Supplementary notes

David Merrick[[1]](#footnote-1)

Phelps’ 307-page (243, 2nd edn.) book contains an introduction by E. G. Browne, followed by Phelps’ Introductory (17 pages), Bahíyyih Khánum’s recollections (84 pages), Phelps’ Discourses (155 pages), and some translations. Shoghi Effendi expressed the following views on the book:

He [the Guardian] has instructed me to write and tell you that he does not advise publishing this book in any language, as it is full of inaccuracies. In America they have also ceased to republish it or circulate it for the same reason.

…

He would also like you to forward to him the copy of the book you have in English for his reference libraries here, as it is, in spite of its inaccuracies, of historic interest. …”[[2]](#footnote-2)

It is not clear from this quote which section or sections Shoghi Effendi felt were inaccurate because the book is made of several independent sections. It could be argued that the strength of his reaction would be toward the teachings and principles section which do have clear inaccuracies as Phelps is providing his own summary view of things and are the very place the author would be most motivated to express his own opinions, and also Browne’s divisive Introduction, it is certainly easy to imagine Shoghi Effendi responding with an especially strong feeling towards these sections. In contrast, the history section has very little for a person to judge as right or wrong, and without an opinion Phelps is more likely to have copied it down as told, and we do see Shoghi Effendi refers to the book as of historic interest. However, at this late stage we really just do not know how general or specific Shoghi Effendi’s feelings were, and it is up to the reader to research and consider all these things for themselves in the greater balance of things.

[Photograph]

Abbas Effendi

Photo by Boissonnas & Taponier, Paris

**LIFE AND TEACHINGS**

**OF**

**ABBAS EFFENDI**

A Study of the Religion of the Babis, or Báha’is  
Founded by the Persian Bab and by his Suc-

cessors, Beha Ullah and Abbas Effendi

by

MYRON H. PHELPS

of the New York Bar

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

EDWARD GRANVILLE BROWNE, M.A., M.R.A.S.

Fellow of Pembroke College, Sir Thomas Adams’ Professor of

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of Cambridge, Author of “A Traveller’s Narrative”

“The New History of Mírzá ‘Alí Muḥammad

the Báb,” etc.

*SECOND REVISED EDITION*

G, P. PUTNAM’S SONS

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for

Second, Revised, Edition

[First edition 1904]

Chapter VII

Philosophy and psychology

from the first edition has

been appended

to this second edition copy.

The Knickerbocker Press, New York

To

THE COUNTESS M. A. DE S. CANAVARRO

TO WHOM I SHALL ALWAYS FEEL A DEEP OBLIGATION FOR HAVING DIRECTED MY ATTENTION TO THE REAL CHARACTER AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BEHA’I MOVEMENT, AND TO THE ASSISTANCE OF WHOSE CLEAR INSIGHT SUCH SUCCESS AS I MAY HAVE HAD IN REACHING A CORRECT APPRECIATION AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE TEACHINGS OF ABBAS EFFENDI IS VERY LARGELY DUE, THIS BOOK IS GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

Preface to second edition

IN the first edition of this book a chapter was given to the philosophy and psychology of the religion.[[3]](#footnote-3) It was there stated that a conditional after-life only was taught—an after-life dependent upon the good use made of present-life opportunities. This portion of the book elicited a good deal of discussion and was thought by many to be an inaccurate statement of the teachings of the faith. While much pains had been taken to reach a correct understanding of this matter, translations and retranslations having been repeatedly made, I was aware that the abstruse nature of the subject and the consequent difficulties of translation had made errors only too possible, and I accordingly availed myself of the first opportunity to revisit Syria and lay the question before Abbas Effendi—or, as he prefers to be called, Abdul Beha—himself. This I was able to do in December, 1909, just seven years after my first visit to those hospitable shores.

I found the great Teacher at Haifa, hardly, if at all, older in appearance and as genial, cordial, and inspiring as before. My stay was necessarily brief, but I had a number of interviews with him and thoroughly satisfied myself that in the particular referred to I had indeed mistaken the meaning of his words and that the expressions which I had interpreted to indicate the annihilation of unworthy individualities meant only the entry into states of aloofness from God, and consequent gloom, termed “death” in comparison with the radiant bliss of the “friends” in the immediate presence of the “Beloved”.

At the time of this visit to Haifa I proposed to make soon the necessary changes for a corrected edition of the book, but since then I have been travelling continuously and have not had sufficient leisure to accomplish this. I am now informed that the first edition is about exhausted, and that if the book is to be kept in print another edition must be issued at once. Meanwhile, my notes of the Haifa conversations have become separated from me in the course of my travels and will not again be accessible for a considerable time, hence the only course left open to me, if an edition is to be issued now, is to omit entirely the chapter

containing the erroneous statement, trusting to the occasion of a future edition to re-write it or supply its place with the Haifa discourses.

On consideration, I have decided to pursue this course, the more readily, as I believe that the book as it stands, when taken in connection with these prefatory remarks, contains a fairly comprehensive, though of course not a minutely detailed, exposition of the principles of the faith.

M. H. P.

CALCUTTA INDIA,

January 6, 1912.

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Introduction

NOT by my own seeking, but only at the request of my old friend, Mr G. H. Putnam, the publisher of this book, and, as Mr Putnam informs me, by the wish of the author, Mr Myron Phelps, whose acquaintance I had the pleasure of making in the early part of this year in Cairo, do I write these introductory words to a work which I have read with equal pleasure and satisfaction, and which I regard as a faithful and trustworthy exposition of the views of ‘Abbás Effendi, “the Master of ‘Akká,” and his followers. So faithfully, indeed, does it represent their standpoint that, notwithstanding the fact that Mr Phelps was not sufficiently conversant with Persian or Arabic to enable him to communicate directly with him whose life and teaching he here describes, but was dependent on the offices of interpreters, the whole book is to me full of familiar echoes of the voices to which I so eagerly listened when I visited ‘Akká thirteen years ago, in the days when

Bahá’u’lláh himself still dwelt amongst mankind

To the study of the Bábí religion I was irresistibly attracted, even before I undertook my journey to Persia in 1887–88, by the vivid and masterly narrative of its birth and baptism of blood contained in the Comte de Gobineau’s *Religions et Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale*—a narrative which no one interested in the Bábí (or, if the term be preferred, Bahá’í) faith, or indeed in the history of religion in general, should on any account omit to read with careful attention. My enthusiasm was still further increased by what I saw of the Bábís in Persia, and by my subsequent visits to Bahá’u’lláh at ‘Akká and to his rival, Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, at Famagusta in Cyprus. It was under the influence of this enthusiasm that I penned the Introduction (several times cited by Mr Phelps in the following pages) to my translation of the *Traveller’s Narrative*, a book which has been much more eagerly and widely read in America than in this country, where, at the time of its publication, the very name of the Bábís, now grown familiar even to readers of the daily press, was hardly known to the general public. This enthusiasm, condoned, if not shared, by many kindly

critics and reviewers, exposed me to a somewhat savage attack in the *Oxford Magazine*, an attack concluding with the assertion that my Introduction displayed “a personal attitude almost inconceivable in a rational European, and a style unpardonable in a University teacher.”[[4]](#footnote-4)

Increasing age and experience, (more’s the pity!) are apt enough, even without the assistance of the *Oxford Magazine*, to modify our enthusiasms; but in this case at least time has so far vindicated my judgment against that of my Oxford reviewer that he could scarcely now maintain, as he formerly asserted, that the Bábí religion “had affected the least important part of the Muslim world, and that not deeply.” Every one who is in the slightest degree conversant with the actual state of things in Persia now recognises that the number and influence of the Bábís in that country is immensely greater than it was fifteen years ago, and the conviction which I heard continually expressed this year in Bábí circles at Cairo, that in the course of a very short time their religion would reign paramount in their own country, and break down once and for all the power of the Shi‘ite Muhammadan *mujtahids* and *mullas*, is seriously discussed as a possibility by European diplomatists and consular officers.[[5]](#footnote-5).

But without doubt the most remarkable tri-

umph of the Bahá’í religion (for the older Bábí doctrine out of which this has grown, now preserved in its primitive form only amongst the followers of Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, has been little studied or appreciated across the Atlantic) is the marvellous success achieved in recent years by its missionaries in the United States of America, where, as I understand, the number of believers may now be counted by thousands, not confined to one State or city, but represented in almost all the more important towns. Once again in the world’s history has the East vindicated her claim to teach religion to the West, and to hold in the Spiritual World that pre-eminence which the Western nations hold in the Material.

I have often heard wonder expressed by Christian ministers at the extraordinary success of Bábí missionaries, as contrasted with the almost complete failure of their own. “How is it,” they say, “that the Christian Doctrine, the highest and noblest which the world has ever known, though supported by all the resources of Western civilisation, can only count its converts in Muhammadan lands by twos and threes, while Babiism can reckon them by thousands?” The answer, to my mind, is plain as the sun at midday. Western

Christianity, save in the rarest cases, is more Western than Christian, more racial than religious; and, by dallying with doctrines plainly incompatible with the obvious meaning of its Founder’s words, such as the theories of “racial supremacy”, “imperial destiny”, “survival of the fittest”, and the like, grows steadily more rather than less material. Did Christ belong to a “dominant race”, or even to a European or “white” race? Nay, the “dominant race” was represented by Pontius Pilate, the governor, who was compelled to abandon his personal leanings towards clemency under constraint of “political necessities” arising out of Rome’s “imperial destiny”. Did Christ wish to encourage the racial pride of the Jews when He told them that God was “able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham”? or did He seek to emphasise the strength of blood-relationship when He declared that “whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother”? Who offered Him “all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them,” and how was that offer received? Was it the proud in spirit to whom He promised the kingdom of heaven? or those who said unto Him: “Lord, Lord,” and prophe-

sied in His name? Or, to pass to the teachings of His apostles, did Paul declare that there was a wide difference between the Jew and the Greek? Was it he who proclaimed that “East is East and West is West, and never the twain shall meet”? Or did he assert with the Darwinians that “God hath chosen the mighty things of the world to confound the things which are weak”?

I am not here arguing that the Christian religion is true, but merely that it is in manifest conflict with several other theories of life which practically regulate the conduct of all States and most individuals in the Western world, a world which, on the whole, judges of all things, including religions, mainly by material, or, to use the more popular term, “practical” standards. Mr Phelps goes, perhaps, rather too far when he says (p. 252 *infra*) that “God and religion are but names and shadows to the Western world,” and I would even hesitate to assert that anything equal to the rare and beautiful types of Christian character occasionally met with can be produced by any other religion or philosophy; but that ideas about the Unseen Spiritual World count for much more, and material standards and qualities for much less, in Asia than in the West,

is to me quite certain. Even Muhammadanism, though in theory more exclusive than Christianity (since it is almost inextricably associated with a recognition of the superiority of the Arabian race and language over all other peoples and tongues) is in practice much less so. To give one instance only; the Asiatic, no less than the European or American, looks down on the African negro as vastly inferior to himself, and has the same aversion towards his physical attributes; yet the negro Muhammadan enjoys a far better social position amongst his co-religionists in the East than does his Christian kinsman in the West. He is not even debarred from intermarriage with his fellow-believers of the superior race, much less from sitting at meat with them or mixing in their society; whilst many even of the most excellent and earnest Christian missionaries—not to speak of laymen—whom Europe and America send to Asia and Africa would be far less shocked at the idea of receiving on terms of intimacy in their house or at their table a white-skinned atheist than a dark-skinned believer. The dark-skinned races to whom the Christian missionaries go are not fools, and have no object in practising that curious self-deception wherewith so many ex-

cellent and well-meaning European and American Christians blind themselves to the obvious fact that they attach much more importance to race than religion; they clearly see the inconsistency of those who, while professing to believe that the God they worship incarnated Himself in the form of an Asiatic man,—for this is what it comes to,—do nevertheless habitually and almost instinctively express, both in speech and action, contempt for the “native” of Asia. Yet surely some sentiment surrounds, even to the least imaginative, the tenement, were it the humblest, which has been inhabited by one we love.

There is, of course, another factor in the success of the Bábí propagandist, as compared with the Christian missionary, in the conversion of Muhammadans to his faith: namely, that the former admits, while the latter rejects, the divine inspiration of the Qur’án and the prophetic function of Muḥammad. The Christian missionary must begin by attacking, explicitly or by implication, both these beliefs; too often forgetting that if (as happens but rarely) he succeeds in destroying them, he destroys with them that recognition of former prophetic dispensations (including the Jewish and the Christian) which Muḥammad

and the Qur’án proclaim, and converts his Muslim antagonist not to Christianity but to Scepticism or Atheism. What indeed could be more illogical on the part of Christian missionaries to Muhammadan lands than to devote much time and labour to the composition of controversial works which endeavour to prove, in one and the same breath, *first*, that the Qur’án is a lying imposture, and, *secondly*, that it bears witness to the truth of Christ’s mission, as though any value attached to the testimony of one proved a liar! The Bábí (or Bahá’í) propagandist, on the other hand, admits that Muhammad was the Prophet of God and that the Qur’án is the Word of God, denies nothing but their finality, and does not discredit his own witness when he draws from that source arguments to prove his faith.

To the Western observer, however, it is the complete sincerity of the Bábís, their fearless disregard of death and torture undergone for the sake of their religion, their certain conviction as to the truth of their faith, their generally admirable conduct towards mankind, and especially towards their fellow-believers, which constitute their strongest claim on his attention. Their doctrine, as even Mr Phelps ad-

mits (p. 144 *infra*), is at most a new synthesis of old ideas; ideas with which the Eastern mind has for centuries been familiar, and which have ere now, as I think, been more clearly and logically systematised by older schools of thought, though perhaps without a certain tincture of modern Western notions (or more correctly, perhaps, of modern Western terminology) which is perceptible in these pages. At every turn we are face to face with some familiar echo of a past more or less remote: now of the Manichaeans (as on p. 85), now of the Ismá‘ílí propagandists (as on p. 154), now of the early Sufis (as on p. 233). Here we are reminded of a line of Sa‘dí (p. 132), there, of Jalálu’d-Dín Rúmí (pp. 135 and 226), there, of Farídu’d-Dín ‘Aṭṭár (pp. 174 and 180), there, of Shams-i-Tabríz (pp. 224 and 255), there, of Ḥáfiẓ (p. 227). Nothing more strongly testifies to the fidelity of Mr Phelps’ presentation of his subject than the clearness of these echoes from a literature with which, to the best of my knowledge, he is unacquainted. Throughout his book the voice is Persian, though the words are English.

So far I am at one with the author as to the weakening hold of the Christian idea on the Western nations, the increasing materialism

of their ethical, social, and political standards, and the need of some fresh spiritual impulse amongst them. Such impulse, Mr Phelps is disposed to think, if I understand him aright, may be supplied by the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh and his son and spiritual successor, ‘Abbás Effendi. Here, I confess, so far, at least, as the West is concerned, I am much more doubtful. The system in question appears to me to contain enough of the mysterious and the transcendental to make its intellectual acceptance at least as difficult as the theology of most Christian churches to the European sceptic; and not enough assurance of personal immortality to satisfy such Western minds as are repelled by the barren and jejune ethical systems of agnostics, positivists, and humanitarians, who would give us rules to regulate a life which they have rendered meaningless. Mr Phelps emphasises the high ethical standard inculcated by Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abbás Effendi on their followers, and admires, as all who have associated on terms of intimacy with the Bábís (or Bahá’ís) must admire, the strong influence which this standard actually exerts on their conduct, Here again I am entirely with him, for, though I do not admit that the Bahá’í or any other religion

can supply a rule of life higher than that which Christ has given us, I freely allow that the average Bábí or Bahá’í is very much more consistent than the average Christian. But in making such comparison it must be remembered that the Bahá’í religion enjoys two great advantages, so far as this point of view is concerned, over Christianity, Muhammadanism, or any other of the older world-religions: namely, its freedom from those lukewarm adherents who are born, or gravitate from mere indifference, into whatever established faith dominates their environment, and its freedom from the power, and hence from the temptation, to persecute. Almost every Bábí or Bahá’í is in earnest because still, little more than half a century after the Báb’s martyrdom, the number of those born into this faith is less than the number of those who have voluntarily and deliberately adopted it; while the great majority of Jews, Christians, and Muhammadans are what they are simply by reason of the circumstances of their birth. And though Mr Phelps (pp. xxxvii and 154–155) insists strongly on the tolerance of the new faith as at present formulated (for the early Bábís were frankly intolerant, especially towards their Shi‘ite persecutors, as most abundantly appears from the Persian

*Bayán*, written by the Báb, and from the history composed by Ḥájí Mírzá Jání, his contemporary disciple), I cannot wholly share his confidence as to how the Bahá’ís would treat either the Shi‘ite Muhammadans, the Sufis, or the Azalis (against all of whom they have, for different reasons, a special grudge) if they should one day, as is within the range of possibility, become paramount in Persia. Towards other religions, especially Christianity, they would, I believe, be more tolerant than are the Muhammadans, not because they are at all more disposed than the latter to be converted by them, but because they regard them as affording material more apt for their own endeavours to proselytise. But though, in the event of their succeeding in making their religion dominant in Persia, they might, as I think, prove scarcely more tolerant than the present *mujtahids* and *mullas*, especially in the particular cases above indicated, they would, I am convinced, prove infinitely more progressive, and Persia as a country might not improbably gain enormously both in wealth and power by the change.

There are many other points raised by Mr Phelps’s interesting pages on which I should like to touch, but which the limits assigned

to me compel me to leave unnoticed. He has done more than collect, arrange, and interpret the philosophical and ethical ideas of the Bahá’í Bábís; he has in many cases educed from their leaders, by his own patient enquiries, doctrines now probably for the first time formulated by them in writing. Three observations made amongst the Bábís in Persia caused me great surprise, being quite contrary to my preconceptions, though perhaps natural enough in the light of the comparative history of religions. The *first* was the generally prevailing uncertainty as to the authorship of many of their own religious books, especially those of the earlier period (from the Manifestation of the Báb in 1844 till the Manifestation of Bahá’u’lláh about 1863), or, in other words, the complete absence of a Canon of Scripture. The *second* was the varying and unfixed character of their doctrine on many points (such as the Immortality of the Soul) which we should deem of capital importance. The *third* was their readiness to ignore or suppress facts, writings, or views (undoubtedly historical) which they regarded as useless or hurtful to their present aims. The only essentials in Bahá’í eyes are the love of Bahá’u’lláh and his accredited successor, the belief in their Divine

character, and the eager desire to hearken to the reading of their words, contained in countless epistles or “tablets” (*alwáḥ*), which are for the most part rhapsodies interspersed with ethical maxims, most rarely touching on questions of Metaphysics, Ontology, or Eschatology. This (which had also, as I found, struck Mr Phelps, who, like myself, was chiefly anxious to learn how the new religion dealt with the subjects last mentioned) is, I fancy, part of a deliberate purpose on the part of Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abbás Effendi to discourage that essentially Persian passion for speculative Metaphysics which threatened, especially during the two or three years succeeding the Báb’s martyrdom (1850–1853), to destroy all order and discipline in the young church by suffering each member to become a law unto himself, and by producing as many “Manifestations” as there were Bábís.

In the study of a religion we may, according to our standpoint, look chiefly either at the Process by which it was formed or the Result at which it arrives, and these two points of view differ as widely as Embryology differs from Ethics. Mr Phelps has written chiefly from the latter point of view, while I have perhaps inclined to the former. Some time ago I had

the pleasure of meeting an English diplomatist freshly returned from Persia, who had held repeated and intimate conversations with many of the Persian Bábís, and who possessed an insight into the Persian mind which I have hardly seen equalled in my experience, save, perhaps, by that displayed by the late Comte de Gobineau in his *Religions et Philosophies dans l’Asie Centrale*, to which I have already had occasion to refer in this Introduction. Three of his remarks, especially, have remained in my memory, and since they bear on matters discussed in this Introduction, I may perhaps be permitted to conclude with them, since to me they have afforded much food for reflection.

Speaking first of my own writings about the Bábís, especially my translation of the *New History*, he observed that several of his Bábí friends greatly disliked my attempts to trace the evolution of Bábí doctrine from that of the Shí‘a sect of Muhammadans, through that of the Shaykhí school (in which the Báb and many of his earliest disciples were educated), to the forms which it successively assumed in the hands of the Báb and his followers. “They regard you,” he concluded, “as one who, having before his eyes a beautiful flower, is not

content to enjoy its beauty and fragrance, but must needs grub at its roots to ascertain from what foul manure it derived its sustenance. As for the History of Ḥájí Mírzá Jání, which you regard as of such incomparable interest on account of the light which it throws on various conflicting tendencies and rash deeds and doctrines which agitated the young Bábí church, I do not doubt, from what they said, that they would, if possible, compass the destruction of the one surviving copy of the book, to which, unfortunately as they consider, you obtained access.”

Speaking next of my visits to Ṣubḥ-i-Azal, and my endeavours fairly to state and fully to discuss his version of the schism which first rent asunder the Bábí church (since Bahá’u’lláh’s death again divided by another schism, to which Mr Phelps briefly alludes on pp. 80–82 *infra*), he remarked: “The question here was not a mere question of historical rights or documentary evidence, but the much greater question as to whether Babiism was to become an independent world-religion, or remain a mere sect of Islám. In the struggle between Ṣubḥ-i-Azal and Bahá’u’lláh we see a repetition of the similar conflict which took place in the early Christian Church between Peter and

Paul. The former was in closer personal relations with Christ than the latter; but it is owing to the victory of the latter that Christianity is now the religion of the civilised West, instead of being an obscure sect of Judaism.”

Lastly, replying to an expression of wonder on my part that, with no fixed or prominent idea of personal immortality, or of rewards in a future life, the Bábís should, with hardly a single exception, meet the martyr’s death, when occasion arose, not merely with equanimity, but with exultation, he said: “Is it possible for you to wonder at this? If so, you must surely have lost touch with the Persian mind, and have forgotten what is meant in its language of metaphor by ‘the Loved One’, ‘the Wine’, ‘the Cup-bearer’, and ‘Intoxication’.” And even as he spoke a dimness cleared, as it were, from my mental vision, nurtured latterly too much on dead Persian books and too little on the words of living Persian men, and I seemed to see (and to understand in the seeing) Sulaymán Khán, one of the Bábí martyrs of 1852, as, pierced with deep wounds, in each of which burned a lighted wick, he hastened, as a bridegroom to his bride, to the place of execution, singing with exultation:

*“Yak dast jám-i-báda, wa yak dast zulf-i-Yár—Raqsí chuní’n miyána-i-maydánam drzúst!”*

“Grasping in one hand the Wine-cup, clinging to my Darling’s hair,

Gaily dancing, thus would I confront the scaffold in the square.”

E. G. Browne

CAMBRIDGE, Sept. 27, 1903.

Introductory

TO the student of the development of human thought, there is probably not in the world to-day another place so interesting as the small city of ‘Akká in northern Palestine; for there may be investigated, still in its youth and under the fostering care of one of its founders, a religious faith which gives promise of becoming, at no very distant time, one of the recognised great religions of the world. Whatever we may think of the pretensions which it makes to divine origin, whatever our opinion as to the validity of the system of morals and social ethics which it advocates, or of the truth or error of the psychological and philosophical views which it advances, we can hardly doubt that we are here in the presence of a great force, destined to have a far-reaching influence upon the thought and lives of men.

Fascinating indeed are those mysterious and mighty movements which, now and again, with a certain rhythmic sequence and regularity,

have from the earliest days swept over the earth, revivifying spiritual life, changing individual habits and social customs, and, during many succeeding centuries, moulding the lives of vast masses of mankind. A Confucius, a Zoroaster, a Buddha, a Christ, a Mahomet, is born as other men, lives the ordinary span of human life, and dies as others, but by his brief presence the face of the world is changed. What is the character, what are the daily lives, of those remarkable beings who have such unlimited influence over their fellow-men as the founders of religions? How do such men act, how do they speak, what do they teach? What is the apparent nature of the bond which unites to them and to each other the men about them who play the important parts in these history-making epochs?

There are no questions of greater human interest than these. If we have here before us, subject to our inspection, inviting our investigations, and ready to reply to our questions, one who, there is reason to believe, may even possibly be such a man—if, moreover, this man advances a philosophy new to us, which assumes to illumine the ever-baffling mystery of existence and is not without persuasive force, it would be passing strange if we

should let go by the opportunity afforded by his presence of studying his life and character and weighing carefully his words.

It is considerations of this sort which, as it seems to me, now invite our attention to ‘Akká. The interest which centres in this city arises from the fact that here have lived for upwards of thirty-four years the leaders of the religion of Babism, or Baha’ism, natives of Persia, who are suffering exile and imprisonment because of their religious innovations. This movement was inaugurated in Persia in 1844 by one ‘Alí Muḥammad, a youth of twenty-five years, who in that year announced himself to be the “Báb” (Gate), a term familiar to Muslims, and by which is understood an avenue for the transmission to men of messages from a superhuman source. As expressed by one of his followers, ‘Alí Muḥammad meant by this term “that He was the channel of grace from some great Person still behind the veil of glory, Who was the possessor of countless and boundless perfections, by whose will He moved, and to the bond of Whose love He clung.”[[6]](#footnote-6)

The mission which ‘Alí Muḥammad asserted for himself was the inauguration of a new Divine Dispensation which should be for mankind a revelation of the Divine Will and

should result in reforming the beliefs and lives of mankind; in which dispensation he was but the forerunner preparing the way for one greater than he, who would be the direct Manifestation of God—who would, when he came, fully reveal the Divine message, and to whom all that he (the Báb) said was to be regarded as subject and subordinate.

‘Alí Muḥammad supported his claims by passages from the scriptures, and by the traditions of the Muslim Church, which he interpreted as forecasting the appearance of a Divine Messenger at the very time when he himself had announced his mission, but chiefly by the eloquent and elaborate disquisitions which ever flowed from his lips, seemingly inexhaustible in volume and fertility of reasoning. Whether because of the validity of his appeal to scripture and tradition, the cogency of his reasoning, the force of his eloquence, or because of his spiritual power, all of which resources his followers unite in ascribing to him in a high degree, ‘Alí Muḥammad found many to accept him. Zealous missionaries went out from him through all Persia, and his following rapidly became considerable. The Muslim priesthood, apprehensive for their influence, united to repress by force the rising tide of the

new faith. An era of bloody and relentless persecution followed, which has not, perhaps, been paralleled in history. Singly, and by hundreds, the Babis were hunted down and slaughtered. One’s heart thrills with emotion, one’s conception of the noble possibilities of human nature expands as one reads of the splendid and unflinching heroism of the Babis in the cause of their faith. Such was their love and loyalty to their leader that during the whole of the terrible time of persecution hardly a single instance of recantation in order to escape death occurred, though the opportunity was generally offered. Their spirit of absolute and self-forgetting devotion and love is well exemplified in the manner in which Mírzá Qurbán ‘Alí, one of seven executed together in Teheran in September, 1850, met his death. When he was brought to the foot of the execution pole, the headsman raised his sword and smote him from behind. The blow only wounded the old man’s neck, and cast his turban upon the ground. He raised his head and exclaimed: “‘Happy he whom love's intoxication So hath overcome that scarce he knows Whether at the feet of the Beloved It be head or turban which he throws!'"[[7]](#footnote-7)

The number of martyrdoms which have taken place in Persia has been estimated at ten thousand.[[8]](#footnote-8) Most of these occurred during the early history of the faith, but they have continued with diminishing frequency, even down to the present time.

In 1850 the Báb himself was executed at Tabriz. It had been expected that his death would check the spread of the religion, but this expectation was not realised. The Babis continued to increase in numbers; the persecutions became more intense. In 1852 a number of the leaders of the faith fled from Teheran to Baghdad, in the domains of the Sultan of Turkey.[[9]](#footnote-9) They remained here eleven years,

were then transported by the Turkish Govern-

ment to Adrianople, and five years later to

‘Akká.

In this band of exiles was one Mírzá Ḥusayn ‘Alí, belonging to a Persian family of distinction and great wealth, about thirty-five years of age at the time of the flight from Teheran. He had long been regarded by the Babis as a leader, and venerated for his wisdom and character. The Báb had conferred upon him the title of “Bahá’u’lláh” (Glory of God).

Soon after reaching Baghdad, Bahá’u’lláh withdrew from his family and spent two years alone in the mountains. He then returned to Baghdad and engaged in teaching and expounding Babist doctrines. When the transfer of the exiles from Baghdad was ordered, Bahá’u’lláh made to five of his closest followers the declaration that he himself was the Manifestation of God who had been foretold by the Báb. This declaration was not publicly proclaimed until some four or five years later, from Adrianople. It was then accepted with substantial unanimity by the Babis, who have since that time generally styled themselves and been styled by others, “Bahá’ís”. Bahá’u’lláh occupied his remaining years almost entirely with writing, and has left many voluminous works, none of which, with the exception of some disconnected passages, have been translated into a European language. He died at ‘Akká in 1892, and was succeeded, at his own designation, by his son, Abbas Effendi, who has since continued to be the leader of the faith. He is styled “Our Master” and “Our Lord” by the Bahá’ís (by which they mean that he is a man who has

reached the understanding and knowledge of God, and, being illumined by His wisdom, is fitted to teach and lead), and is regarded by

checklimit them with a veneration and affection second

only, if indeed second, to that which they be-

stow upon the memory of Bahá’u’lláh. He

is classed by them with the Báb and Beha

Ullah as the third and last of the Divine Mes-

sengers by whom the present Dispensation is

introduced.

Meanwhile the faith has shown undiminished

vitality in Persia, where the number of its ad-

herents is now estimated at several millions,[1]

and it is said to be steadily increasing. Mis-

sionaries have also gone out to various parts

of the world, and the religion has already taken

root in many countries.

While spending the summer of 1902 in Lon-

don, it happened that through friends I heard

much of Bahá’ísm, which has adherents in Eng-

land, as well as a much larger number in the

United States. Having for many years given

much attention to the study of philosophic and

religious thought, the subject interested me.

I took occasion to read up the history of the

movement, and learned what I could of the

1 A traveller in Persia., recently writing in the *Fortnightly Review*,

refers to the Bahá’ís as comprising something like half of the popula-

tion of that country. This is no doubt an overestimate. But, on

the other hand, published statistics must be taken as erring the other

way, since great numbers of Bahá’ís do not declare themselves pub-

licly, on account of the hostility to which they would be exposed.

tenets of the religion. As to the former, I

found that, chiefly owing to the careful and

extended researches of Professor Edward G.

Browne of Cambridge University, the results

of whose work, so far as published, are con-

tained in two volumes of translations, with co-

pious notes, entitled respectively *A Traveller’s*

*Narrative* and *The New History*, and in two

papers contributed to the *Journal of the Royal*

*Asiatic Society* for 1889, a full record of the

movement was easily accessible. To these

sources I am chiefly indebted for the historical

outline which I have given above.

It appeared, however, more difficult to as-

certain what were the teachings peculiar to the

faith. I found much bearing upon the claims

of the founders of the religion to divine in-

spiration in the way of arguments drawn from

the prophecies of the Mohammedan and other

scriptures and traditions, and an elaborate code

of social ethics; but nothing of importance

further than this. It seemed to me singular

that a religion having the vitality and power of

assimilation shown by the history of Bahá’ísm

should have no philosophical or psychological

basis for its moral precepts, and I felt a strong

desire to ascertain by personal investigation

whether such a basis did not exist. I accord-

ingly made inquiries as to whether my pre-

sence for this purpose would be acceptable at

the headquarters of the faith, and after some

correspondence, in which my wishes were fur-

thered by friends who were known in ‘Akká, I

received an invitation to come there. This I ac-

cordingly did, and spent in that city the month

of December, 1902. This month was one of the

most memorable in my life; for not only was I

able to gain a satisfactory general view of this

religion, but I made the acquaintance of Abbas

Effendi, who is easily the most remarkable man

whom it has ever been my fortune to meet

As I had suspected was the case, I found

that Bahá’ísm possesses a system of philosophy

and psychology. This system is logical, and

to many minds will seem persuasive. It har-

monises in every respect with the discoveries

and conclusions of modern science, and makes

a strong appeal to intelligent and reasoning

thought. More even may be said than this;

for the conceptions of Bahá’ísm with regard to

cosmogenesis, man and his relation to the uni-

verse, bear an analogy which is very striking

to the views discussed by the most advanced

thinkers of the present day, arguing from scien-

tific premises.

On its ethical side, it has as high moral stan-

dards as any of the other great religions; while

the social regulations which it advocates are

certainly more enlightened than those which

have generally been put forward in the name

of religion.

Another characteristic of Bahá’ísm, as re-

freshing and attractive as it is striking to the

mind accustomed to the dogmatic narrowness

of the modern Christian Church, is its mar-

vellous spirit of liberality. It recognises every

other religion as equally divine in origin with

itself. It professes only to renew the message

formerly given by the Divine Messengers who

founded those religions, and which has been

more or less forgotten by men. If revelations

have differed it has only been in degree, de-

termined in the several cases by the differing

capacities of men in different stages of human

development to receive them. No man is

asked to desert his own faith; but only to

look back to its fountainhead and discern,

through the mists and accumulations of time,

the true spirit of its founders.

Further, I found that this faith does not ex-

pend itself in beautiful and unfruitful theo-

ries, but has a vital and effective power to

mould life towards the very highest ideal of

human character,—which in the Western world

is generally agreed, no doubt, to be that of

Jesus of Nazareth,—as exemplified by the life

of its chief representative and the salient char-

acteristics of those of his followers with whom

I became acquainted.

That there was in the world a religion hav-

ing this character, and embodied in an actual,

living, and strenuous movement, which, al-

though new, has already shown great vitality,

power of aggression, assimilation, and growth,

was to me a revelation. I saw at once that

there was in this mere spectacle, which I had

had the fortune to see and understand, the

potentiality of immense good to other nations

of the world by impelling a recognition of the

real strength and greatness of the spirit of

true religion, under whatever external form it

may appear, and stimulating a return to the

purity and simplicity which have characterised

all religions in their youth. Almost through-

out the world to-day religion is stagnant and

faith is dead; but here is a demonstration

that it is capable of revival. Such a spectacle

as the ideal, Christ-like life of Abbas Effendi

has in it an immense probative and stimulating

power.

As a result of reflections of this kind came

the impulse to prepare this book, in order to

make a permanent record, available to oth-

ers, of the things which I have observed and

learned. I shall first collect my observations

and the information I have received from

members of his family and others who were

eye-witnesses of, or connected with, the occur-

rences referred to, bearing upon the life and

character of Abbas Effendi. This I regard as

perhaps the most important part of my present

undertaking: since nothing could so well serve

to make plain the intended application of the

doctrines taught, or could be so effective an

incentive to aspiration and effort, as the ex-

ample of this life. This portion of the book

will include a narrative by his sister, Behiah

Khanum, of the life of Abbas Effendi and

the fortunes of the family of his father, Beha

Ullah, from the time when they left Teheran

in 1852. As the restrictions of Mohammedan

social custom, which the Bahá’ís in ‘Akká care-

fully observe for the sake of peace and har-

mony, prevented me from meeting this lady

personally, this narrative was given by her in

instalments to Madam M. A. de S. Canavarro,

who was in ‘Akká at the same time that I was,

and by her repeated to me. Each instalment

was written down within a few hours after it

was received from Behiah Khanum.

I shall also say something as to the type of

character which this faith tends to attract and

develop, as indicated by that of those who

compose the little band of Bahá’ís which share

the exile of Abbas Effendi in ‘Akká.

I shall next give an outline of the philosophy

and psychology upon which the ethical injunc-

tions of the religion rest. To ascertain the

views of Abbas Effendi upon these matters

(as to which, as indeed all others, I was as-

sured that his teachings are identical in every

respect with those of Bahá’u’lláh) was the

most serious portion of my task; such is the

great difficulty of grasping the abstract ideas

of those whose modes of thought are so differ-

ent from ours, especially when expressed in a

language so unlike our own as the Persian.

Had it not been for my familiarity with Ori-

ental philosophic thought, I should have been

quite unable to accomplish it. On this branch

of the subject the teachings were not, for the

most part, given to me in set discourses ac-

companied by a word-for-word interpretation

which could be set down in sequence, as was

the case with most of the other matter which

I received from Abbas Effendi, owing to the

difficulty of transferring these abstruse ideas

into English by the aid of the interpreters

available. They were chiefly imparted in

informal conversations and as replies to ques-

tions, which have been collected and system-

atised.

Next I shall proceed to a synopsis of the

teachings of Bahá’ísm as to the conduct of

life, or its conception of true religion as that

term is ordinarily used; and in order to give

a complete view of the subject, I shall add the

leading features of the elaborate code of social

ethics enjoined by the leaders of the faith.

It will, of course, be understood that I do

not for a moment conceive that I have arrived

at a full understanding of the tenets of the

religion and the philosophy underlying it in

all their scope and detail. The time which I

have thus far given to the investigation is far

too short for that; nor, until the more im-

portant of the voluminous writings of Beha

Ullah, and those of Abbas Effendi, which are

also considerable, shall have been accurately

rendered into a European language, can we

hope to have an exact and systematic analysis

of it. But although it is, of course, possible

that I may have been misled in some minor

matters by faulty interpreting, I have checked

and counterchecked my understanding of the

statements made to me with such care that

I am satisfied that in its essential points the

presentation which I shall give of the salient

features of the philosophy and tenets is sub-

stantially correct

Nothing is quite so necessary to a just view

of Bahá’ísm as a thorough comprehension of

its attitude towards other religions. I have

therefore thought it advisable to add a chap-

ter dealing with this matter, which, in defining

the relations which the faith conceives to exist

between itself and the external world, neces-

sarily touches upon its most intimate concep-

tions of its own essential nature. For a correct

understanding of the entire subject this is the

most important chapter in the book; and I

would advise that it be read both before those

dealing with philosophy and ethics, and also

in the order in which it stands.

Finally, I shall assemble a number of the dis-

courses which I heard from Abbas Effendi

during my stay in ‘Akká, and which were, with

the exceptions hereafter noted, taken down

from the interpreter consecutively and sub-

stantially as they appear here; and to these

I shall add one or two other discourses of

Abbas Effendi, and a few passages from the

writings of Bahá’u’lláh, translations of which

have been given to me by friends.

I have already said that the narrative of

Abbas Effendi’s sister was given to me by

Madam Canavarro; further, we have worked

together over all parts of the book. It might

more properly have been published over our

joint names; but since she does not wish this,

I am obliged to content myself with stating

the facts. Without her clear insight and in-

valuable aid it would never have reached its

present form.

I am aware that it has many deficiencies,

and it is possible that I have fallen into some

errors. Such defects as exist I hope to supply

or correct in a future edition; and I shall feel

much indebted to my readers if they will call

my attention to any which they may discover,

addressing me in care of my publishers.

M H. P.

Cairo, March 8, 1903.

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**LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF**

**ABBAS EFFENDI**

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LIFE AND TEACHINGS OF

ABBAS EFFENDI

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**CHAPTER I**

**THE MASTER OF** ‘Akká

SMALL as this world is, boast as we may of

our means of communication, how little

we really know of other lands; how slowly the

actual thoughts, hopes, and aspirations of

other peoples, the deep and real things of

their lives, reach us, if they indeed ever reach

us at all! We of the so-called “Christian”

lands think, perhaps, that if Christ were to

appear again upon the earth the good news

would burden the telegraph, that His words

and daily life would be marshalled forth under

double headlines for our convenient perusal at

breakfast or on the rapid-transit trains, giving

us the interesting information without inter-

rupting our important occupations. Ah no!

We but deceive ourselves. The Man of Naza-

reth might pursue His holy life on the banks

of the Jordan and the shores of Gennesaret

for a generation of men, but the faintest

rumour of Him would not reach our minis-

ters or our stockbrokers, our churches, or our

exchanges.

Imagine that we are in the ancient house of

the still more ancient city of ‘Akká, which was

for a month my home. The room in which

we are faces the opposite wall of a narrow

paved street, which an active man might clear

at a single bound. Above is the bright sun

of Palestine; to the right a glimpse of the old

sea-wall and the blue Mediterranean. As we

sit we hear a singular sound rising from the

pavement, thirty feet below—faint at first, and

increasing. It is like the murmur of human

voices. We open the window and look down.

We see a crowd of human beings with patched

and tattered garments. Let us descend to the

street and see who these are.

It is a noteworthy gathering. Many of

these men are blind; many more are pale, ema-

ciated, or aged. Some are on crutches; some

are so feeble that they can barely walk.

Most of the women are closely veiled, but

enough are uncovered to cause us well to be-

lieve that, if the veils were lifted, more pain

and misery would be seen. Some of them

carry babes with pinched and sallow faces.

There are perhaps a hundred in this gather-

ing, and besides, many children. They are

of all the races one meets in these streets—

Syrians, Arabs, Ethiopians, and many others.

These people are ranged against the walls

or seated on the ground, apparently in an atti-

tude of expectation;—for what do they wait?

Let us wait with them.

We have not to wait long. A door opens

and a man comes out. He is of middle stat-

ure, strongly built. He wears flowing light-

coloured robes. On his head is a light buff

fez with a white cloth wound about it. He is

perhaps sixty years of age. His long grey

hair rests on his shoulders. His forehead is

broad, full, and high, his nose slightly aquil-

ine, his moustaches and beard, the latter full

though not heavy, nearly white. His eyes are

grey and blue, large, and both soft and pene-

trating. His bearing is simple, but there is

grace, dignity, and even majesty about his

movements. He passes through the crowd,

and as he goes utters words of salutation.

We do not understand them, but we see the

benignity and the kindliness of his counte-

nance. He stations himself at a narrow angle

of the street and motions to the people to

come towards him. They crowd up a little

too insistently. He pushes them gently back

and lets them pass him one by one. As they

come they hold their hands extended. In

each open palm he places some small coins.

He knows them all. He caresses them with

his hand on the face, on the shoulders, on the

head. Some he stops and questions. An

aged negro who hobbles up, he greets with

some kindly inquiry; the old man’s broad

face breaks into a sunny smile, his white teeth

glistening against his ebony skin as he re-

plies. He stops a woman with a babe and

fondly strokes the child. As they pass, some

kiss his hand. To all he says, “*Marhabbah*,

*marhabbah*”—“Well done, well done!”

So they all pass him. The children have

been crowding around him with extended

hands, but to them he has not given. How-

ever, at the end, as he turns to go, he throws

a handful of coppers over his shoulder, for

which they scramble.

During this time this friend of the poor has

not been unattended. Several men wearing

red fezes, and with earnest and kindly faces,

followed him from the house, stood near him

and aided in regulating the crowd, and now,

with reverent manner and at a respectful dis-

tance, follow him away. When they address

him they call him “Master.”

This scene you may see almost any day of

the year in the streets of ‘Akká. There are

other scenes like it, which come only at the

beginning of the winter season. In the cold

weather which is approaching, the poor will

suffer, for, as in all cities, they are thinly clad.

Some day at this season, if you are advised of

the place and time, you may see the poor

of ‘Akká gathered at one of the shops where

clothes are sold, receiving cloaks from the

Master. Upon many, especially the most in-

firm or crippled, he himself places the gar-

ment, adjusts it with his own hands, and

strokes it approvingly, as if to say, “There!

Now you will do well.” There are five or

six hundred poor in ‘Akká, to all of whom he

gives a warm garment each year.

On feast days he visits the poor at their

homes. He chats with them, enquires into

their health and comfort, mentions by name

those who are absent, and leaves gifts for all.

Nor is it the beggars only that he remem-

bers. Those respectable poor who cannot beg,

but must suffer in silence—those whose daily

labor will not support their families—to these

he sends bread secretly. His left hand know-

eth not what his right hand doeth.

All the people know him and love him—the

rich and the poor, the young and the old—

even the babe leaping in its mother’s arms.

If he hears of any one sick in the city—Mos-

lem or Christian, or of any other sect, it mat-

ters not—he is each day at their bedside, or

sends a trusty messenger. If a physician is

needed, and the patient poor, he brings or

sends one, and also the necessary medicine.

If he finds a leaking roof or a broken window

menacing health, he summons a workman, and

waits himself to see the breach repaired. If

any one is in trouble,—if a son or a brother is

thrown into prison, or he is threatened at law,

or falls into any difficulty too heavy for him,—

it is to the Master that he straightway makes

appeal for counsel or for aid. Indeed, for

counsel all come to him, rich as well as poor.

He is the kind father of all the people.

This man who gives so freely must be rich,

you think? No, far otherwise. Once his fam-

ily was the wealthiest in all Persia. But this

friend of the lowly, like the Galilean, has been

oppressed by the great. *For fifty years he*

*and his family have been exiles and prisoners*.

Their property has been confiscated and

wasted, and but little has been left to him.

Now that he has not much he must spend lit-

tle for himself that he may give more to the

poor. His garments are usually of cotton,

and the cheapest that can be bought. Often

his friends in Persia—for this man is indeed

rich in friends, thousands and tens of thou-

sands who would eagerly lay down their lives

at his word—send him costly garments. These

he wears once, out of respect for the sender;

then he gives them away. A few months ago

this happened. The wife of the Master was

about to depart on a journey. Fearing that

her husband would give away his cloak and so

be left without one for himself, she left a sec-

ond cloak with her daughter, charging her not

to inform her father of it. Not long after her

departure, the Master, suspecting, it would

seem, what had been done, said to his daugh-

ter, “Have I another cloak?” The daughter

could not deny it, but told her father of her

mother’s charge. The Master replied, “How

could I be happy having two cloaks, knowing

that there are those that have none?” Nor

would he be content until he had given the

second cloak away.

He does not permit his family to have lux-

uries. He himself eats but once a day, and

then bread, olives, and cheese suffice him.

His room is small and bare, with only a mat-

ting on the stone floor. His habit is to sleep

upon this floor. Not long ago a friend, think-

ing that this must be hard for a man of ad-

vancing years, presented him with a bed fitted

with springs and mattress. So these stand in

his room also, but are rarely used. “For

how,” he says, “can I bear to sleep in luxury

when so many of the poor have not even

shelter?” So he lies upon the floor and cov-

ers himself only with his cloak.

For more than thirty-four years this man

has been a prisoner at ‘Akká. But his jailors

have become his friends. The Governor of

the city, the Commander of the Army Corps,

respect and honour him as though he were their

brother. No man’s opinion or recommenda-

tion has greater weight with them. He is the

beloved of all the city, high and low. And

how could it be otherwise? For to this man

it is the law, as it was to Jesus of Nazareth, to

do good to those who injure him. Have we

yet heard of any one in lands which boast the

name of Christ who lived that life?

Hear how he treats his enemies. One in-

stance of many I have heard will suffice.

When the Master came to ‘Akká there lived

there a certain man from Afghanistan, an aus-

tere and rigid Mussulman. To him the Mas-

ter was a heretic. He felt and nourished a

great enmity towards the Master, and roused

up others against him. When opportunity

offered in gatherings of the people, as in the

Mosque, he denounced him with bitter words.

“This man,” he said to all, “is an impostor.

Why do you speak to him? Why do you

have dealings with him?” And when he

passed the Master on the street he was care-

ful to hold his robe before his face that his

sight might not be defiled.

Thus did this Afghan. The Master, how-

ever, did thus: The Afghan was poor and

lived in a mosque; he was frequently in need

of food and clothing. The Master sent him

both. These he accepted, but without thanks.

He fell sick. The Master took him a physi-

cian, food, medicine, money. These, also, he

accepted; but as he held out one hand that

the physician might take his pulse, with the

other he held his cloak before his face that

he might not look upon the Master. *For*

*twenty-four years* the Master continued his

kindnesses and the Afghan persisted in his

enmity. Then at last one day the Afghan

came to the Master’s door, and fell down,

penitent and weeping, at his feet.

“Forgive me, sir!” he cried. “For twenty-

four years I have done evil to you, for twenty-

four years you have done good to me. Now

I know that I have been in the wrong.”

The Master bade him rise, and they became

friends.

This Master is as simple as his soul is great.

He claims nothing for himself—neither com-

fort, nor honour, nor repose. Three or four

hours of sleep suffice him; all the remainder

of his time and all his strength are given to

the succour of those who suffer, in spirit or in

body. “I am,” he says, “the servant of God.”

Such is Abbas Effendi, the Master of ‘Akká.

**CHAPTER II**

**THE STORY OF HIS LIFE**

**TEHERAN AND BAGHDAD**

IN introducing Abbas Effendi to the reader

I have thus far presented phases of his

character which are unusual and first strike

the attention. But these qualities are only

the efflorescence of a strong, symmetrical, and

well-balanced nature, which should be regarded

from all sides. In the various relations of life

when circumstances demand it he can be re-

solute, stern, and unyielding, as well as tender

and compassionate. In his large family he is

the firm and careful head, no less than the kind

father and affectionate husband. Among men

he is a strong and virile man, with a vigorous

and clear intellect, a sound judgment, and sub-

stantial common sense. Among his people he

is the executive, the administrator, and organ-

iser of affairs.

Professor Browne, who visited ‘Akká in 1890,

thus graphically describes him as he saw him

at that time (*A Traveller’s Narrative*, Intro-

duction, page 36):

“Seldom have I seen one whose appearance impressed

me more. A tall, strongly built man, holding himself

straight as an arrow, with white turban and raiment,

long black locks reaching almost to the shoulder, broad,

powerful forehead indicating a strong intellect, com-

bined with an unswerving will, eyes keen as a hawk’s,

and strongly marked but pleasant features,—such was my

first impression of Abbas Effendi, “the Master,” as he

*par excellence* is called by the Babis. Subsequent con-

versation with him only served to heighten the respect

with which his appearance had at first inspired me.

One more eloquent of speech, more apt of illustration,

more intimately acquainted with the sacred books of

the Jews, the Christians, and the Mohammedans, could,

I should think, scarcely be found even among the

eloquent, ready, and subtle race to which he belongs.

These qualities, combined with a bearing at once ma-

jestic and genial, made me cease to wonder at the influ-

ence and esteem which he enjoyed even beyond the

circle of his father’s followers. About the greatness of

this man no one who had seen him could entertain a

doubt.”

But the best estimate of the character of

Abbas Effendi is to be gathered from the

events of his life, to a brief narration of which

I will now proceed. The story is told by Be-

hiah Khanum, his sister, as follows:

“My brother, Abbas Effendi, now our

Lord, was born at Teheran in the spring of

1844, at midnight following the day upon

which, in the evening, the Báb made his de-

claration. I was born three years later. He

was therefore eight and I five, when in August,

1852, the attempt was made upon the life of

the Shah of Persia by a young Bábí, who

through ungoverned enthusiasm had lost his

mental balance. The events following this

attempt are vividly impressed upon my mind.

My mother, Abbas Effendi, myself, and my

younger brother, then a babe, were at the time

in Teheran. My father was temporarily in

the country.

“The attempted assassination caused great

uproar and excitement throughout the city. All

Babis were searched for, and, when found, ar-

rested. A mob sacked our house, stripping it of

its furnishings. My mother fled with us to the

home of a sister of her father, whose husband

was an official of the government; but, seeing

the alarm which her presence caused, she was

unwilling to bring her relatives into danger,

and returned to her own home.

“There we gathered together some furniture

which had been left by the mob, and lived in

one room, destitute of all but the barest neces-

sities.

“My father, as my mother learned from a ser-

vant who was with him when he was arrested,

was not long after brought to the city in chains

and placed, with many other Babis, in a dungeon

below ground. They were chained together

in squads by heavy chains passing about their

necks. He expected to be executed first, as a

leader, but he was instead reserved for the

more horrible suffering of witnessing the suc-

cessive torture and death of his companions

separately. Each day one or more were se-

lected for this fate, and the others reminded

that their turn might come to-morrow.

“Meanwhile, we heard each day the cries of

the mob as a new victim was tortured or exe-

cuted, not knowing but that it might be my

father. My mother went daily to the house of

her aunt for news of him and generally spent

the entire day there, hoping that each hour

would bring some tidings. These were long

and weary days for my mother, young as she

was and unaccustomed to sorrow.

“At first, on going to her aunt’s, my mother

would take me with her; but one day, return-

ing unusually late, we found Abbas Effendi

surrounded by a band of boys who had un-

dertaken to personally molest him. He was

standing in their midst as straight as an arrow

—a little fellow, the youngest and smallest of

the group—firmly but quietly *commanding*

them not to lay their hands upon him, which,

strange to say, they seemed unable to do.

After that, my mother thought it unsafe to

leave him at home, knowing his fearless dispo-

sition, and that when he went into the street,

as he usually did to watch for her coming,

eagerly expectant of news from his father for

whom, even at that early age, he had a pas-

sionate attachment, he would be beset and

tormented by the boys. So she took him with

her, leaving me at home with my younger

brother. I spent the long days in constant

terror, cowering in the dark and afraid to

unlock the door lest men should rush in and

kill us.

“Meanwhile my mother was without money.

She would have been reduced to extremities

but for the fact that the buttons of our gar-

ments were of gold. These she used for buy-

ing food and for bribing the jailors to take

food to my father.

“Four months passed in this fearful agony of

suspense and terror. Meanwhile the Govern-

ment had investigated my father’s case and

had become convinced that he had had no con-

nection with the attack upon the Shah. This

might not have been sufficient to effect his

release at that time, on account of the popular

fury against all Babis, but he was so ill that it

was thought he would die, and his illness was

made a pretext for his liberation and he was

released under surveillance. Two weeks later,

in company with a number of other families

of believers, we set out for Baghdad with a

military escort. It was bitterly cold, and the

route lay over mountains. The journey lasted

a month. My father was very ill. The chains

had left his neck galled, raw, and much swollen.

My mother, who was pregnant, was unaccus-

tomed to hardships, and was worried and har-

assed over our recent trials and the uncertainty

of our fate. Another thing which grieved her

was her separation from my younger brother

whom, being very delicate, she had felt obliged

to leave behind in Teheran as unfit to endure

the hardships of this journey. We were all

insufficiently clothed, and suffered keenly from

exposure. My brother in particular was very

thinly clad. Riding upon a horse, his feet,

ankles, hands, and wrists were much exposed to

the cold, which was so severe that they became

frost-bitten and swollen and caused him great

pain. The effects of this experience he feels

to this day on being chilled or taking a cold.

“We arrived in Baghdad in a state of great

misery, and also of almost utter destitution.

The only means that we had brought from

Teheran consisted of a few personal effects that

my mother had collected before our depart-

ure, which had been so hurried that she had

had no time in which to make suitable prepara-

tion. Even these were nearly exhausted by

the time we reached our destination, having

been bartered on the journey for necessaries.

“More misery now stared us in the face.

My father was still very ill, my mother and

other women in delicate health, small children

needed care, while our means were insufficient

to procure even the usual necessities of life.

My mother’s health demanded that we should

have servants, but we were unable to hire

them. There were, indeed, those among the

believers who would willingly have acted as

such for us, and who actually did so, to some

extent, but we could not permit them to do

what we would not do ourselves—especially

my mother, who was habitually very thought-

ful and considerate, and who always preferred

to work for herself and others rather than be

a source of trouble to any one.

“I was, of course, too young to be of any

real help; and as it was, there was no one in

our household capable of doing much but my

poor mother, who was unaccustomed to labour

of any kind. In trying to wash our clothes

her hands, which were fine and delicate, be-

came blistered and were torn till they bled

“In short, our sufferings—at least those of

our own family—were indescribable. How-

ever, we struggled through this period as

bravely as we could, until, after a time, occa-

sional remittances came to us from Teheran,

the proceeds of personal effects—jewels, cloth

of gold, and other valuable articles which were

a part of my mother’s dowry—which had been

left there to be sold. This money ameliorated

our condition to a considerable extent.

“As soon as the Blessed Perfection[1] be-

came somewhat better, he began again to

teach. Gathering the believers about him he

encouraged, exhorted, and taught them un-

til peace and happiness again reigned in the

hearts of his devoted followers, and our little

band of refugees found joy in his holy pre-

sence. But this happiness was of but brief

duration. Not long after, my uncle, Subh i

Ezel, my father’s half-brother, arrived in

Baghdad, and then there began to be dishar-

mony and misunderstandings among the be-

1 This is the appellation usually given Bahá’u’lláh by Bahá’ís.

lievers. At the time of the trouble in Teheran,

Subh i Ezel had escaped and remained for

some time in concealment. Then he followed

us, travelling in the disguise of a dervish.

“I do not wish to be understood as assert-

ing definitely that Subh i Ezel was the cause

of the discord to which I have referred; but it

began at about the time of his joining us, and

I myself have concluded that it was attribut-

able to him.

“At length this state of affairs became very

distasteful to my father, he being by nature a

man of peace. Strife of any kind seemed to

hurt him; more, however, because of the un-

happiness which it brought upon others than

because of the discomfort which it caused him.

It was his habit, for the sake of peace and to

quell strife, to take all blame upon himself

where possible, and to seek to pacify those in

contention by his love.

“After we had been in Baghdad about one

year, he announced that he could endure it no

longer, and that he would go away.

“Accordingly, taking a change of clothes,

but no money, and against the entreaties of

all the family, he set out. He was prevailed

upon to take a servant, but sent him back the

next day.

“I have stated that my brother was deeply

attached to his father; this attachment seemed

to strengthen with his growth. After our

father’s departure he fell into great despond-

ency. He would go away by himself, and,

when sought for, be found weeping, often

falling into such paroxysms of grief that no

one could console him. His chief occupation

at this time was copying and committing to

memory the tablets[1] of the Báb. The child-

hood and youth of my brother was, in fact,

in all respects unusual. He did not care for

play or for amusement like other children.

He would not go to school, nor would he

apply himself to study. Horseback riding

was the only diversion of which he was fond;

in that he became proficient, being reputed

to be a very skilful horseman.[2]

1 The letters and shorter writings of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and

Abbas Effendi are called “tablets” by the Bahá’ís.

2 In reply to a question by Madame Canavarro, as to what he was

most fond of as a child, Abbas Effendi said: “I cared more for

hearing the tablets of the Báb recited than anything else. I used to

commit them to memory and repeat them. This was the greatest

pleasure I knew in my childhood—my play and amusement. I was

not fond of study, nor did I care for books.”

Being asked whether as a young man he did not seek amusement,

like others of his age, he replied: “At Baghdad I rode on horse-

back; and at one time I had an idea that I would like to hunt. So

on a certain occasion I joined a party of hunters and went with them

to the chase. But when I saw them killing birds and animals, I

“After my father’s departure many months

passed; he did not return, nor had we any

word from him or about him. We were all in

great sorrow, and made constant inquiries,

hoping to hear some rumour which would en-

able us to trace him.

“There was an old physician at Baghdad

who had been called upon to attend the fam-

ily, and who had become our friend. He

sympathised much with us, and undertook on

his own account to make inquiries for my

father. He at length thought that he had

traced him to a certain locality, quite distant

from Baghdad, in the mountains; and there-

after was accustomed to ask all persons whom

he met from that region for such a man.

These inquiries were long without definite

result, but at length a certain traveller to

whom he had described my father, said that

he had heard of a man answering to that de-

scription, evidently of high rank, but calling

himself a dervish, living in caves in the mount-

thought that this could not be right. Then it occurred to me that

better than hunting for animals, to kill them, was hunting for the

souls of men to bring them to God. I then resolved that I would

be a hunter of this sort. This was my first and last experience in

the chase.

“This is all I want to tell you of myself. I am only a seeker of

the souls of men, to guide them to God.”

ains. He was, he said, reputed to be so wise

and wonderful in his speech on religious things

that when people heard him they would follow

him; whereupon, wishing to be alone, he would

change his residence to a cave in some other

locality. Further he related this incident: A

boy attending a village school had been flogged

and sent out for failure in his writing. While

he was weeping outside the schoolroom, this

holy man came by and asked the cause of his

grief. When the lad had explained his trouble

the Dervish said: ‘Do not grieve. I will set

you another copy, and teach you to write well.’

He then took the boy’s slate and wrote some

words in very beautiful characters. The boy

was delighted; and showing his slate in pride

at now having a better master than he had

had in the school, the people were astonished,

Dervishes being commonly illiterate. They

then began to follow the Dervish; who, wish-

ing to meditate and pray in solitude, left that

place for another.

“When we heard these things, we were con-

vinced that this Dervish was in truth our be-

loved one. But having no means to send him

any word, or to hear further of him, we were

very sad.

“There was then in Baghdad an earnest

Bábí, formerly a pupil of Kurratu l’Aeyn (a

woman famous for her beauty and learning,

who was one of the disciples of the Báb, and a

martyr). This man said to us that as he had

no ties and did not care for his life, he desired

no greater happiness than to be allowed to

seek for him whom all loved so much, and that

he would not return without him.

“He was, however, very poor, not being

able even to provide an ass for the journey;

and he was besides not very strong, and

therefore not able to go on foot. We had no

money for the purpose, nor anything of value

by the sale of which money could be procured,

with the exception of a single rug, upon which

we all slept. This we sold and with the pro-

ceeds bought an ass for this friend, who there-

upon set out upon the search.

“Time passed; we heard nothing, and fell

into the deepest dejection and despair. Fin-

ally, four months having elapsed since our

friend had departed, a message was one day

received from him saying that he would bring

my father home on the next day. The other

members of the family could not credit the

truth of this news, but it seemed to electrify

my brother. He minutely questioned and

examined the messenger, and became much

excited. He quite believed that his father

would return, but no one else did.

During the night following the next day,

however, my father walked into the house.

We hardly knew him; his beard and hair were

long and matted—he really was a Dervish in

appearance. The meeting between my brother

and his father was the most touching and pa-

thetic sight I have ever seen. Abbas Effendi

threw himself on the floor before him and

kissed and embraced his feet, weeping and

crying, ‘Why did you leave us, why did you

leave us?’ while the great uncouth Dervish

wept over his boy. The scene carried a weight

not to be expressed in words.

“The absence of my father had covered a

little more than two years. After his return

the fame which he had acquired in the mount-

ains reached Baghdad, and not only Babis but

many others came to hear his teachings; and

many, also, merely out of curiosity to see him.

As he wished for retirement these curiosity

seekers were a great trouble and annoyance

to him. This aroused my brother and he de-

clared that he would protect his father from

such intrusions. Accordingly he prepared two

placards, one for the door of his own room,

which read, ‘Those who come for information

may apply within; those who come only be-

cause of curiosity had better stay away’; the

other for the door of his father’s room, of

which the purport was, ‘Let those who are

searching for God come, and come, and come.’

Then he announced that he himself would first

see those who came. If he found that they

were genuine truth-seekers he admitted them

to his father’s presence; otherwise he did not

permit them to see him.

“So time passed. My father taught many,

and his followers became numerous. Many of

them were the fierce and untutored Arabs of

Irak. All evinced an intense devotion to him.

He was visited also by many Babis from

Persia.

“During these years Abbas Effendi was ac-

customed to frequent the mosques and argue

with the doctors and learned men. They were

astonished at his knowledge and acumen, and

he came to be known as the youthful sage.

They would ask him, ‘Who is your teacher—

where do you learn the things which you say?’

His reply was that his father had taught him.

Although he had never been a day in school,

he was as proficient in all that was taught as

well-educated young men, which was the cause

of much remark among those who knew him.

“In appearance my brother was at this time

a remarkably fine-looking youth. He was

noted as one of the handsomest young men

in Baghdad.”

**CHAPTER III**

**THE STORY OF HIS LIFE** **(*Continued*)**

**CONSTANTINOPLE AND ADRIANOPLE**

“THE Governor of Baghdad at this time

was a relative of my father, but his

enemy on account of differences in religious

opinion and family misunderstandings. This

man, rendered uncomfortable by the sight of

my father’s increasing fame and influence,

exerted himself to effect his removal from

Baghdad. He caused representations to be

made to the Shah of Persia that, whereas Beha

Ullah had been driven out of Persia because

of the harm threatened by his presence to the

Mohammedan religion in that country, now he

was injuring the religion even more in Bagh-

dad, and still exerting his evil influence in

Persia; and that therefore he ought to be re-

moved to a place at a greater distance from

that country, and one where he could do less

harm.

“These representations and suggestions he

sent repeatedly to the Court of Persia, until at

length the Shah was moved to use his influence

with the Sultan of Turkey to have the Babis

transferred from Baghdad to Constantinople.

An order to this effect was at length made by

the Sultan.

“When this news came to us, from which we

inferred that my father would again be made a

prisoner, we were thrown into consternation,

fearing another separation. He was summoned

before the magistrates. My brother imperi-

ously declared that he would go in his stead;

but this our father overruled, and went him-

self. Great numbers of his followers had as-

sembled about our house, and these witnessed

his departure with many demonstrations of

grief, feeling that it was possible that he might

not return.

“The magistrates expressed great sorrow to

my father; they said that they respected and

loved him, that they had not instigated the

order, but that they were powerless to suspend

or modify it, and must proceed with its execu-

tion. My father remained in conference with

them nearly all day, but could do nothing to

avert the catastrophe. When he returned, he

told us that we must prepare to set out for

Constantinople in two weeks.

“This report was like a death-knell to his

followers, who were still gathered about the

house. Many of them were Arabs; their fierce

natures rebelled and they gave way to violent

remonstrances. They implored the Blessed

Perfection not to desert them. ‘You are our

shepherd,’ they said; ‘without you we must die.’

“The next day they so overran the house

that we could not prepare for the journey.

Then the Blessed Perfection proposed to go

with Abbas Effendi to the garden of one of

our friends and live there in a tent till the time

of departure, that the family might be able to

proceed with the packing. This remark was

repeated and misunderstood, and the rumour

circulated among the believers that the Blessed

Perfection was to be taken away alone. Then

they came pouring in by hundreds, so wild

with grief that they could not be pacified; and

when my father started to leave the house with

my brother they threw themselves upon the

ground before him. One man who had an

only child, which had come to him late in his

life, stripped the clothes from the child’s body

and placing it at my father’s feet cried, ‘Naked

I give you my child, my precious child, to do

with as you will; only promise not to leave us

in distress. Without you we cannot live.’

“Then, as the only way in which to soothe

his followers, the Blessed Perfection took all

his family to the garden, leaving to friends

the preparation of his household goods for the

journey. Here we pitched tents and lived in

them for two weeks. The tents made, as it

were, a little village, that of my father, which

he occupied alone, in the centre.

“Four days before the caravan was to set

out, the Blessed Perfection called Abbas Ef-

fendi into his tent and told him that he himself

was the one whose coming had been promised

by the Báb—the Chosen of God, the Centre

of the Covenant. A little later, and before

leaving the garden, he selected from among

his disciples four others, to whom he made the

same declaration. He further said to these

five that for the present he enjoined upon them

secrecy as to this communication, as the time

had not come for a public declaration; but

that there were reasons which caused him to

deem it necessary to make it at that time to a

few whom he could trust. These reasons he

did not state; but they are to my mind sug-

gested by the subsequent events which I shall

narrate farther on, and which I think he at

that time anticipated, and in view of which he

felt that he needed special protection.

“Many of the Blessed Perfection’s followers

decided to abandon Baghdad also, and ac-

company him in his wanderings. When the

caravan started, our company numbered about

seventy-five persons. All the young men, and

others who could ride, were mounted on horses.

The women and the Blessed Perfection were

furnished waggons. We were accompanied by

a military escort. This journey took place in

1863, about eleven years after our arrival in

Baghdad

“From the time when the declaration was

made to him at Baghdad Abbas Effendi seemed

to constitute himself the special attendant, ser-

vant, and body-guard of his father. He guarded

him day and night on this journey, riding by

his waggon and watching near his tent. He

thus had little sleep, and, being young, became

extremely weary. His horse was Arab and

very fine, and so wild and spirited that no

other man could mount him, but under my

brother’s hand as gentle and docile as a lamb.

In order to get a little rest, he adopted the

plan of riding swiftly a considerable distance

ahead of the caravan, when, dismounting and

causing his horse to lie down, he would throw

himself on the ground and place his head on

his horse’s neck. So he would sleep until the

cavalcade came up, when his horse would

awake him by a kick and he would remount

“The march to Constantinople occupied

four months. Much of the weather was in-

clement and during many whole days we were

without proper food. In our company were

many small children, upon whom and the wo-

men the journey was very hard. On one

occasion during a long and cold march, my

brother having obtained some bread, rice, and

milk, my father made up with his own hands a

sort of pudding by boiling these together with

a little sugar, which was then distributed to all

The preparation of this food was a reminis-

cence of my father’s two-years’ sojourn in the

mountains, where he was dependent on what

might be given him, and this dish—which he

sometimes made for himself—was the only

warm food he had.

“Such times as these were moments of

pleasure; but there was always present a feel-

ing of apprehension—as though a sword were

hanging over our heads.

“Arrived in Constantinople we found our-

selves prisoners. We were put into a small

house, the men below and the women above.

My father and his family were given two rooms.

The weather was very cold and damp, and we

had no fires or proper clothing. Because of

the crowding the atmosphere was foul. We

petitioned for better quarters, and were given

another house, which was to some extent an

improvement.

“While we were here the Blessed Perfec-

tion was advised by persons of prominence

who came to see him to appeal to the Sultan,

state his case, and demand justice, in accord-

ance with the Turkish custom. To these sug-

gestions he replied that he was a man whose

only concern was the spiritual welfare of men;

that he had never interfered in any way with

worldly affairs, nor should he ever do so, even

in his own behalf; that the Sultan had com-

manded his presence in Constantinople, and

for that reason alone he had come; that in

like manner he should in the future comply

with the wishes of the Sultan; that he saw no

reason why he, a spiritual man, should initiate

the trouble, argument, and commotion incid-

ent to an appeal; and that if the Government

wished to investigate the truth of the matter,

it would itself institute an inquiry.

“I have heard that these words were re-

peated to the Sultan and did not please him,

perhaps because a different construction had

been put upon them by the narrator than the

meaning which the Blessed Perfection intended

to convey. However that may be, it being a

matter about which I cannot speak with cer-

tainty, my father was not called upon to ap-

pear at any inquiry. An order was, however,

made, about two months after our arrival in

Constantinople, directing our transfer to Adri-

anople, a town in eastern European Turkey

of notoriously bad climate, to which criminals

were often sent.

“Before we set out a threat was made of

separating us—of sending the Blessed Perfec-

tion to one place, his family to another, and

his followers elsewhere. This overwhelmed

us with apprehension, which hung over us and

tormented us during the whole of the journey

and long after. The dread of this or of the

execution of my father was the greatest of

our trials—a horrible fear of unknown danger

always menacing us. Such threats were fre-

quently repeated after this time also. Had it

not been for them we could have borne our

sufferings with greater resignation; but these

kept us always in a heart-sickening suspense.

“The journey to Adrianople, although oc-

cupying but nine days, was the most terrible

experience of travel we had thus far had. It

was the beginning of winter, and very cold;

heavy snow fell most of the time; and desti-

tute as we were of proper clothing or food, it

was a miracle that we survived it. We ar-

rived at Adrianople all sick—even the young

and strong. My brother again had his feet

frozen on this journey.

“Our family, numbering eleven persons, was

lodged in a house of three rooms just outside

the city of Adrianople. It was like a prison;

without comforts and surrounded by a guard

of soldiers. Our only food was the prison

fare allowed us, which was unsuitable for the

children and the sick.

“That winter was a period of intense suffer-

ing, due to cold, hunger, and, above all, to the

torments of vermin, with which the house was

swarming. These made even the days horrible,

and the nights still more so. When they were

so intolerable that it was impossible to sleep, my

brother would light a lamp (which somewhat

intimidated the vermin) and by singing and

laughing seek to restore the spirits of the family.

“In the spring, on the appeal of the Blessed

Perfection to the Governor, we were removed

to somewhat more comfortable quarters within

the city. Our family was given the second

story of a house, of which some of the believers

occupied the ground floor.

“We remained for five years in Adrianople.

The Blessed Perfection resumed his teaching

and gathered about him a large following.

We were very poor and always in great priva-

tion, but had become so inured to suffering

that we should have lived in tolerable content-

ment had it not been for two things—the feel-

ing of dread and sense of unknown danger of

which I have before spoken, and another matter

to which I will presently more particularly

refer.

“During this period, as, in fact, had been the

case for a number of years, Abbas Effendi was

the chief dependence and comfort of the entire

family. He had from childhood a remarkably

self-sacrificing nature, habitually yielding his

own wishes and giving up whatever he had to

his brothers and sisters, keeping nothing for

himself. He was always gentle; never became

angry, and never retaliated. The life we were

living afforded constantly recurring occasions

for the exhibition of these qualities of his

character; and his unceasing efforts did a great

deal to make its conditions endurable for the

other members of the family.

“For the poor also he had ever been very

tender-hearted, and, destitute as we were, he

always contrived to find something to give to

others who were in greater want. This alms-

giving proclivity of my brother was a great

trial to our mother, for in our straitened cir-

cumstances she found it very difficult with the

means at her disposal to provide for her own

family only those things which were actually

necessary.

“The matter to which I have just referred

as interfering with our contentment was a very

terrible experience brought upon us by Subh i

Ezel, to whose machinations our subsequent

sufferings were chiefly due, and which were

the immediate cause of our being sent some

years later from Adrianople to ‘Akká. To this

very serious affair I will now proceed.

“Subh i Ezel continued to be one of our

company after we came to Baghdad in 1853.

With his family he now occupied in Adrianople

a house separate from ours though near it.

The relations between the two families, which

for a time while we were in Baghdad had been

strained, had become again harmonious. The

food of Subh i Ezel’s family was usually pre-

pared in our house, under my supervision, and

sent to Subh i Ezel’s house. The reason for

this was that his wives were not properly at-

tentive to their household affairs and prepared

his food so badly that it was not suitable for

him to eat. We saw this, and, in order to en-

able him to live comfortably, offered to cook

his food and send it to him.

“There was a bath in our house, but none

in Subh i Ezel’s, and he was accustomed to

use our bath. The same servant prepared the

bath and acted as bath attendant for both my

father and Subh i Ezel.

“Up to this time the declaration which the

Blessed Perfection had made to five of his

disciples in Baghdad had not been formally

communicated to Subh i Ezel, or, indeed, to

any one else, and we do not know that he was

aware of it: though his conduct suggests that

he suspected it, and that this suspicion fur-

nished the incentive which prompted him in

doing what I am about to relate. As you no

doubt know, Subh i Ezel claimed to have

been appointed by the Báb as his successor,

and therefore to be, after the Báb’s death, the

head of the Bábí Church.

“The events which I am about to relate

occurred about one year after he had moved

into the city from the quarters which he had

at first occupied in Adrianople. One day

while in the bath Subh i Ezel remarked to the

servant (who was a believer) that the Blessed

Perfection had enemies and that in the bath

he was much exposed, and asked whether it

would not be easy for an attendant who was

not faithful to the Blessed Perfection to make

away with him while shaving him. The serv-

ant replied that this was certainly the case.

Subh i Ezel then asked him whether, if God

should lay upon him the command to do this,

he would obey it. The servant understood

this question, coming from Subh i Ezel, to be

a suggestion of such a command, and was so

terrified by it that he rushed screaming from

the room. He first met Abbas Effendi and

repeated to him Subh i Ezel’s words. My

brother endeavoured to quiet him, and com-

manded his silence. This the servant refused

unless he was taken at once to the Blessed

Perfection. Abbas Effendi accordingly ac-

companied him to my father, who listened to

his story and then enjoined absolute silence

upon him.

“This occurrence was ignored by my father

and brother, and our relations with Subh i

Ezel continued to be cordial. The Blessed

Perfection was indeed several times warned to

beware of Subh i Ezel, by persons who claimed

to have overheard conversations between him

and his intimates, but no attention was paid

to these warnings.

“Some time afterwards, to celebrate a fam-

ily festival day, Subh i Ezel invited us all to

his house, At this time, also, my father was

warned not to take food there, but replied

that he must treat Subh i Ezel with kindness

and could not refuse it

“This entertainment was looked upon as

cementing the family reconciliation, and it is

usual on such occasions among Persians for

the heads of the two family factions which

have been alienated to eat from the same

plate. So, now, rice for both my father and

Subh i Ezel was served to them on one plate.

This rice, as well as all the other food used

for the meal, had been prepared in Subh i

Ezel’s house, contrary to the usual custom.

Now my father and Subh i Ezel had these

well-known peculiarities of taste—that the

former was very fond of onions, while the

latter could not endure them. The portion

of rice intended for my father was accordingly

flavoured with onions, while that intended for

Subh i Ezel was differently prepared. The

servant bringing in the plate placed it, at the

direction of Subh i Ezel, with the side upon

which was the rice flavoured with onions to-

ward the Blessed Perfection. While he did

so Subh i Ezel smilingly remarked, ‘Here is

rice cooked as you like it!’ My father ate

some of the rice prepared for him, but for-

tunately not very much, as for some reason it

did not please him. He preferred the rice

prepared for Subh i Ezel, and ate of it, and

also of the dishes which the others at the

table were eating.

“Soon after eating the rice my father be-

came ill and went home. About midnight he

was seized with severe vomiting and passing

of blood from the bowels. A physician was

summoned, and declared that he had been

poisoned.

“My father was desperately ill for twenty-

two days; during all this time he took no

food. On the eighteenth day the physician

said that he could not live. The death sen-

tence terribly moved Abbas Effendi. He

placed his head on the pillow beside his fa-

ther’s in the utmost agony of grief. He im-

plored him to live for the sake of the world,

for his family, and for him. My father was

too feeble to speak, and could only place his

hand on my brother’s head. The physician

was deeply moved by the sight. He had

learned to love Abbas Effendi,—as did every

one who came in contact with him,—and de-

clared he would give his life to save the father

for the boy. Thrice he repeated, ‘I will give

my life—I will give my life—I will give my

life’ walking as he spoke several times around

the bed. At length, utterly despairing of

the case, he left. The next morning he

sent word that he was ill, and advised that

another physician be summoned. Nine days

later he died. We then recalled his singular

words.

“Meanwhile we did not summon another

physician for my father, feeling that the case

was hopeless; but to our surprise his condition

soon showed marked improvement, and on the

third day he asked for food, which gave us

much hope. From this time he grew stronger

continuously, but very slowly,[1] and at length

recovered.

1 Partisans of Subh i Ezel have endeavoured to anticipate and

break the force of these revelations by publishing the following

story, cited by Professor Browne in a note, *A Traveller’s Narrative*,

p. 359- They allege that Bahá’u’lláh “caused poison to be placed

in one side of a dish of food which was to be set before himself and

Subh i Ezel, giving instructions that the poisoned side should be

turned towards his brother. As it happened, however, the food had

been flavoured with onions, and Subh i Ezel, disliking this flavour,

refused to partake of the dish. Bahá’u’lláh, fancying that his

brother suspected his design, ate some of the food from his side

of the dish; but the poison having diffused itself to some extent

through the whole mass, he was presently attacked with vomiting and

other symptoms of poisoning.” This transparent fabrication as-

sumes an impossible ignorance on the part of Bahá’u’lláh of the fact

that onions were disliked by his brother, as well as the improbable

“After the recovery of my father from this

illness, Abbas Effendi strongly urged him to

declare himself to Subh i Ezel. My father,

however, persisted in replying that so long as

Subh i Ezel did not effect other harm than he

was able to do to him personally, that is, so

long as he did not injure the Cause, he would

not assert himself against him.

“Subh i Ezel made no further attempts

upon the life of the Blessed Perfection, but

he began to endeavour to arouse dissensions

among the believers, making various false

hypothesis that Bahá’u’lláh would knowingly have partaken of food

in which poison had been placed.

In the following pages of his book Professor Browne mentions a

number of other charges made against Bahá’u’lláh by the Ezelis,

equally incredible, at least so it seems to me, to any one familiar

with the character and teachings of the Bahá’ís. I do not think that

it would be time well employed to advert to these charges in detail.

Allegations so flatly in contradiction to the spirit, lives, and teach-

ings of Bahá’u’lláh and his successor, will quickly enough fade away

and be forgotten if left to themselves. But I must protest most

energetically against Professor Browne’s suggestion (pp. 371 *et seq*.)

that any traits of Oriental character shared by the leaders of Beha’-

ism could be assumed as possibly closing their eyes to the iniquity

of such proceedings in support of their cause. Of course one can-

not dogmatise on impressions of character, but I wish to place on

record the fact that my own acquaintance with the Bahá’ís and the

spirit which animates them makes it inconceivable to me that such

utter perversion of moral sense, however possible it may generally

be to the Oriental type of character, about which I here express no

opinion, could under any circumstances characterise their policy as

a body, or the policy of their leaders.

accusations against the Blessed Perfection. At

this time, of course, the Babis in general did

not know that my father had said that he was

the Divine Manifestation, but he was regarded

by most of them as their leader, and very

much beloved. Subh i Ezel was looked upon

as leader, however, by some of the Babis.

“Thus matters went, becoming worse and

worse, until it was plainly evident that the

Cause was suffering. Then the Blessed Per-

fection summoned Abbas Effendi and said to

him that the time had come for a public de-

claration. ‘Not for myself would I do it,’

he said, ‘but because the welfare of the Cause

demands it.’ He then wrote a tablet, longer

than any he had before written and of great

power, it has been said that men trembled as

they read it,—addressed to the Babis generally,

and setting forth his declaration.

“This tablet he directed to be read to every

Bábí, but first of all to Subh i Ezel. He as-

signed to one of his followers the duty of tak-

ing it to Subh i Ezel, reading it to him, and

returning with Subh i Ezel’s reply. When

Subh i Ezel had heard the tablet, he did not

attempt to refute it; on the contrary he ac-

cepted it, and said that it was true. But he

went on to maintain that he himself was co-

equal with the Blessed Perfection, affirming

that he had had a vision on the previous night

in which he had received this assurance.

“When this statement of Subh i Ezel was

reported to the Blessed Perfection, the latter

directed that every Bábí should be informed

of it at the time when he heard his own tablet

read. This was done, and much uncertainty

resulted among the believers. They generally

applied to the Blessed Perfection for advice,

which, however, he declined to give. At

length he told them that he would seclude

himself from them for four months, and that

during this time they must decide the question

for themselves.

“This he did. None of the believers other

than his own family had access to him, or com-

munication with him, for four months. At the

end of that period all the Babis in Adrianople,

with the exception of Subh i Ezel and five or

six others, came to the Blessed Perfection and

declared that they accepted him as the Divine

Manifestation, whose coming the Báb had fore-

told. The Babis of Persia, Syria, Egypt, and

other countries, also, in due time accepted the

Blessed Perfection with substantial unanimity.[1]

1 Subh i Ezel had, indeed, a few adherents; but his following has

been so inconsiderable, and so utterly without the vitality and power

“Subh i Ezel now took up another line of

action. He opened a correspondence with

prominent persons in the Turkish government

and the Muslim Church, in which he alleged

that the Blessed Perfection was stirring up

strife and seeking to destroy the Muslim faith

by showing a contempt for the Koran, neglect-

ing the fast of Ramadan, permitting the women

of his followers to go unveiled, condemning

polygamy, and the like. These allegations,

although wholly unfounded, since the Blessed

Perfection, equally with our Master at the

present time, required of his followers the

most careful observance of, and respect for,

the social customs of the people among whom

they lived, were persisted in by Subh i Ezel,

until he had made the impression which he de-

sired. The Turkish government, annoyed and

irritated, finding our people, between whom,

as can be well understood, it was unable to

discriminate, vexatious and troublesome, wear-

ied of the whole matter, and determined to

scatter us; a course which under the circum-

stances was a quite natural and intelligible out-

of assimilation so characteristic equally of the earliest and latest

stages of this movement, that the defection has not impaired in any

ascertainable degree its solidarity, and is to be regarded, in consider-

ing the present status of the faith, as a quite negligible quantity.

come of Subh i Ezel’s actions. An order was

therefore issued decreeing that the Babis in

Adrianople should be separated and banished;

that Subh i Ezel should be sent to one place,

the Blessed Perfection to another, his family

to another, and the followers to still others;

and that all should be kept in ignorance of

their own and the others’ destinations.

“During the period of his residence at

Adrianople, Abbas Effendi had endeared him-

self to every one, high and low, those of the

faith and others alike. He taught much and

even at that time was commonly called the

‘Master.’ The Governor himself had become

a friend of the Master’s and delighted to listen

to his religious discourses. It was the habit

of the Governor frequently to have the Master

at the palace, and when my brother could not

go to the Governor he sometimes came to my

brother.

“When the Governor received the order

of banishment from Adrianople he was so

affected by it that, not having the heart to

execute it himself, he put it into the hands of

his subordinates for execution, wrote a letter

to Abbas Effendi, and left the city. In this

letter he said:

“‘This trouble has come upon you through

members of your own family. It is Subh i

Ezel who has caused the Sultan to take these

steps, I am powerless to aid you, and my

love for you is so great that I must go away.

I cannot see this dreadful thing happen.’

“This trouble broke with the suddenness of

a tornado upon us. We were sitting quietly

together at home when we heard a bugle-call.

My brother looked out and saw a cordon of

soldiers about the house presenting arms.

Our first thought was that the life of the

Blessed Perfection or of Abbas Effendi was

threatened. The latter endeavoured to quiet

our alarm, and went out to inquire the cause

of this demonstration. He was given the

Governor’s letter. The family consulted and

Abbas Effendi then told the officer in com-

mand that we would die rather than be sepa-

rated, and asked at least for respite. The

reply was, ‘No; you must go to-day, Beha

Ullah and his family to different places, and

neither can know the destination of the other.’

Abbas Effendi demanded permission to go

to the Governor’s palace and appeal to his

representative. This was at first refused but

finally granted, and he set out between two

guards.

“My brother pleaded so eloquently with

the officials that they consented to telegraph

to Constantinople asking that the order be

changed so that our family might remain

together. A reply was received refusing the

change. My brother persisted, and had such

influence with the officials that they seemed

unable to put the measure into execution, per-

mitting him to send despatch after despatch

for a week.

“These were days of horror. The mem-

bers of our family neither ate nor slept. No

cooking was done in the house. When my

brother left in the morning with the guards

we feared that we might never see him again,

and watched hour after hour for his return.

“At length a telegram was received granting

the concession that my father should be per-

mitted to take with him his immediate family,

but directing that his followers should be separ-

ated from him, without knowledge of his destin-

ation. A servant who had accompanied my

brother overheard a part of this despatch read

and misunderstood it. Without waiting to in-

quire whether he had heard aright, he returned

to us with the report that the first order was

not to be rescinded; that the Blessed Perfec-

tion was to be separated from his family and

his followers. After telling us this he ran out

and spread the news among the believers who

were gathered near our house. They were as

though stunned, paralysed. One of them, an

old and faithful follower, seized a knife, and

exclaiming, ‘If I must be separated from my

Lord, I will go now and join my God,’ cut

his throat. Fortunately this man’s knife was

partially arrested by a bystander so that his

jugular vein was not severed; with the aid of

a physician his life was ultimately saved.

“The attempted suicide caused a great noise

and disturbance, which attracted our attention.

My mother and I went out to inquire into the

cause of the commotion. We came near, and

saw a man lying on the ground with blood

streaming from him. The soldiers surround-

ing the group prevented us from approaching

closely enough to determine with certainty

who it was, but the first thought which came

to us was that my poor brother, on hearing

that the order was to be carried out, had, in

his despair, killed himself. We could hear the

gulping utterances of the man—‘You have

separated me from my Lord,—I prefer to die.’

Though unable to distinguish the voice, we

still thought it was my brother. We remained

in this agonising suspense for some time, until

we suddenly heard my brother’s voice rising

high above the din, and speaking with tremend-

ous force.

“On hearing him, two things amazed us.

First, he seemed to be wrought up to the high-

est pitch of anger and indignation. Never

before had we heard him speak an angry word.

We had known him sometimes impatient and

peremptory, but never angry. And then, his

great excitement had apparently given him

command of the Turkish language, which no

one had ever heard him speak before. He

was, in Turkish, and in the most impassioned

and vehement manner, protesting against, and

denouncing, the treatment of the officers and

demanding the presence of the Governor, who

in the meantime had returned to the city. The

officers seemed cowed by his vehemence, and

the Governor was sent for. He came, and

seeing the situation said, ‘It is impossible, we

cannot separate these people.’

“The Governor returned to his palace and

telegraphed to Constantinople. The next day

he received a reply granting permission to the

followers of the Blessed Perfection to accom-

pany him. We were told to prepare for im-

mediate departure, but were not told to what

place we were to be sent. When we set out

there were seventy-seven in all in our band.

We journeyed six days, and arrived at Galli-

poli, which is on the sea.

“On our arrival at this town we were met

with the information that the Governor had a

telegraphic order from the Sultan’s government

directing our separation; that my father with

one servant was to go to one place, my brother

with one servant to another, the family to Con-

stantinople, the other followers to various

places. This sudden and unexplained with-

drawal of the hard-won concession we had so

recently obtained exhausted our patience. We

unhesitatingly declared that we would not be

separated, and a repetition, in substance, of

the events of the last days in Adrianople fol-

lowed. My brother went to the Governor and

told him that we would not submit to separa-

tion. ‘Do this,’ said he,—‘take us out on a

steamer and drown us in the ocean. You can

thus end at once our sufferings and your per-

plexities. But we refuse to be separated.’

“We remained in Gallipoli for a week, in

the same horrible suspense which we had ex-

perienced at Adrianople. Finally my brother,

by his eloquence in argument and power of

will, succeeded in gaining for the second time

from the Constantinople government the con-

cession that we should remain together.

“At Gallipoli the German, Russian, and

English Consuls called upon the Blessed Per-

fection and offered to intercede in his behalf

with the Turkish government, assuring him

that they could procure, for him and his family,

permission to go to one of the countries of

Western Europe, where they would have no

further trouble. My father replied that he did

not wish to oppose the will of the Sultan, nor

would he consent to abandon his followers;

that his only interests were in spiritual things

and his only desire to preach a religion, and

that therefore he had nothing to fear.

“The order from Constantinople directed

that we should embark together upon a govern-

ment vessel, and no time was lost in putting it

into execution. In the hurry, distress, and

uncertainty of the moment, we neglected to

provide food for the voyage, but to one old

servant, on his way to the ship, the thought

occurred that he had not seen any provisions

prepared, and he bought a box of bread. This,

with the ship’s prisoners’ rations, which were

almost inedible, was the only food we had for

five days, when we reached Alexandria. Here

the rumour that we were to be separated was

renewed; and all were so terrified by it that

no one was willing to leave the ship to buy

provisions lest he be prevented from returning.

We were able to procure only some grapes and

mineral water.

“The little bread we had was now spoiled;

and, what with hunger, fright, and grief, we

were almost bereft of reason. On one of our

company, indeed, these conditions had so

preyed as to unbalance his mind, and he threw

himself from the ship as we were leaving the

harbour of Alexandria. The ships’ officers

were, however, fortunately able to bring her

to in time to reach this man before he sank,

and he was brought on board and revived.”

**CHAPTER IV**

**THE STORY OF HIS LIFE (*Continued*)**

‘Akká

“AFTER a voyage of about two days we

were landed at Haifa, in Syria. All

were sick, from hunger or eating improper

food. I myself was a healthy woman up to

the time of taking this voyage; since then I

have never been well.

“We remained one day in the prison at

Haifa, the men in chains, and were then taken

in small boats to ‘Akká (a distance of ten miles).

The water was very rough, and nearly all be-

came seasick.

“‘Akká, as we afterwards learned, was a

prison to which the worst criminals were com-

monly sent from all parts of the Turkish

Empire. It was reported to have a deadly

climate. There was a saying that if a bird flew

over ‘Akká it would fall and die.

“At that time there was no landing for the

city: it was necessary to wade ashore from the

boats. The Governor ordered that the women

be carried on the backs of the men. My

brother was not willing that this should be

done, and protested against it. He was one

of the first to land, and procured a chair, in

which, with the help of one of the believers, he

carried the women ashore. The Blessed Per-

fection was not allowed to leave his boat until

all his family had landed. When he had come

ashore, the family were counted and taken to

the army barracks, in which we were to be

imprisoned. From the terrible sufferings and

privations of the journey we were nearly all

sick; worst of all, perhaps, the Blessed Perfec-

tion and myself.

“Arrived at the barracks, it was proposed

to put the Blessed Perfection and his family

on the second floor, and he was sent up; but

I fainted from exhaustion and was unable to

ascend the stairs. [Here the narrator paused

a moment, visibly trembling, and then con-

tinued.] Of my own experience perhaps this

is the most awful. The horrible sufferings

of the voyage had reduced me almost to the

point of death. Upon that came the seasick-

ness. When we landed in ‘Akká all the people

of the town came crowding about us, talking

loudly in Arabic, which I understood. Some

said that we were to be put in the dungeons

and chained; others that we were to be thrown

into the sea. The most horrible jests and jeers

were hurled at us as we were marched through

the streets to this dreadful prison.

“Imagine, if you can, the overpowering im-

pression made by all this upon the mind of a

young girl, such as I was then. Can you won-

der that I am serious, and that my life is dif-

ferent from those of my countrywomen? But

this is digressing.

“When we had entered the barracks the

massive door was closed upon us and the great

iron bolts thrown home. I cannot find words

to describe the filth and stench of that vile

place. We were nearly up to our ankles in

mud in the room into which we were led.

The damp, close air and the excretions of the

soldiers combined to produce horrible odours.

Then, being unable to bear more, I fainted.

As I fainted, those about me caught me before

I fell; but because of the mud and filth there

was no place upon which I could be laid. On

one side of the room was a man weaving a

mat for the soldiers. One of our friends took

this mat and I was placed upon it. Then they

begged for water, but they could not get it.

The soldiers would permit no one to go out.

There was a pool of water on the dirt floor, in

which the mat-maker had been moistening his

rushes. Some of this water was dipped up

and strained and put to my lips. I swallowed

a little and revived; but the water was so

foul that my stomach rejected it, and I fainted

again. Then a little of this water was thrown

into my face; and at length I revived suffi-

ciently to go up-stairs.

“In the meantime my brother had slipped

out and gone down to assist in the landing of

the remainder of our company, whom we had

left in the boats. When the soldiers discovered

that he had disappeared, they at once notified

the Governor, who had search made for him

and found him helping the others ashore.

The followers were all brought to the barracks

together and lodged on the ground floor.

Among them were the women and children,

almost dying with hunger and parched with

thirst. My brother begged to be permitted

to go out for food and water. The soldiers

replied: ‘You cannot put a foot outside of

this room. If you do, we will kill you. Our

orders are not to let you leave the barracks

under any pretext.’ Then he asked permis-

sion to send out a servant guarded by soldiers.

This was refused.

“The above was related to us by my brother,

when he at length returned to our family quar-

ters, in reply to our inquiries as to the occasion

of his absence. He had been away for hours,

and our hearts had been filled with anxiety

for his safety.

“Then came another time of heart-sickening

suffering. The mothers who had babes at

breast had no milk for them, for lack of food

and drink, so the babes could not be pacified

or quieted. The larger children were scream-

ing for food and water, and could not sleep or

be soothed. The women were fainting.

“Under these conditions, my brother spent

the first part of the night in passing about

among the distressed people, trying to pacify

them, and in appealing to the soldiers not to

be so heartless as to allow women and children

to suffer so. About midnight he succeeded in

getting a message to the Governor. We were

then sent a little water and some cooked rice;

but the latter was so full of grit and smelled

so badly that only the strongest stomach

could retain it. The water the children drank;

but the rice only the strongest could eat.

Later on, some of our people in unpacking

their goods found some pieces of the bread

which had been brought from Gallipoli, and a

little sugar. With these a dish was prepared

for the Blessed Perfection, who was very ill.

When it was taken to him, he said: ‘I com-

mand you to take this to the children.’ So it

was given to them, and they were somewhat

quieted.

“The next morning conditions were no

better; there was neither water nor food that

could be eaten. My brother sent message

after message to the Governor, appealing in be-

half of the women and children. At length

he sent us water and some prisoners’ bread;

but the latter was worse even than the rice—

appearing and tasting as though earth had

been mixed with the flour. My brother also

succeeded in getting permission to send out

a servant, guarded by four soldiers, to buy

food. But before this permission was given,

the Governor commanded the presence of my

brother and told him that neither he nor any

of our people—not even a child—was to leave

the prison under any circumstances whatever,

and that unless this was promised the servant

would not be permitted to go out. Under the

circumstances my brother was obliged to give

this promise.

“The servant selected was told that if he

spoke to a man or woman except in bargain-

ing for supplies, he would be spitted on the

swords of the soldiers.

“The servant procured some provisions; yet

even thus we were still badly off for food, for

we were all so poor that we could buy but lit-

tle. So the Blessed Perfection requested that

the prison allowance for our support should

be commuted for money. The Governor con-

sented, and gave to my father the amount

allowed our family, and to my brother the

amount allowed to the others. Then my father

gave his own share and that of our family to

my brother for the people, the whole being in-

sufficient, for them, saying: ‘I will eat bread.’

Thereafter, when the supply of provisions was

insufficient and he learned of it, he would take

only bread and water.

“When we were first brought to the bar-

racks we had no knowledge as to the manner

of life to which we were to be consigned. We

feared that the Blessed Perfection, my brother,

and perhaps others would be placed in dun-

geons and chained. The only information

about it which we could obtain was that our

sentence would be read on Friday—our arrival

being early in the week. This uncertainty was

an additional horror. When the sentence was

read to us, we learned that it stated that we

were political prisoners, nihilists, murderers,

and thieves; that wherever we went, we cor-

rupted the morals of the people; that we had

leagued to overthrow the Ottoman Empire;

that we could be given no leniency, and that

the orders to keep us under bolt and bar must

not be broken. It was because of this evil

reputation, which had doubtless been given to

the government by those who had reasons for

desiring our destruction, and not from any

want of humanity on the part of our jailors,

who later became very kind and friendly to

us, that we were subjected to such stern treat-

ment and were given no more latitude or aid.

“The season was summer (1868) and the

temperature very high. All our people were

huddled together on the damp earth floor of the

barracks; with little water to drink, and that

very bad, with no water with which to bathe,

and scarcely enough for washing their faces.

Typhoid fever and dysentery broke out among

them. Every one in our company fell sick ex-

cepting my brother, my mother, an aunt, and

two others of the believers. We were not al-

lowed a physician; we could not procure medi-

cine. My brother had in his baggage some

quinine and bismuth. With these two drugs

and his nursing, he brought us all through with

the exception of four, who died. These were

two months of such awful horror as words can-

not picture. Imagine it, if you can. Some

seventy men, women, and children packed to-

gether, hot summer weather, no proper food,

bad water, the most offensive odours from

purging and excretions, and a general attack of

the terrible diseases of dysentery and typhoid.

“There was no one with strength to be of

any general service but my brother. He washed

the patients, fed them, nursed them, watched

with them. He took no rest. When at length

he had brought the rest of us—the four who

died excepted—through the crisis and we were

out of danger, he was utterly exhausted and

fell sick himself, as did also my mother and

the three others who had theretofore been

well. The others soon recovered, but Abbas

Effendi was taken with dysentery, and long

remained in a dangerous condition. By his

heroic exertions he had won the regard of one

of the officers, and when this man saw my

brother in this state he went to the Governor

and pleaded that Abbas Effendi might have a

physician. This was permitted, and under the

care of the physician my brother recovered.

“For long after our departure from Adrian-

ople none of the friends and followers of the

Blessed Perfection in Persia knew our where-

abouts. We were not permitted to send any

letters. Great efforts were made to find us,

and our friends finally traced us to ‘Akká; but

this whole city was then practically a prison

from which strangers were carefully excluded,

and they found it impossible to get into com-

munication with us, or even to pass the city

gate.

“There was a Persian follower of the Báb

who some time before, having failed in his

business at home, had emigrated to ‘Akká.

He had not dared to disclose his faith, and no

one suspected it. The servant who marketed

for us happened one day, as he went about the

bazaar to come to this man’s shop; and though

he was not allowed to speak with him, he seems

to have known intuitively that he was a friend.

So thereafter he made most of his purchases

of provisions at his shop. Some of the Persian

believers who had come to ‘Akká, but who had

been unable to enter the city, effected com-

munication with this man and arranged with

him to send a note to the Blessed Perfection.

This the shopkeeper accomplished by conceal-

ing the note among some vegetables and giving

them to the servant with such a look that the

latter understood and afterwards searched for

it. The note begged the Blessed Perfection

to send out some word; but this seemed to be

beyond our power.

“The physician who visited my brother, on

seeing our condition, had so much sympathy

with our distress, and became so fond of Abbas

Effendi, that he asked him if there was not

something which he could do for us. My

brother begged him to take a message to the

believers who were waiting to hear from the

Blessed Perfection. He undertook to do so,

and carried a tablet away in the lining of his hat.

For two years this physician conveyed tablets

and messages to and fro for us in this way.

“After this first message had been trans-

mitted from the Blessed Perfection, many be-

lievers came here from Persia and remained

in the neighbourhood with the hope of effect-

ing some communication with him, or at least

of getting a glimpse of him. They would go

to some prominent point where they could be

seen from his window. Some of us, seeing

them, would call my brother’s attention to

them, whereupon he would inform the Blessed

Perfection and follow him to the window and

wave his handkerchief.

“We were imprisoned in the barracks, with-

out any substantial change in our manner of

life, for two years. During this time none of

us left the prison—not even my brother or

any of the children. The Blessed Perfection

passed his time in his room, writing tablets, or

rather dictating them to my younger brother,

who was a rapid penman. Abbas Effendi

would copy them and send them out by the

physician.

“It was usual to carry on this work during

the evening. One evening towards the end

of the second year, my younger brother came,

as was his habit, to write for his father. But

as he was not very well, and as some others of

the family were also ill, the Blessed Perfection

told him to go and come later. So he went

up to the flat roof of the barracks, where we

were accustomed to walk, and which was our

only recourse for fresh air and exercise. He

was walking up and down, repeating tablets

and gazing at the sky, when he stumbled, lost

his balance, and fell through the opening

to which the ladder from below led up. The

room into which he fell had a lofty ceiling; it

was the living-room of the family. No one

was in the room at the time, but, hearing his

cries, some of the family rushed in and found

him lying in a heap on the floor with the blood

pouring from his mouth. The Blessed Perfec-

tion, hearing the commotion, opened the door

of his room and looked out. When he saw

his son he turned back and re-entered his room,

saying: ‘Mahdy has gone!’

“We took him up and laid him on his mat

He was perfectly conscious. Later the Blessed

Perfection came and remained with him. The

physician was sent for; he said that there was

no hope.

“My brother lived for about thirty hours.

When he was about to pass away the Blessed

Perfection said to him: ‘What do you desire?

Do you wish to live, or do you prefer to die?

Tell me what you most wish for.’ My brother

replied: ‘I don’t care to live. I have but one

wish. I want the believers to be admitted to

see their Lord. If you will promise me this,

it is all I ask.’ The Blessed Perfection told

him that it would be as he desired.

“So, after much patient suffering, my

brother’s gentle spirit took its flight. As we

could not leave the barracks, we could not

bury our dead; nor had we the consolation of

feeling that we could provide for him through

others the grateful final tribute of a proper and

fitting burial, as we had no means wherewith

even to purchase a coffin. After some con-

sideration and consultation among ourselves,

finding that we had nothing to dispose of, and

at a loss how to proceed, we told our Lord[1] of

the sad situation. He replied that there was

a rug in his room which we could sell. At

first we demurred, for in taking his rug we

took the only comfort he had; but he insisted

and we sold it. A coffin was then procured,

and the remains of my deceased brother placed

in it. It was carried out by our jailors, and

we did not even know whither it was taken.

“The death of this youngest and favourite

child—of a very gentle and sweet disposition—

nearly broke his mother’s heart. We feared

for her reason. When the Blessed Perfection

was told of the condition of his wife, he went

to her and said: ‘Your son has been taken by

God that His people might be freed. His life

was the ransom, and you should rejoice that

you had a son so dear to give to the cause of

God.’ When our mother heard these words

she seemed to rally, knelt, and kissed the

Blessed Perfection’s hands, and thanked him

for what he had said. After that she did not

shed a tear.

“I should perhaps here say a word about

our relations, in the family, to the Blessed

Perfection. After his declaration we all re-

1 ‘Bahá’u’lláh.

garded him as one far above us, and tacitly

gave him a corresponding position in our de-

meanour towards him. He was never called

upon to consider, or take part in, any worldly

matters. We felt no claim upon him because

of family relationship—no more than that of

his other followers. When we had but two

rooms for all, one was set apart for him. The

best of everything was always given to him

he would take it and then return it to us and

do without. He slept upon the floor because

his people had no beds, although he would

have been furnished one had he wished it.

“Some time after the death of his son, the

Blessed Perfection (who, as I have said, usu-

ally never attended to affairs, these being all

left to my brother) expressed a wish to have

an interview with the Governor. Meanwhile

my brother’s dying prayer, that the believers

might be permitted to visit their Lord, having

been overheard by a soldier who was present

at the time and by him repeated to the officer

in charge, had come to the ears of the Gov-

ernor. Very possibly it had touched him and

now influenced him to accede to the Blessed

Perfection’s request for an interview; at all

events the request was granted, and the Blessed

Perfection met the Governor in council with

his officers. He then addressed them on the

subject of his separation from his followers

and of their great sorrow and distress occa-

sioned by it, reminding them of his deceased

son’s dying petition, and speaking with such

eloquence and power that the Governor was

moved to grant his appeal.

“We were, in consequence, removed from

the barracks and given a comfortable house

with three rooms and a court. Our people,

and also our family, were permitted to go at

large in the city, and whoever wished could

visit us; but my father was required to remain

within the house.”

Just here I wish to interrupt the narrative

in order to call attention to what seems to me

a very remarkable fact. Notwithstanding this

interminable catalogue of the extreme and al-

most incredible sufferings and privations which

this heroic band of men and women have en-

dured—more terrible than many martyrdoms

—there is not a trace of resentment or bit-

terness to be observed amongst them. One

would suppose that they were the most for-

tunate of the people among whom they live,

as, indeed, they do certainly consider them-

selves, in that they have always been permitted

to live near their beloved Lord, beside which

they count their sufferings as nothing. They

well know that those having their own motives

for maligning them have persistently misled

the Sultan’s advisers as to their real charac-

ter and purposes; and that their implacable

enemies have been, not the authorities of the

state, but those allied to them both by na-

tionality and close ties of family relationship.

Except as these have interfered and caused

prejudice and trouble, they consider their treat-

ment by the government humane and even

kind. Moreover, they recognise the fact that

the deplorable attack upon the life of the Shah

of Persia, while in no sense their fault, has been

inevitably their misfortune, rationally explain-

ing much of the suspicion and harsh treatment

to which they have been subjected.

When all is fairly considered, it must be ac-

knowledged that the Sultan is fair and liberal

in the treatment of religious opinions, provided

that these opinions are not used as a shield for

hostile political purposes and intrigues. Men

of many various faiths dwell together in peace,

harmony, and contentment in all parts of his

dominions.

We should beware, moreover, of hasty criti-

cism, remembering how difficult it is for a

sovereign to penetrate to the truth of such

matters, easily obscured by the perversions of

hostile interests which have his ear; and we

may hope that the patient resignation and good

lives of Abbas Effendi and his little band of

followers at ‘Akká may at length convince his

Majesty that, as is, indeed, the fact, he has not

in his dominions more loyal subjects or more

useful citizens.

**CHAPTER V**

**THE STORY OF HIS LIFE (*Concluded*)**

‘Akká

“AMONG those who went with us from

Adrianople to ‘Akká were three men

who were followers of Subh i Ezel, and also

one of Subh i Ezel’s wives who, having quar-

relled with him, asked permission to accompany

us. During the two years of close confinement

these four lived peaceably with the followers

of the Blessed Perfection, the woman in his

family. As soon as our company was released

from the barracks, they began to make mis-

chief. They slandered the believers to the

people of ‘Akká, saying that we would make

trouble at the first opportunity, and other

things of like nature. The men were relatives

of the woman, and she asked permission to live

with them. So they took up quarters together

in another part of the town from that in which

we lived.

“After this their hostility became more

aggressive and open. They declared that they

were imprisoned by mistake, being enemies of

the Blessed Perfection; threatened to kill the

Blessed Perfection and my brother, if there

should be an opportunity; and carried on vari-

ous intrigues against them, as the forging of

letters purporting to come from the Blessed

Perfection and saying evil things of the Sultan

and the Governor, which they took to the of-

ficials. At length they were so successful in

inviting trouble that a threat came from Con-

stantinople of again transporting and separat-

ing us.

“Two of the believers thought that they

would settle the matter themselves, without

taking counsel with the Blessed Perfection or

my brother. They reasoned that if they should

take such counsel, they would be forbidden

to execute their plans, and, having been for-

bidden, they could not disobey. ‘We will,’

they said, ‘do a wicked deed; but we will stop

the evil doings of these people even if we are

cursed for it. We will save our Lord though

at the risk of our own souls.’ They persuaded

another of the believers to join them and the

three proceeded to the house of the Ezelis.

Their intention was to demand of them a

promise to stop their mischief, under threat of

death; but they did not have the opportunity

to get so far as that. Having called the Eze-

lis out they asked them whether they intended

to kill the Blessed Perfection and the Master;

whereupon the Ezelis attacked them fiercely

with clubs and sticks. A general fight fol-

lowed in which two Ezelis and one Bahá’í

were killed.

“In consequence of this affair (which oc-

curred very soon after our release from the

barracks) my brother was arrested and put in

chains in the dungeon, on the assertion by

the surviving Ezeli and the woman with him

that he and the Blessed Perfection had in-

stigated the trouble. Then followed another

period of misery. The Blessed Perfection

was brought before the court and gave test-

imony in behalf of himself and my brother.

Abbas Effendi was speedily released from

prison, but remained under suspicion, and the

matter was not determined for many months,

during which we lived in terrible suspense and

anxiety. But at length the Court was satisfied

that the charges were baseless, and they were

withdrawn.[1]

1 Professor Browne (*A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 370) quotes Lau-

rence Oliphant as saying that Bahá’u’lláh, on being brought before

the court on this occasion, and being asked who and what he was,

replied. “I will begin by telling you who I am not. I am not a

“The Blessed Perfection then excommun-

icated the two Bahá’ís who were in the fight

and survived it: they never again had speech

camel-driver,”—an allusion to the prophet Mohammed,—“nor am I

the son of a carpenter,”—an allusion to Christ. “This is as much as

I can tell you to-day. If you will now let me retire, I will tell you

to-morrow who I am.” “Upon this promise”’ continues Mr Oli-

phant, “he was let go; but the morrow never came. With an enor-

mous bribe he had in the interval purchased an exemption from all

further attendance at court.”

I called Abbas Effendi’s attention to this statement, and asked him

if there was any truth in it. “There is none whatever,” he replied.

“You can yourself see that Bahá’u’lláh could not have made those

remarks. This being a Turkish government, the officials are all

Mohammedans. There are also a very large number of Christians

here. All Mohammedans and Christians would have understood the

allusions; and such remarks being disrespectful to Mohammed and

Christ, and the Blessed Perfection being a prisoner accused of en-

deavouring to subvert religious faith, they would have cut him in

pieces—he could never have left the court-room.

“What the Blessed Perfection actually said in his own behalf was

in substance this:

“‘I am innocent of any knowledge of this matter. How could

I, who teach love and pity for every creature—who have given my

life and that of my family to demonstrate that this is true religion—

instigate this thing?

“‘You are trying to fasten upon me a guilt of which I an innocent;

but I am ready to die. If you wish to execute me, I will sign any

paper which you may prepare consenting to my execution; but I de-

clare to you that I am innocent of this accusation.’

“The trial of these men lasted six months; during all this time

the effort was being made to fasten the guilt upon the Blessed Perfec-

tion. Moreover, this trial was before a judge and jury. Is it likely

that under these circumstances he could have bribed both a judge and

a jury, who were, besides, to begin with, not too well disposed towards

him? The effort would have been futile had he attempted it. He

did not, nor would he have done so under any circumstances.”

with him. He soon after began a series of

tablets on the sin of murder; declaring that

no one, whosoever he might be, who would

take the life of his brother, could be a Bahá’í.

“The woman and the surviving Ezelite were

sent to Constantinople.

“These, so far as I have ever heard, were

the only Ezelis who have been killed by

Bahá’ís.

“After our liberation from the barracks and

the termination of this affair, my brother was

able to mingle freely with the people of ‘Akká,

and he at once began to establish friendly rela-

tions with them. As illustrating the manner

in which he gradually won their good-will,

an incident occurs to me which I will relate.

The believers needed fuel, but the people would

not sell it to them. They regarded us as her-

etics and thought there was merit for them

in harshness and unkindness towards us. Ab-

bas Effendi obtained permission to send out

of the city for charcoal, and a camel-load was

brought back. The driver was stopped by a

Christian merchant. ‘This is better charcoal

than I can get,’ he said, and without more cere-

mony took it for himself—nor would he return

the money paid for it.

“This was reported to my brother. He

went to the merchant’s shop and stood in the

door. He was not noticed. Then he entered

and sat down by the door. The merchant con-

tinuing to transact his business with those who

came and paying him no attention, he waited

in silence for three hours. At length, when

the others had left and no more came, the

merchant said to him: ‘Are you one of those

prisoners here?’ Abbas Effendi assenting, he

continued: ‘What have you done that you are

imprisoned?’

“‘Since you ask me’ replied Abbas Effendi,

‘I will tell you. We have done nothing. We

are persecuted as Christ was persecuted.’

“‘What do you know of Christ?’ said the

merchant.

“My brother replied in such a manner that

the merchant perceived that he was not ignor-

ant of Christ and the Christian Bible. He

then began to question him about the Bible

and was interested in his replies, as my brother

gave him explanations which he had never

before heard.

“Next he invited my brother to a seat be-

side him and continued the conversation for

two hours. At its conclusion he seemed much

pleased, and said: ‘The coal is gone,—I can-

not return you that, but here is the money.’

He then escorted my brother to the door and

down into the street, treating him with the

greatest respect. Since that time he and Ab-

bas Effendi have been fast friends, and the

two families also.

“Yet the prejudices and animosities of the

people against us were so deep-rooted that

much time and patience have been required

to remove them. You have already been told,

I think, of the Afghan who persisted in his

enmity for twenty-four years, but was finally

softened by my brother’s kindnesses. So it

has been with many. But in time his love for

others has won all hearts. People have com-

monly said of him: ‘What does he do to his

enemies that he makes them his friends?’

“The Governor, the magistrates, the officers

of the army, first learned to respect him, and

then to love him. Nearly every one in the

city loves him, Muslim and Christian, rich

and poor.

“Yet perhaps there is one exception—I

know of no other—of which I will now

speak.

“The Blessed Perfection indicated in many

ways that Abbas Effendi was to be his suc-

cessor. Many years before his death he de-

clared this in his *Book of Laws*. He has

referred to Abbas Effendi as ‘The Centre of

my Covenant,’ ‘The Greatest Branch,’ ‘The

Branch from the Ancient Root,’ ‘The Mystery

of the Greatest God.’ He conferred upon

him the designation of ‘His Highness the

Master,’ and usually so addressed him and

spoke of him; and he required all his family

to treat him with marked deference. He also

left a testament in which he reiterated his will

in this respect

“Nevertheless, after the death of the Blessed

Perfection, Abbas Effendi’s assumption of this

position was resented by our half-brother,

Mirza Mohammed Ali. For a time he en-

deavoured to stir up dissensions among the

Bahá’ís. Failing in this, he sought to injure

my brother personally. At this time, as had

been the case for more than twenty years, my

brother was permitted to go at his pleasure

beyond the walls of ‘Akká, and had the free-

dom of the surrounding country. I then my-

self resided in Haifa, and he as well as the

other members of his family were in the habit

of going there frequently, a change which

was of much benefit to their health, since

‘Akká is a small, crowded, and, in some sea-

sons, unhealthy city. Mohammed Ali pro-

ceeded to make false charges of various sorts

against Abbas Effendi to the Turkish govern-

ment. One of these was this:

“The Blessed Perfection before his death

gave Abbas Effendi the charge to build, on a

site which he had selected on the side of Mt.

Carmel above Haifa, a building which should

be the permanent resting-place of the remains

of the Báb, himself, and my brother, and also

contain a hall for meeting and worship. This

building was in process of erection at the time

I speak of—it is not yet completed—and Mo-

hammed Ali represented to the authorities

that it was intended as a fort, in which Abbas

Effendi and his followers intended to entrench

themselves, defy the Government, and en-

deavour to gain possession of this part of

Syria.

“Other equally baseless charges were fabric-

ated and reiterated until the Government, as

on previous occasions, became weary of the

annoyance and issued a firman decreeing that

the original order, by which the Blessed Per-

fection and his family were confined within the

walls of ‘Akká, should be again put in force.

“This was about two years ago. Since that

time my brother has been assured that on his

application in behalf of himself alone, his strict

confinement would be again remitted He

refuses, however, to make this application.[1]

This is because he is much more grieved by his

brother’s alienation from himself than by his

own loss of freedom. He regards harbour-

ing hatred against another as the greatest evil

which can befall a man, and he is determined

to rescue his brother from this, if possible, at

whatever cost to himself. He knows that his

own liberation would cause Mohammed Ali’s

hatred to increase, and probably render a re-

conciliation impossible; but he hopes that, if

the situation remains as it is, he may in time

be able to soften his brother’s heart and regain

his love.[2]

“My father’s imprisonment in his house con-

1 Further, in the fall of 1902, a number of American friends of

Abbas Effendi formed the plan of visiting the Court of the Shah of

Persia and securing his co-operation in an application to the Sultan

of Turkey for the release of Abbas Effendi. They came to Europe

for this purpose, and from Paris telegraphed to Abbas Effendi asking

his assent to the project. He replied, requesting that the undertaking

should be abandoned.

2 As this book is about to go to press, I am informed of an event

which has caused great rejoicing in the Bahá’í world. Besides Mo-

hammed Ali, Abbas Effendi has another half brother (full brother

to the former), by name Badi Ullah. Badi Ullah has always main-

tained friendly relations with Abbas Effendi and his family, but has

sided with Mohammed Ali in his protest against recognising Abbas

Effendi as the head of the church. He has now repented of his

apostasy, and in a lengthy manifesto, a copy of which I have seen,

announces his adherence to Abbas Effendi as the true “Centre of the

Covenant.”

tinned for nine years after our release from the

barracks. His followers from abroad now had

free access to him, and our life was in most

respects comparatively comfortable. After this

time the Governor gave the Blessed Perfec-

tion the freedom of the city, and of the

country in the vicinity of ‘Akká. His friends

now urged him to reside in the country, be-

lieving that his health would be benefited by

the change. He at first refused, but at length

yielded to persuasion and transferred his resi-

dence to a house without the city.1 Here he

1 Professor Browne visited Bahá’u’lláh here in 1890, and his

graphic description of his first interview with him is so effective

and interesting that I will quote it. “I was conducted,” he says,

“through passages and rooms at which I had scarcely time to glance

to a spacious hall, paved, so far as I remember (for my mind was

occupied with other thoughts), with a mosaic of marble. Before a

curtain suspended from the wall of this great antechamber my con-

ductor paused for a moment while I removed my shoes. Then, with

a quick movement of the hand, he withdrew, and, as I passed, re-

placed the curtain; and I found myself in a large apartment, along

the upper end of which ran a low divan, while on the side opposite

to the door were placed two or three chairs. Though I dimly sus-

pected whither I was going and whom I was to behold (for no dis-

tinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere,

with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that

the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met

the wall sat a wondrous and venerable figure, crowned with a felt

head-dress of the kind called *taj* by dervishes (but of unusual height

and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban.

The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I can-

not describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one’s very soul;

power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines

passed a quiet and peaceful life until his death

at the age of seventy-five, in the year 1892.

His chief occupation, as it had been at all

times since his return from his sojourn of two

years alone in the mountains near Baghdad,

was the writing of sacred books and tablets.

“Abbas Effendi continued to live in ‘Akká.

on the forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and

beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the

waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood,

as I bowed myself before one who is the object of a devotion and

love which kings might envy and emperors sigh for in vain!

“A mild, dignified voice bade me be seated, and then contin-

ued: ‘Praise be to God that thou hast attained! … Thou

hast come to see a prisoner and an exile. … We desire but the

good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem

us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banish-

ment. … That all nations should become one in faith and all

men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the

sons of men should be strengthened; that the diversity of religion

should cease, and differences of race be annulled what harm is there

in this? Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes, these ruinous

wars shall pass away, and the “Most Great Peace” shall come.

… Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that

which Christ foretold? … Yet do we see your kings and rulers

lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of

the human race than on that which would conduce to the happiness

of mankind. … These strifes and this bloodshed and discord

must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family. …

Let not a man glory in this, that he loves his country; let him rather

glory in this, that he loves his kind. …’

“Such, so far as I can remember them, were the words which, with

many others, I heard from Beha. Let those who read them con-

sider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death, and

bonds, and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their

diffusion.”

He frequently visited the Blessed Perfection,

and generally came out on foot. The walk

was long, and in summer the sun very oppres-

sive. It was his habit, if overcome with heat

or fatigue, to lie down on the ground, rest his

head on a stone, and sleep. The Blessed Per-

fection remonstrated with him about this, say-

ing that he should use a horse. My brother

replied, ‘How can I come to my Lord riding?

I must show that I am the humblest of all the

people. When Christ went out he walked,

and slept in the fields. Who am I, that in

visiting my Lord I should go as greater than

Christ?’

“In his early life my brother was much

disinclined to marry. It is a Persian custom,

when two cousins, a boy and a girl, are born

about the same time, to promise them in mar-

riage to each other in their infancy. My

brother was promised in this way to a cousin,

and while we lived in Baghdad we thought

that the time had come for the marriage. He,

however, thought differently; and when our

mother desired to send for the girl, he posi-

tively refused to permit it to be done. ‘Why

should I marry?’ he asked; ‘are there not

enough to suffer now, that we should propose

to bring others to share our lot?’

“After our release from the two-years’ con-

finement in the barracks here, my mother and

myself were both very desirous that my brother

should marry, and we began to look about for

a girl whom we would approve. Our choice

finally fell upon the daughter of a believer liv-

ing in Syria, who was said to be very beauti-

ful and amiable, and in every way a suitable

match. Without consulting my brother, since

we wished to place him in a position where he

could not refuse our oft-repeated appeals to

give us a daughter and a sister, I invited her

to visit us. The invitation was accepted, and

she set out with her brother. After a hard

and wearisome journey, they reached Haifa

and were taken to the house of one of my

uncles there.

“We commenced quietly to make prepara-

tions for the marriage, without making known

to my brother the arrival of the girl. How-

ever, many of the believers knew of it and of

our intentions, and were so delighted that ‘their

Master’ (as they always called him) was to

take a wife, thus giving them the hope that he

might have a son to succeed him in fostering

the faith until it should become established,

that their pleasure shone in their faces. My

brother saw that there was something unusual

afoot, and the thought occurred to him, since

the subject had been so much urged upon

him, ‘Now perhaps they are getting me a

wife.’ So he hastened home to us and de-

manded with considerable energy, ‘What is

this—what are all the people smiling about?

Is it possible that you are again planning to

get me a wife? If you are, you may as well

give it up, for I will not marry.’ We tried to

plead and reason with him, but he would not

hear us. Finally we said, ‘What, then, is to

be done? She is at Haifa—she has come with

her brother—what can we do?’ Then he hesi-

tated, looked serious, and finally said: ‘Well,

if you have brought her here, she belongs to

me, and I will give her in marriage to some

one who will be better suited to make her

happy than I.’

“She remained at Haifa for some time, until

at length my brother brought about her mar-

riage to a husband of his own selection. The

marriage has resulted satisfactorily to all par-

ties.

“The Báb, during his life, had a certain fol-

lower who was specially devoted to him. On

one occasion he visited this man in his home.

His host said to him that his visit filled him

with the greatest happiness of his life; but that

he had one sorrow of which he wished to speak.

He had been married ten years, and was child-

less. He begged the Báb to pray for a child

for him, and this the Báb promised.

“Nine months later a daughter was born to

this follower. When this daughter grew up

she was very sweet and very amiable. She

had been promised in her infancy to a cousin;

and her cousin, in due time, was very desirous

for the marriage. Having been permitted to

see her, from that day on he seemed to think

of nothing but the time when she should be

his wife. He urged on the marriage, provided

the house, and made all the usual preparations.

On the day set, the bride was brought to

the bridegroom’s house, which, according to

Persian custom, completed the civil marriage.

Then, to every one’s amazement and conster-

nation, the bridegroom refused to see the

bride. To the demands of the relatives as to

why he had changed his mind within an hour

his only reply was, ‘I do not know. I cannot

explain and have nothing to tell. All I know

is that I cannot see her.’

“Six months later the young man died.

“The girl remained in her husband’s house

until his death; but she never saw him after

entering it

“She felt much humiliated, and resolved that

she would never again marry. She and her

family were very earnest believers; and after

this occurrence she begged her father and

mother to send her to be a servant in the

household of the Blessed Perfection. Because

of her disappointment her parents did not wish

to refuse her; and her mother wrote for per-

mission to visit the family of the Blessed Per-

fection with her daughter. Permission was

granted and they came to Haifa. The Blessed

Perfection asked my brother to bring them;

but, not finding it convenient to go himself,

he gave the commission to some one else to

execute. Mother and daughter came to our

house, and, having seen the Blessed Perfec-

tion, asked to see the Master. At that mo-

ment my brother entered and conversed briefly

with the ladies, seeming, however, unusually

interested for him.

“The ladies returned to Haifa and remained

there, coming back and forth occasionally to

visit us. My mother and I, seeing that my

brother was noticing the young woman, hoped

that he might marry her; but, remembering

our experience, we did not dare to suggest it.

About six months later the Blessed Perfection

called my brother to his room and asked him

if he would not take this young woman for his

wife. My brother consented.

“In deciding to marry, my brother undoubt-

edly sacrificed his own preference for a single

life to the wishes of the rest of the family, and

especially of the Blessed Perfection. The lat-

ter had suggested to him that, as his example

would influence all believers, it would be well

if it illustrated the best and highest condition

of life for men, which was the married state.

Yet, in coming to this decision, I think that

our Master was much influenced by the warm

regard and affection which he undoubtedly felt

for the woman whom he was asked to marry.

“Then there was much rejoicing. All the

believers looked forward to the marriage with

delight. But time went on and yet it was not

concluded. The real reason, which we did not

care to mention publicly, was that we had no

suitable room to give my brother in the house,

and were not willing to lose him from our

home, where his presence was so essential to

our happiness.

“Finally, I went to the wife of our landlord

and told her of our perplexity. She consulted

her husband, and he, a good-natured man, said

that he could remove the difficulty. He owned

the adjoining house; and he cut a door to con-

nect the courts of the two houses, and gave

us a room, completely furnished, in the other

house.

“The way was thus made plain for the mar-

riage, and it was duly solemnised soon after.

“The occasion of the wedding had one pe-

culiar feature so characteristic of my brother

that I will mention it. Our marriage service

is very simple, consisting of the reading of a

tablet and the exchange of promises by the

contracting parties. It is usually followed by

feasting and the entertainment of friends until

late at night

“Our Master had made, personally and with

great care, all the preparations for receiving

and entertaining the guests. The ceremony

was performed by the Blessed Perfection about

two p.m. My brother then quietly withdrew

without speaking to any one, and did not re-

turn until after the guests had dispersed.

“It was not from want of consideration for

the solemnity of the occasion or for his bride

that he did this, for the tender affection which

he has always shown for her disproves this; or

for his guests, for his minute attention to the

arrangements for their pleasure disproves this

also. But it was his habit to spend this part

of the day and the evening in visiting the poor

and sick and explaining the Koran, he being

frequently thus occupied until a late hour. He

never permitted his own affairs to interfere

with the discharge of these duties, and was

unwilling to neglect them even on this occa-

sion.

“My brother’s marriage has proved exceed-

ingly happy and harmonious. Several months

ago my sister took two of her daughters to

Beyrout on account of their health, and this

has been her first separation from her husband

for any length of time. Since a short time

after her departure a question repeated by my

brother the first thing every morning to his

daughter, who is his constant attendant, is,

‘Ruha, when do you think your mother will

come back?’

“Eight children have been born to them, of

whom four are living. Their family now con-

sists of two unmarried daughters, two married

daughters with their families, and myself.

“Many influences, and those of the very

strongest character, have been brought to in-

duce my brother to take a second wife—a

practice which the Blessed Perfection did not

in terms forbid, but advised against. The

believers have urged it strongly for several

reasons. Very many of them wish to take a

second wife themselves, but feel constrained

from doing so by the Master’s example. In

Persia, except among believers, polygamy is a

universal custom, and the restriction to one

wife, which all believers feel and respect, seems

very severe. Then there is a general wish

that the Master might have a son to succeed

him. Other arguments have been advanced;

and the pressure brought to bear upon him

has been, and still is, very great—greater than

you can easily imagine.

“The general advice of the Blessed Perfec-

tion against a second marriage would in itself

have had the effect with my brother of a com-

mand and have settled the question; but as

regards him it was withdrawn by our Lord

before his death. He said to Abbas Effendi

that he rather wished to lead the believers

gradually to monogamy than to force them to

adopt it, which they felt bound to do by reason

of the Master’s example; that therefore, and

since it was much desired by all that the Mas-

ter should have a son, he withdrew even the

advice in his case, and desired him to consider

himself free to follow his own desires and in-

clination.

“To this the Master replied that his own

wishes and feelings were against a second

marriage, though, if the Blessed Perfection

should command it, he would obey. This,

however, the Blessed Perfection never did.

“To all other appeals his reply has always

been a firm refusal. He thinks that if it had

been God’s will that he should leave a son, the

two who had been born to him would not have

been taken away. He believes that the best

and highest condition of life for a man is mar-

riage to one wife, and that it is his duty to set

that example to the world.”

**CHAPTER VI**

**CHARACTERISTICS AND INCIDENTS**

I SHALL now collect some of my own observ-

ations with regard to Abbas Effendi, and

a number of incidents of his life related to me

by others, which throw light upon and illus-

trate his character, but which I am not able to

make a part of any consecutive narrative. I am

aware that in doing this I am disregarding lit-

erary symmetry; but as my only object in pre-

paring this book is to give those who read it

as much information as possible about him and

his teachings, I do not wish to omit any mate-

rial which may contribute to this end.

The characteristic of Abbas Effendi, regarded

as a religious leader, which is at once the most

striking, the most attractive, and the most im-

pressive, is his generous and tolerant liberality.

It is disappointing to find that narrowness and

intolerance have already shown themselves in

the teachings of some of his followers—a per-

version and degradation of true religion which

is seen to be an almost inevitable tendency of

human nature in all ages of the world, and

which most religions have suffered in the hands

of their adherents. The chief glory of Beha’-

ism is that its true spirit, as exemplified in its

Great Apostle, is utterly free from it.

I shall state at length his attitude in this

respect in a subsequent chapter, here merely

mentioning two incidents illustrating it, which

were related to me in ‘Akká.

One was that of a gentleman who wrote to

Abbas Effendi to this effect: That he recog-

nised him as a man of great spiritual force,

and one who, in urging upon men the observ-

ance of the Law of Love, was doing much in

the service of humanity; that he desired to

work with him and for him; but that also he

(Abbas Effendi) had said some things with

which he did not agree, and that he himself

had some spiritual light, which he did not wish

to surrender.

Abbas Effendi replied that he welcomed him

as a co-worker; that he asked him to give up

nothing; that he approved of his continuing

to adhere to any religious faith with which he

might be associated, and that the one thing

necessary was to love God above all things

and seek Him.

The other case was that of a lady who was

visiting Abbas Effendi in ‘Akká. She had

accepted him as her religious teacher, and

desired to assist in spreading his teachings.

When about to return to her home, she told

him that her associations were all in the or-

thodox Christian Church, and that her friends

would be repelled by the idea of a new relig-

ion. He advised her to return as a Christian,

to remain in the Christian Church, and to teach

what she had learned as the true teaching of

Christ.

Abbas Effendi has another characteristic as

a religious leader which seems to me to be, es-

pecially at this time, remarkably refreshing and

reassuring,—he makes no claim to being a

“healer” or to the performance of “miracles.”

Whether or not he possesses such powers I

would not undertake to say; but he certainly

regards physical health as of too little import-

ance in comparison with spiritual welfare to

merit primary attention. The only real sick-

ness which he recognises is sickness of the

soul. The one and exclusive object which he

has in view is the spiritual elevation of human-

ity—an all-sufficient end in itself, which does

not require for its justification any physical

gain.

Yet, in point of fact, he says there is a physi-

cal gain in attaining spiritual health; for the

normal effect of this is to promote recovery

from bodily disease; and still more, in those

cases where the latter is not removed by spirit-

ual regeneration, the spirit which has experi-

enced this change *does not feel* physical pain,

and looks upon the sufferings of its body with

the same indifference with which the ordinary

man regards suffering in the body of another.

The body is, therefore, sometimes restored,

and pain is overcome by spiritual force; but

these occurrences are properly regarded as un-

important incidents in the attainment of spirit-

ual well-being.

Further, Abbas Effendi is very careful not

to countenance any interpretation of his acts

by his followers which could lead to the im-

putation to him of miraculous powers. The

assertion of such powers for himself or for his

predecessors would, he says, stand in the way

of other messengers, who will come, in the future

as in the past, when the world requires them.

If men’s minds are fixed on miracles, which

prove nothing except themselves, they will be

less open to the reception of truth, or be closed

entirely to the Divine Message.

He says, also, that if miracles are ascribed

to the founders of a religion and become en-

grafted upon it, they will inevitably be simu-

lated by priesthoods and other pretenders to

Divine authority to mislead, delude, and de-

fraud the ignorant masses of mankind, as illus-

trated by the greater part of the past history

of Christianity, and by the hundreds of quacks

and impostors who at the present day practise

their shameful impositions upon the people in

the name of Christ.

So, too, Abbas Effendi discourages every-

thing tending to centre attention upon himself

or to exalt his personality into an object of

devotion or worship. He has had numerous

applications for his photograph, but always de-

clines to have it taken. His reply to these re-

quests is: “I do not wish to have men think

of my personality or my form. The personal-

ity changes, the form passes away: there is

nothing permanent about them. All this must

die—must pass out of the recollection of men.

But deeds and words never die. These are

my sign: it is these only which I wish to leave

to the believers and to the world.”

His only claim or description of himself is,

“Servant of God,” or “Servant of Bahá’u’lláh,”

or “Servant of the servants of Bahá’u’lláh.”

Bahá’u’lláh bestowed many titles upon him

(see page 80), but as to these he says that

they were all given by favour, and that they

mean but one thing—“Servant.”

As might be expected from this lack of self-

assertion, Abbas Effendi’s life is spent in quiet

and unassuming work. His general order for

the day is prayers and tea at sunrise, and dic-

tating letters or “Tablets,” receiving visitors,

and giving alms to the poor until dinner in the

middle of the day. After this meal he takes a

half-hour’s siesta, spends the afternoon in mak-

ing visits to the sick and others whom he has

occasion to see about the city, and the evening

in talking to the believers or in expounding, to

any who wish to hear him, the Koran, on which,

even among Muslims, he is reputed to be one

of the highest authorities, learned men of that

faith frequently coming from great distances to

consult him with regard to its interpretation.

He then returns to his house and works

until about one o’clock over his correspond-

ence. This is enormous, and would more than

occupy his entire time, did he read and reply

to all his letters personally. As he finds it im-

possible to do this, but is nevertheless deter-

mined that they shall all receive careful and

impartial attention, he has recourse to the as-

sistance of his daughter Ruha, upon whose in-

telligence and conscientious devotion to the

task he can rely. During the day she reads

and makes digests of letters received, which

she submits to him at night.

In his attention to these various duties he is

absolutely unremitting. The month which I

passed in ‘Akká was the Mohammedan fast of

Ramedan, which, as all other Mohammedan

observances, was scrupulously kept by Abbas

Effendi and his followers, for the sake of

peace and to avoid the imputation of social

innovation. This fast requires abstinence

from food between sunrise and sunset. The

effect of this privation upon him, in addition

to that of his assiduous activity, was very

marked, and towards the end of the fast he

frequently appeared to be in a state of great

exhaustion.

I have adverted to his frugal and abstemi-

ous habits in matters relating to his personal

comfort. Several incidents further illustrat-

ing this trait were told to me. On one oc-

casion he was going to Haifa, and asked for a

seat in the stage. “Your Excellency,” said

the driver, “surely wishes a private carriage.”

“No,” replied Abbas Effendi. The driver

thought this parsimony in a man of his posi-

tion. At Haifa, while he was still in the

stage, a fisherwoman came to him in great

distress, saying that all day she had caught no-

thing, and must go home to a hungry family.

He gave her five francs, and turning to the

stage-driver said: “You now see the reason

why I would not take a private carriage.

Why should I ride in luxury when so many

are starving?”

The Master’s habit of wearing cheap clothes

troubles his family. I was told of a con-

spiracy a few months before to impose a cloak

of better quality upon him without his know-

ledge. His wife procured the necessary money

from her brother, who is in the habit of act-

ing as banker for the family, and furnished a

tailor with the required cloth, who proceeded

to make the garment. They knew very well

that the Master would not wear expensive

clothes if he knew it, but, counting upon his

inattention to such matters, hoped that he

would not notice the quality.

But unfortunately the tailor bungled the

cloak. It did not fit, had to be returned

several times; and in the goings to and fro

which ensued, its cost came to Abbas Effendi’s

knowledge. Thereupon he sent for his brother-

in-law and said to him: “You must sell that

cloak and charge me with whatever loss there

may be upon it: such an amount of money

will buy four cloaks, one of which is good

enough for me; the others can be given

away.”

His daughter Ruha relates that when her

sister was recently married she had no trous-

seau, and for the ceremony merely donned a

clean dress. People asked her father why he

had not given his daughter bridal garments.

He replied, “My daughter is warmly clad and

has all that she needs for her comfort. The

poor have not. What my daughter does not

need I will give to the poor rather than to

her.”

Early during my stay in ‘Akká the follow-

ing curious incident was related to me. The

Master happened to have a fine cloak of

Persian wool which had been given to him,

when a poor man applied to him for a garment.

He sent for this cloak and gave it to the

applicant. The man took it and demurred,

saying that it was only of cotton. “No,”

said Abbas Effendi, “It is of wool;” and to

prove it he lighted a match and burnt a little

of the nap. The man still grumbled that it

was not good. Abbas Effendi reproved him

for criticising a gift and appeared not a little

vexed at his ungrateful conduct. But he

terminated the interview in this extraordinary

fashion—by directing an attendant to give

the man a *mejidi* (a coin worth about four

francs). “If any one vexes him,” continued

my interlocutor, “he always gives him a

present.”

I was at a loss to understand this singular

procedure at the time; but an incident which

occurred later during my stay threw light upon

it. One day the Master was distributing coats

to poor men, in accordance with his custom, to

which I have referred above (p. 5). In this

distribution he carefully selected the donees,

judging from his personal knowledge in each

case whether the charity was merited, and

making a record of those to whom coats were

given. On this occasion there was one man

who was very insistent in his demand for a

coat, but whose application Abbas Effendi for

some reason did not approve. The man con-

tinued to persist, and the Master to refuse,

finally repulsing the beggar with a good deal

of acerbity. After some time, however, what

did he do but bring this same man into the

large court where the coats were hung upon a

line, and give him the choice of the lot! The

man tried on three, and, finding one which

suited him, took it away.

Madam Canavarro saw the incident and

afterwards asked Abbas Effendi to explain it.

He smiled and said: “Did you notice that?”

—and then, calling her attention to the

backs of his hands, which had been somewhat

scratched and torn in managing the crowd, he

continued: “My body is still under the law.

You see how these people may injure it. It

is necessary that I should control them—

that I should put them down. But, having

put them down, I must show them that I did

not do it in unkindness. And so, too, if I find

it necessary to display some temper, I must

take care that my actions show my motive, in

order that my example may not be misunder-

stood”

The Master has, as may be inferred from

what I have already said, a very tender, sensi-

tive, and sympathetic nature. To his appre-

ciation of the suffering and discontent which

it causes among women I chiefly attribute

his dislike to the institution of polygamy, re-

markable in one who has been all his life sur-

rounded by those who practise it. This is

shown not only by his persistent refusal to

adopt it for himself, notwithstanding the very

powerful influences (see above, p. 92) which

have urged him to do so, but by the reticence

which he habitually maintains when the sub-

ject is introduced. It is evidently a matter

upon which, because of his surroundings, he

does not wish to express himself with freedom.

Many things suggestive of his sympathy

and tender-heartedness were told to me. I

have referred to his habit of eating very sim-

ply and but once a day. This is not his in-

variable custom, since, when he has guests, he

entertains them generously, in fact exquisitely,

and eats with them. His family say, however,

that he always prefers a simple repast; and if

it happens that he has just come from visiting

the poor, elaborately prepared food is es-

pecially distasteful to him.

Busy as he is, it would much relieve him to

delegate distributing alms to some of his fol-

lowers. This, in fact, he sometimes does, but

rarely, for this reason. On these occasions

the poor frequently resort to artifices, as by

going away after receiving money and return-

ing to secure double or triple alms. These

artifices are likely to be met, by any one ex-

cept himself, with impatience or harshness, and

this the Master does not like. To the poor

and ignorant above all, he says, we should

always be kind.

Once he was entertaining a wealthy lady

who had her maid with her. The latter stood

behind her mistress’ chair at dinner. Abbas

Effendi was uneasy. At length he called for

a chair, placed it beside him, and asked the

maid to be seated. Then he addressed his

conversation to her, telling her, among other

things, to be content; that those who served

were often more loved by God than those

whom they served.

I was told of the case of a consumptive who

had been almost deserted by his friends, as

frequently happens in ‘Akká, Syrians having a

superstitious fear of the disease. The mother

and sisters of this young man hardly entered

his room. His food was brought in by a

servant, and he was left to reach it and other-

wise to care for himself as best he could.

The house in which he lived was near that

occupied by the Master, and the ladies of the

latter’s family saw this sad sight from their

windows. No woman, of course, could offer

assistance under the circumstances; but the

Master heard of it from them, and thereafter

went daily to the sick man, took him delica-

cies, read and discoursed to him, and was

alone with him when he died.

In his dealings with men and in the relief of

suffering, differences of religious opinion have

no weight with the Master. Men of all faiths

are absolutely the same to him. He com-

monly associates a Muslim and a Christian

with him in regulating his charities. I usually

noticed one or both of these faiths represented

among those who were assisting him in the

distribution of alms or clothing. The ideal of

human life which he strives, first of all, to pro-

mote, is fraternal co-operation among all men.

During the fast of Ramedan considerable

discomfort is caused among the poorer Mo-

hammedans by the fact that, when exhausted

by the long fast of the day (from sunrise to

sunset), they have not the means to provide a

sufficiently substantial meal to restore their

strength. It was the Master’s habit, while I

was in ‘Akká, to provide every second day a

supper at sunset for many such persons.

A year or two ago a wealthy American

lady, a friend of Abbas Effendi, spent some

months in Haifa. On going away she asked

permission to make him the donation of a

sum of money, for his own use or for that of

the Cause. He replied that he could not

himself accept a gift from her; but that if she

wished to do something for him, she should

educate the two little girls of a Christian

schoolmaster in Haifa, who had recently lost

his wife, was very poor, and in much trouble.

She accordingly sent these children to a school

in Beyrout.

There are in ‘Akká about ninety Bahá’ís of

whom I think I have met all the men. The

restrictions imposed by Mohammedan social

customs, which, as I have said, the Bahá’ís

here observe for the sake of peace and har-

mony, prevented me from meeting the women.

These Bahá’ís are all Persians, living in ‘Akká

in voluntary exile in order to be near their

“Master.” The fact that, also for the sake

of peace, they are not permitted by him to

make propaganda within the dominions of the

Sultan explains, no doubt, the absence of

other nationalities among them. The attrac-

tions of their native country do not weigh as

a straw against the privilege of living near

Abbas Effendi; and nothing except his wish,

which is absolute law to his followers, could

induce them to leave him. This touching and

eloquent tribute to the character of Abbas

Effendi is only an expression of the funda-

mental characteristic of all Bahá’ís whom I

have known—that is, the absolute devotion

of themselves, their possessions, and their

lives to the cause of their faith and its repre-

sentative. I am told that it is the dearest

wish of the millions of Bahá’ís in Persia to

make the pilgrimage to ‘Akká, and that, if

such a thing were possible, they would mi-

grate there *en masse* for permanent residence.

But at present even pilgrimage is, except in

rare instances, forbidden by Abbas Effendi.

In the earlier years of Bahá’u’lláh’s impris-

onment there, when access to him, or even

entrance into the city, was impossible for

Bahá’ís from Persia, the pilgrimage was fre-

quently made for the mere purpose of seeing

him at the window of his room in the prison,

from a point without the walls of ‘Akká.

I have never known a community which

seemed to enjoy such a general distribution of

the sterling qualities and virtues of character.

They are industrious and self-controlled; in

appearance they are cleanly and thrifty. Their

faces are all sincere, honest, kindly, intelli-

gent, and generally strong. Their school is

attended by about twenty bright-looking boys

(girls are excluded by Mohammedan custom),

who are, among other things, industriously

studying the English language, and have

made considerable progress in acquiring it.

In their intercourse with each other, and, so

far as I have had the opportunity to observe,

with others, the Bahá’ís continually overflow

with kindliness and good-will. They seem

like a single family whose members bear the

liveliest affection for one another. I can even

easily credit the statement made to me that

when the persecutions were at their height in

Persia, it happened more than once that a

Bahá’í, having been arrested by mistake in

place of another who had been denounced,

permitted the error to go undiscovered, and

suffered execution rather than endanger his fel-

low-believer.

To a Bahá’í there is no recommendation of

character and trustworthiness equal to that of

being a Bahá’í. This confidence in the char-

acter of Bahá’ís extends also, as I have learned

from conversation with other citizens of ‘Akká,

to those who are not of their faith. I am told

that they are frequently chosen as fiduciaries

and trustees by Muslims and Christians.

One observes among them a feeling of fel-

lowship and complete equality as men, regard-

less of the distinctions of wealth and poverty

or high and low degree, I saw this feeling

expressed many times; as when, during the

exposition of the doctrines by some teacher in

my room, the boy who served my meals would

enter without remark and respectfully take a

seat before him.

There is also among them an atmosphere of

intense religious conviction and spiritual life,—

yet quite without apparent emotion or excite-

ment,—which forcibly impresses one who is

accustomed to the torpidity prevailing in

Western lands in regard to those things.

Professor Browne remarks (*A Traveller’s*

*Narrative*, Introduction, p. xxxix.):

“The spirit which pervades the Babis (Bahá’ís) is such

that it can hardly fail to affect most powerfully all sub-

jected to its influence. … Let those who have

not seen disbelieve me if they will: but should that

spirit once reveal itself to them, they will experience an

emotion they are not likely to forget.

Nothing could be more true. In the pre-

sence of a number of them, aglow, as they all

are, with the fire of love, conviction, and

determination, one feels—however he may

believe, he feels—that scepticism about the

reality of spiritual existence is a trifle absurd,

and that things unseen must be as certain as

things seen.

If we analyse this peculiar spirit of the

Bahá’ís; if we seek to penetrate that which

marks them off from other men, the conclu-

sion to which we are brought is that its

essence is expressed in the one word *Love*.

These men are Lovers; lovers of God, of

their Master and Teacher, of each other, and

of all mankind. This is the name which they

are fondest of applying to themselves, and it

is that which most intimately indicates their

distinctive characteristics. Their love goes

out in all these directions with the fervour of

the lover’s passion, but a passion free from all

gross elements. It is this which has sustained

them in their sufferings and martyrdoms, and

now inspires their eager devotion to their

cause. To some this fact will have an im-

mense possible significance; for they will re-

member that seers have said that there is a

Divine Love of which the ordinary human

passion is but the darkened and corrupted

shadow, and which, searching, strenuous, and

pure, it is sometimes given to men to feel.

**CHAPTER VII**

**ETHICS AND CONDUCT**

IF man’s nature and his relations to God are

as outlined in the preceding chapter, what

is true religion? That is, what is the path for

man to follow which will most perfectly con-

duce to the fulfilment of the Divine purpose

and to man’s highest good? It is not difficult

to deduce an answer to this question from the

philosophy which we have been considering.

In reality, a man does not stand for himself

alone, but for the whole human race. The

life of all men is a single Divine emanation.

They should therefore hold to each other the

closest relation of sympathy, love, and brother-

hood. This must be the way the matter looks

when seen from the Divine standpoint—from

the standpoint of the Divine rays which are

the souls of men. Any other attitude on the

part of the human consciousness must cause

dis-harmony between man and God; must, in

fact, constitute an insuperable barrier to man’s

Divine possibilities.

As we know ourselves, egotism and selfish-

ness are the very core of our personal natures.

Each imagines that he stands apart, separate

and distinct from his fellows and all else. His

motives and actions all have reference to his

own centre of consciousness; with regard to it

and for its benefit all his efforts are exerted.

This leads, in human intercourse, to greed,

ambition, vanity, pride, and all the other forms

of self-assertion. But according to the philo-

sophy which we are considering, this idea of

separateness is false, and places man in a

position of hopeless hostility to the funda-

mental principle of all existence. Each man

is bound up with his fellows. Their welfare

should be his concern no less than his own.

This identity goes to the very root and es-

sence of man’s nature. Its realisation must,

then, be the most important, if not the one

essential, step in his higher development.

Charity, kindness, love, and compassion for

all beings must be the first of the virtues.

The religion of the Bahá’ís is in entire ac-

cord with their philosophy. The first duty of

man, they say, is love to God and his fellows.

This is true religion. *Khodah* and *Mohabbet*,

God and Love, are the words always in their

mouths. Love is the very essence of the

nature of God. By love alone can man ap-

proach God; and love for God is no other

than love for man. The service of man is its

highest expression. Love, kindness, unselfish-

ness, compassion, are the direct path to the

soul and to God.

“Love for men,” says Abbas Effendi, “is

love for God. To serve men is to serve God.

My sign is this—that I serve the people, that

I clothe the people.”

By “men” and “people” are meant all men

and all people, no less than those of one’s own

land or faith. “There is no reward for kind-

ness to one’s own,” said Bahá’u’lláh, “but for

kindness to all there is a reward.”

Mirza Assad Ullah, a venerable teacher

who has lived for twenty years in ‘Akká, said

to me:

“He [Bahá’u’lláh] turned to every people,

to all mankind, saying, ‘Ye are the leaves of

one tree, the fruit of one tree. Be ye kind to

one another.’ This is the first of the pre-

cepts he has left us. All the teachers of old

desired to say this, but men were not able to

hear it. Now they can understand it.

“When God opened this heavenly school,

His first lesson was that of love. To-day in

that school the chief teacher is our blessed

Master. He sees the Muslim, the Christian,

and the Bahá’í, all with one eye—He is equally

kind to all. He educates us to be like Him.

We have been in this school for nearly sixty

years, but we have not yet finished the first

lesson that we may go on to the second.”

It follows from this law of love and brother-

hood that evil should not be met with evil, but

with good; that is t there should be no resent-

ment or retaliation—the injury is to be for-

given and forgotten. Commenting upon this

subject, Abbas Effendi says:

“The reference of the words of the Old

Testament ‘an eye for an eye and a tooth for

a tooth’ is double: it refers, first, to the bal-

ance which is preserved by human law, that

there may be a check to evil-doing; and, sec-

ond, to the inevitable retribution which will

fall upon each individual during his life, or

upon the race after his death, for his evil acts.

But Christ, when he advised that, if a man be

struck upon one cheek, he turn the other, was

advancing a rule of conduct which should

govern the every-day relations between indi-

viduals. His words are not to be taken liter-

ally, but as enjoining that there should be no

resentment or retaliation for injuries received.

By retaliating in kind, you will act as evilly as

the wrong-doer. You should conquer hatred

by love. If you meet with kindness him

who injures you, you may overcome his stub-

born spirit. The love of God will then come

to him, and he will become a changed man.

“As an illustration of what I mean by the

spirit of non-retaliation, I may mention the

instance of a believer in Russia who was at-

tacked without provocation and almost killed.

The criminal was tried and condemned to

death. The believer, animated by this spirit,

begged the Governor to mitigate the sentence,

and obtained its reduction to several years of

banishment.”

In conformity with this general principle of

conduct, strife and dis-harmony of every sort

are to be avoided. “No Divine Messenger,”

says Abbas Effendi, “ever encouraged strife,

or suggested that the sword be used in pro-

mulgating his teachings. When followers of

Christ or Mahomet have resorted to this

means of spreading their faith, imagining that

they were justified by the words of their Mas-

ter, they have mistaken the symbols of his

teaching for its reality and have done that

which he had, in fact, forbidden. This misin-

terpretation was due to their own ignorance

and degradation. All the great Teachers are

from God, and teach the same thing; the dif-

ferences in the results which have followed

from their teachings have been due to the va-

rieties of character—the degrees of ignorance

or knowledge, of materiality or spirituality—

of mankind.

“The capacities of men differ. If you pour

water into two vessels, a large and a small one,

though both may be filled one will contain

more water than the other. So of men—one

may have more truth than another; but the

one who has less, may still have truth. Of

what avail is contention as to what is truth?

In the contention God is lost. Intellectual

refinements are of no avail without the godly

life.

“Once there was a contention between two

eminent believers in Persia. One of these

declared that the Blessed Perfection was God

and that there was no other. The other con-

tended that the Blessed Perfection was but

the reflection of God.

“The contention grew into a quarrel, and

dissension was threatened in the Church. The

Blessed Perfection summoned both of these

men to appear before him.

“To the one he said, ‘You say that I am God

and that there is no other. You are right’

“To the other he said, ‘You say that I am

but the reflection of God. You are right.’

“Then to both he said, ‘You are both

right.[1] But to contend will destroy you both.

Go home and be friends.’

“And so they did. They became good

friends, returned to Persia, and each contin-

ued to teach as he thought. This was the

only dissension which has ever occurred among

the believers.

“The essence of the nature of God is love.

His favour cannot be won by hatred or strife.

He is never angry. He curses nothing. It

has been said otherwise; but such teaching is

the teaching of heathenism—of the teachers

of the time—not that of the Messengers of

God. When you see men doing evil things,

you should not be angry with them—you

should pity them; for their evil deeds are due

to their ignorance, and for them they must

suffer.”

A second cardinal principle of life which

Bahá’ísm enjoins is a habit of detachment

from material things. That is to say, while a

man should make a reasonable and proper use

1 By this Bahá’u’lláh is explained to have meant that he was in

himself both the reflection and the One (see p. 129) the apotheosis

of man; in one aspect divine, in the other human.

of the things which minister to his comfort

and pleasure, he should not be dependent

upon them, or become attached to them, or

allow his course of action to be diverted by

seeking the gratification of desire or passion.

This also is a necessary deduction from the

philosophy, for obviously he cannot hope to

reach union with the Divine while his energies

are absorbed in the search for temporal pleas-

ure, or his attention centred upon material

things.

The influence of man’s lower nature, tending

to engross his energies in satisfying its de-

sires and ambitions, is the only “devil” which

Bahá’ísm knows. Commenting upon the pas-

sage in the New Testament where Jesus is

said to have been taken to a high mountain

by Satan and shown all the kingdoms of the

earth, Abbas Effendi said:

“This narrative cannot be literally true, as

the earth is round and not to be surveyed

from any mountain. The meaning is this:

Man has two natures—a higher nature, which

is Divine, and a lower nature, which is human.

The higher nature is the inspiration of God

within us; the lower nature is the slave of

sensuous pleasure, desire, attachment, and ig-

norance. The struggle which Jesus experi-

enced was that between the higher and the

lower selves. In this struggle Jesus perceived

that the things of the senses and the world

are impermanent and futile. He conquered

his lower nature, and his higher self—that

which was of God—became ascendant. Then

it was that he said, ‘Get thee behind me,

Satan.’”

“The servants of God,” said Bahá’u’lláh,

“cannot reach the shore of the ocean of the

knowledge of God unless they fully cut them-

selves free from all that is created, in heaven

or earth. Purify your souls, O men of the

earth, in order that ye may attain to the posi-

tion for which ye are predestined of God—in

order that ye may enter the tents which God

has pitched for you in the sky of Heavenly

Expression.”

Heaven and hell are not places, but con-

ditions of mind and heart. “Good thoughts,

good resolves, and good deeds bring men

nearer to God, and that is heaven. Hell is

the state of mind in which there are evil

thoughts and purposes, yielding to the desires

of the senses, clinging to material things. In

that state man is separated from God, and in

his ignorance he suffers. Salvation—heaven

—is the conscious realisation of God in this

life, which is gained by love, kindness, and

good deeds.”

Bahá’ísm has an elaborate code of social

ethics, found chiefly in Bahá’u’lláh’s *Book of*

*Laws*, but amplified by other writings and

oral teachings.

Marriage of one husband to one wife is

recommended as the best condition of life for

man. Asceticism is condemned.

That the exact position of the religion with

reference to marriage may be understood,

some explanation is necessary. The *Book*

*of Laws* permits a second marriage. Beha

Ullah himself had two wives; but since his

second marriage occurred early in his life

and under peculiar circumstances, the exact

nature of which I do not know, this fact is not

regarded as sanctioning the practice for others.

Moreover, both he and Abbas Effendi advise

against it. They say that if a man has two

wives, it is his duty to treat both exactly alike,

which it is impossible for him to do. Further,

men should so regulate their lives that all

about them may be happy and contented; but

two wives of one husband cannot be so.

These facts, and the example of Abbas

Effendi, establish monogamy as an essen-

tial feature of Bahá’ísm. That the Bahá’ís

themselves everywhere so regard it, is shown

by their practice.

Consent of both parties and parents is re-

quired for marriage.

Divorce is permitted on the demand of either

party after a preliminary separation of one

year. The reason assigned for this freedom

of divorce is that a life useful and profit-

able to one’s self and others requires content-

ment; but this is impossible where two persons,

who find themselves uncongenial, are obliged

to continue to live together.

The education of children, boys and girls

alike, is strictly enjoined. If it is neglected

by the parents, it should be given by the com-

munity at the expense of the father. The

children of the very poor should be educated

by the community. The teacher who edu-

cates a child acquires a claim upon any in-

heritance he may receive.

There are no priests connected with the

religion.

The administration of institutions of charity,

hospitals, and the like, and the care of the

moral and spiritual welfare of the community,

are to be placed in the hands of commissions

selected by the people. Funds required for such

uses are to be provided by an inheritance tax.

Begging is forbidden. Every able-bodied

man must work; and if work cannot be

found, it will be provided by the community.

“The most hateful of mankind before God

is he who sits and begs; take hold of the

rope of means, relying on God, the Causer

of causes.”[1]

Gambling, slavery, the use of opium, and

the use of intoxicating liquors are forbidden.

The above social regulations were given to

me at ‘Akká. I will add a few excerpts from

Professor Browne’s digest of the *Book of*

*Laws*.[2]

Arson, murder, theft, adultery, slander, and

backbiting are prohibited, and appropriate pen-

alties provided.

Cleanliness is insisted upon.

Austerities and self-mortification are forbid-

den, and their uselessness exposed.

Legal impurity is abolished, and the people

of all religions are to be regarded as pure and

not to be avoided.

Kindness and courtesy are enjoined on all

believers.

No one is to approve for another that which

he would dislike for himself.

1 Translation by Professor Browne.

2 *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society,* 1889, p. 972.

Enemies are to be forgiven; evil is not to

be met with evil.

Beasts of burden are not to be ill-treated or

overloaded.

The book closes with a recommendation that

mankind shall select one language and one

character from those that exist, and adopt

them as a means of communication. “This,”

says Bahá’u’lláh, “is the means of union, if

ye knew it, and the greatest source of concord

and civilisation, did ye recognise it. Teach

this common language to the children in all

schools, that the whole world may become one

land and one home.”

**CHAPTER VIII**

**ATTITUDE TOWARDS OTHER RELIGIONS:**

**ESSENTIAL NATURE OF BEHA’ISM**

THE relations which Bahá’ísm asserts for

itself with other religions and its attitude

towards them is a subject which might suita-

bly, it may be thought, have had an earlier

introduction. I have deferred discussing it at

length, in order that, for its better understand-

ing, we might have before us while consider-

ing it a general view of Bahá’í doctrines, for it

is a subject of the very first importance to a

just estimate of the character and probable in-

fluence of the movement, and if we fail to

fully grasp it, we shall surely fail to appreciate

or understand Bahá’ísm.

It is claimed for Bahá’ísm that it is a relig-

ion of this age and stage of evolution; that

it teaches love, tolerance, and charity, accord-

ing to the modern idea of the true meaning of

these words. “Love and good-will to man”

is the key-note of Abbas Effendi’s teachings.

He looks forward to the time when the

whole world shall feel a single bond of broth-

erly religious fellowship. As he sees religious

truth, there is no room for contention or arbi-

trary doctrines. “Where there is conten-

tion,” he says, “there cannot be the highest

conception of truth. We must have sympathy

for all beings, and to have real sympathy

means to feel with others in their higher aims

and ideals.”

The body of doctrine which Bahá’ísm teaches

is not put forward in any sense or particular

as new, but as a unification and synthesis of

what is best and highest in all other religions.

“Every one receiving these instructions,” says

Abbas Effendi, “will think, ‘How like my own

religion!’ This is because they are so broad

that they include all truths; and all religions

are built upon the same foundation. All in-

tolerance must go. To-day is the time of the

spirit of Truth, and that spirit is one of char-

ity and sympathy for all the beliefs of the

people of the world.

“The spirit has passed away from the bodies

of the old religions. All the teachings of the

great Manifestations are sublime, their lives

stand out as brilliant stars; but time changes

all things, and while the forms of their doc-

trines remain, the spirit has fled. These bod-

ies are dead or dying; but the same spirit is

reborn in a new body—that is, the Body of

the Law contained in the utterances of Beha

Ullah. As the teachers of old, he came not

to destroy, but to renew; and all that is true

in all religions will stand, for truth cannot die.

By the New Dispensation new spirit is infused

into these teachings and they will be under-

stood by men; and when they are understood

there will no longer be room for contention.

“The reality of words is spiritual, and this

reality remains the same, though the formal

expression is in many different words of as

many languages. This spiritual reality behind

the word is a matter of deep significance.

Through the spirit of a word, if you are not

heedless, I will plant a seed in your heart,

which will grow into a great tree.

“After a word has been spoken it may be

forgotten: but the spirit with which it was

uttered remains, for good or evil. This spirit

is the real word, and if one discerns it when

the word is spoken, he will perceive the

relations between the various corresponding

words of the several languages; and from this

relationship between words he will discern

that there is also relationship between the

races or peoples who respectively use the

languages. The same thing, indeed, is indi-

cated in the forms of words, in the community

of roots shared by different tongues; as we

have the words ‘brother,’ ‘daughter,’ ‘better,’

in Persian as in English. These are proofs

of the relationship—of the brotherhood—

existing between the widely separated peoples

of the world.

“But men are careless; they do not regard

abstract relations, but seek always for the

concrete. If a word spoken is not in form

like that which they use, they think it differ-

ent. With names and descriptive terms it is

the same. So the various religions dispute

and wrangle over what they call differences,

when there are no differences if one considers

only the spirit of the words.

“Christ told his followers to receive his

words in the spirit—not in the letter; and so

have all Manifestations.”

In one respect only, a difference is asserted

between the present and other dispensations—

in that it is higher in degree, because of the

relatively advanced general condition of the

world when it appeared.

The Bahá’í view is this: The march of

evolution is constantly upward; but at any

given time it is in different stages and pro-

ceeding on different lines in different parts of

the world. Some races are even retrograd-

ing at times. The crest of the wave of pro-

gress is now at one point, now at another,

vibrating to and fro among the races of the

earth. Periods or cycles of progress carry

forward for a time this race—for a time

that.

If we examine the history of the world in

its religious and philosophical aspects, defin-

ing and comparing the successive great cycles

of racial development, we find that each is

marked by the appearance of the founder of

a new religion and philosophy.

To continue in the words of Abbas Effendi:

“Each Manifestation was alike great in him-

self, each spoke with the same authority, each

alike breathed the spirit of God. The same

fundamental truth underlies the doctrines of

each. The differences between them were

not in themselves, but in the evolutionary

stages of the peoples whom they taught.

When Christ appeared, the people among

whom he came were in a low state of intelli-

gence—there was little or no discussion of

abstruse questions among them. Buddha,

though earlier, came to a part of the world

where civilisation was much more advanced,

which was ripe in philosophical and meta-

physical speculations. Mahomet found wild

tribes and hordes of uncivilised barbarians.

“On the one hand, each of these great

teachers had to meet a problem peculiar to

himself that of guiding and satisfying his

contemporaries and associates; and, on the

other, the condition of the world’s advance-

ment in general—the state of communication

between different parts of the world—was

such that the teachings of each were confined

to the people of that region to which they

came and for whom they were especially

adapted.

“The progress of the world during the past

fifteen hundred years has greatly modified

the conditions which prevailed when these

teachers were on earth. Man has learned to

control the forces of nature and to harness

them in his service. All the nations of the

world are in constant, easy, and rapid commun-

ication: closely united by the telegraph, the

telephone, steam and electric locomotion. A

World-Teacher appearing now, after so long

a lapse of time since the last, and under the

changed world-conditions which now prevail,

might be expected to be greater than his pre-

decessors; and such he is. He is a World-

Teacher in a broader sense than they. His

teachings cannot be limited to any nation or

race. His problem is to guide and instruct

the whole world as it is to-day; his teachings

must meet every condition of the world.”

I understand that, metaphysically, the Bahá’í

conception of Bahá’u’lláh as compared with

other World-Teachers is something like this:

There is the Divine Essence, and there is the

Spirit of that Essence. In all other Manifest-

ations God sent His Holy Spirit, or Breath,

to breathe upon the peoples of the world.

This Breath has been called “Krishna,” by

the Indians, “Logos” by the Greeks, “Holy

Ghost” by the Christians. It is the Word of St.

John, which “in the beginning was with God.”

That is, when the Spirit was manifested in

the prophets of old, they represented as much

of the Divine nature as it was possible for the

people of those periods to assimilate.

Now the world has advanced. It was ne-

cessary for the Essence Itself of God to be-

come manifest, and this It did through the

person of Bahá’u’lláh. This is not saying

that Bahá’u’lláh was not a man like other

men; for all Manifestations are men like other

men; but he was also, and as a man, the

crowning glory of a period, in whom the per-

fect Divine Image was reflected.

Now that Bahá’u’lláh, the man, is no more,

the drop has become the ocean. That which

was manifested is withdrawn to God, the pure

Essence—to that which is both the Spirit and

its Source.

“All religions,” says Abbas Effendi, “are

written symbolically. This is the only way in

which Truth can be written to withstand time

and its changes. Languages change, the mean-

ing of words is lost; for these are but the ex-

pressions of periods. Symbols never change,

since they are the expressions of man’s spirit.

The realities encased in them are handed

down as long as the symbols are preserved.

These realities the spirit reawakens.

“Bahá’u’lláh was no exception in this re-

spect to all other Divine Manifestations. He

used symbols and metaphors, and if we would

understand him, we must interpret these. But

this is the day of enlightenment, and therefore

his symbols will be read with the highest con-

ception of truth, and his teachings will throw

light upon those of all the former Manifest-

ations.

“At the time of Christ, or at least among

those who heard him, there was, as I have

said, little or no discussion of difficult ques-

tions—men were not accustomed to abstract

thinking; therefore the symbols and meta-

phors of his teachings were not interpreted

by them—they were literally accepted as the

letter of the Law. It is not meant that the

greatest truths were not contained in Christ’s

teaching, but that his teachings were to a

great extent misunderstood and the truths

lost. Those who were the fathers of the

Christian religion gave to the world his literal

speech, without explaining the meaning which

it was intended to convey.

“The time has now come when men are

keenly receptive of spiritual things, and the

symbols, metaphors, and allegories (which are

merely the casings of truth) can be unveiled,

and their true meaning understood.

“It is to uncover and expose that which

lies hidden in time and in the religions of the

past, to infuse a new spirit into the peoples

of the earth, that the New Dispensation has

appeared in the world of men.”

This is the broad platform from which

Bahá’ísm appeals to the world. As is neces-

sarily the case, if consistent with its principles

the teachings of Abbas Effendi are in no

way arbitrary. He is persuasive rather than

argumentative. Arrogance and dogmatism are

not, in his opinion, proper or useful means to

be employed in making known truth to men.

His teachings are rational; and there is not in

them the suggestion of anything inconsistent

with love, kindness, and charity.

If a man is sincere and tries to live in ac-

cordance with his belief, although he may be

unable to see the greatness of God, and still

clings to an arbitrary doctrine, Abbas Effendi

has for him no censure, but rather love and

sympathy in his heart and in his speech.

“God,” he says, “is to every human being

as great as the individual mental capacity

permits one to see Him. So, also, is the

Manifestation who represents Him in this

world of beings. Each individual perceives

with the faculties peculiar to his own evolu-

tion. The Manifestation appeared not for a

few, but for all. To the simple, as to the

great, he is the same: but some see him in

one light, some in another, according to their

capacities to perceive.”

“Where real religion is felt it is often the

heart which speaks rather than the head, and

if we want to extend our sympathy to such as

these, we must look into their hearts to find

their needs, and treat their beliefs with charity.

With others, whose intellects have awakened,

but whose hearts have not, we must address

the mind. Where neither the heart nor the

head is yet aroused, we must appeal to the

emotions; for we must extend help to all.”

As I have said before, he does not ask that

a man give up his own religion, but only that

he live according to its spirit. His exhorta-

tion to men is, not to become Bahá’ís, but to

put into practice the principles in which they

themselves believe. This is true religion: not

bearing an emblem or holding to a name.

He desires to meet and deal with the philo-

sophical and psychological questioning of the

age; but it is right ethics which he regards as

the most important part of his teaching, for

this reaches the masses and through them

spreads as a wave over the earth. He aims

to call men to a realisation of the fact that

they are not living according to the moral

and ethical instructions of their various faiths.

And why is this? Because long familiarity

has resulted in carelessness. Religions have

become mere forms; the spirit has left them.

I have already mentioned an instance cited

to me in which Abbas Effendi advised a

Christian who sought his teaching, and desired

to work with him and for him, to do so under

the name of Christ. A similar instance came

under my own observation. Madame Cana-

varro had expressed to him her desire to as-

sist in spreading the teachings of Bahá’ísm

among the Buddhists, and then spoke of the

difficulties before her in introducing them as a

new religion.

“Teach them,” he replied, “as the truths

contained in their own religion; and after

you have instructed them and gladdened their

hearts, you may tell them of the Messenger,

and remind them of the promise of Buddha

that another teacher should come, teaching

the same truths.”

When she further remarked that she was

so imbued with the spirit of Buddhism that it

was a part of her very life, he said: “It is

your sufferings and your faith in God which

have brought you to the true spiritual insight,

and no change or alteration can take place in

you. What you call yourself is of no conse-

quence.”

I have been thus insistent in explaining at

length, and so specifically that no room for

doubt may be left as to my meaning, the atti-

tude of Bahá’ísm towards other religions, be-

cause, as I have said, it is my opinion that

this is the most significant and important fact

connected with the movement, and that, unless

it be fully grasped and always borne in mind,

the religion itself cannot be understood or

appreciated for what it is. And I am the

more careful because I know that Abbas Ef-

fendi and his predecessors have been misun-

derstood by some others in regard to this

matter, and that the accuracy of what I say

may be challenged by those who rely upon

certain of the published teachings of the ad-

herents of the faith.

Notwithstanding the lapse of centuries, hu-

man nature remains much the same; the vot-

taries of new religions in all ages have made

like mistakes. Carried away by zeal for their

cause, seeking in every way to magnify the

“glad tidings” which they cherish as their

life-breath, they come to have eyes for nothing

else, and are likely to speedily fall, quite un-

consciously it may be to themselves, into in-

tolerance and dogmatism, though thereby they

contradict the fundamental principles laid down

by those whom they follow.

When I first met the wonderful man whom

his followers call “Master,” I was deeply im-

pressed with the breadth and liberality of

his views, and ventured to call his attention

to statements of another tenor, which I had

seen. He deprecated them unreservedly, and

continued:

“They see from their own standpoint. But

these people are pure in heart and simple in

spirit; therefore, though not intellectually ad-

vanced, they are capable of grasping their

portion of truth, for truth is for all. They

give it out according to their understanding.”

I, too, know the pure and gentle spirit of

the Bahá’ís,—of them all so far as I have met

them,—and it is with a feeling of warm per-

sonal regard for them, one and all, and only

out of an ardent respect for the faith which

they hold dearer than themselves, that I call

attention to these errors; and I do so because

they place that faith in a false light which

will, and ought to, repel rather than attract,

and tends to lead men back into the old pit-

falls incident to reading the scriptures of the

World-Enlighteners according to the letter in-

stead of according to the spirit.

In a book expounding Bahá’ísm and entitled

*Sacred Mysteries*, recently published in Amer-

ica, it is said, at page 100:

“Whosoever is, in this day, firm in the

Covenant and Testament of God, and turns

unto Abdul-Baha [Abbas Effendi] in compli-

ance with the decisive command of the Blessed

Perfection, he is of the people of the King-

dom. … On the other hand, whosoever

violates the Covenant of the Blessed Perfec-

tion, and turns away from Abdul-Baha, the

Centre of the Covenant, he is at every instant

declining, one of the companions of the left

hand, and one of the letters of the hell fire.”

Again, on page 87, I find this:

“Whosoever is really firm in his love for

Abdul-Baha, and arises to serve the Cause

of the Blessed Perfection, is of the Kingdom.

… But he who is not firm in the Cove-

nant of God is of the hell, the doors of the

Kingdom are closed unto him,” etc.

Now the author of this book was writing in

a language (Persian) in which ideas are ex-

pressed in a manner very different from that

to which we are accustomed, and the accurate

rendering of which into English seems to be

exceedingly difficult: and one who knows, as

I do, his sweet and gentle disposition is forced

to suspect that he has been misrepresented

by his translator. But the passages must be

taken as they will be understood by those to

whom they are addressed; and to be thus told

that he who does not believe according to the

writer’s standard is doomed “as one of the let-

ters of the hell fire,” drops us abruptly back into

the repulsive atmosphere of orthodox Christ-

ianity, which, in exploring Bahá’ísm, we have

fondly hoped to leave far behind.

The author refers (p. 101) to two Tablets by

Bahá’u’lláh which he seems to think authorise

the words which I have quoted. One of these

Tablets I have been unable to find; but an

English rendering of the other is given in the

twelfth chapter of this book. Its spirit is as

remote from the sentiments which we are con-

sidering as is every thing else which I have

seen or heard proceeding directly from Beha

Ullah or Abbas Effendi.

When Abbas Effendi was specifically asked

as to the fate of those millions of human be-

ings who would never hear of Bahá’u’lláh—

whether they were, for that reason, to be

regarded as hopelessly lost—he replied: “No.

The birth of our Lord was for all; those who

shall know of Him and those who shall not.

The Spirit is the same everywhere. Under

whatsoever name men address Him, He will

respond to their call.”

Asked, further, about the heathen—those

devoutly and sincerely kneeling before stone

images—he answered: “They too will be

heard, and God will protect them.”

His followers should hold these words of

their Master before them as a guiding star in

their teaching.

In writing upon a religion, and in interpret-

ing religious writings, one must ever bear in

mind its fundamental principles. There is

always a basis from which he must not devi-

ate, any more than the builder of a house may

depart in the erection of his walls from the

foundation which he has laid. Words and

terms must be used and interpreted accord-

ing to the body of the teaching. If the love,

tolerance, and charity which are the basic

principles of Bahá’ísm are ever held as the

touchstone of the truth of what is said with

regard to it, such errors as these will never be

made or accepted.

Bahá’ísm cares not for names and forms. It

looks upon itself only as a divine and therefore

impersonal instrument for helping on the uni-

versal evolutionary process. It urges as the

first, and really the only important, thing, the

building and perfection of character; to hold

to a name is nothing—to live aright is every-

thing.

“Every deed of life,” says Abbas Effendi,

“is a thought expressing itself in action; it is

the actual mirror of the man within. The

act sets up a force which is the spirit of the

deed. Successive acts done in furtherance of

a purpose produce an accumulating spiritual

force which never dies.

“Therefore we must be active—we must be

up and doing. Our deeds build up our char-

acters, and the building of our characters is

our task. Life in this world is for this pur-

pose. We are, while here, more or less arbi-

ters of our own destiny; but in the worlds to

come we cannot progress except by grace of

the Divine Will. Therefore let us attend to

the building of character as the one thing

essential.

“If heredity has not given us the qualities

of character necessary for our high moral

and spiritual advancement, we must labour

to build up a new structure within ourselves

which will be adequate to that aim. Each

man must look to himself and within himself

to find his errors and weaknesses.

“When we find weak points in our charac-

ter we must begin to tear down; and also we

must not neglect to build up good qualities

in place of the evil ones which we discard. It

is a law of our nature that to remove a char-

acteristic permanently another must be de-

veloped in its stead.

“Self-discipline is the first aim of one who

desires to live a true life. But as to this do

not misunderstand me; I do not mean the

discipline, widely practised in old times and

even by many at the present day, which con-

sists in mortifying the flesh and deadening

the emotions. Enjoy pleasant things, look

with pleasure upon beautiful things, but with-

out clinging to them, without longing to

possess them, without holding them dearer

than God. The flesh, the senses, the emo-

tions, are the instruments by which we attain

to the understanding of truth. But they must

be kept as instruments, and not allowed to

become our masters, as they are likely to do

if we fail to keep guard over them.

“Sense indulgence is evil because it keeps

the soul away from God. Unless it is held

in check progress towards God is quite out

of the question. You cannot serve two

masters. And it is difficult to deal with, be-

cause sensations remain as abstractions in the

mind, and, though so subtle that they can

scarcely be recognised, exert an effective in-

fluence towards their own repetition.

“Yet while making earnest efforts to sub-

jugate the senses man is liable to err; his

nature is very complex, and to find the true

path requires wisdom. If he attacks them by

indiscriminate repression, as by asceticism,

worse evils will be encountered; for the effort

may produce serious physical or mental dis-

orders, perhaps insanity or death; or it may

result in merely diverting the uneradicated

evil tendency into some other channel where

it may be even more injurious to the charac-

ter; and it will in any case tend to foster

selfishness, which is worse than sensuality.

“Therefore the attractions of the senses

must be met, not by running away from them,

but directly, by a man’s will and the power

which is within himself to resist evil when

temptation arises. Thus only can desire be

eradicated from the nature of man.

“Selfishness must also be rooted out, not

only in its gross, but in its exceedingly subtle

forms. A man may be selfish even to an

extreme and be quite ignorant of it

Not until a man has wholly freed himself

from lust and selfishness will he be able to

distinguish between what is good in him and

what is not. Lust and selfishness lead men

ignorantly to evil acts, and evil acts in turn

increase lust, selfishness, and ignorance.

“To learn one’s own nature is better than

to seek for the unknown and the unknowable.

“There is need for great wisdom in building

up one’s character. One must have tolerance

and know how to apply it; charity, and know

how to bestow it; love, and know how to love

all things.

“Only to be always speaking of love is not

sufficient. We must love in our hearts. Nor

can love and hate exist together, for love and

hate are opposites. If a man declaims that

he loves every one, while his actions contra-

dict his words, his assertions have no worth.

“Do not mortify the flesh. Care for the

body as the vehicle of the soul and the spirit

within; but at the same time do not pamper

it.

“Cultivate your finer nature through your

senses and your emotions, taking care mean-

while that they do not become your masters.

“Look always to God for aid, not to frail

human nature. Call on the Beha[1] for strength

to guide you. That spirit is now the renovat-

ing influence upon this earth.

“Be calm, be joyous, and not only when

the sky is clear, but when the clouds gather

as well. To be calm and brave under difficul-

ties is a proof of spiritual force.

“But let no man, because he has gained

1 The spirit of Bahá’u’lláh, now become one with the Divine

Essence.

outward control over himself, imagine that he

has accomplished the highest cultivation of

his character. There must be inner calmness,

based on a sense of security in God’s protec-

tion, and a desire to do good for the sake of

good. One should find pleasure in the doing

of good deeds; he should not do them with

an eye to the reward which they are to bring.

“When he has reached this point, a man

may be said indeed to have conquered himself.”

**CHAPTER IX**

**DISCOURSES**

THE STANDARDS OF TRUTH

MAN has four standards to which he re-

fers in the ascertainment of truth—the

report of the senses, the verdict of reason, tra-

dition or testimony, and inspiration. The an-

cient philosophers generally regarded reason

as the highest of these; for the best means by

which to reach an understanding of the es-

sence of things, they said, is the mind. But

the philosophers of the present day place

their chief reliance upon the senses. What-

ever these declare to be the truth of the mat-

ter, that they accept as final. Followers of

the various religions believe that the declara-

tions of their Holy Writs are the ultimate

verities. Mystics and spiritualists find final

truth only in the revelations of inspiration.

Men are generally agreed that there are

only these four standards for the determina-

tion of truth; and yet the inadequacy of each

of them is quite clear.

First, as to the report of the senses, now

generally accepted as the most reliable of the

four. Of the five senses, sight ranks as the

highest. It is most certain that the faculty of

sight is liable to error—that it may mislead—

and that therefore it is not a perfect stand-

ard. For example, the eye is deceived by

the mirage, seeing it as water. It mistakes the

image in the mirror for the real object. The

great and brilliant stars are seen by it as

points. The pulsating light of the sun ap-

pears to it to be without motion. A point of

light moving rapidly is to it a continuous line.

On a moving ship the shore seems to it to

move. The eye ascribes the motion of the

earth to the sun, and to it all the stars seem

to circle about this globe.

It is therefore clear that sight is not a

certain standard.

Though by the ancient philosophers the

reasoning mind was regarded as the highest

authority, these philosophers do not agree.

Some declare that the universe had a begin-

ning, others that it had no beginning. Their

various opinions are so numerous that one

cannot count them. But if the verdict of

man’s reason was a norm of final and absolute

verity, the philosophers of the world would

agree.

The third standard of truth to which men

have recourse is the testimony of others, as

found, for example, in tradition and sacred

books. But testimony can only be considered

by the mind; and if the mind itself is not a

trustworthy instrument, how can the evidence

which it offers us from these sources be so?

Great error may result from the misinterpret-

ation of a single word or expression of the

sacred books.

The inspiration of God is a revelation to

the heart: but temptations of the devil are

also addressed to the heart. If to the hearts

of men is revealed a command,—“Do ye

thus and thus,”—how are we to know whether

this is a revelation from God, or a temptation

from Satan?

Our conclusion must, therefore, be that none

of these standards for the determination of

truth is worthy of implicit confidence; and

man has no other means for reaching a true

understanding.

Yet if the conclusion declared by all four of

these standards be the same, it is worthy of

confidence. Then we may be assured that

the common report is correct. Otherwise we

cannot be sure.

The rule, then, which we should adopt in

our investigations, is this: In determining

every question we should refer it to these four

standards, and a conclusion which is supported

by the verdict of all we should accept; any

other we should regard as uncertain.

Yet there is another standard which is the

peculiar possession of the Chosen of God.

This standard is the breathings of the Holy

Spirit. By that power assurance is produced,

man becomes certain, and the consciousness is

satisfied.

NATURE OF GOD AND THE UNIVERSE[1]

God is Love and Peace. God is Truth.

God is Omniscience. God is without begin-

ning and without end. God is uncreated and

uncreating, yet the Source, the Causeless

Cause. God is pure Essence, and cannot be

said to be anywhere or in any place.

God is infinite, and as terms are finite

the nature of God cannot be expressed in

terms; but as man desires to express God in

some way, he calls God “Love” and “Truth,”

because these are the highest things he knows.

Life is eternal; so man, in order to express

God’s infinity, calls God “Life.” But these

things in themselves are not God. God is

the Source of all, and all things that are, are

mirrors reflecting His Glory.

But, while God does not create, the first

principle of God, Love, is the creative princi-

ple. Love is an outpour from God, and is

1 This exposition, and that in Chapter XI. on “Reincarnation,”

were compiled from a number of discourses and conversations, and

submitted to Abbas Effendi and approved by him.

pure spirit. It is one aspect of the Logos,

the Holy Spirit. It is the immediate cause of

the laws which govern nature, the endless

verities of nature which science has uncov-

ered. In short, it is Divine Law and a Mani-

festation of God. This Manifestation of God

is active, creative, spiritual. It reflects the

positive aspect of God.

There is another Manifestation of God

which is characterised by passivity, quiescence,

inactivity. In itself it is without creative

power. It reflects the negative aspect of

God. This manifestation is matter.

Matter, reflecting the negative aspect of

God, is self-existent, eternal, and fills all space.

Spirit, flowing out from God, permeates all

matter. This spirit, Love, reflecting the

positive and active aspect of God, impresses

its nature upon the atoms and elements. By

its power they are attracted to each other

under certain ordered relations, and thus,

uniting and continuing to unite, give birth

to worlds and systems of worlds. The same

laws working under developed conditions

bring into existence living beings. Spirit is

the life of the form, and the form is shaped

by the spirit. The evolution of life and form

proceeds hand in hand. The powers of spirit

are evolved by the experiences of the form,

and the plasticity of the matter of the form is

developed by the activity of the spirit. Work-

ing up through the mineral and vegetable

kingdoms, sense-perception is reached in the

animal, and the perfection of form is attained

in man.

The forms or bodies of component parts,

infinite in variety, which in the course of

evolution spirit builds as the vehicles of its

expression, are, because of the instability of

matter, subject to dissolution. As they dis-

appear, others are built following the same pat-

terns, carrying on the characteristics of each.

Sense-perception gives rise to desire, desire

to will, will to action, and action again to

sense-perception. This chain ever repeats

itself, and so the powers of thought, mem-

ory, reason, and the emotional capacities are

evolved in spirit. These powers and capaci-

ties of spirit, expressed in individual human

beings, constitute human characters.

Through these successive evolutionary steps

spirit develops characters having many Divine

attributes. The positive, creative aspect of

God is reflected in them. Individuality is

derived from expression in individual form.

Self-consciousness accompanies individualised

character, and the being thus endowed has

the potentiality of rising to the knowledge of

God.

Characters inspired by the universal human

spirit continue in lines of specific developing

types, as did species in the vegetable and

animal kingdoms.

Similar types recur again and again, but

without a continuing individual life from one

human being to another. This recurrence

may be likened to that of the seasons. Spring,

summer, autumn, and winter return in succes-

sion, each season the counterpart of the like

season in the previous year—the same yet not

the same. So flowers and fruits come this

year from like seed or from the same bush or

tree as those of last year, each in the line of

succession of its kind, the same in essence, but

differing in substance.

In the latter case the power which causes

the seed to rot in the ground and a new

growth to spring from it, or the bush or tree

to put forth again leaves and fruit, is the

power of the Spirit, the active aspect of God

as Life.

So in the case of man. Life is eternal, but

the individual human consciousness is not in-

herently so. It can only gain immortality by

uniting with the pure Divine Essence. This

union man may reach by a pure life and love

for God and his fellows.

When in the course of evolution the stage

of thought and reason has been reached, the

human mind acts as a mirror reflecting the

glory of God.

The face of nature is illumined, the grass,

the stones, the hills, and valleys shine; but

they shine not of themselves, but because they

reflect the rays of the sun. It is the sun which

shines. In the same way, our minds reflect

God. Those who live thinking good thoughts,

doing good deeds, and with love in their hearts

—the minds of these become ever clearer, re-

flecting more and more perfectly the love of

God, while the minds of those who live in

ignorance and desire are clouded and obscured

and give forth His light but meagrely.

A stone reflects but slightly the rays of the

sun; but if a mirror be held up, though it be

small, the whole of the sun will be reflected in

it, because the mirror is clear and bright. Just

so is it with the minds of men and the Sun of

Reality. The great Masters and Teachers so

purified their minds by the love of God and

of men that they became like polished mir-

rors, reflecting faithfully the Glory of God

PERSISTENCE OF NATURAL QUALITIES

We come now to the subject of transforma-

tion in the nature of matter; and we wish to

show you that that which is temporal is essen-

tially different from that which is eternal, and

that neither can change its nature for that of

the other.

As an example of matter we may take the

metal, iron. Its nature is such that when

heated it may become hot, red, and fluid. But

though it continue a thousand years in the

fire, its nature will not be changed into that of

fire; its nature as iron will still remain. It will

indeed receive certain qualities from the fire;

but whatever the extent to which it acquires

these qualities, its mineral nature will endure

and cannot be changed. It continues to be a

mineral. The simple elements always retain

their nature as simple elements.

So, if iron be alloyed with some other metal,

it will display qualities which it did not have

before; but on the dissolution of the alloy it

will return to its original state and display the

ordinary qualities of the metal.

Again, substances of the mineral kingdom

may become constituents of vegetable forms;

but they do not thereby lose their mineral

nature. They become, not a growing power,

but part of a growing form. These substances

may in like manner come to animal bodies,

but, as before, without leaving behind their

peculiar nature as minerals, although they take

on certain qualities from the animal. And,

finally, they may go to make up bodies and

receive the impress of the character of man—

may reflect the perfections of human nature;

still they do not lose their identity as minerals.

A light shines forth from a crystal globe.

For a thousand years it may radiate through

the crystal, and still the crystal will remain

crystal and the light light. The crystal serves

only to make manifest the beauty of the light.

Thus it may be known that the nature of

things remains always the same—that inherent

qualities can never be lost. The body of man

always remains dust of the earth, returning on

its dissolution to the elements from which it

was compounded.

Therefore it will ever be the function of the

visible world to reflect the perfections of God.

This, then, is the purpose of the succession of

forms; and as the perfections of God are in-

finite, the succession of forms must be infinite

also.

DIVINE AND EARTHLY NATURE

The ancient philosophers of Greece, Persia,

and Egypt believed that God manifested in

material things His final and supreme Reality.

This supreme reality has been likened to the

water of the sea, and material things to its

waves. In this simile the water is considered

to have two different modes of manifestation.

In their form the waves are temporary, chang-

ing. In their substance they are eternal,

unchanging.

Again, the single Reality has been likened

to unity, material things being the manifesta-

tions of that Reality as numbers are the mani-

festations of unity. As one plus one equals

two, one plus one plus one equals three, and

thus from one all numbers come, so all things

are made up from the one Reality.

This view of the universe is wrong. Why?

Because the One is perfect, while all material

things are imperfect. If this philosophy were

true, there would be nothing except the tem-

poral and changing. Light would be as dark-

ness, life as death, wisdom as ignorance, sight

as blindness, since all that exists in the material

world is imperfect.

The Reality of God is the world of perfec-

tion. The Reality of God is as a light which

shines upon all things; all are illumined by it.

The rays of the sun cause objects to ap-

pear. Light is not substance; it is that by

virtue of which substances may be seen—it

causes substances to appear. In the same way

the illumination of God causes the essential

reality of substance to become perceptible.

Spirit is not the material of the body it

gives the body life.

God gives life; He is not the reality of

substance. Spirit is not matter.

SPIRIT

The word “spirit” has several different signifi-

cations, or rather there are several degrees of

spirit.

Spirit[1] in the vegetable world is the life

of plants—the power by virtue of which they

grow.

Spirit in animals confers the capacity of

sensation upon physical bodies compounded of

associated elements. By virtue of it animals

see, hear, feel, and have other sensations.

Spirit in man is the perceiving soul, able to

understand the realities of things and predom-

inating over all things else.

The spirit of faith endows man with the

capacity to love God and to know God. If

the spirit of man, his perceiving soul, be con-

firmed by the spirit of faith so that it loves

and knows God, and if it be guided by the

guidance of God, and if the divine attributes

1 The spirit in minerals, omitted in this enumeration, was fre-

quently referred to by Abbas Effendi as a latent life-principle, fur-

nishing the bond of union which builds up simple elements into

inorganic forms.

be manifested in it, then there is a living soul

which attains to eternal life. Otherwise it

may be considered to be dead.

That is why Jesus said, “Let the dead bury

their dead.” One who is born of the flesh is

flesh; one who is born of the spirit is spirit.

Those men who have not been delivered from

the darkness of the human estate and who

have not been illumined by the effulgence of

God, although they are human in form, are in

reality but animals. Though they are living

as regards the body, as regards the spirit they

are dead.

The lamp which is extinguished and gives

forth no light may be considered to be dead.

When it has been relighted it is again alive.

The spirit of faith is as the radiance of the

lamp: and therefore those whose souls have

not been led to the shadow of the wings of

God are as though dead.

The spirit of faith is like the ether regarded

as the vehicle of light. Etheric matter is

found everywhere; but only where it is in

undulation does light appear. The appear-

ance of light is not caused by motions to and

fro of the ether—by its goings or its com-

ings—but by undulations in the ether every-

where present. Thus at night we have etheric

matter, but without undulations, and therefore

darkness prevails; but by the power of the

sun it is caused to undulate, and light appears.

The atmosphere is always present; when it

is disturbed sound is heard; but this is not

because the atmosphere, having gone away,

has come again.

As touching the Spirit of God—which we

call the Holy Spirit—this is eternal. It is

the pure favour of God. It is the Divine

virtues—the attributes of Divinity. It in-

fluences the essence of all things. It is that

which infuses life into the soul. It is the

teacher of minds. It is the creative power.

It gives eternal life. It is the educator of

men. It is the centre of the graces of the

Merciful God. It is the pure effulgence which

dissipates the darkness of the world of men.

Human nature is like iron, of which the

characteristics in its normal state are to be

black, to be cold, and to be solid. The grace

of the Holy Spirit is like fire which glows

upon the iron and changes its blackness to

redness, its coldness to heat, its solidity to

fluidity. The iron has received the rays of

the fire; its characteristics have been changed

by the heat of the fire. In the same way, the

spirit of man, which is his perceiving soul,

when it shall receive the rays of the Holy

Spirit will become endowed with the attri-

butes of the Holy Spirit. His imperfect qual-

ities will be changed to perfect ones. He

will reflect the attributes of the Holy Spirit.

Otherwise he is esteemed to be dead—even

below the animal. In the Koran it is said:

“They are like animals—even lower than

they.”

THE PERCEIVING SOUL

You have asked me for an explanation

about soul. Man possesses a gift by which

he is distinguished from all other creatures—

a spiritual principle which is bodiless, pure,

simple, or uncompounded, which is superior to

place and time. Animals have sensations;

they have the five physical senses and perceive

those things which affect the senses. Man

also, like animals, having the five senses,

perceives the things which affect them; but,

further, he possesses a spiritual power, in its

nature original and essential, which encom-

passes the reality of all things and by which

he perceives things which do not affect the

senses.

Things which affect the senses are those

which are physical, which have bodily form

and shape. But the spiritual power of man

perceives essential realities—realities which

are unseen, without bodily form and shape.

Animals perceive outward, objective things;

they cannot perceive things which are hidden,

subjective. Man, by means of his perception

of the essential nature of things known to the

senses, can find a way to understand things

unknown to them.

In short, man has a power which encom-

passes and perceives things both seen and

unseen, by which he is distinguished from the

animals; which enables him to perceive things

which are purely intellectual realities.

The intellectual realities are those which

are immaterial, as love, wisdom, spirit, charac-

ter, knowledge, the divine powers; these are

the intellectual realities, these are the hidden

communications, these are the divine virtues,

these are the human perfections, these are

the mysteries of nature.

All these are realities which pertain to the

realm of the mind; and there are also the in-

sensible qualities of sensible things, as the

roundness of the earth, which man is able to

infer from that which his senses perceive.

The capacity for understanding these things

animals do not possess; it is for man only.

The power which perceives in the realm of

mind, which penetrates to the essence of all

things, is the intellectual power, the perceiv-

ing soul. All the arts, sciences, industries,

and inventions were once in the invisible

world—were hidden mysteries; but the in-

tellectual power of man has revealed them—

has brought them forth from the invisible to

the visible world. The art of writing is an

example. This was once a hidden mystery.

No one had known it. But the intellectual

power of man brought it forth, making known

the possibility of such an art.

Another example of things brought forth

from the invisible world is astronomical science,

once unknown to men. The sky was thought

to be a tent. The earth was supposed to be

flat, and the sun to move over it. But now

man’s intellectual power has revealed these

hidden mysteries.

Therefore it is to be understood that in

man there is a revealing power which encom-

passes the realities of all things, which is fitted

for perceiving and understanding hidden mys-

teries. By means of it, from known or visible

things he draws conclusions as to things which

are unknown or invisible. By this power he

is distinguished from the animal. This is the

perceiving soul, or the spirit of man. It has

different states or conditions, and about these

I hope to speak to-morrow.

The first state of the perceiving soul is that

in which it is engrossed in the gratification of

desire. In this state its nature is like that of

animals: animal lusts predominate in it. Like

the animal, it is unable to distinguish good

from evil. Being overwhelmed by desires, it

cannot discriminate between what is lawful and

what is unlawful. It gives rein to desire, to

the attractions of lust.

In this state it knows neither God nor the

innocence of human nature (by which I mean

human nature in its purity, untainted by desire

and passion). It is far from the truth of all

things.

This is the soul which has not been trained.

Though outwardly—though from their speech

—men in this state might be supposed to

have the power of distinguishing good from

evil, in reality they have no discrimination.

Such are men in general, who have not been

under the care of the Divine Teachers, and

who have not known the pure impulses of

man (unperverted by desire and passion).

After a man has come under the care of the

Teachers, after he has perceived and under-

stood the nature of man in its purity, then,

having gained discrimination, he learns what

virtue is. Such a man realises his faults. He

takes himself to task because of his unworthy

and evil qualities. He is ever contrite—re-

pentant for his evil deeds. He longs for

goodness and virtue.

This is the second state or condition of the

perceiving soul; it is the first stage of the

progress of the soul to God. This repent-

ance, this longing for the virtues of God, is

the means whereby are acquired the inner

sight of enlightenment. The man comes to

know the qualities of truth and the qualities

of untruth. His capacity to feel and to per-

ceive increases; by the gift of God he gains

insight and receives inspiration. These are the

means of his development and progress—the

means whereby his nature is changed and puri-

fied—the means whereby he is trained and

educated to understand. Then he compre-

hends the mysteries of God; without instruc-

tion from any, he penetrates the real Divine

mysteries; without a teacher he receives under-

standing and learns the realities of all things.

When he has reached this stage he receives

assurances and confirmations; he attains stead-

fastness and constancy. His faith becomes

unalterable, firmly established as a mountain.

If the seas of superstition roll their waves

over him, they move him no more than would

a drop of water. If all tests and temptations

assault him in unison, they have no influence

upon him. He is so sure, so firm, so joyful,

so steeped in faith, so intent upon the king-

dom of God, so strong in his spiritual life,

that he sings and dances under the sword of the

foe. Though all the men of the world were

gathered together, wishing to move him from

his faith, they could not. Why? Because he

receives light from the Source of all Gifts.

When he has attained to this estate, he is

satisfied; he is content in God into whatso-

ever conditions he may be thrown. This is

for him the state of contentment in God. He

feels himself drawn into the ocean of grace.

At that time, also, God is content with him.

The host of the Supreme Concourse is con-

tent with him. The angels of heaven (of

course, when I say “angels,” I mean holy hu-

man souls) are content with him. He himself

will be one of the angels, whether in or out of

the body.

In this estate he becomes a centre for re-

ceiving the power of the Holy Spirit. In this

estate his spirit bears to the Holy Spirit the

relation which, before, his body bore to his

spirit. He becomes like a polished mirror.

When he speaks, he gives forth the rays of

the Sun of Reality. All the light which is

reflected from this mirror is the light of the

Holy Spirit.

Therefore was it that Jesus counselled his

disciples to speak and teach without fear,

since the Holy Spirit would come to them

and put words into their mouths. When you

have need to speak turn your hearts to God,

and His Spirit will give you words. The

Blessed Perfection has spoken to like effect:

“The heart is My room; cleanse it, make it

ready, that I may come and dwell in it. Thy

spirit is My desire; purify it, that I may visit

it”

We hope, if it please God, that through the

grace and instruction of the Blessed Perfec-

tion, and through the radiance of his testi-

monies, all of you may attain to this estate;

for this is the estate of perfection, this is the

estate of eternal life.

THE HOLY SPIRIT

The world of existence has two estates: the

one is the Unconditioned, the Absolute, the

Divine; the other is that of submission to

God. The one is the estate of God, the

other of created beings.

That is to say, when we speak of God or

Truth, we mean that which is endowed with

the highest perfection, and when we speak of

the created world, we mean that which is sub-

ject to utter imperfection. The one is eter-

nal, the other temporal. The one is rich, the

other poor. The one is powerful, the other

impotent. The one is all-knowing, the other

plunged in ignorance. The one is wholly im-

pure, the other swayed by desire.

But the eternal flows out to, envelops, and

permeates all things which are impermanent.

God, or Truth which is the reality of God,

gives life to mankind.

The earth in its own inherent condition is

dark, while the sun is bright; but the sun

shines upon the earth, and the earth is bright

by reason of the shining of the sun.

So God has given His light to created be-

ings. God is a perfection which flows out to,

envelops, and permeates the world; and man-

kind should reflect the perfection of God as

the earth reflects the rays of the sun.

The grace which is between the Creator and

the created is Love. The intermediary of

that grace of God is the Holy Spirit. If there

were no love, there would be no communica-

tion between God and created beings. Were

there no light, there would be no communica-

tion between the sun and the earth.

The rays of the sun shine forth from the

mirror when it is exposed to the sun, although

the mirror of itself is dark. The light which we

see in the mirror is but the effect of the power

and grace of the sun. In the same way, the

visible world is altogether imperfect; all the

virtues and all the perfections which appear in

this world are the reflections of the perfections

of God.

The efforts of all the Divine Teachers have

been directed to the end of so educating man-

kind that the souls of men shall attain the

capacity to reflect in their essence the rays

sent forth from God—that the light of the

Sun of Reality should shine in the mirror of

the heart, giving forth radiance.

The intermediary of these graces and bene-

fits is the Holy Spirit

Although the beings of the visible world

have voluntary activity, and effects follow

their activities,—that is to say, although all

conditioned beings have powers and faculties,

for every power has its corresponding fac-

ulty,—yet these powers are exercised by them

under the law of nature. Conditioned beings

are like mirrors, which have shape and form,

and of which the faculty is to reflect light. In

other words, the power of every conditioned

being is according to its character, because it

is under the law of nature.

But the Holy Spirit is other than these; its

power is beyond the control of nature, not

under the law of nature. It is Eternal Life,

Infinite Light, and Unconditioned Power. It

transforms darkness into light. It transforms

the hater into the lover. It transforms im-

perfection into perfection. It transforms pov-

erty into wealth. It transforms ignorance

into knowledge. It transforms weakness into

strength. It transforms blindness into seeing.

It transforms deafness into hearing. It trans-

forms dullness into speech. From it the soul

destitute of spirit, and therefore dead, receives

everlasting life.

This is why Jesus said that though men have

eyes, they see not; though they have ears, they

hear not; though they have tongues, they

speak not; and that he brought healing to

them. By this he meant that although they

have material ears they have not the power of

spiritual hearing; although they have material

eyes they have not the power of spiritual sight

—they perceive not the kingdom of God, and

that the extraordinary power of the Holy

Spirit is the means of putting these spiritual

faculties into operation.

I hope that the perfumed fragrance of the

Holy Spirit will breathe upon you all.

**CHAPTER X**

**DISCOURSES (*Continued*)**

PARABLE OF THE SEED

A SEED comes into the world of existence.

It is planted, and it sprouts and grows.

The plant puts out branches, leaves, and

flowers, and bears fruit. The seed has dis-

appeared, and has appeared again in all these

forms. After all this it returns as seed; that

is, seeds appear like the seed which was

sown.

Now in fact no one of these new seeds is

the same seed which was sown; but the quali-

ties and essence of that seed have reappeared

in these seeds.

The essence of that seed has been mani-

fested.

This seed may be likened to the perfect

soul; the souls of men in general are as the

leaves and the flowers.

REINCARNATION[1]

There is reincarnation of matter, and there

is reincarnation of spirit. Reincarnation of

matter is the process whereby matter is de-

veloped or evolved through its service as the

substance of series of developing material

forms. Reincarnation of spirit is the process

whereby spirit develops or evolves through

its association with these forms.

The visible universe is the expression of a

vast system of evolution which proceeds by

the combination of elements into forms both

organic and inorganic, and the development

of these forms. These forms or bodies are

mutable and perishable because mutability

inheres in the nature of matter. That the

form may continue, renovation follows dis-

solution; thus the form is preserved.

On the dissolution of the form, the elements

of which it was composed go back to their

homogeneous state. They return or are re-

incarnated, though not necessarily in associa-

1 See note p. 169.

tion with each other, to build up other forms

or bodies.

The evolution of spirit proceeds co-ordi-

nately with the evolution of matter. Spirit

appears as the soul of material things, and is

the force which impels the ascent from lower

to higher forms; as spirit itself evolves, it

causes the development of the forms which

it inspires.

First, it appears in the inorganic world as

the latent principle of life in minerals. It

evolves, as a universal principle, by virtue of

the experiences gained from the mutations

of that world. It causes the mineral to un-

dergo during vast periods of time certain

states and changes of state in accordance with

modes and processes which the research of

learned men discloses as physical and chemical

laws. Thus it reaches the degree of evolu-

tion proper to itself in that kingdom, and it at

the same time brings the matter of the king-

dom to a certain stage of development.

Matter is now fitted to serve as the sub-

stance of vegetable forms, and spirit is pre-

pared to act as the architect of these forms,

which it proceeds to build. Thus the world

of plants is brought into existence, and moves

on to its perfection.

In like manner the same evolving spirit

expresses itself successively in the animal and

human kingdoms, having at hand in each

stage, from which to fashion the forms of

that stage, matter developed by its previous

evolutionary experiences.

Thus spirit and matter evolve together.

The evolution of spirit consists in the acquire-

ment of capacities and powers. The evolu-

tion of matter consists in the acquirement of

qualities, as plasticity and adaptability, fitting

it to serve as the substance of forms or bodies

higher in the scale of life.

In each ascending stage spirit manifests

more of its energy, as permitted by the ac-

quired qualities of the matter with which it

has to deal.

The passage of matter in this evolution-

ary process from lower to higher forms, or

bodies, is what I mean by the reincarnation of

spirit.

When the body of man is perfected, physical

evolution comes to an end, since nature does

not seek to build a higher form than that

of man. But the evolution of spirit continues

until reason, the mental powers, and the emo-

tional capacities are evolved in it. These are

not developed by entities which pass from body

to body, but by the universal or World-Spirit

of man. The results of each individual life-

experience go to the general enrichment of hu-

manity. As a hundred lamps may be lit from

a single flame, so the one World-Spirit illu-

mines the minds of countless men. Without

this spirit, man’s body, like the lamp, is lifeless

matter.

Thus it may be said that the spirit which

now informs the human race is the same spirit

which informed mankind or other evolving

beings a hundred, a thousand, or a million years

ago. To that extent, only, the theories of the

so-called reincarnationists are valid.

The conditioned world and its beings possess

like attributes and qualities in the present as in

the past. Therefore they may be said to be

the same. When we say that the seasons, as

spring or winter, have returned, we mean that

the season characterised by certain qualities or

incidents, as cold or rain or new growth of

vegetation, has returned. The association of

qualities we call character also recurs, and when

a character with which we are familiar as pos-

sessed by some individual of the past reappears

in another individual of the present, we are apt

to say that the former has returned. This

does not mean that an entity having those

characteristics has reappeared, but that the

World-Spirit of man has again displayed that

character or association of qualities.

We see a man of to-day powerful, a great

general, whose deeds are like Hannibal’s. This

man may be called Napoleon, but we may say

that Hannibal has returned. In saying this

we do not think of Hannibal’s wraith or entity,

but of the character, similar to his, here mani-

fested as Napoleon.

Those who believe in a reincarnating entity

support their theory by claiming that it is nec-

essary to the equalisation and balance of justice.

They say that if a man is evil, he will be born

again in this world to suffer for his misdeeds.

When they see a good man suffering, they say

that he is suffering in judgment for sins com-

mitted in a previous life.

This line of reasoning is the basis upon

which they have built their theory. Now this

reasoning is bad, and, if thought out to the end,

it cannot stand. Were it valid, the sufferings

of all great beings are to be attributed to their

evil deeds in a previous life. One must con-

clude from it that Jesus, who endured as great

tribulation as could be heaped upon a man,

suffered because of his sins. What great re-

former, prophet, or sage has not suffered?

Were their sufferings a retribution for their

sins? God forbid.

This reasoning also requires us to conclude

that Hannibal and Napoleon were the most

admirable of men, since their victories and

successes must have resulted from previous

good deeds.

The principle itself is wrong.

THE WORLDS OF DARKNESS AND LIGHT

This world is a world of darkness, affliction,

and work. It is like the womb; one must bear

in patience its troubles and its pains. The

world of the womb is not a world of pleasure:

as long as one is in it, he must submit to its

narrowness, darkness, and gloom. If while

there he were to be told of a better world, he

would not believe in it. It is hard for him to

leave that world for this; but when he comes

forth he learns that that was a perdition, and

this a world of light. Then he understands

that that was narrow, this spacious; that there

he had but bad odours, while here he enjoys

the perfumes of gardens; that there he was in

darkness, while now he sees; that there no

sounds came to his ears, while now he hears;

that there was torpor, here speech; there death,

here life.

For mankind this world is like the womb.

It is full of hardships, tribulations, calamities.

An ignorant man may think it beautiful; but

when he leaves it for spiritual realms he will

understand it as it is—will learn that this is a

world of darkness, while the world of God is

illumined.

This is a world of blindness, deafness, noth-

ingness; the other world is a world of seeing,

hearing, reality. This is a world of death, that

of life. Man knows nothing in this world; the

spiritual world is a world of revelation.

Men in their present condition are ignorant

of that world, and therefore they wish to re-

main here. Their utmost desire is to live

here always—like a bird in a cage. But the

bird which has known the flower garden will

not wish to be confined in the cage. If he

finds himself there, his desire will be to escape

from it that he may return to the garden. So

when a man is delivered, he will not wish to

return. He will never desire to descend—to

be exiled from the godly world and come back

to this dark world.

Is there any child who, after being born into

the world, desires to return to the womb? Is

there any man who, having been freed from

prison, desires to be again imprisoned? Is

there any bird which, after it has escaped from

the cage, will desire to return to it? Not

unless it is lame—has broken a wing and

cannot fly—will it prefer the cage to the

heavens; neither will a man, unless he be

imperfect or undeveloped, be attached to

material things.

Therefore our pains in this world, our work

and our care, must be endured; and among

mine is this—that I have so much to do which

must be done that I have little time to speak

to you. I hope to meet you all in heaven,

where there will be less to disturb and hinder.

THE WORLDS OF GOD

Those who lack wisdom think that the

worlds of God are limited to the material

universe. They deny that there are spiritual

realms. These glad tidings have not reached

their ears. The fragrance of the other worlds

has not come to their nostrils.

We may liken the condition of men in this

world to that of the child while it is still in

the womb. It has known no other world than

that of the womb; it cannot picture to itself

a wider or a better world. Should some one

say to it, “There is an external world having

a pure atmosphere, spacious areas, and pleas-

ant seas, flowing rivers, gardens, orchards, and

palaces, lofty skies, and shining stars, all very

beautiful and delightful,—why dost thou re-

main in this gloomy and malodorous world,

thy food the blood of the womb? Leave this

world and come to the other,” the child, un-

able to conceive these things, would perhaps

reply: “There can be no better world than

this; I can imagine none pleasanter, more

spacious or more attractive, nor food more

acceptable than that which I have. This is

the only world.”

But when from his limited world the child

comes to the world of men, it sees indeed that

this world is as a paradise to that—that this

world was not to be imagined in the world of

the womb.

The child in the womb may be imperfect—

it may lack eyes, or ears, or limbs; yet it does

not realise its blindness, its deafness, or its

other imperfections. Neither its perfections

nor its imperfections can be appreciated there.

But when it comes to the world of men, its

perfections and imperfections both become

apparent. If blind, it is known as blind; if

deaf, it is known as deaf; and so of its other

imperfections. If born with sight, with hear-

ing, and with the other blessings of perfected

development, the perfection of these organs

and faculties is realised.

Those who have blessings know their bless-

ings—those who have imperfections know

their imperfections, when they come from the

world of the womb to the world of men;

before, they knew them not.

Just in the same way, while in this material

world those who know God do not realise the

blessings which He has conferred upon them;

nor do those who know Him not realise the

deficiencies of their state, when they leave

the world of men for the spiritual realms, the

gifts which God has bestowed upon them will

be revealed to those who attain to Him;

while the imperfections of those who walk in

darkness, whose sight is veiled from God and

who are bound down by attachment, will be-

come plain to them also.

Man while in the womb had eyes and ears,

but that limited condition afforded no oppor-

tunity for the exercise of these organs. But

when he came forth into the outer world, a

world of space and freedom, the faculties

which he possessed could be exercised, and

the blessings which God had bestowed upon

him became apparent.

So, too, if while in the womb he lacked

these faculties, he knew it not; but when he

has come forth he feels the need of them, and

then first realises his defects.

If the material world were the only realm of

existence, life would be fruitless, the universe

a failure. The infinity of beings would have

lived in vain. For of all beings man is the

highest; and from its beginning to its end,

man’s life is pain. Now he is sick, now he is

plunged into sorrow, now his friend is stricken,

now one of his dear ones dies, now he suffers

loss, now his house is destroyed, now his ship

is wrecked, now he is reduced to poverty, now

he has a quarrel, now he sees some one suffer.

This world is a world of suffering. Were

there no other, suffering would be the only

outcome—the only fruit of existence. Were

this the case, there could be nothing more

senseless than the universe.

Just as the fruition of the conditions of the

womb is in the world of men, so the fruition

of this world is in the spiritual realms.

THE PERCEPTION OF TRUTH

There are two states of existence—the tem-

poral and the eternal—the conditioned and the

unconditioned—the estate of impotence and

of primeval power. We may compare them

to utter poverty and abundant wealth. The

eternal state has all the perfections, the tem-

poral, all the imperfections. The eternal state

has no change, no transformations; the tem-

poral has no permanency. It is not possible

that the temporal should be a constant state,

because transformation and change inhere es-

sentially in its nature.

Helping grace is from that state which is

eternal. This grace flows continuously to the

temporal. If it should fail, that which is tem-

poral would perish. Therefore the grace of

the perfections of God flows forth continu-

ously to the beings of the visible world.

In its ultimate reality the nature of man has

two conditions. One condition is spiritual,

the other, material. It has a divine condition

and a satanic condition, an angelic condition

and a demoniac condition, a condition of radi-

ance ruled by mind and a condition of darkness

ruled by desire. If either of these conditions

predominate, its opposite will disappear. If

the divine condition predominate, the satanic

will disappear. If the angelic condition pre-

dominate, the demoniac will disappear. If the

illumined condition predominate, that which is

dark will disappear. Therefore God sends Di-

vine Messengers and reveals holy doctrines and

causes divine teachings to be spread abroad,

that the spirit of man may be educated, to the

end that by Divine inspiration the grace of

God may be made to appear in the essential

nature of man. This grace, which is the Di-

vine perfection, appears without interruption

in the temporal world. Although the influx

of grace is continuous, yet in order that it may

be efficient there must be a capacity to receive

it. The sun may shine for a thousand years

upon a stone, but the beauty of the sun cannot

be perfectly reflected by the stone unless the

stone be refined, cleansed, and changed into a

mirror. Then the beauty of the sun, with its

form, its rays, and its heat, will be manifested

and declared by the mirror.

A blind man is confounded, but a man with

eyes sees clearly. A man with eyes decides

because of that which he has himself seen, not

contenting himself with what is seen by others.

We may see clearly the perfections of God

and the radiance of His illumination. To be-

hold this suffices us; we need not the tra-

ditions of men.

Thus the Jews had traditions about Jesus, and

the Christians exalt him much. But we should

look to the personality of Jesus as we ourselves

see it. If we find that the perfections of God,

the graces and inspirations of God, appear in

him and in his teachings,—that these are clearly

shown forth,—this should suffice us. Now

we perceive that Jesus was a world-educator;

therefore we acknowledge his greatness.

And then as to Mahomet. We do not con-

sider diverse traditions, either for him or

against him. We consider what has been

shown forth by him. Thus we perceive that

the Koran is full of knowledge and wisdom.

In the Arabian deserts, where the lamp of

enlightenment was thoroughly extinguished, a

man appeared. He educated the Arabian

nation, then in the last degree of savagery,

and he improved it in all its conditions until

in five hundred years it became superior to

other nations. It is clear that such a man

was a world-educator.

Our conclusion is confirmed by the wisdom

of the Koran. In it Mahomet even treats

some mathematical questions which in his

time had not been correctly solved by civilised

nations. He who had been a simple, un-

learned man contradicted the mathematicians

of his time. But after the researches of a

thousand years it transpires that what he said

was right, and that what the ancient men of

learning had declared was wrong.

From these things it may be known that

this man was great. We have seen in this

case with our own eyes, have perceived with

our own minds. Traditions and superstitions

have not served us.

We are the lovers of light. When we see

the light we worship it, however lowly the

source from which it comes; whether its source

be Israelite, or Arabic, or Persian, or Indian

matters not to us. We love not the lamp,

but the light. It is for the light that we

search.

HOW THE EYES OF MAN ARE VEILED

The Sun of Reality, by which we mean the

Perfections of God, appears, like the physical

sun, to change its position in the spiritual

heavens relatively to us.

As the physical sun has its path of move-

ment during the course of the year, so the

Sun of Reality appears to us to move; yet it

is ever a fixed centre, radiating always a con-

stant spiritual force. The movements of the

sun relatively to us are apparent only, for it

is the earth which moves; and because of the

movement of the earth and the inclination of

its axis, the four seasons come in succession.

The sun seems to give its light from differ-

ent regions of the heavens. In the spring it

seems to shine from the equator, in the sum-

mer from the northern heavens, in the fall,

again, from the equator, in the winter from the

southern heavens; yet in fact the sun is always

in the same central position relatively to us,

ever giving the same light, and only appearing

to move from one position to another.

One who has inner sight is a lover of the

Sun in whatsoever region of the heavens He

may appear. Then is one a lover of the

Sun—when he possesses inner sight. He is

a believer in the Sun in whatsoever region

He may appear. If He shine from the equa-

tor, he will turn his face there; if He appear

in the north, he will turn towards Him; if He

appear in the south, there will he turn. For

he is a lover of the Sun, in whatsoever region

He may appear.

But men are lovers of the places of appear-

ance, not of the Sun. When the Sun appears

to move from point to point, they hold to the

point from which He has departed. Then

they are veiled from the Sun Himself.

For the Sun of Reality there was a rising

out of the point of Moses. But when the

Sun of Reality had moved to the point of

Jesus, those who were holding to the point,

instead of holding to the Sun, did not turn

their faces to the point of Jesus. Therefore

they were veiled. As the Sun of Reality

moved on to the point of Mahomet, again

were men veiled; for they were worshippers

of names, not of the reality; lovers of the

word “Moses,” not of its meaning; lovers of

the word “Jesus,” not of its significance. The

true lover of the Sun turns his face towards

the Sun at each point of His appearance,

whether He has shone from the point of

Moses, or of Jesus, or of Mahomet, for it is

the *Sun* which he loves.

The shining of the Sun of which we are

now speaking is the shining of the Perfection

of God. As that Sun seems to change His

position, one must himself move. Instead of

keeping his eye fixed upon the mirrors, one

should worship the Sun Himself, from what-

soever mirror He shines. But human nature

is not so; all men are lovers of the *mirrors*.

If the light of the Sun leaves one mirror and

goes to another, they are left in darkness.

Just as when one looks in a mirror near which

there is a light he sees all the objects within

range of the mirror, but if the light be ex-

tinguished, he sees nothing.

Then, further, there are certain signs and

allegories recorded in the Scriptures relative

to the coming of the Messiah. These signs

are written in symbols. Their meaning is not

that of the literal signification of the words,

yet this was the meaning accepted by the Is-

raelites. They did not know the symbols. As

these signs did not appear according to their

external meaning the Israelites said: “This

is not the promised Messiah.” Thus, one of

these prophecies declared that the Christ

would appear sitting on the throne of David;

others that his rod would be of iron, that he

would conquer the East and the West, that he

would vindicate the law of the Old Testament.

It was prophesied that during his reign love

and tenderness would so increase that even the

animals would be influenced—that the wolf

and the sheep would drink from the same

fountain; that the serpent and the mouse would

make their home in the same cave; that the

partridge and the bird of prey would share the

same nest, that the lion and gazelle would lie

in the same meadow. But as these signs, in

their external meaning, did not come to pass,

and as men did not understand the hidden

meaning, their sight was veiled. Christ was in

reality a king; but his reign was not that of a

Nimrod or a Cyrus. His was a Divine Reign.

His rule penetrated to the world of the heart.

The earthly reign may pass away in a handful

of dust; but the Divine Reign is such that

after nineteen hundred years it still remains.

It is not yet ended. This is the real reign.

But those helpless ones did not comprehend.

They looked for a Messiah who should wield

the sovereignty of a Pharaoh. Therefore

their sight was veiled; and so it is with others.

THE PROOF OF THE DIVINE TEACHER

Before opening this discourse, the Master

asked after the health of those present, and

then proceeded:

When I speak of health, I refer to spiritual

health. The health of the body is imperman-

ent. However carefully one seeks to pre-

serve it, he will inevitably some time become

ill—his body broken. But spiritual health

passeth not away; it is attained when the spirit

of man is delivered from the conditions of this

darkened world, and becomes enveloped and

permeated by divine qualities. As man’s phys-

ical form has been developed through various

stages and degrees—that is, by evolution from

the mineral to the vegetable, from that to the

animal, and from that to the human kingdom;

as the bodily estate of man has been reached

by passing through these several stages, until

at length a stage has been attained higher than

the others, in which it is endowed with all the

physical excellences, so his spiritual nature ad-

vances through successive stages of develop-

ment until it reaches the Highest Kingdom

and the most Glorious Horizon. For one who

has attained to this state, material darkness

and earthly defects are changed into heavenly

illumination and divine perfections.

All the Messengers of God have been sent

for the one purpose of educating the souls of

men so that they may progress from their un-

developed condition to the attainment of that

state where it is known and understood that

“Blessed is the One who is the Best Creator.”

This is the mystery of the Messengers—the

original divine proof. In the case of one

claiming to be a Manifestation of God, one

must consider whether this education and this

gift proceed from him. If it be so, there is no

doubt but that he is a true teacher. This is

the test of his genuineness; he must be an

educator of men.

A teacher should first of all be a virtuous and

learned man; and if from his school or college

trained and perfected disciples come forth, this

is the proof that he is a Master, a true and

divine teacher. The truth is distinguished

under all circumstances from all else; one can-

not be mistaken. The proof of the sun is his

light, of a flower garden its perfumed fra-

grance, of a sea its waves and its brilliant

pearls.

What characterises the sun? That it sends

forth rays of light and heat which cause living

things in the world to grow and evolve. As

this is the characteristic quality of the physical

sun, so that of the Sun of Reality is to teach

and educate human souls; through the warmth

of the love of God and the glory of God to

appear to the souls of men.

THE HEAVENLY WISDOM

All things have qualities which are created

with them—which are innate in them. The

brilliance of the stars, the beauty of the trees,

the brightness of the ocean, the fragrance of the

flowers,—all these qualities are innate in

the objects to which they pertain. Man, also,

has innate qualities; but there is in addition a

perfection, not innate, which may be acquired

by him. Therefore man needs a teacher; for,

in order that he may acquire this perfection,

some one must aid him in bringing it forth.

The gaining of Wisdom requires a teacher.

The Divine Messengers are the perfect

teachers—teachers for the whole world; all

that pertains to the universal order is from

God. This earth is a school in which man-

kind are the pupils. The Divine Messengers

are God’s teachers. Happy he who is a pupil

in this school! From the teachers of God he

may gain Heavenly Wisdom. Heavenly Wis-

dom is that lesson which is eternal. Earthly

wisdom is as the water of pools, gathered from

this side and from that, while Heavenly Wis-

dom is as rain. Earthly wisdom is as the

light of a lamp, while Heavenly Wisdom is as

the ever-shining radiance of the stars. If the

Heavenly Wisdom should pass away from this

world, all human beings would perish.

That is to say, the life of man is to know

God, to know the mysteries of His Wisdom.

For this all the Divine Messengers became

manifest—to teach the Heavenly Wisdom.

This Heavenly Wisdom is eternal peace, uni-

versal reconciliation, and unending rest for

man.

Then do all ye who are the friends of God

teach this Wisdom—teach it to all mankind,

that it may be the means of illumining the

world of men. To-day this is the blessing,

this is the heavenly gift, this is the appearance

of God.

We must serve this august purpose and

light this lamp; that all the people of the

world may smell the perfume of this sweet

odour; that the brightness of Wisdom and

the Spirit of God may change this earth into

a paradise, may make of this gloomy prison a

radiant garden of the most Glorious One.

THE MEANING OF SUFFERING

Man’s happiness has its source in the heart,

not in the body. When his heart is glad, a

man is happy, though in prison. When his

heart is sad, he can not be happy, though in

a paradise. A lighted lamp is still alight,

though it be in a cellar or a cave.

Therefore was the imprisonment of the faith-

ful their path to God, a heaven for them.

That which was real in them was as the gold

which becomes purer the longer it remains in

the fire; or like good soil, which becomes

more fruitful the more it is ploughed. For

them this world was as a school wherein, as

the pupils are diligent, so they learn.

God has given to birds and beasts their

instincts. These are innate in them—are di-

rectly from God. But the wisdom of man is

of two kinds—that which is innate in him,

and that which he must acquire for himself.

To birds and beasts God has given all those

things which it is necessary for them to have.

But he has created man without giving him

these things; he must acquire them by his

own efforts.

In like manner man’s Higher Wisdom is

not born with him. He must work for it, and

the greater his exertions, the more he will gain.

Unless he make great, earnest effort, he can-

not attain to the Perfect Wisdom.

If a child be free to follow his inclinations,

he does not exert himself to study; unless he

be placed under discipline he will not gain an

education, nor can he become a learned man.

If he is not given the training of a school, he

will grow up in ignorance and folly.

God has blessed His beloved with hardships

and sufferings, that by means of them they

may gain Divine Wisdom. He has cut them

off from the world, has permitted them to find

no earthly rest or happiness, that they may

seek for spiritual assurances. These suffer-

ings He has given as tests that the faithful

may be confirmed in constancy, and the faith-

less driven away.

**CHAPTER XI**

**DISCOURSES (*Continued*)**

HEAVEN AND HELL

GOD has created all things wisely and

with a purpose. For everything He has

ordered a heaven and a hell; its heaven is

its place of high degree—of fullness, matur-

ity, and perfection; its hell is its place of low

degree—of meagreness, immaturity, imper-

fection.

If a tree receive the careful attention of a

gardener, it reaches luxuriance and brings forth

good fruit. This is the place of high degree,

the paradise, of that tree. But if the tree be

neglected and fail of its leaves and fruit, it

falls into a condition of low degree, which is its

hell.

All things of the world have similar con-

ditions. By the grace of God a perfection of

good qualities is natural for every existing

thing. In the attainment of that perfection is

its high estate or paradise; in the failing to

attain thereto, or in its loss after it has been

attained, is its low estate, or condition of hell.

The function of a lamp is to give forth light.

If it be well trimmed and lighted, it is in the

condition of its highest good; but if its vase

be broken and its oil spilt, if its light be extin-

guished, then it is in its condition of evil.

Thus it is that for everything there is a

heaven and a hell.

Of all things in the world, man is the highest

Compare him with the mineral, the vegetable,

and the animal. The vegetable is distin-

guished from the mineral and is higher than it,

because, as well as form and substance, it has

the power of growth. The animal has form

and substance, as the mineral, and the power of

growth, as the vegetable; but, besides these, it

has the capacity for sensation, and by this it is

distinguished from the mineral and the vege-

table.

But man, while possessing all the qualities

and capacities of these three kingdoms, has be-

sides them a perceiving power by which he may

penetrate to the reality of all things. From

this we see that man is higher than all things

else: for him are perfections both material and

spiritual.

Therefore man needs a teacher by whom

his spiritual powers may be developed—that

his lamp may be lighted. For this is the

coming of the Messengers of God: that man

may be educated, that his latent perfections

may be brought forth and made manifest, that

his spiritual and heavenly estate may be re-

alised.

The Divine Messengers are like gardeners.

They are sent that the trees of mankind may

be trained and refreshed until they reach their

perfect growth, and that, when this is attained,

they may bring forth their perfect fruit. If

mankind come under the training of these real

teachers and be directed to true understand-

ing and knowledge, all will be manifested and

made known.

THE TWO SORTS OF HAPPINESS

Happiness is of two kinds: physical, possess-

ed by animals and men, and spiritual, which is

known only by those men who have attained

to holiness. Physical pleasure is something cas-

ual and temporary only—is due to an adventi-

tious and transient condition of the nerves.

But spiritual joy is of God and is unending.

The ignorant and the wise man both enjoy;

but the enjoyment of the ignorant man is de-

pendent upon eating and drinking, or upon ex-

ternal conditions; while that of the wise man is

drawn from the unfolding of the secrets of the

universe—from the revelation of the mysteries

of the Kingdom. The former passes away,

but the latter is undying and eternal.

The joy of the prophets of God endures

unto this day, and so also that of those saints

and holy men who have been perfected under

the care and training of those Divine Teachers.

The material kingdom is of time; affliction

and calamity attend it. It is the womb of

pain. But the spiritual kingdom is unpassing,

it has no end, it is beyond danger and fear, it

is exalted day by day, its sun is shining ever

more, the voice of its grandeur arises higher

and higher. All that belongs to this visible

world is corruptible, mortal; all that belongs

to the divine world is incorruptible, eternal.

This is why holy, perfect men seek to find

the other world. They are attracted by the

beauty of God, they have drunk of the cup of

God. The cup of the material world is fol-

lowed by pain, but the Divine cup, the cup of

the Love of God, has an everlasting intoxica-

tion, and pain follows it not. Happy are those

who are intoxicated with this intoxication!

May it please God that those who are faith-

ful may receive this cup of joy—a joy which

does not fade, and after which there is no

sorrow, a life after which there is no birth, a

light after which there is no darkness, a grand-

eur after which there is no littleness.

LOVE[1]

Have thou full assurance that love is the

mystery of the appearance of God; that love

is the divine aspect of God; that love is spirit-

ual grace; that love is the light of the King-

dom; that love is the breath of the Holy

Spirit in the spirit of man. Love is the cause

of the manifestation of truth in the material

world. Love is the essential bond of union

which exists between God and all things in

their ultimate reality. Love is the source of

the greatest happiness of the material and the

spiritual worlds. Love is the light by which

man is guided in the midst of darkness. Love

is the communication between truth and man

in the realm of consciousness. Love is the

means of growth for all who are enlightened.

Love is the highest law in this great uni-

verse of God. Love is the law of order

1 Part of a Tablet written to a believer by Abbas Effendi.

betwixt simple essences, whereby they are ap-

portioned and united into compound substances

in this world of matter. Love is the essential

and magnetic power that organises the planets

and the stars which shine in infinite space.

Love supplies the impulse to that intense and

unceasing meditation which reveals the hidden

mysteries of the universe.

Love is the highest honour for all the na-

tions of men. To that people in whom God

causes love to appear the Supreme Con-

course, the angels of heaven, and the hosts

of the kingdom of The Glorious One make

salutation. When the hearts of a people are

void of this Divine power—of the love of

God—they will descend to the lowest estate

of mortals, they will wander in the desert of

error, they will fall into the slough of despair

and there is no deliverance for them. They

become like worms which delight in grovelling

in the earth.

O friends of God! be ye manifestations of

the love of God and lamps of guidance in all

the horizons, shining by the light of love and

harmony.

How beautiful is the shining of this shining!

LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP

I wish that I could be with you always, but

my time is not my own. Yet my heart is

with you. The important thing is to be with

each other in union of the heart. Why? Be-

cause the communications of the heart are not

limited by place or time. The things which

are subject to place and time will end; that

which is free from place and time is eternal

and established. By the grace of God I hope

that you will be with me always.

This love is good. It will purify and il-

lumine the world. As when swiftly moving

bodies collide there is a radiation of heat, so

when hearts come together light will be spread

abroad. Such friendship is good—as the love

of the spring wind to the flowers, as the love

of the falling rain to the meadows. Such

love is good, is good. Such, I hope, will be

our love.

The wind when it comes to a garden of

flowers gathers the perfume and spreads it

abroad. You also must, like the wind, gather

the perfume of the garden of God and spread

it throughout the world. The people of the

world are very ignorant. They are wholly

occupied with the enjoyments of the world.

They have quite forgotten God. They are

like the worm: all their growth and increase

is under the ground. The more they increase

(in the things of the world), the lower they

go (farther from God). They have no wings

to fly through the air, to ascend upwards to

heaven.

Whether or not men will reach the higher

place, under the wings of God, depends upon

the efforts which they put forth.

Birds satisfy themselves with some few grains

of food, and then on the branches of the trees,

with many different songs, give praise and

thanks to Almighty God. I pray God that

you may be as the birds; that spiritual attrac-

tion may draw all your hearts together, and

that while you are on the earth your flight

may be towards the heavens; that while you

are in the finite world, your seeking and your

striving may be for the godly world. This is

the path.

LOVE AND CONCORD

To-day we will occupy ourselves with the

glad tidings of God.

It is for us to consider how we may educate

men that the darkness of ignorance and heed-

lessness may disappear and that the radiance

of the kingdom may encompass the world;

that the nations of men may be delivered from

selfish ambition and strife, and be revivified

by the fragrance of God; that animosity and

hatred may be dispersed and wholly disappear,

while the attracting power of the love of God

so completely unites the hearts of men that all

hearts beat as a single heart; that the arteries

of all mankind may pulsate with the love of

God; that contention and war may utterly

pass away, while peace and reconciliation lift

their standard in the midst of the earth and

men become enamoured of one another; that

the joys of spirituality may prevail over ma-

terial pleasures; that East and West may de-

light in one another as lovers, and North and

South embrace each other in closest affection;

that the visible world maybe the mirror of the

world of the kingdom; that the image of the

Supreme Concourse may be reflected in all

gatherings of men; that the earth may be

changed into the paradise of the Glorious

One, and the Divine Jerusalem embrace the

terrestrial globe.

TALK TO CHILDREN

The Bahá’ís in ‘Akká have a boys’ school.

Every Friday the pupils are brought by their

teacher to the Master s house, to submit to his

inspection exercises which they have prepared

in Persian and English penmanship and in

translation from Persian into English. I was

present on one of these occasions. There

were eighteen boys, ranging in age from about

six to eighteen years, with intelligent faces and

quiet and respectful demeanour, ranged against

the wall of the large court. The Master

passed down the line inspecting the papers

which they held in their hands. Then, pacing

up and down before them, and taking as his

text this verse written by one of them, “The

son of Lot associated with evil persons,

whereby his succession to the prophethood

was lost,” he talked to them somewhat as

follows:

Ponder upon this and understand what it

means. One who associates with evil com-

panions loses his reputation and his good

name; from being good he becomes bad, from

being virtuous he becomes impure, from being

holy he becomes depraved. Do not take ex-

ample from the vicious, do not permit your-

selves to be corrupted by the evil-minded.

Whenever you who are believers meet with

one another, your conversation should not be

about worldly things; you should advise each

other how to live noble lives, and seek good

examples in one another. You should speak

about spiritual and godly things, in order that

your souls may be revived and your minds be

made pure. You should think much of your

lessons and your writing, which will fit you

to be useful men. You should not think of

things which will separate you from God.

You are the children of the *new* time. Your

thoughts should always be as to how you may

become wise and good. You should seek sa-

gacity and prudence, and to make progress in

the right path.

THE POOR

The poor of this world suffer: we should

care for them.

The poor are nearer the kingdom of heaven

than the rich. The hope of the rich is in their

wealth, but the trust of the poor is in God.

If one make a poor man happy, it is better

than countless services to a rich man. Kind-

ness to a poor man is better than service to

thousands of rich men. If we work for a rich

man or serve him, it does not give him great

happiness; but if we are kind to a poor man,

his heart will be glad. If we give water to a

field of grain which is not dry, we do not

greatly benefit it; but if we water parched

ground, we do it much good.

The man whose heart is kind and pure is

near to the kingdom. The hearts of the poor

are sensitive; the hearts of the rich are hard.

But if a rich man be compassionate, he is very

near to God, for he has come out of tempta-

tion.

PRAYER[1]

The heart of man is like a mirror upon

which dust ever accumulates. To cleanse it

he must constantly supplicate God that it may

be purified. The act of supplication removes

earthly desires from the heart, as polishing

removes dust from the mirror. Without

prayer the heart ceases to be a mirror of the

divine perfections; it becomes as a rough and

unpolished stone.

The delight in prayer severs the heart from

the world. Prayer is the key by which the

doors of the kingdom are opened. There are

many questions which it is difficult for man

to solve; but by prayer these are unveiled.

There is nothing which man cannot learn

through prayer.

1 Part of a discourse by Abbas Effendi, previously published.

Mahomet said that prayer is a ladder, by

which man can ascend to heaven. If one’s

heart is free from attachment to the world,

praying is the act of ascension to God.

But we must pray only because we love

God; not because we fear Him, or fear hell,

or hope for Divine bounty or for heaven.

FROM THE WRITINGS OF BEHA ULLAH

For the following Tablets and extracts from

the writings of Bahá’u’lláh I am indebted to

my friend, Mr Hussein Rouhy of Cairo. Mr

Rouhy furnished me with literal translations

from the original Arabic and Persian. In

order to avoid obscurities and forms of ex-

pression and figures of speech unfamiliar to

Western readers, these have been somewhat

modified in form; but in all cases without

departure, I think, from the meaning of the

originals.

LOVE AND BROTHERHOOD

O children of Beha, ye who have drunk from the pure

wine of Reality, associate with all the people of the

world, with the men of all religions, in concord and

harmony, in the spirit of perfect joy and fragrance.

Remind them also of that which is for the benefit of

all; but beware that ye make not the Word of God the

cause of opposition and stumbling, or the source of

hatred among you.

If ye have a word or an essence which another has

not, say it to him with the tongue of love and kindness.

If it is accepted and impressed, the end is attained; if

not, leave him to himself and pray for him, but do not

molest him.

The tongue of kindness is attractive to the heart, and

it is the sword of the spirit; it furnishes the true rela-

tion of thought to utterance; it is as the horizon for the

arising of the Sun of Wisdom and Knowledge.

Blessed is he who at night approaches his couch with

heart purified from malice and hatred.

Verily the Lord is the Compassionate, the Generous.

Creatures were created through love; let them live in

friendship and unity. This is the commandment of

the Wronged One to his Saints and Sincere Ones.

And ye were commanded by your God, the Glorious,

when He was sitting under the swords of the strangers,

that if ye know of any sin or wrong committed by oth-

ers ye reveal it not, nor make it public, lest He unveil

you; for He is the One who veils often, the Giver, the

Bounteous.

The most glorious attainment is the understanding of

this great saying: “All beings are the fruits of one tree,

the leaves of one branch, the drops of one sea. Honour

is for him who loveth men, not for him who loveth his

own.”

ATTACHMENT

Ponder carefully upon this supreme word, which was

before revealed by the August Pen:—“O Children of

Knowledge! The physical eye will be hindered from

seeing the world and what is in it by a very thin veil;

then what will follow if the veil of attachment covers

the eye of the heart!”

Say! The sword of Wisdom is stronger than the

summer heat, and sharper than the sword of steel.

Draw out this sword in My Name and Power and in-

vade with it the cities of the hearts of those who are

fortifying themselves with the fortifications of desire.

DIVINE WISDOM

He is the Sovereign of the Expounders of the Law.

We had pondered over the wisdom of the earth, its

traditions, and prophecies.

Then from the chamber of the Heart of Man, clad in

the raiment of his Mind, came forth a Beauteous Dam-

sel, radiant and fair; and standing in the midst of the

air she cried out in a glad voice:

“O people of the Heavens and the Earth! Verily I

am she who is called the Spirit of Wisdom, the knower

of that which has been written and concealed. By the

grace of the Eternal who sent me forth I unveil my

face, that ye may behold me as I am; that ye may

know the perfections of Thought, of Wisdom, of Life,

and Soul, which are hidden within yourselves.

“By the Lord of men I charge ye, O ye People of

the World! Veil me not with the veils of unfaithful-

ness, attachment, and lust; deliver me not into the

hands of these.

“As God liveth, unfaithfulness is my enemy, and it

is the companion of vice and strife.

“By the One, the Lonely, I exhort ye! Let not my

foe triumph over me, ye People of the Earth; be not

of those who ignorantly exult and trample me beneath

their feet.”

Thus have we made known to thee by a parable that

which lies concealed in the heart of man, and that which

happened to us in the Greatest Imprisonment, that ye

may be of those who understand. For all that has come

to pass, for the calamities which have befallen us in

God’s right way, we praise Him.

Verily if thou receivest this tablet and understandest

what is written therein, greet our Beloved, and offer

praise before their faces on the part of the Wronged

One, the Stranger.

ADDRESSED BY BEHA ULLAH TO ONE OF HIS SONS

O Zia, be patient in calamity, tranquil at all times,

confident in God. Heed the counsels of the wise, re-

vere God, look with charity upon the mistakes of men.

Follow not after desire, but hasten to God. Be as the

cloud which gives its bounty to all the creatures of the

earth. Have mercy for the guilty, forgive the disobedi-

ent, be steadfast in the Covenant, and firm in the Cause.

Thus commandeth thee the Wronged One.

And again revere God.

He commandeth thee also to keep faith and right-

eousness. Hold fast to these two. And again I say,

Hold fast to these two.

JEWELS OF WISDOM

*From the Arabic of* Bahá’u’lláh*.*

Of the Utterances which descended from the Majestic

Might through the tongue of Power and Strength on the

prophets of the past, we have taken the essence and in

the garment of Brevity clothed it. And this is a kind-

ness to the Beloved, that they may be enabled to fulfil

the Covenant of God and to perform in themselves that

which He has entrusted to them, that through the ex-

cellence of devotion, which is of the Spirit, they may

win the Victory.

Son of Spirit!

The first Utterance declareth:

Possess a good, pure, and enlightened heart, for

therein is the Kingdom, Eternal, Unpassing, Ancient.

Son of Spirit!

The best of all to Me is Justice, Cast it not aside if

thou desirest Me. Neglect it not. By it thou wilt be

strengthened to see all things, not with the eyes of men,

but with thine own, to know all things, not by the know-

ledge of any in the world, but of thyself. Upon this

meditate—how thou oughtest to be. The power of dis-

cernment have I given thee. This is My Providence

for thee; keep it ever before thine eyes.

Son of Man!

I was in My Ancient Essence and My Everlasting

Being. I foreknew My Love for thee; therefore I

created thee and laid upon thee My Likeness and mani-

fested in thee My Beauty.

Son of Man!

Because thy creation rejoiced Me, therefore I created

thee. Love Me, that I may acknowledge thee and in

the Spirit of Life confirm thee.

O Son of Existence!

Love Me, that thou mayest know My Love for thee.

If thou lovest Me not, My Love can never reach thee.

Know this, O Servant!

O Son of Existence!

Thy rose-garden is My Love, thy paradise is My Near-

ness. Therefore enter in and tarry not.

In My Supreme Majesty, in My Highest Kingdom, it

is this which has been ordained for thee.

O Son of Humanity!

If thou desirest Me, love not thyself. If thou seekest

My Grace, value not thine own. Thus thou wilt be

transient in Me, but in thee I will be everlasting.

O Son of Spirit!

For thee no peace has been ordained save by turning

from thyself and advancing towards Me. Verily it is

the Law that thy glory is in My Name and not in thine

own; that thy dependence is on My countenance and

not on thine. For verily I am to be beloved above all

that is.

O Son of Existence!

My Love is My Kingdom. Whosoever enters it is

safe; whoever seeks it not is led astray and perishes.

O Son of Truth!

Of My Kingdom art thou; come into it, that thou

mayest attain to Eternal Truth.

My Love is in thee; know it to be thyself, that thou

mayest find Me near.

O Son of Existence!

My Vase thou art; My Light is in thee. Be enlight-

ened by it and seek not any besides Me; for I have

made thee rich and abundantly bestowed My Grace

upon thee.

O Son of Existence!

By the Hand of Power I made thee, by the Fingers of

Strength I created thee, and in thee I placed the essence

of My Light. Therefore depend upon this and upon

naught else; for verily Mine Action is perfect and My

Decree shall prevail. Doubt not this, question it not.

O Son of Spirit!

I created thee rich. How is it that thou makest thy-

self poor? I made thee mighty. How is it that thou

holdest thyself cheap? From the essence of Know-

ledge I brought thee forth. How is it that thou seekest

aught besides Me? From the clay of Love I kneaded

thee, How is it that thou turnest from Me?

Direct thy sight to thine own being, that thou mayest

find Me standing in thee, Powerful, Mighty, Supreme.

O Son of Man!

Thou art My Possession, and My Possession will

never be destroyed. How is it that thou fearest thy

destruction? Thou art My Light, and My Light will

never be extinguished. How is it that thou apprehend-

est thy extinction? Thou art My Garment, and My

Garment will never be worn out. Therefore rest thou

in thy love for Me, that thou mayest find Me in the

Highest Horizon.

Son of Truth!

Turn to My Face and withdraw from all else besides

Me; for verily Mine Authority is enduring and will never

end, My Kingdom is eternal and will never be over-

thrown. If thou seekest something besides Me, thou

wilt find it not—yea, even though thou searchest the

universe for ever and ever.

O Son of Light!

Forget all else in Me, be comforted by My Spirit.

This is the essence of My Command; therefore abide in

it steadfastly.

O Son of Man!

Let thy satisfaction be in Me—not in the things of

the world. Seek no refuge besides Me; for verily there

is naught else that will ever satisfy thee.

O Son of Spirit!

Ask thou not of Me that which I desire not for thee.

Be thou satisfied with what I have ordained to thy

countenance; for that will benefit thee—if with it thou

art content.

O Son of Divine Wisdom!

I placed in thee a spirit from Me that thou mightest

be My Lover. Why hast thou left Me and sought

another lover?

O Son of Spirit!

My Right to thee is great and cannot be denied; My

Bounty to thee is ample, and cannot be ignored; My

Love for thee is real and cannot be forgotten; My Light

for thee is shining and cannot be concealed.

O Son of Humanity!

I have ordained for thee from the Tree of Wisdom

the Holiest Fruits. How is it that thou hast turned

from them and been content with what is common?

Return thou to thy heritage in the Highest Horizon.

O Son of Spirit!

I created thee sublime, but thou hast made thyself

ordinary. Ascend to that for which thou wert created.

O Son of the Unseen Supreme Kingdom!

I beckoned thee to life, but thou preferrest death.

Wherefore hast thou turned from My desire and fol-

lowed thine own will?

O Son of Man!

Transgress not the bounds of thy limitation, claim not

for thyself what thou shouldst not claim. Adore the

Countenance of thy Lord, the Mighty, the Powerful.

O Son of Spirit!

Dost thou boast thyself over the poor? Verily I walk

before them; and I behold thee in thy miserable state

and for ever grieve for thee.

O Son of Existence!

How is it that thou hast forgotten thine own faults, and

occupiest thyself with the shortcomings of My People?

In that thou doest thus thou condemnest thyself.

O Son of Man!

So long as thou thyself sinnest, breathe not of the sins

of any. If thou violatest this command, of the earth

art thou. To this I bear witness.

O Son of Spirit!

Lay not upon any man what thou wouldest not have

placed against thyself, and promise not what thou wilt

not fulfil. This is My Command to thee; obey it.

O Son of Spirit!

Know verily that he who exhorts men to equity and

himself does iniquity is not of Me, though he bear My

name.

O Son of Man!

Hinder not My servant in whatsoever he may ask of

thee; for his face is My Face, and Me thou must revere.

O Son of Existence!

Ponder well thy deeds each day, as though thou wert

to be judged for them; for verily death cometh to thee,

and then thy deeds will judge thee.

O Son of the Unseen Spiritual Kingdom!

I made death as glad tidings for thee. How is it that

thou despairest at its approach? I gave thee enlight-

enment to guide thee. How is it that thou veilest thy-

self from it?

O Son of Spirit!

The Gospel of Light I herald to thee; gladden thy-

self with it. To the State of Holiness I call thee; enter

its shelter that thou mayest rest for ever.

O Son of Spirit!

The Holy Spirit heralds comfort to thee. How is it

that thou art sorrowful? The Spirit of Command con-

firms thee in the Cause. How is it that thou tarriest?

The light of My countenance shines before thee. How

is it that thou goest astray?

O Son of Man!

Be not sorrowful save when thou art far from Me; be

not happy save when thou art returning to Me, when

thou art near Me.

O Son of Man!

Cheer thy heart with delight, that thou mayest be fit-

ted to meet Me and become a mirror of My Splendour.

O Son of Man!

Clothe thy nakedness with the Splendour of My Gar-

ment. Deprive thyself not of thy portion of My Beauti-

ful Fountains, lest thirst possess thee for ever.

O Son of Existence!

Keep My Commands because thou lovest Me. Cut

thyself off from thine own desires, if thou seekest My

Pleasure.

O Son of Man!

Neglect not My Laws, if thou lovest My Beauty;

forget not My Commandments, if thou desirest My

Blessing.

O Son of Man!

Speed thee to the land of the Supreme Kingdom,

haste to the space of Heaven. Thou wilt not find rest

save in obedience to My Command and in devotion

before My Face.

O Son of Man!

Glorify My Cause, that I may make known to thee the

secrets of My Greatness and shine upon thee with the

Enlightenment which is eternal.

Son of Man!

Obey Me that I may come to thee. Advance My

Cause that thou mayest be crowned a Victor in the

Kingdom.

Son of Existence!

Mention Me in Mine Earth that I may mention thee

in My Heaven; that thine eye and Mine Eye may be

content.

Son of the Throne!

Thy hearing is My Hearing; hear thou with it. Thy

sight is My Sight; see thou with it. Attest for Me in

thine inmost soul a supreme holiness, that I may attest

for thee in Myself an exalted place.

O Son of Existence!

Suffer in My Cause with a joyful heart, receive with

thankfulness that which I have destined for thee; that

thou mayest rest with Me in the tents of Glory behind

the veils of Might.

O Son of Man!

Consider what it behooves thee to do; act wisely. Is

it dearer to thee to die upon thy bed, or to be martyred

in My Name upon the dust and become the Dawning-

place of My Cause and the Manifestation of My Light

in the highest estate of Paradise? Be wise, O Servant!

O Son of Man!

By my Splendour! Thy will to tinge thy hair with thy

blood is dearer to Me than the two realms of the uni-

verse, than the brilliance of the two Great Lights.

Therefore cherish it, O Servant!

Son of Man!

To everything there is a sign; and the sign of Love is

patience to endure the trials, the destiny, ordained

by Me.

O Son of Man!

The true lover longs for the test as the rebel for

pardon, as the criminal for mercy.

O Son of Man!

If thou avoidest affliction how canst thou walk in the

hard way of those who are content with that which

pleaseth Me? If thou fearest lest calamity befall thee

on My Path, how canst thou gain the Enlightenment of

My Splendour?

O Son of Man!

My Calamity is My Providence. Without, it is fire

and vengeance; within, it is Light and Mercy. Therefore

welcome it with joy, that thou mayest become Everlasting

Light and an Eternal Spirit. This is my Command; know

thou it.

O Son of Humanity!

If good fortune come to thee, let it not rejoice thee;

if humiliation overtake thee, mourn not because of it;

for verily there shall be a time when both shall cease and

be no more.

O Son of Existence!

If thou art stricken with poverty, sorrow not; for

verily riches shall one day be thine. Fear not abase-

ment, for exaltation shall be thy portion.

O Son of Existence!

If thou lovest the Ancient and Unending Kingdom,

the Unpassing and Eternal Life, turn from this transient

and mortal state.

O Son of Existence!

Let this world not engross thee.

Verily fire is the test of gold; with gold We prove the

hearts of men.

O Son of Man!

Thou desirest gold, but I desire thy separation from it.

Thou hast thought to find thy riches in heaping it to-

gether; I know that to purify thyself from it is thy

wealth. By My Life! That is thine imagining, this My

knowledge; how can thy thought agree with Mine?

O Son of Man!

Distribute the gold which I have given thee among

My Poor, that thou mayest in Heaven give from the

Treasures of Exaltation which have no end, from the

Stores of Glory which cannot be exhausted.

But by My Life! The sacrifice of thyself is more

glorious, couldst thou behold it with Mine Eye.

O Son of Humanity!

The temple of thy life is My Throne. Cleanse it

utterly, that I may occupy it

O Son of Existence!

Thy heart is My House; sanctify it, that I may enter

it. Thy spirit is an aspect of My Essence; purify it for

Mine Appearance.

O Son of Man!

Put thy hand into My Treasury, that I may raise My

Head, shining with brilliancy, from above thy treasures.

O Son of Man!

Ascend to My Heaven that thou mayest come near to

Me, that thou mayest drink from the Pure Wine which

has no likeness—from the Everlasting Cup of Glory.

O Son of Man!

Many are the days that thou occupiest thyself with

the superstitions and imaginings of thy fancy. How long

wilt thou thus sleep upon thy bed? Lift thy head; for

verily the Sun has arisen and ascended to the zenith,

that He may shine upon thee with the Light of His

Splendour.

O Son of Man!

Enlightenment has come to thee from the Horizon of

the Mount, the Spirit of Holiness has breathed from the

Sinai of thy heart. Therefore cleanse thyself from hin-

drances and imaginings; enter into the Court that thou

mayest be prepared to meet Me—that thou mayest be

fitted for the Everlasting Life where no trouble, weariness

or death can befall thee.

Son of Man!

My Eternity is My Creation and I have created it for

thee; therefore make it the garment of thy temple. My

Oneness is Mine Invention and I have invented it for

thee; therefore clothe thyself with it. Thus mayest

thou be the Arising-place of My Omnipresence forever.

Son of Man!

My Greatness is My Gifts to thee, My Majesty is My

Mercy to thee; but that which is due to Me none can

realise or comprehend. I have kept it in the treasures

of My Secrets, in the stores of My Mysteries,—as a kind-

ness to My Worshippers and a Mercy to My Creatures.

O Children of the Unseen Essence!

Ye will be hindered from loving Me—your hearts will

be disturbed when I am mentioned, for the mind cannot

grasp Me, the heart cannot encompass Me.

O Son of Splendour!

By My Spirit and by My Providence! By My Mercy

and by My Splendour!

All that which I have made known unto thee by the

Tongue of Might and written for thee with the Pen of

Power, is revealed according to thy place and station, not

according to My Supreme Reality.

O Children of Men!

Know ye why I created ye from one dust? That

no one should glorify himself over the other, that ye

should always bear in mind the manner of your creation.

Since I have created ye from one substance, it behooves ye

to be as one, walking with common feet, eating with one

mouth, living in one land; until in your natures and

your deeds the signs of the Unity and the essence of the

Oneness shall appear.

This is My advice to ye, O ye People of Light! Profit

by it, that ye may pluck the fruits of Holiness from the

Trees of Might and Power.

O Children of the Spirit!

Ye are my Treasuries; for in ye have I stored the

Pearls of my Secrets, the Gems of My Knowledge.

Guard them, lest the unbelievers among My People,

the wicked ones among My Creatures, should discover

them.

O Son of Him Who stands in. His own Essence in the

Kingdom of Himself!

Know that I have bestowed the Fragrance of Holi-

ness upon thee, have accomplished the Utterance unto

thee, have perfected all Grace for thee, have willed for

thee what I have willed for Myself. Therefore dwell in

Me with love and gratitude.

O Son of Man!

On the tablet of thy soul write all that I have enjoined

upon thee, with the ink of Light; and if thou canst not,

write it with ink taken from the essence of thy heart;

and if still thou canst not, write it with the red ink shed

in My Cause, which verily is dearer to Me than all else;

that its radiance may be confirmed for ever.

**CHAPTER XII**

**CONCLUSION**

THAT a religion enjoining such fraternal

relations between men, advocating such

enlightened social regulations, holding up as

exemplars such ideals of life as that of Abbas

Effendi, and able to inspire its followers with

such self-forgetting and whole-souled devotion

to its cause, must effect a vast amelioration in

the conditions of life of those peoples to whom

it was immediately addressed and whom it can

reach directly by means of the Persian and

Arabic languages, both used by its founders,

and is surely destined to leave a deep impress

upon the history of mankind, there seems to be

no room for doubt. Bahá’ísm has already de-

monstrated that it is a great religious force.

But can we go a step further—can we arrive

at any conclusion as to the validity of the claim

of the Bahá’ís that theirs is a Divinely inspired

world-religion in its first youth? Probably the

intellect alone is incompetent finally to decide

this question, but there are certain indications

which appeal directly to the intelligence, the

force of which can be estimated by the reason.

The examination of the great religions of

the world, of late years very searching, has

shown us an identity of essence in them, from

the very earliest of which we have record to

the latest. The great Upanishads, the most

ancient and the grandest of sacred books, tell

us of the oneness of all beings—teach us to

look in them for ourselves and for God; teach

us, that is, that the first and the last guide-post

for the aspiring soul is to the path of kindness,

compassion, and love for all that lives.

The Bhagavad Gita, the lineal descendant

of the great Upanishads, handing down their

lesson in sublime celestial song, pulsating with

the life and warmth and vigour of the Good

Law, which has perhaps been venerated by

more millions of human beings than any other

sacred book, begins and culminates in the de-

claration, “He who sees Me in all beings and

all beings in Me, who, ever perceiving the One

Life, loves Me dwelling in all beings, he who

sees the same life in all things as in himself, he

it is, O Arjuna, who seeks Me by the highest

path.”

And hear the Buddha, that mighty man, the

most majestic figure of ancient days, who trod

the plains of India for nigh to half a century,

uttering his words of peace and love.

“And he [the follower of the Path] lets his

mind pervade one quarter of the globe with

thoughts of love, and so the second, and so the

third, and so the fourth. And thus the whole

wide world, above, below, around, and every-

where, does he continue to pervade with heart

of love, far-reaching, grown great, and beyond

measure.

“Just, Vasetha, as a mighty trumpeter makes

himself heard, and that without difficulty, to-

wards all the four directions; even so of all

things that have shape or form, there is not one

that he passes by or leaves aside, but regards

them all with heart set free and deep-felt love.”

This, too, is the one insistent note of the life

and teachings of Jesus of Nazareth—that

wise and holy man whose followers have

heaped dogma upon dogma, vain fabrications

of darkened intellects, obscuring and hiding

the pure and simple lesson of his life, until

God and religion are but names and shadows

to the Western world.

Whatever its source, this is the one great

lesson which has been taught by the great

teachers of all ages, and it now rings forth a

second time from the valleys of Palestine as

fresh and clear as it sounded from the slopes

of the Himalayas more than three thousand

years ago.

Secondly, few, I presume, who will read this

book, have not had occasion to marvel that a

religion could be thought to be both divine

and, though limited by the necessities of place

and time, exclusive. No thinking and un-

biassed man can believe that the Creator of a

Universe has made to any man, to any institu-

tion, to any nation, or even to any age, alone

and exclusively, those communications neces-

sary for the welfare of all mankind in every

age. From our childhood we of the West

have been drilled in the efficacy of a single

faith, a single name, a single church; and if

we have ever dropped our mental swaddling-

clothes, we have come to know that such a

claim can be nothing but delusion. Happy are

we, if, with that shaken confidence, we have

not lost all faith and hope; if we have had the

perseverance and good fortune to learn that

this intolerance is not to be attributed to the

spirit of primitive Christianity, but to the pre-

judices which have accumulated and crystal-

lised about it in the course of twenty centuries.

Such claims carry their own refutation; but

to have known and outlived them fits us the

better to appreciate the splendid liberality of

this new faith. Here is no close communion;

no trust or monopoly of Divine grace. Zo-

roaster,, Moses, Buddha, Christ, Mahomet, and

Bahá’u’lláh, each in his turn reflected the rays

of Divine Truth. No man is asked to surren-

der that which is dear to him by association or

inheritance. He hears only a renewal of the

oft-repeated message which has been dulled

and dissipated by the lapse of ages. Whether

or not this be a Divine message we may per-

haps feel ourselves unable to decide; but that

it is offered to us in a manner to win the ap-

proval of our intelligence and our hearts, we

are bound to admit.

In the third place, there is a distinct probat-

ive force in the lives of those by whom it is

proposed and in the type of character which it

attracts and develops. Those who have sought

far and long for a solution of the mystery of

existence which would satisfy their reason and

their hearts, who, baffled and confused by the

mazes of philosophy and dogma, by the laby-

rinths of imaginative speculation which human

ingenuity has fashioned in countless forms since

time began, but who have at length discerned

the single golden thread lying at the root of

all, gleaming as brightly at the dawn of history

by the Ganges as in later times from the plains

of Galilee,—many of these have believed that

they had found in this co-ordinating golden

link a basis of truth upon which they might

repose; and yet, while they have felt and

reasoned that this must be so, their confidence

has wavered when they reflected that, beau-

tiful and convincing as was this teaching of

universal identity, brotherhood, and love, there

were to be found nowhere in the broad earth,

it seemed, living exemplars of its power to

mould life and action into conformity with its

precept. If this doctrine is indeed true, why,

they have demanded, are there not those whose

lives it has fashioned into the ideal which it

prescribes? Where is there at least one man

whose godly life will prove to us that this path

is practicable for men?

To know the Master of ‘Akká is at once a

confirmation and a revelation to those who have

thus searched and thought. Their reason and

intuition is justified, the possibilities of human

nature are revealed to them. Here is a man

who proves to us that self can be utterly for-

gotten; that all-embracing love can be substi-

tuted for egotism as the motive-power of a

human life; that the recorded lives of Buddha

and Christ may indeed be realised by those

who follow in their path. There are many

men for whom this spectacle will change belief

into conviction with the certainty of knowledge.

In the fourth place, if it belongs indeed to

the Divine order that Messengers be sent to

men when faith has waned and true religion

been forgotten, it would seem that the present

time is very opportune. In both the East

and the West men are wandering in the dark.

The East has been the cradle of all the great

religions; yet many of its peoples, overridden

by selfish and ignorant priesthoods, slaves to

curious and complicated superstitions, quite

oblivious to their glorious heritage, follow

their spiritual guides into unimaginable depths

of selfishness, isolation, and hardness of heart;

while, in the West, religion has for the most

part become a hollow name, assumed for the

sake of fashion or of ostentation. If a new

divine impulse was ever needed, it would seem

that it is called for now.

However we may judge the pretensions of

the Bahá’ís, they have a most substantial claim

to our respect; and every well-wisher of his

fellow-men will extend to them, as they do to

all, the hand of fellowship and good-will.

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**CHAPTER VII**

**PHILOSOPHY AND PSYCHOLOGY**

THE Bahá’í conception of the Supreme Be-

ing is not a personality, but an Essence,

an all-pervading Force or Power, frequently

referred to as Love, or Truth, or Life. “God,”

says Abbas Effendi, “is pure essence, and can-

not be said to be anywhere or in any place.

God is infinite, and, as terms are finite, the

nature of God cannot be expressed in terms.

But as man must form and express a concep-

tion of God in some way, he calls God ‘Love’

or ‘Truth’ because these are the highest

things he knows. Life is eternal; so man, to

express God’s infinity, says that God is ‘Life.’

But these things in themselves are not God.

God is the Source of all things that are made,

and all things that are, are mirrors reflecting

His Glory.”

The universe exists for the purpose of indi-

vidualising the Infinite Absolute and Eternal

Essence; that is, for the purpose of creating

in that Essence centres of consciousness and

intelligence which shall know themselves and

know It or God.[1] The instrument of this

creation is the material universe, and the

process is evolution. Spirit is an emanation

from God; but it is simple, undifferentiated,

unorganised. Spirit must be developed or

evolved by a vast course of evolution in con-

tact with matter, by means of the experiences

thereby gained, until the emotional, mental,

and reasoning faculties and powers are devel-

oped in it. Self-consciousness follows from

the association of spirit evolving these powers

with individual human forms. These centres

of emotion, intelligence, reason, and self-con-

sciousness are capable, in due course, of union

with, or transfer to, the pure Absolute Es-

sence, whereby the ultimate end of the evolu-

tionary process is attained.

The process of evolution proceeds by the

development of combinations of material ele-

ments constituting organic and inorganic forms.

Spirit is the force which brings about these

combinations. As it evolves, it develops and

pushes forward the evolution of the forms

which it permeates, impelling the ascent from

lower to higher forms. These combinations,

1 “I was a hidden treasure. I desired to be known. Therefore I

created the world, in order to be known.”—*Koran*.

forms, or bodies, being but aggregates of ele-

ments, are subject to the law of continual

change which inheres in all material things.

Their duration can be but temporary, and their

end is the scattering of the elements of which

they are composed. That the forms may

continue, they must be at intervals renewed.

Further, evolution requires readjustment of

form as development proceeds. Hence, from

both the nature of matter and the require-

ments of evolution, arises the necessity of

death, or the dissolution of the physical form;

or rather, we should say, perhaps, that matter

has been created with the qualities needed by

the evolutionary process for which it exists.

Renovation follows dissolution, and thus the

forms are preserved.

There are four degrees of spirit concerned

with evolutionary growth, as spirit manifests

itself in the various forms of nature—the

mineral, the vegetable, the animal, and the

human spirit—and each of these degrees is a

development or evolution of those which have

preceded it in the ascending scale. The min-

eral spirit contains the latent principle of life.[1]

1 Compare the recent remarkable discoveries of Professor I. C.

Bose demonstrating the existence of the essential characteristics of

life in metals. *The Response of Matter*; London, Longmans,

Green & Co.

It causes the cohesive and adhesive forces

existing between atoms, molecules, and sub-

stances. The chemical and physical laws which

scientific analysis discloses are the manifesta-

tions of spiritual force, or the modes of exist-

ence impressed by spirit upon matter. Spirit

forces the matter of the mineral kingdom to

undergo various changes of condition and mu-

tations of form under the guidance of these

laws, until, as a result of the experiences in-

volved in these changes and mutations, spirit

reaches that degree of evolution which can be

attained in this kingdom of nature. Co-ordi-

nately with this evolution of spirit the evolu-

tion of matter proceeds; it acquires plasticity

and adaptability, and becomes fit to take its

place in the kingdom of nature next above, as

the substance from which vegetable forms may

be organised.

The completion of this process closes a cycle

or period. The mineral spirit, that is, the

one World-Spirit of the mineral kingdom, now

passes away from the mineral and proceeds to

the vegetable kingdom. During the cycle

just passed, co-ordinately with the develop-

ment of the conditions and forms of the

mineral kingdom, the evolving spirit has pro-

duced also the primary forms of the vegetable

kingdom, and these it permeates and impels up-

wards. The spirit which informs the vegetable

kingdom, though the same in essence as that

which first permeated the mineral kingdom,

differs in its mode of manifestation. Not only

has it evolved new qualities and capacities;

but, since the conditions of the vegetable king-

dom are freer and more mobile than those of

the mineral kingdom and matter is more plastic

than before, it has scope to display more of

its inherent energy. It may be likened, in

its manifestation, to a gale of wind developed

from a breeze.

The matter of the vegetable kingdom, when

it has reached the degree of development

proper to that kingdom, has in combination

two sets of qualities or natures: that peculiar

to the mineral kingdom, and that peculiar to

the vegetable kingdom, whereas matter in

the mineral kingdom possessed only the min-

eral nature. In the acquisition of this new

set of qualities consists the growth or evolu-

tion of matter in the vegetable kingdom. It

is thus prepared to serve as the substance of

animal bodies.

Spirit passes from the vegetable to the ani-

mal kingdom, and from the animal to the hu-

man kingdom, in a manner similar to that in

which it passed from the mineral to the vege-

table kingdom, just described. It still con-

tinues to be, as when it first appeared in the

mineral kingdom, a single, undivided force;

and it is the same in essence as before, though

with evolved capacities and powers, and in-

creased manifestation of energy as the scope

for the display of its activities enlarges.

The matter of the animal kingdom has in

combination three sets of qualities or natures

—those peculiar to the mineral and vegetable

kingdoms and its own; while the matter of

which man’s body is composed has acquired a

fourth, peculiar to itself. It has now reached

a very high degree of plasticity and adapt-

ability.

Thus spirit and matter evolve in union with

each other through the four kingdoms of

nature, during each stage adding the growth

and development attained in that stage to

the growth and development attained in prior

stages. When the physical form of man has

been perfected, spirit has accomplished one

part of its purpose—or the purpose for which

it was sent—that is, the creation of a physical

form suited to serve as the vehicle for the

manifestation of spirit in the higher stages

of its evolution yet to come. Man’s physical

form is the highest type of form—nature’s

final product and the goal of her evolution.[1]

Although the evolution of types of form

now ceases in the material world, spirit con-

tinues to evolve, through its association with

the human body and the life experiences thus

gained, until the emotional, mental, and reason-

ing faculties and powers of man are fully de-

veloped in it. This spiritual evolution has its

expression in the material world in the de-

velopment of the human brain, the solar plexus,

and other nervous ganglia, which are coinci-

dently perfected as they are required to serve

as vehicles for the evolving spirit manifesting

itself as the intellect and emotional nature.

During this stage of its evolution, as in the

stages which preceded it, spirit is a single

World-Force, not a congeries of entities.

1 To illustrate the remarkable analogy between these conceptions

and some phases of modern thought, I will here quote a passage

from the *London Contemporary Review*, of March, 1902. The

writer, Mr Wake Cook, in developing his thesis of an “Increasing

Purpose” manifested in the natural order and evolution of the

world, says:

“This idea of life, conditioned, restricted, or focussed by matter

in its various modes, rests on a larger conception. Instead of formu-

lating the idea of Matter and Motion, or Matter and Force, a larger

term—Cosmic Life—as carrying all below it, is substituted for

motion or energy, and substance for matter, the latter being the

lowest form of substance. This life, which may be conceived under

any of its sectional aspects such as Force, or as Intelligence, builds

Self-consciousness results, as has been said,

from the individualisation impressed upon

spirit evolved to the emotional, thinking, and

reasoning stage, by its association with in-

dividual human bodies. Therefore, except as

will be hereafter explained, the self-conscious-

ness of man does not survive the dissolution

of his body. As mind, and consequently

human character, develops, the thoughts, vo-

litions, and characteristics of each human

being go to enrich the common fund of the

one World-Spirit of man, and constitute in it

potentialities which will be again brought into

manifestation in other human beings. Further,

the thoughts and characteristics of the indi-

vidual are not scattered and dissipated so as

to lose the coherence of individual character,

but tend to reappear in conjunction with each

up the machinery of its expression, its organism, in the highest form

permitted by the plastic condition of matter; and the One Life, or

Spiritual Force, will express itself in the highest manner possible to

the nature of the machine or organism. As Force it may undergo

endless transmutations, but no loss, and in every case it will produce

different results according to the different structures through which

it works. A rush of wind, as a tornado, may work devastation; yet

a like rush of air directed through a furnace blast is a most useful

servant of man; or, if sent through the more complicated mechanism

of an organ, it may discourse sweet music, wakening the soul to

worship; or through the more delicate mechanism of the human

voice it may stir the nations through the statesman, may stir the

whole world of the emotions through the orator, the poet, and the

other, thus giving rise to a succession of

similar and developing characters.

The human intellect, when subject to ma-

terial conditions, cannot fully grasp or express

the methods and operations of spirit, and there-

fore this process can only be suggested to the

mind by words which do not describe, but

offer an intellectual substitute for the reality.

Suppose that a man rises from his bed during

the night, lights a lamp, writes a letter, ex-

tinguishes the lamp, and returns to his couch

and sleeps. The consciousness and active in-

telligence have departed, but the letter re-

mains. In some such way the thoughts and

characteristics of a man remain after his death

in the spiritual world, without self-conscious-

ness, and subject to such spiritual forces that

they are impelled to seek, when opportunity

offers, expression in association with each other

singer; a laugh, a cry, a groan, a lover’s sigh, are all expressions

of the one force acting through different conditions. In like man-

ner, the Cosmic or Divine Life manifests itself through matter

in accordance with its plastic conditions, and its manifestations will

correspond with the organisms which the state of matter permits it

to form. To the less organised forms of matter, the Divine Life is

simply an active force, and the Divine Love simply gravitation,

or attraction, which holds every atom of this vast universe in loving

embrace. As matter undergoes the necessary changes to fit it for

higher organisation, life moulds it to its most simple forms, and as

it becomes more plastic the forms become more and more complex

until we reach conscious life, and ultimately man. Thus ‘Force’ is

in another human individual, who in conse-

quence displays a character similar to that

possessed by the individual who has passed

away. But as spirit cannot manifest itself

without a body, this character cannot again

appear until a physical type suitable for its

manifestation recurs. Physical types, however,

constantly recur, under the operation of hered-

ity and other natural laws, and thus similar

characters continually reappear among men.

There is, however, no re-embodying entity, or

continuance of self-consciousness, from the one

life to the other. The spirit which illumines

each human form, the flame of each human

lamp, is the one and indivisible World-Spirit

of man which illumines all other human forms.

It is the Spirit of God, in essence the same

yesterday, to-day, and for ever.

But man has, either potentially or in fact,

differentiated by the conditions of matter; merely attraction and

motion in the clod, it becomes life in the plant, manifesting beauty.

In other conditions it becomes animal life, moved marvellously

by instinct, elaborating rudimentally and in detail those organs or

faculties which, when developed, are synthesised in man. Animals

preying upon each other keep matter in the organic mill, so to speak,

refining and preparing it for its highest function in man, in whom

the Divine Life becomes dimly conscious of itself. Starting with

the idea of Force, its character changes with the changing condi-

tions, attraction and repulsion are translated into love and hate,

instinct is transmuted into reason, intellect, and the higher in-

tuitions.”

another principle by which he is distinguished

from all beings below him. This is a Divine

radiation, and comes to man directly from

God. It is described by Abbas Effendi as a

ray of His love, sent by Him to every human

being at its conception. It is the real human

soul. When united with the human con-

sciousness it becomes an individuality, knowing

itself and God.

This soul lights the reflecting and reasoning

mind of man and gives it the semblance of

itself, the real soul.

Of the existence of this soul the masses of

mankind are not consciously aware. But it is

the source of the impulses leading to the

noble, generous, and unselfish actions which

illumine the pages of the life of man. Almost

all men have a more or less clear sense of

many things which do not follow from, or are

opposed to, the ordinary experiences of human

life; as of immortality, which could never

have been derived from experience; an in-

stinctive belief that life has a purpose, which

again is opposed to experience; an instinctive

sense of the reality and worth of the souls of

other men, which neither the senses nor the

intellect can possibly give. Such intuitions

are due to the inspiration of the soul.

The world and all its myriads of forms exist

only for the purpose of producing by evolu-

tionary growth centres of consciousness, in-

telligence, and emotion which may reach up

to, and unite with, this ray from God and soul

of man. Toward this consummation evolu-

tion is surely carrying the whole human race.

A large portion of mankind has not reached

the stage of development where this union is

possible; but there are vast numbers of men

who might attain it by the exercise of their

own powers,—for man while in this world has

a far-reaching control over his own destiny,—

but do not seek it, do not turn their faces

toward God. The masses of mankind are

wrapt in ignorance and selfishness, and pass

the few years of their mortal lives engrossed

in the gratification of their personal desires

and ambitions, in the egotistic trifles and vani-

ities of earthly existence. For these there is

no hereafter, except as their thoughts and

deeds continue by their influence and effects

to modify the general course of the life of

humanity as a whole. They are like the

leaves of the tree which fall in myriads and

only avail to enrich the soil, and to which

the fruit which reaches perfect maturity bears

but a small proportion in number; like the

multitudes of germs of every species which

never come to germination, nature having

created and scattered them in infinite profu-

sion in order that a few might find suitable

conditions for growth; or like the vast num-

bers of relatively imperfect forms sacrificed at

every step in evolution in order that a few

more perfect ones may be selected by survival

to carry on the evolutionary process.

It is to show to man these truths—to turn

him from his path of ignorance and heedless-

ness, and to induce him to exert his own efforts

in unison with the Divine purpose for his own

supreme good, that God from time to time

sends the Divine Messengers and Teachers

who have established the great religions of

the earth. These Divine Messengers differ

from other men only in the perfection of their

development. They are able to reflect God

perfectly. All men, all things, indeed, reflect

God to some extent; but these are like clear

and polished mirrors which give a perfect im-

age. A Messenger comes whenever, through

the lapse of time and the forgetfulness of

men, the voice of his predecessor becomes

obscured; and the extent to which the truth

is declared by each depends upon the capacity

of the age to receive it. Such Messengers

were Moses, Zoroaster, Buddha, Christ, Ma-

homet, and the founders of the Bahá’í faith.

The revelation of the last is fuller than any

which has preceded it, men being now better

fitted than before to understand the truth.

Their special mission is to establish the unity

of religions, and to spread peace and harmony

among men.

It follows from what has been said that the

human consciousness must effect its union

with the soul, if at all, during the term of

earthly life, since of itself it has no existence

beyond that term. If the nature is sufficiently

developed, having behind it the necessary

hereditary force and endowed with an uncon-

querable fire of aspiration, union with the soul

may be attained during the strength and

vigour of manhood. This is the ideal con-

summation of a human life; but there are also

many other possibilities, determined by the

various degrees of human development. Thus,

for example, where a man is heavily fettered

by earthly desires and attachments, the union

may not be possible during vigorous life, and

yet may occur at that moment just preceding

death when the senses have ceased to func-

tion, but consciousness remains, wholly freed

from sense-bondage. This case is not infre-

quent; but when it takes place the event is

not at all to be understood as following from

a “death-bed repentance.” It has nothing

whatever of that character, but is an inevita-

ble sequence of past conditions, independent

of the volition of the moment, and represent-

ing the absolute net result of the character

and life.

Again, this union has various degrees of

perfection, dependent also upon the conditions

determined by character, life, and aspiration.

When it is imperfect, the human conscious-

ness, overshadowed by the soul, and now

keenly aware of its imperfections, passes into

other states of existence, where its further

opportunities for reaching perfection do not

depend upon individual effort,—cannot be

demanded and seized as of right, as in

this world,—but are dispensations of divine

favour.

When the union is complete, there results

an individuality possessed of Divine Wisdom

and the all-pervading powers of Spirit, know-

ing itself and also knowing that it is a part of

the Infinite, Absolute, Eternal Essence. Time

exists for it no more, nor can it be said to

be in any place, though it is still within the

realm of space and form. Contemplating the

Divine Source of which it feels itself to be a

part, it passes on to higher conditions of exist-

ence and continues its growth.

In its ultimate perfection, it passes beyond

time, space, place, and form. It is then man

and God in one, the reflection and the One.

1. Modified for the 2nd edn—it is not a part of the book. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 230. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Despite its inaccuracies and having been deleted by the author, I have decided to append this first edition chapter to this document since it has already been quoted by other publications and to avoid further claims of a cover up.—M.W.T. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The review in question appeared in the *Oxford Magazine* of May 25, 1892, p. 394. Amongst many other egregious observations, the reviewer, “ speaking candidly as a layman,” considers that “the history of a recent sect which has affected the least important part of the Muslim world (nor that part very deeply) and is founded on a personal claim which will not bear investigation for a moment” is “quite unworthy of the learning and labour which” (he was kind enough to say) “the author has brought to bear upon it”; while, in the closing sentence, he “records his belief that the prominence given to the ‘Báb’ in this book is an absurd violation of historical perspective; and the translation of the *Traveller’s Narrative*, waste of the powers and opportunities of a Persian scholar.”

   I am well aware that it is generally considered undignified and improper for an author to take any notice of his critics, or even to admit that their strictures have caused him more than a momentary vexation; and towards the more irresponsible reviewers of journals which do not profess to represent the opinions of a cultivated circle such indifference is undoubtedly the correct attitude. But the *Oxford Magazine*—at any rate outside Oxford—is supposed to be a serious exponent of the ideas and judgments of that University; and one has the right to expect that a work treating of an Oriental religious movement shall not be judged by one who, however great an authority he may be on classical archaeology, knows so little even of Islám that he can speak of the originator of the Wahhábí movement as “Wahháb” (and even this he incorrectly writes, “Waháb”); a blunder comparable to that of the Turkish journalist who, desirous of making display of his proficiency in French, employed the remarkable word “*topjet*” (hardly recognised as standing for “*numéro d’objet*”) in the sense of “catalogue number”; or [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . of the English bard who talks of “Abdul the Damned.” The veriest tyro in Arabic would know that only God could be spoken of as al-Wahháb, “the All-Giver,” and that ‘Abd (servant) must stand before it to make it a possible name for a man—‘Abdu’l-Wahháb, “the Servant of the All-Giver.” [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Bahá’u’lláh in *A Traveller’s Narrative*, p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Quoting *Táríkh-i-Jadíd*, pp. 254–5. *The Dawn-Breakers*, p. 453. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. This estimate is conservative. Many place the number at from twenty to thirty thousand, and some even higher. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Ottoman Empire. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)