibrahim George Kheiralla

(Khayru'llah), a Syrian convert, actively began to promulgate it in Chicago. Shoghi Effendi states in *God Passes By* that Kheiralla visited Kenosha as early as 1895 and that Byron S. Lane, a Kenosha engineer, was converted between 1895 and 1897, having learned of the new Faith through Paul Kingston Dealy (d. 1937) of Chicago, one of the first Baha'is in America.<sup>2</sup> Lane wrote of his conversion:

We were living in Kenosha at the time and on visiting a friend in Chicago, by the name of Paul Kingston Dealy, I heard of a great Wise Man who came from the Holy Land, who had a true Message of God, the Truth. We investigated and found that he [Dealy] surely had the Truth and we got him to come to Kenosha and give the Message to all who were ready to receive it.<sup>3</sup>

After satisfying Lane's inquiries into the nature of the Faith, Dealy began making regular visits to Kenosha along with Kheiralla, who seems to have been in charge of the lessons received by those who were studying the new religion.<sup>4</sup> Meetings were held regularly at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Lane, at 566 West Street (now 6317 Eleventh Avenue) where large numbers investigated the Baha'i teachings. There was a fixed course of study which usually consisted of twelve lessons and began with teachings on the soul and mind, progressed through various subjects, and culminated with the last lesson, during which those who had accepted all they had been taught were given the knowledge of the Greatest Name. That is, they were told about Baha'u'llah.<sup>5</sup> It is this knowledge of Baha'u'llah which was the truth referred to in the first of the Baha'i lessons:

It is your desire Mr. Truthseeker, to take these teachings, is it not? What is your object? To know the truth? Well, Mr., the truth is and has always been for the truth seeker and for no one else. As Jesus taught. We follow the example of Jesus. He said: "Knock and it shall be opened, ask and thou shalt receive, he that seeketh, findeth," showing that you have only to ask for it. It costs nothing, only the asking for it.

But when you get it you will prize it higher than anything on this earth for it is the greatest thing that man can get in this world.<sup>6</sup>

Although the knowledge of the teachings and recognition of the station of Baha'u'llah was a great prize, one requirement of those taking the Baha'i lessons was that: these teachings are private and you are not to mention them to anyone; they are not secret but private, and we trust to your honor. We do not ask you to take any obligation or oath. These teachings are private for many reasons. You will remember that Jesus talked to the masses in parables. When He was alone with His [apostles] they asked Him why He talked to the masses in parables. He said: "to them I talk in parables but to you only is given to understand the mysteries of the Kingdom of God. ..."

When they attempted to expound the teachings He rebuked them and told them that they must not cast their pearls before swine. This was to show them that the truth was only for truth seekers. ... So you are not to mention the teachings until you are given permission.<sup>7</sup>

Since Kheiralla was giving similar series of lessons in various localities, and one needed to have his permission to speak of the teachings, it is evident that he exercised a strong control over the dissemination of the Faith, and over the early believers. The effect of this control would be recognized a few years later. In any case, the silence observed by the Baha'is was so nearly complete that from 1897 to 1900, both in public and among themselves, the Baha'is were known as "Truthseekers" or, more often, as "Truth-knowers." This led to considerable confusion and speculation about the true nature of Baha'i beliefs.

The Truth-knower lessons in Kenosha were quite successful, resulting in the enrollment of eighteen believers in 1897.<sup>8</sup> In that same year, an embossing seal for stamping documents and papers was purchased by those Baha'is in Kenosha who had charge of such matters. The inscription on the seal read: "The Assembly of Behaists in Kenosha, Wis. \*1897\*" and in its center was an imprint of the Greatest Name symbol.<sup>9</sup> The Baha'is in the United States referred to themselves as Behaists until about 1900.

The use of the term "assembly" requires some clarification. In the first years of the Faith's development in America, the term usually referred to the entire Baha'i membership in a given locality. Thus, "Assembly of Behaists in Kenosha" may refer to the whole Kenosha Baha'i community, and not to the elected body later referred to as the Local Spiritual Assembly.

It would be of some interest to establish a definite date for the formation of Kenosha's first elected institution, since this would decide the question of whether Kenosha was the first or the second such body to be formed in the country. In *God Passes By* Shoghi Effendi indicates that "as far back as the year 1899 a council board of seven officers, the forerunners of a series of assemblies which, ere the close of the first Baha'i century, were to cover the North American Continent from coast to coast, was established in the city of Kenosha."<sup>10</sup> The Kenosha records still in existence include a minute book for 1899, showing the election of a "Board of Counsel" on 26 May of that year. However, a treasurer's record book dated January 1898, also in the Kenosha archives, indicates the possibility, though not directly documented, of an Assembly in 1898 or 1897. A manuscript "History of the Kenosha Baha'i Community" compiled in 1933 by Louis J. Voelz, then secretary of the Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Kenosha, tends to confirm the view of early Kenosha believers that 1897 was the year in which an elected body was formed.<sup>11</sup>

The National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States and Canada addressed this problem in a letter to Shoghi Effendi dated 6 January 1944. In its attempt to compile significant historical facts for *God Passes By*, the National Spiritual Assembly recorded the following reports from Kenosha and New York City:

Kenosha Assembly: "We report that we have the original embossing seal used by the Baha'is here in 1897. This seal reads as follows—The Assembly of the Behaists in Kenosha, Wis. \*1897\* The minutes of a meeting held on May 26th, 1899 reports the election of seven officers . . . but states nothing regarding the election of a Board. However, in the Minute [*sic*] of the meeting of June 23rd, 1899, it reports that the President appointed two other members as watchmen. That would make a total of nine officers. But they were

apparently officers of the entire Bahá'í community and not of a separately [sic] elected Board. It seems that in those days the name Assembly applied to the entire community and that the business meetings included the community in general. . . . The only Minutes we have of that early period are from May, 1899 to May, 1900. The start of the present Spiritual Assembly had its inception . . . June 8th, 1904."

New York Assembly: "The records show that a 'Board of Counsel' was elected on December 7, 1900, at the old home of Mr. Arthur P. Dodge, room 601, Carnegie Building. . . . But incorporation took place earlier for the old seal is dated 1898—The Assembly of the Beha'ists New York City'. Also William Dodge remembers that there was a body of nine in 1898. I find no written account of such a body."<sup>12</sup>

Without direct and clearly documented evidence, however, the issue of whether Kenosha had an elected local body before or after New York City will continue to remain in doubt.

The year 1898 brought continued successful meetings in the home of Byron Lane,<sup>13</sup> where he witnessed the conversions of many prominent Kenosha businessmen and women.<sup>14</sup> The new Baha'is suffered much criticism from relatives and friends, but such opposition did not prevent the Baha'i community from growing to seventy-seven believers during that year.

There may be several possible explanations for the ready acceptance of the Baha'i teachings among Kenoshans. First, the popularity of spiritualism, mesmerism, Christian Science, and various reform movements may have opened the way for investigation of other unorthodox or non-Christian religious ideas.<sup>15</sup> Second, many Kenoshans were descendants of immigrants from upper New York State, which in the nineteenth-century had a tradition of religious ferment, as exemplified by Millerites and Mormons.<sup>16</sup> Third, the 1893 World's Parliament of Religions had an effect on educated Americans, and the Kenoshans may have been particularly affected because of their proximity to Chicago. Fourth, Kenosha was a city with great social change, being a port on Lake Michigan used by large numbers of immigrants to the Midwest. It nearly doubled in population, from

6,532 in 1890, to 11,606 in 1900.<sup>17</sup> Fifth, the "private" nature of the Truth-knower lessons may have drawn those who might tend to be attracted to secret movements, such as Freemasonry.

Ibrahim Kheiralla's successes in teaching brought great commendation from 'Abud'l-Baha, and the designations of "Baha's Peter," "Conquerer of America," "The Second Columbus."<sup>18</sup> He left in July 1898, with the first group of Western Baha'is to make a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. The central feature of their visit was the opportunity to meet 'Abdu'l-Baha. It was during this period in 'Akka that Kheiralla began to develop a mistrust and antagonism which would result in a total break with 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1900.

Even a cursory glance at the content of the Truth-knower lessons or at Kheiralla's books, *Bab-ed-Din* and *Beha U'llah*, provides ample evidence that Kheiralla's highly personal exposition of Baha'i beliefs diverged considerably from the doctrines expounded by 'Abdu'l-Baha. We might cite as examples, his teachings concerning the personality of God, the incarnation of God in Baha'u'llah, the station of 'Abdu'l-Baha as the return of Jesus Christ, the preexistence of the soul, reincarnation, and the significance of personal revelations. It is not surprising that Kheiralla's pilgrimage should reveal to him the discrepancy between his own version of the Baha'i teachings and that offered by 'Abdu'l-Baha and the other Persian teachers. In a 1917 autobiographical sketch,<sup>19</sup> Kheiralla hints at the importance he attached to his own view of his personal version of Baha'i tenets. Referring to the publication of his book *Beha 'U'llah*, Kheiralla wrote: "To safeguard and protect *my teachings* from changes and misrepresentations by the teachers *whom I appointed* to teach, and also by others who studied them, I made up my mind to put them in black and white in the form of a book."<sup>20</sup> (Emphasis added.)

Kheiralla's attachment to his own teachings, and his unwillingness to accept the authority of teachings which were easily verifiable from the Arabic texts of Baha'i scriptures, or from the person of 'Abdu'l-Baha, is illustrated by two further incidents which took place on his pilgrimage. Kheiralla reports that 'Abdu'l-Baha was asked the symbolic meaning of the two unclean

animals which entered Noah's Ark. 'Abdu'l-Baha's answer was that "they were ungodly people who pretended to be believers and deceitfully joined the Assembly of the faithful." Kheiralla's reply to 'Abdu'l-Baha was that the ark was symbolic of God and that, therefore, those who pretended to be believers "cannot enter nor be allowed to come into it." After Kheiralla had expounded an explanation of his own, 'Abdu'l-Baha said, "Every subject has two meanings, one spiritual, the other material; what I explained to you is right and what Kheiralla explained, is also right."<sup>21</sup> Kheiralla wrote that 'Abdu'l-Baha avoided his further questions so that he had to seek answers from the Persian Baha'is present in 'Akka.

When it became apparent that Kheiralla and the other Baha'is disagreed over various doctrinal matters, 'Abdu'l-Baha called everyone before him to discuss the matter. He pointed out to Kheiralla that, though his logic was good, he should not limit God. Kheiralla answered, "Everything known is limited and as by the Infinite Knowledge of God He knows Himself, therefore God is limited Himself to Himself." 'Abdu'l-Baha's reply was succinct: "This is an error, you should not limit God, say He is independent and sanctified from His creatures." Kheiralla retorted: "Is not the saying 'God is independent from His creatures' a kind of limitation also?" At this point, Kheiralla relates that 'Abdu'l-Baha's face turned white, he frowned, and abruptly ended the meeting.<sup>22</sup>

It is not difficult to see in these incidents, set down by Kheiralla himself, both the motivation for and the outer expression of his smoldering antagonism toward 'Abdu'l-Baha, the appointed successor of Baha'u'llah and interpreter of his teachings. Kheiralla's attachment to his own understanding of Baha'i precepts, and his unwillingness to accept 'Abdu'l-Baha's explanations, were the seed of the opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha's authority he was to exhibit several months later in Kenosha, Chicago, and New York.

#### THE CHURCHES RESPOND

As already mentioned, a Board of Counsel was elected by the Kenosha believers on 26 May 1899, with Lane as president and



Mrs. Minnie Lane, his wife, as vice-president. The effectiveness of the Truth-knower lessons resulted in a total enrollment of 212 Baha'is by the end of the year, which made the Baha'i community a small but significant minority in a city of Kenosha's size.

Such vitality could not long go unchallenged by the established Kenosha churches. Alarmed at the rapid spread of the Truth-knowers, the Baptist, Methodist, and Congregational churches secured the services of a Bulgarian Christian, Stoyan Krstoff Vatralsky (1860-1935), who took some of the Baha'i lessons for his future use and then embarked on a lecture campaign against the Truth-knowers. Vatralsky was educated in Bulgaria by Protestant missionaries. In 1884, he had come to the United States to study, taking a bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1894. A writer, lecturer, and farmer, Vatralsky's published works included hymns and eighteen volumes of prose and poetry on philosophical, ethical, and religious subjects.<sup>23</sup> Vatralsky spent six years in the United States after his graduation from Harvard, and was in Chicago just when the Kenosha Protestant churches were in need of aid to combat the Truth-knowers.

The first hint that Vatralsky's visit to Kenosha was to be directed against the Baha'is came in an article published on 19 October in the *Kenosha Kicker* entitled "Kenosha's Future Glory":

Is it in envy of Milwaukee "made famous" by beer, that our Kenosha town is harboring another, although quite different, "spirit," which promises to make us even more infamously notorious? I refer to our blooming "Truth-knowers." Mr. Vatralsky . . . has lately been studying this cult by taking their secret lessons. He says that it is an Oriental sect, called Babi, from Bab, its founder, a Mohammedan fanatic. Mr. Vatralsky seems disinclined to talk about them; but in answer to my question he said: "Your self-styled Truth-knowers are an esoteric Mohammedan sect, more pantheistic than Christian Science, more absurd than Mormonism and by far the most dangerous cult that has as yet made its appearance on this continent. And your city has the unenviable distinction of being the first to give its doctrine harbor in America."<sup>24</sup>

The article concluded by urging Vatralsky to deliver an address on the subject of the dangers of the Truth-knowers.

The week following the appearance of this article brought rebuttals by several believers, including Mrs. Lane and Mr. Frederick A. Slack. Several points become clear in view of the first article and the letters from believers addressed to the charges raised by Vatralsky. First, the secret nature of the Truth-knower lessons aroused suspicion toward the Faith. Second, many of the believers themselves were either poorly informed as to the true nature of the Faith and its teachings, or they were unwilling to tell. For instance, note the following reference to the Qur'an, a Holy Book whose divine origin is recognized by Baha'is:

He says we are teaching Mohammedanism. I will say right here, we are teaching God's truth and teaching it from the Bible. If this is so how can we be teaching Mohammedanism? Mohammedanism is not taught from the Bible, but from the Koran, which is the most corrupt of all bibles and the most corrupt of all religions.<sup>25</sup>

Here we must remember that, at the time, the Baha'is had almost no publications, only a few typed extracts of Baha'i Scriptures, and some short Tablets (letters) from Abdu'l-Baha. Third, Vatralsky had taken some, though not all, of the lessons. He had placed the Baha'is in an awkward position, for although the believers had in good faith followed Kheiralla's instructions of silence about the teachings, they were now forced to defend what appeared to be duplicity on their part.

The blow came in an open letter from Vatralsky to Lane in the *Kenosha Daily Gazette*:

I have often heard you declare your certainty that you teach the truth, and once or twice you personally invited me to prove wherein you are wrong. . . . This I purpose to fulfill next Sunday evening at Park Avenue Church. ... It is needless to add that I do not intend to denounce you—as you know I have no personal grievance against you—but merely to point out where and why I believe you are awfully mistaken, hence grievously misleading others, and sowing dangerous seeds. Believing you, however, to be as sincere as you are mistaken, I both invite you and expect you to be present.<sup>26</sup>

Vatralsky's talk, delivered on 29 October at the Park Avenue Methodist Episcopal Church, was entitled "The Kenosha Truth

Knowers: the Few Truths They Know and the Many Errors They Teach." A dramatic account of the event was printed in the *Daily Gazette* of 31 October under the headline Was Almost a Riot. The Congregational, Methodist, and Baptist churches had all given up their Sunday evening services so that their congregations might attend. By 6:30, one half hour before the service, the building was packed to the doors. Vatralsky's sermon played on Protestant dislike of "Mohammedanism." There was little indication of the storm brewing in the audience until the talk was finished. At that point, the Reverend Mr. Naylor of the Park Avenue Church announced that all those who would like to receive the Truth-knower lessons could get them from Vatralsky. This was the trigger for a general uproar as that Baha'is took exception to this statement.

Thornton Chase, the first American Baha'i, was in the audience. He got up, pointed to Vatralsky, and said, "That man can not give the teachings to anyone because he does not know them himself. Anyone can get them by applying to those who are qualified to give them, but that man does not know the fir; principles about them."<sup>27</sup> This resulted in a general hubbub throughout the church with cries of "Imposter!" being heard from several parts of the audience, apparently directed ; Vatralsky. It seemed that some trouble was likely to occur unless someone intervened.

At this point the cries of the "Truth-knowers" reached Tv Naylor and he appeared at the front of the platform and said that the light of the statements made by the speaker during the evening was evident that Dr. Khrella [Kheiralla] (the leading man of i sect), was a liar. This statement on the part of the minister adds fuel to the flame and members of the sect in all parts of the ho arose and declared their allegiance to the principles of the sect; denounced the speaker. ... In order to put an end to the disagreeable wrangling Mr. Naylor signaled the organist to go on with hymn. At this time Mrs. Frank Lane, one of the local leaders in sect, arose and asked the people to disperse, as they were in house of God and the wrangling was disrespectful.

Mr. Vatralsky seems willing and ready to continue the fight. The matter has aroused a great deal of interest and the de ...

would undoubtedly be the greatest religious event ever held in the city.<sup>28</sup>

The remark directed by the minister toward Kheiralla probably indicates that Vatralsky and many of the Christian ministers believed that Kheiralla had used subterfuge to teach the Faith in Kenosha. Nevertheless, an apology for having used the term liar appeared in the following day's papers over Naylor's signature. He did not, however, apologize directly for having called Kheiralla a liar, but rather for having offended those who were present at the lecture.

The address by Vatralsky was only the first round in a very tense struggle over a period of several weeks, a struggle which aroused the populace and the newspapers to take sides, many asking why the Christian churches should embark upon such a vendetta:

Can it be that Kenosha is to go through another religious crusade? Is it possible that the supposed liberal churches of this city are to make war on another supposed religious sect? Has it come to this that the houses of worship are to be made the rendezvous from which assaults are to be made on other religious beliefs?

It is a fact, old as the world itself, that religion grows by persecution. Nothing so increases religious influence with impressionable people as the notion that its votaries are ready to suffer for their faith. Persecute a religious belief and you attract to it.<sup>29</sup>

Only two days after the lecture in the Park Avenue Church, Vatralsky issued an open challenge to Thornton Chase and Byron Lane to meet him in public debate in order to prove: "first, that the chief points of my address consisted of falsehoods. Secondly, that, in regards to character, I am an im-poster."<sup>30</sup> The debate between Chase and Vatralsky never took place, but Chase did send a lengthy reply to the major Kenosha newspapers. In this apologia for the Faith, he showed the highest respect for Vatralsky's learning, while denying the charges he had made in his talk: that the Truth-knowers taught that immortality ended in a sort of Nirvana; that the Fatherhood of

God was denied, and hence the brotherhood of man also; that the Truth-knowers had no use for the Apostle Paul; that they considered Muhammad to be greater than Jesus; that God could not do what He willed; that after the promulgation of the Babi teachings, the believers propagated them by the sword; and that their teachings were opposed to Jesus Christ.<sup>31</sup> Chase vehemently asserted the falsity of such statements.

Less than a month later, the Baha'i community responded to the attacks of Vatralsky by bringing Kheiralla himself to Kenosha. Some of the local newspapers erroneously called him a "native prince from India and leader of the religious sect known as Truth Knowers." On 28 November 1899 Kheiralla gave a talk at the Rhode Opera House in Kenosha, during which he discussed the search for truth, the unknowableness of God, the reality of the prophets "bearing the same wine in different colored cups," the sacrifice of Christ, and the spiritual interpretation of Biblical parables. This exposition of the Truth-knower beliefs was greeted with warm applause by the packed house. The newspapers, which had possibly been hoping for a harangue or for some sort of Islamic call to holy war, announced that the "lecture proved considerable of a disappointment."<sup>32</sup> Kheiralla did not mention Muhammad, the Bab, Baha'u'llah, or 'Abdu'l-Baha in the lecture, but confined himself to a more or less orthodox presentation of the Baha'i view of some Bible teachings.

If Kheiralla's talk was a disappointment for the reporters, it was not so for Vatralsky. The 13 December *Kenosha Evenings News* carried this announcement:

On next Monday evening, December 18, 1899.

In reply to Ibrahim Kheiralla, the speaker will touch on:

The leading and misleading points of his lecture. The difference between "secret" and "private", "Truth-Knowers" and "truth-tellers", Persia and America, Constantinople and Kenosha, persecution and discussion, words and swords.

The words used before outsiders to conceal their thoughts.

How the name Christ . . . has, for the initiated, two meanings, neither of which is a conceivable conception in Christendom.

4. Why the speaker is against this double-faced Moslem<sup>[sic]</sup>monstrosity . . .

Why he regards it worse, more pernicious than Mormonism.

Why he calls it a Mohammedan sect, and why no student can call it anything else.<sup>33</sup>

Vatralsky's attack on 18 December turned out to be the greatest failure in the whole controversy. The Kenoshans were becoming tired of the question, as witnessed by several editorial statements in the newspapers. This final round of the Truth-knower versus Vatralsky bout was summed up in colorful language in the *Kenosha Daily Gazette* of 19 December:

Vatralsky Debated: Goes Down In Defeat Before a Vast Concourse of Fifty-five People. Vatralski *[sic]*, the great, the only exposé of the Truth Knowers, gave a lecture at the Rhode Opera House last night and at the end went down to defeat before the debating prowess of an unknown follower of Bab, a sect akin to the Truth Knowers. And this before a mighty audience of fifty-five persons who crowded and jammed their way into the auditorium, to list enchanted to the discourse of this noted expounder *[sic]* of the truth, revealer of the fallacies of the new sect, the "Truth Knowers." . . .

The audience . . . listened with what patience they could to his pot-pourri of statements containing neither rhyme nor reason.

And when he finally concluded and invited questions there arose, in all his glory, from his seat in the parquette, a mighty follower of the faith of Bab, who proceeded to smite him, hip and thigh. Poor Vatralsky's specious arguments were dissected, torn assunder *[sic]*, and thrown tauntingly back in his face by this believer of a kindred faith to the Truth Knowers, while the Bulgarian squirmed and expostulated, and at last revolted openly.

And then pandemonium broke loose—both men talking at once at the highest pitch of their voices, while Vatralsky gestured wildly in impotent wrath at his inability to make himself understood. . . .

Little more can be said. Vatralsky's arguments were refuted in toto; but little to enlighten the uninitiated as to the religion of the Truth Knowers, or their brothers, the Babites was offered, and when finally the meeting broke up . . . we were no wiser than when we first took our seats.<sup>34</sup>

Despite the reporter's final statement, it was at this meeting that George Kheiralla (the son of Ibrahim Kheiralla), the "Babi" mentioned in the above excerpt, finally admitted that in America the Truth-knowers and Babists were one and the same (i.e., Baha'is).<sup>35</sup> Following this defeat, Vatralsky returned to Bulgaria. He made a final attempt to discredit the Baha'is by writing an essay for the *American Journal of Theology* entitled "Mohammedan Gnosticism in America: the Origin, History, Character and Esoteric Doctrines of the Truth-Knowers."

Ultimately, these attempts to attack the Faith brought only ridicule upon the churches that had instigated them. An illustration of how farcical the whole situation seemed to those observing it from a distance was afforded by an editorial comment from the *Chicago Journal*:

#### The Koran in Kenosha

There is disquieting news from Kenosha. According to rumors that thrifty and erstwhile well behaved suburb is threatened with an epidemic of Mohammedanism. A sect known as Truth Knowers are said to hold the tenets of the prophet.

What might result if Mohammedanism were to gain a foothold in Kenosha it is awful to contemplate. Kenosha is so close. Possibly we can stand a little of that sort of thing in the Sulu islands, if we have to and we may even be able to endure a session of congress with a Mormon in it, but the idea of polygamy at our back gate, so to speak, is distressing.

Who would care to face a large and determined Kenosha juramentado dressed in his white robe de nuit, armed with a case knife, and sworn before a Wisconsin muezzin or cadí or a notary public or something to die killing Christians . . . ?

Before Mohammedanism gets beyond control, and Kenosha people take to running amuck to show their hatred of the infidel dogs about them, something ought to be done to hold the thing in check. The churches might send missionaries into Wisconsin, and perhaps if the president's attention were called to the matter he would dispatch a commissioner to make a treaty of peace with the reigning sultan.<sup>36</sup>

## CRISIS OF COVENANT-BREAKING

But for the believers in Kenosha, now numbering over two hundred, the humor in their situation was soon to be dissipated before the most challenging test to face the nascent American Baha'i community. Ibrahim Kheiralla had returned to the United States from his pilgrimage perhaps as early as July 1898. Rumors quickly circulated among the Baha'is that something was amiss in his behavior. After his departure from Palestine, Kheiralla was abandoned by his American wife, and he soon made several accusations against Dr. Edward and Mrs. Lua Getsinger.<sup>37</sup> It appears that several negative personal comments made by Dr. Getsinger had been enlarged upon and finally transmitted to Kheiralla in a distorted form. And Kheiralla seems to have become convinced that Mrs. Getsinger was teaching Christian trinitarianism as a Baha'i doctrine.<sup>38</sup> In any case, his already precarious relationship with 'Abdu'l-Baha combined with these events in motivating Kheiralla to initiate contact with 'Abdu'l-Baha's half brother, Mirza Muhammad-'Ali, the head of the party of Covenant-breakers opposed to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

On 8 March 1900 the Board of Counsel of Kenosha arranged a meeting for all the believers at the Knights of Pythias Hall to hear Dr. Kheiralla. Before the assembled believers, Kheiralla renounced his allegiance to 'Abdu'l-Baha, saying that 'Abdu'l-Baha was not the one appointed by Baha'u'llah, nor was he the return of Christ (the latter a distortion which Kheiralla himself had promulgated against 'Abdu'l-Baha's wishes). Kheiralla offered no proof satisfactory to his audience, however. Another meeting was held on 9 March, at which many questions were asked of Kheiralla. At the end of the gathering, Byron Lane "announced that he himself will still continue to teach that Abbas Effendi ['Abdu'l-Baha] is the Master and he has found nothing to convince him otherwise."<sup>39</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha swiftly responded to this crisis by sending to America Haji 'Abdu'l-Karim, the Baha'i who had taught the Baha'i Faith to Kheiralla in Egypt. His mission was to protect the young American Baha'i community and to convince Kheiralla of the error of his ways. At the same time,



Muhammad-'Ali, having obtained Kheiralla's support, sent his son Shu'a'u'llah to Kenosha to try to spread opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha.

Word arrived in April 1900 that 'Abdu'l-Karim was coming to Kenosha. The newspapers, always quick to catch wind of trouble, published confusing stories such as: Reports That Truth Seekers were breaking up not true; Kheiralla to lead; Abdul-karin finds failure. The supporters of Kheiralla, seizing upon local ignorance of the teachings, used the newspapers to spread the erroneous report that Haji 'Abdu'l-Karim had been the head of the Faith and was coming to Kenosha to create division among the Truth-knowers by deposing their "true leader," Ibrahim Kheiralla. The Chicago *Inter-Ocean* of 14 October 1900 even carried an article alleging that 'Abdu'l-Karim had stolen thousands of dollars from wealthy Truth-knowers.

The only transcript thus far discovered of meetings between 'Abdu'l-Karim and Ibrahim Kheiralla brings to light the major issue separating Kheiralla from 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>40</sup> Kheiralla himself has stated that during his pilgrimage he had broached the subject of publishing a book entitled *Beha 'u'llah* containing Kheirallah's version of the Baha'i teachings. The manuscript had been typed in 1898, and Kheiralla had it with him in the Holy Land. He writes in his autobiography that he had submitted chapters of this book in Arabic translation to 'Abdu'l-Baha and that he had received approval of them.<sup>41</sup> In the transcript of the 10 May 1900 meeting in New York, however, Howard MacNutt (speaking on behalf of Kheiralla) is recorded to have said, "I can give you my personal guarantee that it [the book *Beha 'U'llah*] has not been translated into Arabic and submitted [to 'Abdu'l-Baha]."<sup>42</sup> 'Abdu'l-Karim himself had introduced the topic of Kheiralla's book into the consultation of the New York Baha'is by stating the actual cause of division in the Baha'i ranks: "that Dr. Kheiralla's book and teaching should be the authority of this truth."<sup>43</sup> Kheiralla's opposition to 'Abdu'l-Baha, his desire to have his book and teachings recognized as authoritative, his establishment of Boards of Counsel with-

out 'Abdu'l-Baha's permission, all indicate his desire for authority and power.

The sudden crisis caused the Kenosha Baha'is, and the entire American Baha'i community, great distress.<sup>44</sup> Unaware of the exact nature of 'Abdu'l-Baha's appointment as the successor of Baha'u'llah, "the Center of the Covenant," a large number of the Baha'i became confused. Many returned to their old churches or to spiritualism. Possibly one-third of the Kenosha Baha'is remained loyal to 'Abdu'l-Baha, while a handful followed Kheiralla. This latter group formed an incorporated society known as the Society of Behaists, with Frederick A. Slack, the former corresponding secretary of the assembly, as its head and "minister."<sup>45</sup>

At this time the facts of the history of the Baha'i Faith were becoming better known. Articles in newspapers were more clearly identifying Truth-knowers, Babis, and Baha'is as being members of the same religion. Kheiralla himself was now openly speaking of the Bab, Baha'u'llah, and their teachings in order to add impetus to his group, despite his earlier insistence that these truths could not be given to everyone. Kheiralla's statements of Truth-knower teachings, now being constantly sent to the Kenosha press, always contained attacks on 'Abdu'l-Baha, his own version of Baha'i principles, and a surfeit of self-aggrandizing statements about how he had come from a pure Christian background, rather than an Islamic one, which in his view somehow entitled him to leadership of the Baha'i Faith in America.<sup>46</sup>

The continued activities of Kheiralla and his partisans caused Abdu'l-Baha to send two more Persian Baha'is, Haji Mirza Hasan and Mirza Asadu'llah of Isfahan, to strengthen those American Baha'is loyal to 'Abdu'l-Baha. Both of them went to Kenosha for a week in January 1901 to deepen the Baha'is and to hold public lectures on the Faith. Byron Lane, who had moved to Chicago in late 1900, returned for a short time to Kenosha to make arrangements for them. The *Daily Gazette* of 16 January headlined the preparations as: B. S. Lane comes to Kenosha to unite the factions of the Kenosha Truth-Knowers. It

reported that the visit of Mira Hasan and Mirza Asadu'llah "to this country has resulted in the opening of the teaching of their belief to all who may desire to learn them. The old plans of keeping their teachings secret will be abandoned, and an open book of the teachings will be published."<sup>47</sup>

The attempt to win some of Kheiralla's followers back to the fold was unsuccessful, and the publicity as quoted above, illustrates how difficult it was to rid Kenoshans of the idea that secrecy was a teaching of the Baha'i Faith, rather than an innovation of Kheiralla. Few of Kheiralla's group ever returned to the Faith, though many insincere professions of a desire to return were made. The so-called society of Behaists survived through the late 1940s, even beginning a publication entitled *Behai Quarterly* from 7543 Twenty-sixth Avenue, Kenosha. It then disappeared leaving no trace.<sup>48</sup>

From 1901 through 1911, approximately sixty to one hundred Baha'is in Kenosha labored to spread their Faith, but the Baha'i community experienced little growth. The Kheiralla episode had badly damaged its strength and prestige in the eyes of the Kenoshans. No more fitting commentary on the despondency of the Kenosha believers can be found than the following draft of a letter to 'Abdu'l-Baha:

To the Center of the Covenant of God,

Abdul Baha Abbas.

Our beloved Master!

We are a little band of believers in Kenosha, who are trying to hold together through [sic] all difficulties caused by the Nakazeen [*Naqidin*, Covenant-breakers] of this town. This is their stronghold in America. We humbly [sic] beg that Thou wilt [sic] intercede for us that we may be strengthened through the confirmations of the Spirit, to keep our numbers together, to hold to the Center of the Covenant, and be enabled to draw these deniers nearer to Thee. We also beg that we may grow more and more spiritually, and that we may be characterized by Thy characteristics, and by our lives and deed [sic] declare the Kingdom of God to our Fellow Man. We thank God that we were enabled to withstand the tests and to pass through them victoriously.<sup>49</sup>

Abdu'l-Baha continued to encourage the Kenosha Baha'is. Among the ten Tablets<sup>50</sup> that he sent them are the following words:

A good fragrance is coming from the rose-garden of Kenosha and a pleasing breeze is blowing from the orchard of the hearts of the friends and maid-servants of the Merciful.

Praise be to God, that town, by the presence of the beloved ones and the Maid-servants of the Merciful, hath become a veritable paradise and its space, like unto the heavens, is illumined with radiant lamps. If this conflagration and attraction continue for a period, Kenosha will soon attain great provisions, will travel with speed through the degrees of existence and make great progress in the orders of the Kingdom.<sup>51</sup>

#### ABDU'L-BAHA VISITS KENOSHA

On his tour of the United States in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha traveled to Kenosha. Mrs. Henry L. Goodale had long cherished the hope that he would come there and had sent him a letter of invitation. He took a day from his stay in Chicago in order to spend time with the Kenosha believers.

In comparison with the attacks on the Faith in 1899, the visit of Abdu'l-Baha received little publicity. However, the newspaper articles that did appear were generally quite favorable. The *Kenosha Union* reported the forthcoming visit of Abdu'l-Baha adding that "it is not often that Kenosha people have the opportunity to see and hear the head of any great religious movement and it is expected that there will be a large crowd at the services tomorrow evening."<sup>52</sup>

Before leaving for Kenosha on 15 September 1912, Abdu'l-Baha spoke several times to the Chicago Baha'is about the need for firmness in the Covenant of Baha'u'llah, and stated that violators of that Covenant must be shunned. He spoke of this because Kheiralla was then residing in Chicago and had attempted to stir up discord over Abdu'l-Baha's visit. One of the Baha'is who knew Kheiralla, Dr. J. Frederick Nutt, was told by Abdu'l-Baha that if Kheiralla's intention was pure, he would

come to 'Abdu'l-Baha in all sincerity like everyone else. 'Abdu'l-Baha took Dr. Nutt with him to Kenosha to witness all that transpired as evidence of the triumph of the Covenant.<sup>53</sup>

On the morning of 15 September, 'Abdu'l-Baha and his entourage<sup>54</sup> arrived at the station of the Chicago North Shore and Milwaukee Railroad (Electric Line) at Evanston. When the awaited train pulled into the station, 'Abdu'l-Baha paced the platform unconcerned and never boarded his railroad car. To the dismay of his companions, the train for Kenosha left without them. After boarding the next train for Kenosha, they came upon the wreckage of the first train near Waukegan. 'Abdu'l-Baha said, "the protection of the Blessed Beauty [Baha'u'llah] was with us." He told how some of the Baha'is had wished him to sail to America on the maiden voyage of the *Titanic*, but Baha'u'llah had guided him to come direct via the S. S. *Cedric*.<sup>55</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha was met at the Kenosha train station by Baha'is who transported him by automobile to the Baha'i Center located in Gronquist Hall (616 Fifty-seventh Street) where a meal was awaiting him. 'Abdu'l-Baha stood at the head of the stairs and shook hands with each person who came into the hall. Grace Anderson, who was nineteen years old at the time, described the moment of meeting:

It's something you can't explain exactly. It's not for anybody to describe unless they have themselves experienced it. I don't think I can describe it, the moment when He shook my hand. The only thing I can liken it to at all would be an electric shock. Not unpleasant. But, like something just kind of went through you. It thrilled you. And he looked at you. Right through you. And the first thing he did was to say to you in English, "Are you happy?"<sup>56</sup>

'Abdu'l-Baha then spoke to the gathering. Since the text of his talk has not been published previously, the following is a major portion of it:<sup>57</sup>

I am very happy in meeting you. I thank God that His Holiness Baha'u'llah has such friends. Their faces are illumined and their nostrils are perfumed with the fragrances of the love of God.

The Cause of God has always appeared in the East, but it spreads more widely in the West: just as in the Cause of His Holiness Christ His signs were greater in the West. . . . Though He appeared in the East, Baha'u'llah was neither an Oriental nor an Occidental. He was sanctified above all regions. He is with those who are of the Kingdom, who are heavenly, who are divine—be they of the East or of the West. . . .

His Holiness Christ was the Word of God. He was the Spirit of God. . . . Twelve persons believed in His Holiness Christ in His lifetime. One of them became an opponent. Eleven remained. Those also wavered in their faith after the death of Christ. Even Peter—although he was the greatest disciple—at one time denied Christ thrice, but later repented and became firm and steadfast in the Cause of His Holiness. Indeed, the cause of the firmness of the disciples after the crucifixion of Christ was Mary Magdalene.

But today the cause and name of the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah, is incomparable. Twenty thousand people have sacrificed their lives, and under the sword they used to dance. Look how faithful and self-sacrificing they were. In truth, the people of the East have demonstrated the utmost devotion. They sacrificed their glory; they sacrificed their very existence in the path of God. . . . Indeed, they have shown the utmost self-sacrifice, so that through the power of His Holiness Baha'u'llah the hearts became united and the souls became attracted.

Therefore I am hopeful that day by day this unity may be increased, this love may become greater, the oneness of the world of humanity may become resplendent, the heavenly light may illumine the hearts so that all may be in the greatest love and unity—that they may have spiritual bonds and become the cause of spreading the oneness of humanity through the aid and favor of Baha'u'llah—that all who are on the surface of the earth may become united; all races become harmonized together; all religions find unity and fellowship—so that through the power of His holiness Baha'u'llah the banner of the oneness of the world of humanity may be raised, and universal Peace may pitch its tent—that the fragrances of holiness may be diffused; the breath of the Holy Spirit revive the hearts; the nostrils become perfumed—and that the eyes may be seeing, the ears be blessed with hearing—that they may acquire eternal happiness and obtain everlasting life, and become the cause of ideal and material attainments. Through the bestowal of Baha'u'llah this is easy. . . . Therefore, in the utmost humility render ye thanks unto the Divine Threshold that—Praise

be to God!—He has illumined the eyes, the ears He has made hearing. You have heard the divine call, become believers in God, and under the shadow of the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah, you have advanced. Then be ye in the greatest happiness that such a blessing has been granted and that such a bounty has surrounded you. . . . Praise be to God! Ye are all confirmed, full of cheer, and walking in the divine path. I was forty years in the prisons of two kings [of Iran and the Ottoman Empire] who were in the direst enmity. They closed all the roads. Not a single person was able to go out of the fort of Akka. . . . They did not allow anyone to come near, nor did they let me go out. . . . No one thought that I could go on with such hardships and severe persecution. I trusted and in the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah, I had confidence, until suddenly God removed the chain from my neck, and chained the neck of 'Abdu'l-Hamid, the Sultan of Turkey.<sup>58</sup> I came out of the fort. He entered it. I became free. He became a prisoner. All that he did to me, all the conditions of the past, have become reversed. Praise be to God! Through the favor of Baha'u'llah I have come to America. I have seen your faces. It surpasses the imagination; but through the favor of the Blessed Beauty, Baha'u'llah, all the doors were opened, the divine banner was raised. The fame of the Cause of God has enveloped the East and the West. The influence of the word of Baha'u'llah has surrounded the world.<sup>59</sup>

After he finished speaking, 'Abdu'l-Baha went to a long table laden with food and flowers. It had long been a custom that two empty chairs be placed in Kenosha's Baha'i meetings, one in commemoration of Baha'u'llah, the other for 'Abdu'l-Baha—hoping for such a day as this when he would arrive. Grace Anderson recalled the 'Abdu'l-Baha went to the chair which had always been set for him, saying: "This is where I am to sit."<sup>60</sup> He then thanked the Baha'is for the opportunity to visit them:

I too desired that matters be so arranged that I might come to Kenosha to meet the friends. God has upset heaven and earth that I might come to America and Kenosha. He has changed two kingdoms that I might see your faces. I am hopeful, I am hopeful that from this meeting great results may be obtained, a new motion may appear in the souls, a new spirit may be acquired, and that the Baha'i activity here may become very great.<sup>61</sup>

Following this meeting, Abdu'l-Baha went to the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Goodale (6108 Sheridan Road) where he stayed through most of the day. A contemporary narrative records that:

After the arrival of 'Abdu'l-Baha and His party at the Goodale home, they visited in the first floor apartment and received the many believers and friends who came to pay their respects to 'Abdu'l-Baha and hear His words and wisdom. Later, He and His party went for a short walk accompanied by myself, Louis Voelz. We all walked at a respectful distance behind Abdu'l-Baha. While walking through a small park I remarked to the interpreters that a believer [Mrs. Frank Harmon] living across from the park intended coming to our home to see Abdu'l-Baha, but due to sudden illness could not come. Abdu'l-Baha overheard me and asked the interpreters what I had said, and upon being informed of the believer's illness, He immediately left the sidewalk, crossed the grass and crossed the street and walked up the steps of the ill one's home [6219 10th avenue], to visit her. However, no one was home and I was much embarrassed. We went back home and there we found that the ill one had recovered sufficiently to come over to see Him. This incident illustrates how keen 'Abdu'l-Baha is in visiting the ill."

On the evening of 15 September Abdu'l-Baha spoke to a capacity audience at the First Congregational Church (5934 Eighth Avenue). His address concerned the oneness of the messengers of God and the differences arising among their followers. "The Holy Manifestations," he said, "were one in essence. But their followers differed owing to their attachment to false dogmatic imitations."<sup>63</sup>

Abdu'l-Baha remained overnight in Kenosha, staying at the Goodale apartment. The Baha'is were able to speak further with him in the evening. He left by train for Chicago on the afternoon of 16 September 1912. The *Kenosha Union* of that date reported:

An audience which filled the entire auditorium of the church gathered at the Congregational church Sunday evening to listen to



an address by Abdul Baha, head of the Bahaist religion. The Bahaist Assembly in Kenosha was one of the first formed in this country. The speaker of the evening filled all the preconceived ideas of what the leader of a religious movement should represent in his own person, being a man of commanding presence and great personal magnetism. Although he spoke in Persian and his remarks had to be translated to the audience he held the closest attention of his hearers to the end of his address and his exposition of the scriptures was clear and concise from the standpoint of the believers in the new religion. Abdul Baha has been in this country since spring and his lectures and address have greatly strengthened the Bahaists of America. The spread of Bahaism is one of the wonders of the modern world and already the new faith or rule of living numbers it [sic] converts by the tens of thousands in the Orient and is gaining in numbers rapidly in the western world.<sup>64</sup>

The significance of 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Kenosha was twofold. First, he was able to overcome to a great extent the stigma of the 1899 Vatralsky attack against the Baha'is. He was even invited to speak at one of the very churches which had taken the initiative in inviting Vatralsky. Although such a reversal of attitude may have been due to the large amount of positive publicity 'Abdu'l-Baha had already received in other parts of the country, and perhaps to the Baha'is dropping their secret practices, further research will be necessary to discover the motives for such a change of heart on the part of the local Christian clergy.

The second important aspect of 'Abdu'l-Baha's visit to Kenosha was its effect on the Baha'is themselves. After receiving 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets of the Divine Plan<sup>63</sup> just a few years later during World War I, several Kenosha Baha'is moved or traveled to other parts of the United States to spread the Baha'i teachings. One of these, August Rudd, was the first American Baha'i to settle in Sweden.<sup>66</sup> An interview with the son of an early Kenosha believer indicates that this response was due in large measure to the Baha'is having seen 'Abdu'l-Baha.<sup>67</sup>

## CONCLUSION

Kenosha's Baha'i community presents the student of the Baha'i Faith with both a congregation of believers differing from their coreligionists, and with a microcosm of the early American following of the religion.

Kenosha, a small midwestern town, was characterized by tension between the traditional and the innovative members of the population. The mobility of the people and their short distance from the "frontier" of the nineteenth century brought those of independent mind into contact with the settled and conservative, and brought lower- and middle-class immigrants looking for upward mobility into contact with the upper class settlers or longtime residents. These tensions appear to have assisted the development of a group seeking spiritual guidance in the midst of the unsettled and troubled atmosphere of a frontier in transition. These tensions also confirmed in their conservative ways those who sought to maintain the status quo. The result was the attraction to the Baha'i Faith of a segment of the population willing to accept the "Truth-knower" teachings, and the development of another segment eager to publicly attack those same teachings. Kenosha's small size, and its location as the gateway to the Northwest Territories (Minnesota and Wisconsin), made this town fundamentally different from the comparatively more sedate and much larger cities where the Baha'i Faith was first established in America. With this in mind, it is understandable that Kenosha proved to be fertile ground for converts, as well as the site of the first major public attack on the Baha'is in the United States.

Kenosha is representative of the development of the early American Baha'i community in several ways. The community of Baha'is in Kenosha came into being through the same series of lessons taught by Ibrahim Kheiralla in other American cities. The Kenosha Baha'is exhibited the same desire to protect the "privacy" of the teachings. The drama enacted in Kenosha between Baha'is loyal to 'Abdu'l-Baha and the partisans of Mirza Muhammad-'Ali was similar to the tense struggle in other American cities with large concentrations of Baha'is. The town

also became the object of the same reverence which Baha'is have directed toward other cities visited by Abdu'l-Baha, and his visit has been commemorated each year there during September. The ability of the Kenosha Baha'is to maintain a coherent community in the face of the Vatralsky attacks and the defection of their erstwhile teacher can be attributed to their love for Abdu'l-Baha. It was to this towering figure that the great majority of the Baha'is remained attached. In one sense, Kheiralla had indeed done his teaching well: It was to 'Abdu'l-Baha that the new converts remained loyal: he was their "Master" and their "Lord," the point of unity in a community of new and diverse believers.

## NOTES

1. Kheiralla (*O Christians!*, pp. 166-69) indicates that the major concentrations of American believers taught by him were in Chicago, New York, Kenosha, Racine, Ithaca, Philadelphia, and Enterprise (Kansas).
2. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 257.
3. Quoted in Voelz to History Committee of the National Spiritual Assembly 5 September 1933, Kenosha Papers, National Baha'i Archives, Wilmette, 111.
4. Sala, "The Greenleafs," p. 8.
5. Voelz, "History of the Kenosha Baha'i Community from 1897 to November 1933." It is part of Islamic belief that among the various names or attributes of God there is a Greatest Name. Baha'is believe that this name is *Bahd* (Glory or Splendor). The best synopsis of the series of lessons conducted by Kheiralla appears in Browne, *Materials*, pp. 128-43. According to the New York source quoted by Browne, there were thirteen lessons with the "pith" given in the eleventh lesson. Kheiralla's *Bdb-ed-Din* and *Behd 'U'lldh* contained the same general information as given in his lessons. There also exist in the Kenosha Papers transcripts of some of the lessons as they were given by Kheiralla in Wisconsin.
6. "The Soul," from a Truth-knower Lessons manuscript, p. 1., Kenosha Papers.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2.
8. Membership book, Kenosha Papers. The specific membership statistics referred to in this article are taken from this membership book, or other lists in the Kenosha papers.

9. See note 5, above. The symbol of the Greatest Name is a stylized calligraphic representation of the word *Bahá*.
10. Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 260.
11. Voelz, "History, 1897 to 1933," Kenosha Papers.
12. National Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of the United States to Shoghi Effendi, 6 January 1944, Kenosha Papers.
13. The meetings seem to have been held in Lane's home because he had been appointed the "teacher" of the Kenosha Baha'i community. See Kheiralla, *O Christians!*, p. 168.
14. This detail, included in Voelz's "History, 1897 to 1933," was omitted from his manuscript "History of Baha'i Faith in Kenosha, Wis. from 1897 to 1947 Inclusive."
15. Bednarowski, "Spiritualism in Wisconsin," pp. 3-19.
16. Cross, *The Burned Over District*; Smith, *The History of Wisconsin*, pp. 611-12.
17. *Blue Book of Wisconsin 1901*, p. 469.
18. Browne, *Materials*, p. 99.
19. Kheiralla, *O Christians!*, pp. 165-92.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 170.
21. *Ibid.*, p. 174.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 174-75.
23. Longley, "Stoyan Krstoff Vatralsky," pp. 165-67.
24. *Kenosha Kicker*, 19 October 1899.
25. *Ibid.*, 26 October 1899.
26. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 24 October 1899.
27. Voelz, "History of Baha'i Faith in Kenosha, Wis. from 1897 to 1947 Inclusive," p. 2., Kenosha Papers.
28. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 30 October 1899.
29. *Ibid.*, 1 November 1899.
30. *Kenosha Kicker*, 31 October 1899.
31. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 4 November 1899.
32. *Kenosha Evening News*, 29 November 1899.
33. *Ibid.*, 13 December 1899.
34. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 22 December 1899.
35. *Kenosha Evening News*, 19 December 1899.
36. Quoted in *Kenosha Telegraph Courier*, 9 November 1899.
37. This information is contained in correspondence to 'Abdu'l-Baha from early believers which is at present in private hands.
38. 'Abdu'l-Karim, *Statement to all the American Believers*, pp. 5-6.
39. Voelz, "History, 1897 to 1933," p. 2.
40. 'Abdu'l-Karim, *Statement to all the American Believers*, p. 9.
41. Kheiralla, *O Christians!*, pp. 173-74.

42. 'Abdu'l-Karim, *Statement to all the American Believers*, p. 9.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 8.
44. Shoghi Effendi, *World Order of Baha'u'llah*, pp. 82-84.
45. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 16 December 1904. According to the teachings of Baha'u'llah, the Baha'i Faith has no ministers or clergy.
46. *Ibid.*, 17 November 1899.
47. *Kenosha Evening News*, 16 January 1900.
48. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 527.
49. [Kenosha Baha'is] to 'Abdu'l-Baha (draft), 23 January 1904, Kenosha Papers.
50. 'Abdu'l-Baha, *Tablets*, vol. 1, pp. 141-47. Five of the Tablets are printed in this collection. Translations of the others could not be located.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 146.
52. *Kenosha Union*, 14 September 1912.
53. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 271. Balyuzi seems to have used Mirza Mahmud Zarqani ("Diary") for this information, transliterating Dr. Nutt's name as "Knott." Balyuzi also implies a close association between Nutt and Dr. Kheiralla. However, letters in the International Baha'i Archives in Haifa, Israel, indicate that during this period Dr. J. Frederick Nutt was a member of the Chicago House of Spirituality, and that he was in fact entrusted by 'Abdu'l-Baha with the mission of attempting to bring Kheiralla back into the fold.
54. Voelz, "History, 1897 to 1947," p. 4; *idem*, "Narrative of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Visit to Kenosha" (obtained from Mr. Z. Khadem). One of those who accompanied 'Abdu'l-Baha to Kenosha was Saichiro Fujita who later went to Haifa and worked there as a gardener for 'Abdu'l-Baha. He continued at this post until his death in 1976.
55. Balyuzi, *'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 267; Zarqani, ("Diary"), pp. 103-04.
56. Grace Anderson, quoted by McKenty, "Grace Anderson," p. 9.
57. The text quoted here is from a manuscript obtained from Paul Voelz of Kenosha. The choppy quality of the address stems from the fact that the talk was given in Persian phrases, followed by English translation.
58. 'Abdu'l-Baha was imprisoned with Baha'u'llah in 1868 in the penal colony of 'Akka. He did not obtain full liberty until the Young Turk revolt of 1908.
59. Notes of 'Abdu'l-Baha's talk at Gronquist Hall. See note 57.
60. McKenty, "Grace Anderson," p. 9.
61. Notes of 'Abdu'l-Baha's talk at Gronquist Hall.
62. Voelz, "Narrative of 'Abdu'l-Baha's Visit to Kenosha."

63. Zarqani, ("Diary"), pp. 103-4.

64. *Kenosha Union*, 16 September 1912.

65. The mandate for the worldwide expansion of the Baha'i Faith give in sixteen letters, written from 1914 through 1918.

66. Voelz, "History, 1897 to 1947," p. 4.

67. Conversation with Paul Voelz, Kenosha, Wisconsin, 5 March 1977.