

In all, this book is an invaluable source for all those who need to understand the essentials of the Cyprus conflict. However, because the conflict is like a moving target, the work needs constant updating to remain relevant. One would hope that if there is to be a third edition, the author will include the latest developments, such as the European Union's Copenhagen summit in December 2002, the Cyprus meeting in The Hague in March 2003, and, most important, the signing of the European Union accession treaty by the (Greek) Republic of Cyprus in April 2003, which modified some of the essentials of the Cyprus conflict. A new edition would also benefit from an index and the addition of more sources in support of the arguments made and the further readings that are suggested by the author.

DOI: 10.1017/S0020743804361246

KEVEN BROWN AND EBERHARD VON KITZING, *Evolution and Bahā'ī Belief: Abdu'l-Baha's Response to Nineteenth Century Darwinism*, Studies in Babi and Bahā'ī Religions, vol. 12 (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 2001). Pp. 301. \$29.95 paper.

REVIEWED BY ARASH ABIZADEH, Department of Political Science, McGill University, Montreal

It is entirely natural that writers in the Middle East should have been prompted to respond to Darwin's momentous 1859 book, *The Origin of the Species*. *Evolution and Bahā'ī Belief* will interest readers of this journal because it is the first scholarly book-length treatment of one such response; that of the Baha'i leader, Abdu'l-Baha (1844–1921).

One of the main difficulties faced by the reader of Abdu'l-Baha's writings on evolution is that, although some passages claim that "man" did not always exist and only gradually evolved to his present form, other passages state that man has always existed, in perfected form, and was always distinct from animals. In Part 1 of the book, Keven Brown intelligently tackles this difficulty with the aid of two sets of analytical tools. First, he looks to the Middle Eastern reception of Darwin and distinguishes two camps: Darwinians who believed that one species can transmute into another, and essentialists who believed in the originality of species. Brown's first thesis is that, although Abdu'l-Baha was an essentialist, he also believed in "evolution" *within* each species. Thus, while apparently rejecting inter-species transmutation, he advocated "parallel evolution" and rejected essentialist doctrines of special creation.

The second context is the Greco-Islamic philosophical tradition, whose vocabulary Abdu'l-Baha deployed. Brown explores this context to suggest that Abdu'l-Baha sometimes used "species" (*naw'*, *māhīyāt*) differently from the Darwinians: whereas for the latter "species" is always a theoretical category used to classify populations, for the former "species" usually refers to a metaphysical essence akin to a Platonic form posited by God. So Brown's second thesis is that Abdu'l-Baha's essentialism (and rejection of transmutation) reflects his belief that each biological species corresponds to such a divinely posited "species essence." The species essence of man always existed (metaphysically), but its physical existence was actualized only through a teleologically directed process of intra-species evolution.

In other words, what motivates Abdu'l-Baha's reticence toward Darwinism are the theory's potentially "materialist" implications. This yields Brown's key hermeneutical thesis: Abdu'l-Baha's primary concern was not biological theory per se but the philosophical implications of Darwinism. That is, Abdu'l-Baha sought to assimilate the scientific evidence for evolution into a worldview that still allowed God a continuous role in the physical universe.

The trouble, of course, is that the scientific evidence also speaks in favor of transmutation and, correspondingly, of human descent from animals. Brown seeks to address these problems, too, although the effort sometimes spawns some of the essay's murkier passages. (He claims, for example,

that “as a physical process, parallel evolution appears no different than Darwinian evolution” [p. 101], which requires ignoring the question of common descent.) But Brown’s hermeneutical thesis yields a potentially fruitful answer: if Abdu’l-Baha’s biological views were wholly secondary to his philosophical views, and if the scientific evidence in favor of transmutation had been decisive, then, Brown implies, Abdu’l-Baha might have been willing to grant transmutation, but only if it could be reconciled with his teleological essentialism. Brown accordingly looks for tentative textual evidence for such a reconciliation (pp. 109–10).

Brown’s reading is greatly enriched by his attention to the dual context of 19th-century evolutionary debates and of Greco-Islamic philosophy. But he does miss another crucial element: Abdu’l-Baha was, above all, a disciple of Baha’u’llah. The failure to treat this context is rather surprising, particularly because even Abdu’l-Baha’s reception of the Greco-Islamic apparatus is mediated through Baha’u’llah’s corpus. This clearly has bearing on Brown’s hermeneutical thesis (that Abdu’l-Baha’s biological views were secondary to his philosophical views). Brown tends to gloss “philosophical” here as ontological. But it has been argued, for instance, that Baha’u’llah deployed neo-Platonist categories not to endorse any particular ontology, but to advance his theological *ethics*. If Abdu’l-Baha did the same and deployed Greco-Islamic metaphysical vocabulary in a primarily ethical (rather than ontological) language game, then Brown’s reading of Abdu’l-Baha’s views on evolution might require modification. I am not endorsing this reading; my point is that however we read Baha’u’llah, it is significant for interpreting Abdu’l-Baha’s views on evolution.

This lacuna is remedied somewhat in Part 2 of the book, by Eberhard von Kitzing. Von Kitzing rounds out the book with a critical exposition of current cosmological and evolutionary theories (and attempts to correlate them with Abdu’l-Baha’s thought for a primarily Baha’i audience), but he also makes an important contribution to interpreting Abdu’l-Baha’s text. In light of the Baha’i context—Baha’u’llah’s writings and Abdu’l-Baha’s role as leader of the Baha’i community—von Kitzing extends Brown’s hermeneutical thesis. He suggests that Abdu’l-Baha was using biological examples from the science of his time to convey spiritual truths and, as such, his biological pronouncements should not be read literally but as pedagogically convenient analogies (pp. 213–15). Von Kitzing then applies this hermeneutical strategy to Abdu’l-Baha’s analogy between the ontogenetic development of a human embryo and the phylogenetic evolution of the species. Disagreeing with Brown, he argues that Abdu’l-Baha’s purpose was to demonstrate the compatibility of essentialism with evolution, but *not* to endorse parallel evolution. It seems to me that the success of this conclusion depends on how one takes it. If the point is the hermeneutical one that when Abdu’l-Baha apparently endorses parallel evolution he is not in fact *committed* to endorsing it (or any other particular biological theory, for that matter), because it is just a convenient pedagogical device, the argument seems plausible. But if the point is that Abdu’l-Baha’s words, even if taken literally, do not endorse parallel evolution at all (p. 232), then his argument strikes me as unpersuasive.

Criticisms notwithstanding, this is a pioneering book on Abdu’l-Baha’s views on evolution. Scholars of the Middle East (and beyond) interested in turn-of-the-century debates about evolution will find it indispensable.

DOI: 10.1017/S0020743804361258

MARKUS DRESSLER, *Die alevitische Religion: Traditionslinien und Neubestimmungen*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes, Band 53,4 (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft, 2002). Pp. 293. €49.00 paper.

REVIEWED BY MATTHIJS VAN DEN BOS, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Why should a discourse influential among Alevi religious communities sanctify Kemalism, the Turkish state’s militantly secular ideology? Markus Dressler draws on this paradox to organize his