

4. Why the speaker is against this double-faced Moslem monstrosity . . .

5. Why he regards it worse, more pernicious than Mormonism.

6. Why he calls it a Mohammedan sect, and why no student can call it anything else.³³

Vatral'sky'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 Vatral'sky bout was summed up in colorful language in the *Kenosha Daily Gazette* of 19 December:

**VATRALSKY DEFEATED: GOES DOWN IN DEFEAT BEFORE A VAST
CONCOURSE OF FIFTY-FIVE PEOPLE.**

Vatral'ski [*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 Vatral'sky'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 Vatral'sky gestured wildly in impotent wrath at his inability to make himself understood. . . .

Little more can be said. Vatral'sky'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.³⁴

Despite the reporter's final statement, it was at this meeting that **George** Kheiralla (the son of Ibrahim Kheiralla), the "Bábí" mentioned in the above excerpt, finally admitted that in America the Truth-knowers and Babists were one and the same (i.e., Bahá'ís).³⁵ Following this defeat, Vatralsky returned to Bulgaria. He made a final attempt to discredit the Bahá'ís 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 *cadi* 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.³⁶

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 Bahá'ís 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.³⁷ 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 Bahh'i doctrine.³⁸ 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, Mírzá Muhammad-'Ah, 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-Bahá, saying that 'Abdu'l-Baha was not the one appointed by Bahá'u'lláh, 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-Bahá] is the Master and he has found nothing to convince him otherwise."³⁹

'Abdu'l-Bahá swiftly responded to this crisis by sending to America Hájí '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-‘Ah, having obtained Kheiralla’s support, sent his son Shu’a’u’llah to Kenosha to try to spread opposition to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

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 Hájí ‘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-Bahá.⁴⁰ Kheiralla himself has stated that during his pilgrimage he had broached the subject of publishing a book entitled *Behá’u’llah* containing Kheirallah’s version of the Bahá’í 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-Bahá and that he had received approval of them.⁴¹ 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 *Behá’U’lláh*] has not been translated into Arabic and submitted [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá].⁴² ‘Abdu’l-Karim himself had introduced the topic of Kheiralla’s book into the consultation of the New York Bahá’ís by stating the actual cause of division in the Bahá’í ranks: “that Dr. Kheiralla’s book and teaching should be the authority of this truth.”⁴³ Kheiralla’s opposition to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, his desire to have his book and teachings recognized as authoritative, his establishment of Boards of Counsel with-

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

The sudden crisis caused the Kenosha Bahá'ís, and the entire American Bahá'í community, great distress.⁴⁴ Unaware of the exact nature of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's appointment as the successor of Bahá'u'lláh, "the Center of the Covenant," a large number of the Bahá'í became confused. Many returned to their old churches or to spiritualism. Possibly one-third of the Kenosha Bahá'ís remained loyal to 'Abdu'l-Bahá, 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."⁴⁵

At this time the facts of the history of the Bahá'í Faith were becoming better known. Articles in newspapers were more clearly identifying Truth-knowers, Bábís, and Bahá'ís as being members of the same religion. Kheiralla himself was now openly speaking of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh, 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-Bahá, his own version of Bahá'í 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 Bahá'í Faith in America.⁴⁶

The continued activities of Kheiralla and his partisans caused 'Abdu'l-Bahá to send two more Persian Bahá'ís, Hájí Mírzá Hasan and Mírzá Asadu'lláh of Isfahan, to strengthen those American Bahá'ís loyal to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Both of them went to Kenosha for a week in January 1901 to deepen the Bahá'ís 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 Mirh Hasan and Mírzá Asadu'lláh "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."⁴⁷

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 Bahá'í 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.⁴⁸

From 1901 through 1911, approximately sixty to one hundred Bahá'ís in Kenosha labored to spread their Faith, but the Bahá'í 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-Bahá:

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 [*Náqidín*, Covenant-breakers] of this town. This is their stronghold in America. We humble [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.@

'Abdu'l-Bahá continued to encourage the Kenosha Bahá'ís. Among the ten Tablets⁵⁰ 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.⁵¹

'ABDU'L-BAHA VISITS KENOSHA

On his tour of the United States in 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá 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-Bahá received little publicity. However, the newspaper articles that did appear were generally quite favorable. The *Kenosha Union* reported the forthcoming visit of 'Abdu'l-Bahá 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."⁵²

Before leaving for Kenosha on 15 September 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá spoke several times to the Chicago Bahá'ís about the need for firmness in the Covenant of Bahá'u'lláh, 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-Bahá's visit. One of the Bahá'ís who knew Kheiralla, Dr. J. Frederick Nutt, was told by 'Abdu'l-Bahá 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.⁵³

On the morning of 15 September, 'Abdu'l-Baha and his entourage⁵⁴ 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 [Bahá'u'lláh] 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 Bahá'u'lláh had guided him to come direct via the *S. S. Cedric*.⁵⁵

'Abdu'l-Bahá was met at the Kenosha train station by Baha'is who transported him by automobile to the Bahá'í 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?"⁵⁶

'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:⁵⁷

I am very happy in meeting you. I thank God that His Holiness Bahá'u'lláh 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, Bahá'u'lláh 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, Bahá'u'lláh, 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 Bahá'u'lláh 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 'Akká. . . . 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.⁵⁸ 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, Bahá'u'lláh, 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 Bahá'u'lláh has surrounded the world.⁵⁹

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 Bahá'í 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."⁶⁰ He then thanked the Bahá'ís 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 Bahá'í activity here may become very great.⁶¹

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-Bahá 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-Bahá 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-Bahá. 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-Bahá is in visiting the ill.⁶²

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."⁶³

'Abdu'l-Baha remained overnight in Kenosha, staying at the Goodale apartment. The Bahá'ís 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 Baháism 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.⁶⁴

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 Bahá'ís. 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-Bahá 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-Bahá's visit to Kenosha was its effect on the Baha'is themselves. After receiving 'Abdu'l-Baha's Tablets of the Divine Plan⁶⁵ 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 Bahá'í teachings. One of these, August Rudd, was the first American Bahá'í to settle in Sweden.⁶⁶ 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-Bahá.⁶⁷

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-Bahá and the partisans of Mírzá Muḥammad-'Alí 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 (0 *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 Bahá'í Archives, Wilmette, Ill.

4. Sala, "The Greenleafs," p. 8.

5. Voelz, "History of the Kenosha Bahá'í 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 *Bahá* (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 *Báb-ed-Din* and *Behá 'Ulláh* 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 Bahá'ís 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, *0 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 1907*, p. 469.
18. Browne, *Materials*, p. 99.
19. Kheiralla, *0 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-Bahá 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, *0 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 Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 82-84.
45. *Kenosha Daily Gazette*, 16 December 1904. According to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, the Bahá'í Faith has no ministers or clergy.
46. *Ibid.*, 17 November 1899.
47. *Kenosha Evening News*, 16 January 1900.
48. Balyuzi, '*Abdu'l-Bahci*', p. 527.
49. [Kenosha Bahá'ís] 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-Bahci*', p. 271. Balyuzi seems to have used Mirzá Maḥmúd 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 Bahá'í 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-Bahh'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-Bahá*', 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-Bahá was imprisoned with Bahh'u'llah in 1868 in the penal colony of Akká. 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. Zarqání, ("Diary") pp. **103-4**.
64. ***Kenosha Union*, 16** September 1912.
65. The mandate for the worldwide expansion of the Bahá'í Faith given 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.

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