

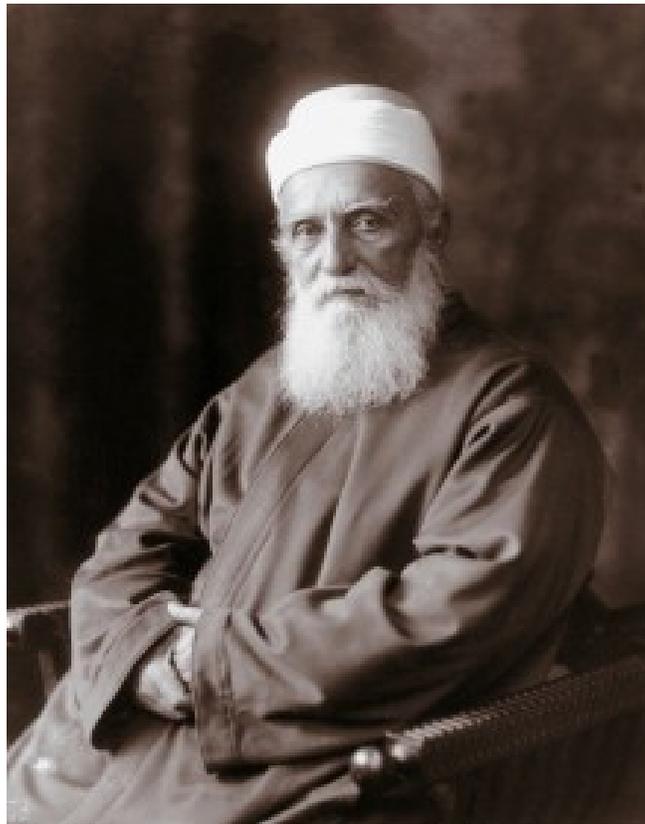
With ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Reminiscences of Khalíl Shahídí

Translated and Annotated by
Ahang Rabbani



Volume 9
Witnesses to Bábí and Bahá'í History

A Lifetime with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá
Reminiscences of Khalíl Shahídí



Translated and Annotated by
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Volume 9
Witnesses to Bábí and Bahá'í History

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Zaynab and Khalíl Shahídí

Translator’s Foreword

One of the distinguishing features of the Bábí and Bahá’í religions is the existence of a large number of eyewitness accounts and primary source materials that closely document the founding and development of the movements in their formative period, 1844-1921. Of this era, the largest number of historical documents pertains to the ministry of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s. Indeed, beyond thousands of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own communications that present enormous details about the people and early history of the Faith, thousands of pages of other eyewitness documents closely chronicle vast portions of His activities and words, and of those around Him – leaving a precious reservoir of information for generations of historians to study, analyze and correlate, and for the faithful to emulate.

The present narrative is one such document. In exceptionally simple but direct and sincere language, the narrator recalls many episodes of his interactions, spanning over four decades, with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Shoghi Effendi or Bahá’í residents of the environs of ‘Akká-Haifa. Khalíl Shahídí makes it clear that he did not set out to write a detailed history of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s august Personage or His ministry for a worldwide audience.

His objective was much more personal and immediate. At the insistence of family members, Shahídí was moved to share stories and recollections of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi that had been inscribed on his heart, and through them to encourage, inspire and even edify his kinsmen or anyone else that would come upon his narrative.

The stories are simple. Their common denominators are the wisdom of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, firmness in the Cause and obedience to the Head of the Faith – for in these, Shahídí believed, lies one’s salvation.

If one had to identify an overarching theme in this narrative, surely it would be constancy in Bahá’u’lláh’s Covenant, since it is this subject, perhaps mentioned more frequently and with greater emotional investment than any other, which the narrator returns to time and again. This theme appears to be his life biography, for Shahídí was born in ‘Akká in 1894 and his formative years corresponded with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s

ministry when opposition to His leadership was unabated. Shahídí observed – indeed experienced firsthand – the relentless attack of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s faithless brothers, other family members and their cohorts, and the turbulent period of the first four decades of the Twentieth Century in the Holy Land. As a trusted resident believer of ‘Akká and a longtime custodian of the House of ‘Abbúd, he was at a unique vantage point to observe ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as He dealt, neutralized and triumphed over all opposition and adversaries.

The stories told are unadorned and unencumbered with historical details, such as, dates, locations, participants and such. Shahídí explains:

It should be clear to the esteemed readers that these recollections are composed without any preliminaries or conclusions, or citing specific dates. This is because the passage of time and days has robbed this servant of that ability. However, the events recorded, or those that are recounted, are mentioned without any addition or loss. Due to the passage of time, I may have forgotten some small details of certain incidents and, therefore, have not recorded those events [in this narrative], nor will they appear in the subsequent pages.

A careful reader will observe that these stories fill many details about various aspects of occurrences in the early years of the Faith. However, more importantly, they provide us with a window into the life and days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá which is personal, direct and unfiltered. History, in its authentic form, is based on such raw materials.

A Short Biography

Shahídí’s family background can be traced to the early days of the Bábí Faith in Qum. It was there that his grandfather, Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl, had embraced the Báb’s movement and led his brother, Áqá Husayn, to the reform movement in their native town. Not long after that, misfortune fell upon them and they were seized by the forces of orthodoxy. They were taken to Tehran and imprisoned. Their hardships in the dungeon

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were so severe that after two years, Áqá Husayn passed away. However, Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl endured his great sufferings for seven years of incarceration. At last when he was released, he went to Baghdad around 1862, where he attained the presence of Bahá’u’lláh and was won over.

He remained in Baghdad and served Bahá’u’lláh’s House – one of the two sites of the Bahá’í *haji* [obligatory pilgrimage] – as a waterman, by carrying water in sheepskin from the nearby river to the House.¹ For five years, he performed this duty and many others with exemplary faithfulness and dedication.

About 1867, Mírzá Buzurg Khán, the Iranian Consul in Istanbul, assisted by Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Husayn ‘Iráqí, a Muslim cleric and an inveterate enemy of Bahá’u’lláh since His days in Baghdad, stirred up mischief and brought about a wave of persecutions against the Bahá’ís of that town.

One morning, as Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl was by the riverside carrying a sheepskin of water to the House of Bahá’u’lláh, two men approached, set upon him and with daggers tore open his bowels. He staggered on, clinging with one hand to his load of water, holding back with the other his entrails, until he reached the house. Then he collapsed and expired.²

Later a crowd of people gathered at the Muslim cemetery to prevent his burial there. Eventually the authorities intervened, and he was buried by their order.

¹ Since there was no running water in the homes, there were men whose occupation it was to carry skins full of water for household use and sometimes gardening.

² This incident is referred to by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 178. It should be noted that no person from a Shi‘i background could read this story without being reminded of the events of Karbala. The party of the Imam Husayn was deliberately cut off from the river and was dying of thirst. The half-brother of the Imam Husayn, ‘Abbás, volunteered to try to get to the water and bring some back. He was attacked by the Umayyad forces and literally hacked to pieces with their swords as he desperately made his way back to the encampment carrying water. He died trying to get the water to them. All this is commemorated yearly in the Muharram rituals and forms an important part of the sequence of events that are the Karbala mythos. Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasul was also getting water from the river and was carrying it back when he was attacked and cut with a sword and he died in his attempt to bring water. And this occurred only about 50 miles from the site of the Karbala events. (Moojan Momen, posting 24 February 2008 on Tarikh discussion group.)

Áqá Husayn Áshchí gives a graphic and moving account of the day when the letter conveying the news of the martyrdom of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl reached Bahá’u’lláh. Those who were present and heard Bahá’u’lláh read the account wept unrestrainedly.³ Bahá’u’lláh assured them that they were lamenting the cruel death of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl, but he had attained what he had always desired - the station of martyrdom.

In some of His Tablets, Bahá’u’lláh has mentioned ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl, recounted his sufferings and remembered him with much tenderness and affection as *shahíd* [witnessed or martyred].

Bahá’u’lláh also revealed a Tablet of Visitation for Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Shahíd and showered His bounties upon his soul:

O Rasúl! He Who is the King of Existence and the Lord of Hosts doth make mention of thee from this all-glorious Abode. We, verily, shall inform thee of that Rasúl who soared in Mine atmosphere; spoke forth My praise amongst My servants; and was so transported by the living waters of Mine utterance that he laid down his life in My path. Thus admonisheth thee He with Whom is the Guarded Book.

O My most exalted Pen! Make mention of My servant Rasúl, who was martyred in Zawrá’. He it was who had been entrusted with the task of providing water for My Sacred House, succeeding in this function to the servant in attendance before the throne of God, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. He, of a truth, set out at dawn to supply with water the House of God in the Day of the Covenant, when lo, the infidels slew him with such cruelty that all things, and those who, with lowliness and submission, have circled the throne, lamented.

Do thou remember him on My behalf, and say: “The first breath that was diffused from the flowers of the garden of Divine mysteries be upon thee, O thou who didst speak forth in commemoration of the Lord of all names, and didst set thy face towards the Supreme Horizon! I testify that

³ Áshchí, *A Lifetime with Bahá’u’lláh: The Narrative of Áqá Husayn Áshchí*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani).

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thou didst hearken unto the Call, and didst direct thyself unto Zawrá’, the seat of the throne of thy Lord, the Creator of the heavens, until thou didst enter this all-glorious Abode, and attain the presence of God, the Lord of the visible and the invisible. Thou art he whom neither the clamor of the nations, nor the distractions of the world, could deter, who didst turn alike with thy face, thine eyes, thine heart and all thy members unto God, the King of Kings. Thou didst continue to circle about the House until the moment when thou didst quaff the choice wine of martyrdom in the path of this Wronged One. Upon thee be the Glory of God; the Glory of all who are in heaven and on earth; and the Glory of all who have believed in God, the All-Glorious, the Loving.”⁴

Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl had two sons:

1. Áqá Muhammad-Hasan Mansúr, who accompanied Bahá’u’lláh as a youth to ‘Akká. A deeply learned man and an exceptionally devoted Bahá’í, he never married and served most of his adult life as the custodian of pilgrim houses in ‘Akká and Haifa. He passed away circa 1928-1929 at the House of Abbúd.
2. Abú’l-Qásim was a coppersmith, and married Dhikriyyih, who is remembered as Umm-Khalíl (thus known after her eldest surviving son). They had four sons and a two daughters:
 - a. Jamílih was born during Bahá’u’lláh’s time, and her name was bestowed by Him. She passed away at an early age.
 - b. Jamíl was born in Bahá’u’lláh’s days also, and named by Him. He, too, appears to have passed away at a young age.

⁴ From Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet to ‘Andalíb, *Áthár Qalam A’lá*, Vol. 2, pp. 4-5. This translation was graciously offered to this monograph by a Bahá’í scholar who wishes to remain anonymous.

- c. Khalíl, the eldest surviving son, was born in 1894. He was raised in ‘Akká, where he assumed his father’s occupation. He, his mother and other siblings were entrusted by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as the custodians of the House of ‘Abbúd. He married in 1923, and around 1948, when Shoghi Effendi directed some resident Bahá’ís to leave ‘Akká-Haifa area, Khalíl and his family moved to Iran. Khalíl and his wife, Zaynab, had eleven children. He passed away on 15 November 1971 in Tehran.
- d. Davúd ‘Akká’wí was married to Munavar, the daughter of Surúsh Núsh, a Bahá’í from ‘Adasiyyih of Zoroastrian descent. They had a son named Abú’l-Qásim, and a younger daughter. This family also lived in the House of ‘Abbúd, but later were directed by the Guardian to move to Asasiyyih in Jordan.
- e. Adíb ‘Akká’wí never married and passed away in Jordan.
- f. Rafiyah married ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl. This family also moved to Iran at the Guardian’s behest. They had two sons: Ibráhím and Badí‘ (who served in the office of the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá’ís of Iran in Tehran).⁵

Shahídí’s Reminiscences

In 1965, Badí‘ Mansúr, a nephew of the narrator, was asked to devote some time taking dictations as Shahídí spoke his recollections.⁶ It appears that this was not only requested by the family, but also eagerly encouraged by Iran’s Bahá’í Publishing Committee, which then took steps to prepare the manuscript for publication. The Committee appointed an editor (typically a learned member of its body) to edit and

⁵ ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl had a brother, ‘Abdu’s-Samad, who was a carpenter and lived in Jaffa. When the family of Bahá’u’lláh left the Mansion in disrepair, Shoghi Effendi asked ‘Abdu’s-Samad to undertake the necessary remodeling. ‘Abdu’s-Samad had a son, Mansúr, who is remembered as having lived in a house east of the Pilgrim House by the Shrine of the Báb. (Hossein Achtchi, posting on Tarikh discussion group, December 2007.)

⁶ Labíb Shahídí, interview with the translator, December 2007.

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extract those passages suitable for immediate publication. The Persian original text seems to have been lightly edited and sections identified towards this objective. The editor notes (appended as page 257 of narrative):

The lines that have been drawn through these memoirs for division and correction were done so by Lajnih Mujaljalih Nashr Nafahat [The Committee for Diffusion of Divine Fragrances] and for this reason, this servant thought best that it remain intact, and a clean copy was not reproduced.

This was written for [the reader’s] information.

[Signature unreadable]

It appears that the intense publication schedule of the Committee in the late 1960s and early ‘70s, and then the Islamic Revolution in Iran, interrupted plans for publication of this document. Surprisingly, though, it appears that this singularly important document remained unavailable to the three scholars who published in early 1970s extensive studies on the life and times of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, namely, the Hand of the Cause of God Hasan Balyuzi, Muhammad-‘Alí Fayzí and Houshang Mahmudi, nor to the translator’s knowledge was it used by any other author .

A close read of the Persian text makes it clear that the narrative is simple spoken words. That is, no attempt was made to systematize the presentation or use elevated language typically used in the Persian literature of the Faith. Further, it is clear that the author, while comfortable with spoken Persian, was not schooled in that language. Given that Shahídí was born and raised in ‘Akká, it is perfectly understandable that his “mother tongue” would have been Arabic. This point is mentioned because the original Persian is not particularly eloquent, though remarkably sincere. One finds many examples of this throughout the narrative.

Since the account is a primary source document, every effort was made to translate it precisely in the style and manner of the original, in hope that by so doing it would convey a flavor of the original text. This produced a certain inelegance in the translation, that for the sake of authenticity and faithfulness to the original were overlooked. For

instance, the narrator always refers to Shoghi Effendi as “The Guardian of the Cause of God,” without any variation on this title, or Bahíyyih Khánúm is often referred to as “the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá.” These titles have been kept. Also, kept were such titles for Bahá’u’lláh as, “the Blessed Beauty”, “Supreme Pen”, and the like; or “the Exalted One” for the Báb.

However, since this document is principally about ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, for the sake of clarity most of titles used for Him were replaced with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Among the titles used by the narrator one often finds *Mawla al-Wará’*, which means the Lord of Mankind.⁷ This too was replaced with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

The page numbers of the original manuscript are indicated in pointed brackets, such as <p.10>, every five pages.

Footnotes have been added to augment information, clarify obscure points, and provide a more detailed perspective. Occasionally, comments by the translator have been added to improve the clarity or continuity of the material. These comments are enclosed in square brackets, thus [...]. All comments within parentheses are by the author, Khalíl Shahídí.

The system of transliteration used in this monograph is consistent with the method used in other academic publications and varies from the system used in most Bahá’í publications by: (1) avoiding subdots and underlines (e.g., Fádíl), and (2) dropping the *izafih* connecting the first name to the surname (e.g., Khalíl Shahídí, instead of Khalíl-i-Shahídí).

Since any single Islamic year (denoted AH) typically overlaps with two Christian years, where only the Islamic year of the event is known, the equivalent Gregorian date is given as the first of the two years partially covered by that Islamic year.

⁷ This title appears in many early Persian publications on the life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but with far less frequency at the present. The title is not Qur’anic, but it is found in many Shi’i hadith, where one finds it used as a title of both Imam ‘Alí and the Twelfth Imam. In the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh, beginning perhaps with the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, the designation finds life again, but with a new meaning as an appellation of God (i.e. His Manifestation). At some later point, perhaps starting with Shoghi Effendi, it appears that it was adopted as a title of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and for a while other Persian writers seem to have followed suit. (Omid Ghaemmaghami, posting on Tarikh discussion list, December 2007.)

Typically, the original text refers to the Central Figures by such honorific titles as “His Holiness” or “His blessed Person,” and these honorifics have been omitted in some instances. Nor does the translation reproduce such expressions commonly used in the Iranian literature of the Bahá’í Faith as, “May my life be a sacrifice unto His Sacred Threshold.”

By the time Shahídí give expression to his memoirs, many principal personalities featured in this history had died, and the original text therefore often refers to them as “the late” or “the deceased.” These terms, too, have largely been omitted.

It should be emphasized that the spoken words attributed to the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in these pages cannot be assigned scriptural authority or equated with their authorized Writings. No one took notes at the time those words were uttered, although it cannot be ruled out that some may indeed be the very words spoken.

All renderings of the Sacred Writings from Persian and Arabic, unless otherwise specified, are by the present translator. If an authorized source (such as *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*) is not cited, then the renderings should be considered as falling in the class of provisional translations intended to convey the essence (*mazmún*) of communications by the Founders of the Bábí and Bahá’í Faiths. Such summary renderings are not to be confused with full authorized translations of the Bahá’í Holy Texts, which will be disseminated in due time by the Bahá’í World Centre.

Acknowledgements

This monograph could not have been completed without the generous collaboration of several friends:

- The author’s son, Labíb Shahídí, has the translator’s profound gratitude for the honor of rendering this precious document into English. He was most encouraging throughout the project and patient in the course of our several interviews about various details.

- Jamíl Shahídí, the oldest surviving son of Khalíl Shahídí, kindly offered his own memoirs of that period and his parents, which hopefully will appear as a future contribution of the Witnesses to Bábí and Bahá'í History series.
- The author's granddaughter, Alham Mirzai (a daughter of the author's daughter Rúhíyyih), graciously shared the two pictures of her grandparents which appear in the opening pages. She also shared an unmarked copy of the original manuscript published as a pdf file at: <http://ahang.rabbani.googlepages.com/shahidi>.
- With my deep gratitude, Bijan Ardjomand contributed the painting on the cover.
- In March 2008, a draft of this translation was posted on Tarikh internet discussion list and the translator is deeply grateful for a number of valuable comments that aided the project.
- As in several other volumes in this series, Phillip Tussing was most gracious and efficient in contributing many improvements to the original draft. His kind collaboration is deeply appreciated.

*Abang Rabbani
Houston, Texas
March 2008*



Zaynab and Khalíl Shahídí
and their first child, Jamílih
circa 1925

Narrator's Preamble

My kinsmen and friends have urged this servant to commit for posterity as a memento such recollections as have remained with me from the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – the Most Mighty Branch of God and the Mystery of the Lord, the Compassionate – and the beloved and chosen Guardian of the Cause of God, may my spirit be a sacrifice unto their station. However, it was observed that all important occurrences that transpired during these two sacred ministries have been recorded most befittingly and completely, with eloquence and clarity, in the history of the Cause. Therefore, it was decided not to write about such episodes, particularly since innumerable scrolls and Tablets revealed from the heaven of the will and decree of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Center of divine Covenant and Testament, and the Guardian of the Cause of God, the sacred essence of divinity, nothing has been left undisclosed. Indeed, even the most minute details and occurrences have been revealed and stand clear and manifest to everyone.

Consequently, I will write of such events that outwardly are very simple, but in their own allotted sphere contain important insights, as they have not been recorded elsewhere, although a portion of these memoirs pertains to this servant and his relatives.

I beseech the prayers of the esteemed readers.

Khalíl Shahídí

Reminiscences of Khalíl Shahídí

[Birth and Family Heritage]

The birth of this servant took place two years after the ascension of the Blessed Perfection and Beauty – exalted and supreme is His remembrance – and occurred in the city of ‘Akká.⁸ The beloved Guardian of the Cause of God, with no resemblance [to me], was six months younger than this servant and my mother was a milk-nurse for him.⁹ It was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá Who named this servant Khalíl, and after a while Khalílu’lláh streamed from His blessed tongue.

On my father’s side, this servant is a grandson of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Shahíd [martyr], who was martyred in Baghdad. His martyrdom is described in the history books of the Cause. For this reason, our family name became Shahídí.

My paternal uncle was Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, who was the custodian of [‘Akká’s] pilgrim house.

My father was Áqá Abú’l-Qásim, who was a coppersmith and most accomplished in this craft. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá often called him Ustád Abú’l-Qásim, and consequently he was known and recognized by all by this name. This servant also mastered that same craft.

The mother of this lowly one was of the believers of Baghdad. Her name was Dhikriyyih, a daughter of Ahmad Vallí. Her mother was Khamiyyih, who attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty in the Holy Land. She used to extemporize verses in Arabic in praise and admiration of the Blessed Perfection, the Holy Family and other kindred, and would bring joy to His blessed Person. <p.5> She passed away in Haifa during that time.

⁸ The ascension of Bahá’u’lláh took place on 29 May 1892.

⁹ According to Rúhiyyih Rabbání, *The Priceless Pearl*, p. 4, “On the 27th day of Ramadan, 1314 of the Muslim calendar, Shoghi Effendi was born. This was Sunday, 1 March 1897 of the Gregorian calendar. These dates have been found in one of Shoghi Effendi’s notebooks which he kept during his boyhood, written in his own hand.”

It was during the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá that my father, Ustád Abú’l-Qásim Shahídzádih, passed from this nether world to the everlasting abode. When His blessed Person [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was outwardly informed of this incident, He was so saddened that tears poured from His blessed eyes. He attended the funeral in ‘Akká’s Bahá’í cemetery in His carriage. He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] used to say, “Ustád Abú’l-Qásim was constant and firm like a mountain. Nothing would make him waver, and in fact events would make him more steadfast and faithful.”

[The Covenant-breakers]

At a time of revolt and intensity in the Covenant-breaking, in one day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá repeatedly summoned him [my father] three times and each time restated these utterances and blessed instructions along with His exhortations and directions, “Ustád Abú’l-Qásim, I ask you, implore you, that if with your own ears you heard the Covenant-breakers insult Me, disregard it.” He greatly emphasized this point. His blessed intention was for the friends of God to remain silent in face of the scorn and uproar of the ill-wishing Covenant-breakers so that incidents that would precipitate complications and difficulties resulting in harm to God’s Cause were prevented.

[Ustád Abú’l-Qásim]

One night, a gathering was assembled in the blessed House in ‘Akká and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “May God’s mercy surround Ustád Abú’l-Qásim. It was too soon.” Meaning he left this world too early.

One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had invited the friends of God to lunch in the pilgrim house of Bahjí, situated next to the blessed Shrine [of Bahá’u’lláh]. When He was welcoming the friends to sit for the meal and serving each one, suddenly He said, “Ustád Abú’l-Qásim, Bismi’lláh.¹⁰ Welcome.” He then paused for a short while. It was certain that everything stood evident before His Holiness and He was beholding the spirits that were present and observant.

¹⁰ Lit. In the Name of God, it is an expression of welcome.

One day, He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was passing by my shop and saw that I was engaged in work. He remarked, “Marhabá, marhabá!¹¹ Give light to your father’s shop!”¹²

[Muhammad-Hasan Khádim]

It was during the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto him – that my paternal uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, passed away in the blessed House [of ‘Abbúd] in ‘Akká, where, in accordance with the instructions of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, these ephemeral servants were in residence and in service. When the Guardian of the Cause of God heard this news in Haifa, he dispatched one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s turbans and instructed, “Adorn Áqá Muhammad-Hasan’s head with this.” He also sent a bottle of perfume and by his instruction, a number of friends from Haifa arrived and with utmost dignity, his earthly remains were interred in the Bahá’í cemetery of ‘Akká. However, his tombstone has not been raised until the present.

[Áqá Muhammad-Hasan] was the recipient of numerous Tablets from the Blessed Perfection and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and was the object of their utmost bounties and grace. This was because in accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wish, he had devoted his life in service of the pilgrims in the pilgrim houses of ‘Akká and Haifa and before that in Baghdad. For this reason he had remained single and had never married.

In the course of his life, which was eighty-one years long, he had prepared seven exquisite collections of Traces and Writings of the Blessed Perfection and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In truth, whoever saw them was astonished and would express gratitude for his labor, since he had arranged and prepared [these collections] with great beauty and attractiveness. In consideration that these were among the most important collections of Writings, these ephemeral servants jointly presented those precious albums to <p.10> the blessed presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto him – which brought immense joy to his blessed heart, and he spoke many expressions of kindness. After a while, he informed us, “I have sent

¹¹ Lit. Welcome, or well done.

¹² *Give light* is a Persian expression, meaning give splendor, or glorify his work.

those collections to America for them to remain protected in their archives as a remembrance [of Áqá Muhammad-Hasan].”

[‘Akká’s Bahá’í Cemetery]

Until the present, the Bahá’í cemetery of ‘Akká has not received due attention and proper beautification. At one time, it was decided to raise a wall around it. After some of this work was completed, one night, the enemies of the Cause destroyed what had been built and it remains in the same condition to this day.

[My Family]

My mother and brother, Adíb, passed away in the honored village of ‘Adasiyih.¹³ This was because after the upheavals that occurred in Palestine and the Holy Land, the Guardian of the Cause of God – may my life be a sacrifice unto him – willed that they should reside in that region in order to be freed from certain complications.

Likewise, these ephemeral servants were instructed to migrate to Tehran. At present, my brother, Dávud, and his wife and children remain in that region [‘Adasiyih], situated in the eastern Jordan.

For thirty years, my mother served in the blessed House [of ‘Abbúd] in ‘Akká and was the recipient of immense favors and considerations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Greatest Holy Leaf – the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – and the beloved Guardian of the Cause, may my spirit be a sacrifice unto the wrongs they suffered. She was extremely faithful, devoted and pious.

In accordance with the all-encompassing wishes and the sovereign will of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, my sister, Rafí’ih Khánum, married Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Mansur [Kashání] in ‘Akká and from this union four children were born, two boys and two girls: Áqá Ibráhím, Áqá Badí’, Bihját Khánum,

¹³ At ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s urging, ‘Adasiyih was settled by a number of Bahá’ís from Yazd and its vicinity. For the most part, these believers were of Zoroastrian background, but because they were experienced farmers, their presence in the region dominated by Sunnis created almost no tension. This village is on the west bank of the Jordan River, in the present day Jordan.

and Vidád Khánum.¹⁴ By the blessed instructions of the Guardian of God’s Cause – may my life be a sacrifice unto his dominion – this family also migrated from the Holy Land to Tehran. It was some time after their arrival that Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl passed away, leaving this transient world for the everlasting abode. Afterwards, my sister and her daughters pioneered to America, and consequently were able to be pioneers twice. Blessed are those who attain unto this!

One of the children of this servant was Nabíh, who contracted heart illness and passed away in Tehran. I implore the Almighty to immerse her in the ocean of His forgiveness.

[Rely Upon God]

During the time of my father, one day in ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was passing through the Súq Abyad where our shop was situated.¹⁵ I had engraved an exquisite calligraphy that read, “Tawakkaltu ‘ala’lláh”¹⁶ and was hanging on the door. When His blessed gaze fell upon it, He greatly praised it and remarked, “Tayakulta ‘ala’lláh.” His blessed purpose was that a person must place his reliance in God under all conditions.

[Calligraphy]

When I was a child and had not reached [the age of] maturity, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave a gold lira coin to my uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, stating, “Give this [as tuition] to the calligraphy teacher.” He had added, “If he [Khalíl Shahídí] would practice, his calligraphy would be like Mishkín-Qalam’s. He must practice constantly.” That essence of sanctity was well

¹⁴ According to the narrator’s son, Labíb Shahídí, it was Badí‘ Mansúr who urged the preparation of the original document and took down Khalíl Shahídí’s dictations; (private communication, November 2007.)

¹⁵ As-Suq al-Abyad, which means, the White Bazaar, is a known location to this day and the present translator recalls often visiting this market over the years he lived in the Holy Land. The house of Mírzá Músá, known as Áqá Kalím, was in that vicinity and often visited by Bahá’u’lláh.

¹⁶ Lit., Rely upon God. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s response was a variant form of the same Arabic word, and meant, “Trust in God.”

aware that in the future this servant would be immersed in work and industry and would not have time to exercise my calligraphy.

[Confirmations]

One year, on the morning of the Ridván Festival, the Most Mighty Branch of God, the Mystery of God, the Interpreter of the divine verses and the Center of divine Covenant and Testament, was in the blessed House of ‘Akká <p.15> and all the friends of God were in His presence as well. This servant had attained unto this bounty also.

He spoke in relation to the significance of that day, and all were immersed in the sweetness of the ocean of His utterance. At that time, with utmost earnestness, in my heart I implored that sanctified essence to bestow confirmation upon me. He then [concluded the gathering and] said, “Fí amáni’lláh.”¹⁷

All the believers rose and began to put on their shoes, as none would come into His blessed presence while wearing shoes. In addition, none would depart until they were given their leave, nor would they enter [into the room] until summoned, since otherwise was outside the bound of propriety and good manners. Besides, the dignity of His Person prevented [anyone from doing otherwise].

As we were leaving His blessed room, suddenly He rose and came outside the room as well. He placed His blessed right hand on the chest of this unworthy servant and three times resonantly stated, “You are successful; you are confirmed!” His repetition was as emphasis; that is to say, “Be assured that you are successful and confirmed.”

Evidences of this utterance have ever since been thoroughly visible, evident and clear to this servant, and undoubtedly will surround me for the rest of my days as well. I implore His sacred Threshold to sustain and confirm me in the Realm Above, and to deal with this evanescent and lowly servant with His bounties and never-ending favors, and to immerse me in the ocean of His absolution. In this regard, I am in need of prayers.

¹⁷ Lit., Be under God’s protection; a form of Middle Eastern farewell.

[A Visit to Haifa]

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was residing in Haifa, I attained His presence less frequently. One day I went from ‘Akká for the sole purpose of attaining His presence and when I arrived, out of compassion, grace and bounty, He inquired, “Did you have something to discuss?” I said simply, “I longed to see You.” He replied, “Any time you are in that state, you should come.” He then added, “Stay here tonight.” I responded, “But it might be an imposition.” He did not say anything; however, from His blessed countenance it was evident that He was pleased with this servant’s consideration.

[Memorization of the Writings]

Sometimes the beloved Master would instruct this servant to chant prayers or recite Tablets.

One day, He was in the blessed House of ‘Akká and this ephemeral being was going towards the House in order to attain His presence, when from the upper window His vision fell upon this servant and motioned me by hand to go into His blessed presence. After I gained audience, He stated, “From now on, whatever you chant must be from memory.” I bowed.

[Lawh Istiqámat]

The first Tablet that I began to memorize was a Tablet by the Blessed Beauty about firmness, constancy and fortitude in the divine Covenant and Testament, and it begins with these words, “*He is the Holy, the Most Glorious. O ye servants of the Merciful One! We admonish you to observe trustworthiness, truthfulness and faithfulness, and to manifest the fear of God, the Mighty, the Wise. Verily, he who holdeth fast to the fear of God is accounted among those who occupy this sublime station.*”¹⁸

The next time He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] came from Haifa to ‘Akká and I attained His presence, He instructed me to chant, and I recited this Tablet.

¹⁸ The cited lines are the opening passage of Bahá’u’lláh’s *Lawh Istiqámat* [Tablet of Constancy]; see appendix 1.

Siyyid ‘Alí Afnán, who in those days was constantly vacillating in his convictions, that is, for a while he associated with the thábitín [faithful friends] and at other times with the náqizín [violators of the Covenant], and whose story of infidelity is thoroughly told in the history texts of the Cause, was in His presence on this occasion as well.¹⁹ As I was chanting this Tablet, the following verse was reached: <p.20> “*Can it be possible that after the dawning of the day-star of Thy Testament above the horizon of Thy Most Great Tablet, the feet of any one shall slip in Thy Straight Path?*”²⁰ This sentence was a reference to the Center of the divine Covenant and Testament.²¹

In short, when I reached this verse, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “Áqá Siyyid ‘Alí, do you hear what is revealed?” He then instructed, “Recite this part again.” I chanted again. ‘Abdu’l-Baha restated, “Áqá Siyyid ‘Alí, this is a verse of the Blessed Beauty! It is not my saying! Recite again.” I recited the sentence a third time and He emphasized, “These are the Words of the Blessed Beauty and not mine.” I then proceeded to chant the rest of the Tablet. Afterwards, He said, “Marhabá!”

The news of this Tablet spread so famously that the Guardian of the Cause of God memorized it at that time, and chanted it in a gathering of the friends.

One day in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, this servant recited this Tablet in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Báb [in Haifa], and He remarked, “Give this Tablet to Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí to translate.”²²

The Hájí did as bidden, but it was a literal rendering and when he began to read it in His blessed presence, it did not meet with His approval, since His purpose by translation was that the principal intent be disclosed and divulged.

¹⁹ Siyyid ‘Alí Afnán was a son-in-law of Bahá’u’lláh and caused enormous difficulties for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and others. For details, see, Afnán, *Memories of the Báb, Bahá’u’lláh and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, (Trans. Ahang Rabbani), chapter 6; and Afnán, *In the Land of Refuge: The Genesis of the Bahá’í Faith in Shiraz*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani), appendix 6.

²⁰ Translation by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 250.

²¹ At this point, the author gives a translation of this verse in Persian. Due to its redundancy, this sentence has been omitted in the present translation.

²² Bahá’u’lláh’s Tablet is in Arabic and presumably was not understood by most Iranian Bahá’ís, who do not read Arabic.

From then on, with utmost enthusiasm, I would devote my leisure hours to memorizing Tablets, divine verses and prayers.

[Visiting the Shrines]

One of the days of the week was devoted to visiting the blessed Shrine [of Bahá’u’lláh], and that day was Sundays. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be at Bahjí, in the pilgrim house of the blessed Shrine. The friends of God in ‘Akká would visit the blessed Shrine [of Bahá’u’lláh] in the afternoon of that day and the friends in Haifa would visit the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb].

On that day, the friends of ‘Akká had won the bounty of visiting the Shrine in His august presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], and He would always remark, “Know the preciousness of these days!” From this blessed expression, it was clear and evident that the eye of the world would never again witness days such as these.

That night, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed in Bahjí and He instructed this servant to remain in His presence. Until we retired for the night and our rest, in accordance with His wish, the hours of the night were devoted to chanting sacred verses and prayers. Afterwards, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to the late Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim Khurásání, who in those days was the custodian of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, and later, during the blessed ministry of the Guardian of God’s Cause, succeeded in attaining to the service of the custodianship of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb], to appoint a place for this servant to sleep. He emphasized, “Make sure he is comfortable and does not catch cold.”

In the morning, after having breakfast, I was given my leave.

[Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim Khurásání]

The aforementioned Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim [Khurásání] was a most faithful, devoted and sincere person. He passed away unexpectedly by the Shrine of the Exalted One. The Guardian of the Cause of God – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto his fidelity – was so saddened that for three days he refused food. He would say, “My sight was not on his service, but on his faith, certitude, sincerity and detachment.” The

Greatest Holy Leaf, may my spirit be a sacrifice for her meekness, would say, <p.25> “You cannot imagine what an exalted station Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim has attained in the world above!”

In accordance with instructions given to him, Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim would spend the nights for protection [of the Shrines] at the Mansion of Bahjí, and later at the Shrine of the Exalted One, but out of respect would not consider it permissible to sleep freely, and would sit in a corner until the morning. This was just an example of the immensity of his goodly character.

One day in ‘Akká, he related for this servant:

One of the eminent Jewish leaders [rabbis] had attained the sanctified presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Bahjí, and His blessed utterances were soaring in regard to the truth of Jesus and the Messenger of God [Muhammad].

Out of his intense prejudice, that religious leader recited a poem that he had in memory:

This with a bell peals out the chimes,
 that lifts his voice from a towered height.
 Each one proclaims his faith is true:
 I wish I knew which one was right!²³

By “This with a bell peals out the chimes,” and “that lifts his voice from a towered height,” he meant the religions of Jesus and Muhammad. Through this poem, he wanted to convey that both were false [Prophets]. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá immediately responded back with the lines,

This faith is true, that a delight!
 and yet the mob, an ugly sight,
 Protested it with all their might!
 I wish I knew which one was right!²⁴

²³ The original Arabic lines are:

*Hádhá bi-náqúsin yarinn, * wa dhá ‘alá ma’dbhinin yasíb.
 Kullun yusabbihu dínuh: * yá layta shi‘rí ma’s-sabíb!*

However, while He was saying, “and yet the mob, an ugly sight,” He was pointing to him with His blessed hand, meaning, “You are that ugly sight who denies these two Dispensations.” Naturally, the man lost his composure and was irritated. However, once more [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] dealt with him softly and with kindness, until he recovered.

Three days after the passing of Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim, the Guardian of the Cause of God instructed several of the friends in Haifa to visit and take flowers to his resting-place. I was charged with reciting prayers at his grave.

The Guardian would state, “Flowers should not be placed on the casket; rather, after burial, place them on the gravesite.”

[Custodianship of the House of ‘Abbúd]

One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summoned this servant from ‘Akká to Haifa. After I attained His presence and received expressions of His kindness and bounty, He said, “Many desire to reside in the blessed House [of ‘Abbúd], but I have chosen you from among the friends. Go and reside in the House, but consider yourself the servant of the House, not its resident.”

Therefore, that day we transferred our residence to the House, that is, with my mother and brothers, Adíb and Dávud, we resided in the House [of ‘Abbúd] and placed this crown of honor on our heads. Whenever the pilgrims would come to pay homage [to the House], we would stand to serve them and arrange for their comfort. On many occasions, members of the Holy Household would come for a visit and spend some time there. Moreover, at times, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá or the Greatest Holy Leaf – the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – would come also, and on such excellent hours all of us would arise to serve them.

²⁴ The original lines are:

*Hádhá sahibun hádhá malíb; * wa-lákinna’l-qawma’l-qabíb*
*Sára yunádí wa yasíb! * Yá layta shi’rí ma’s-sahíb*



One day around noon, I returned to the House from work. On arrival, my gaze fell upon the beautiful countenance of the beloved Master, Who was sitting at the lunch table. At that moment, I was deeply perturbed that I had not been informed of His blessed arrival, even though my mother had prepared all the necessary provisions for lunch. Nevertheless, I was sad that I had not been there to welcome Him. That Essence of Holiness had asked of this unworthy servant from my mother and she had replied, “He is not aware of the Master’s visit.”

[The Master]

During the days of His blessed Person, all the friends would refer to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá as *Sarkár Áqá* [the Master]. The Ancient Beauty, exalted in His mighty mention, would refer to Him as *Áqá*. And if someone would refer to another of the Aghsán other than ‘Abdu’l-Bahá <p.30> as *Áqá*, Bahá’u’lláh would state, “There is only one *Áqá*. That is, the appellation *Áqá* belongs solely to the Most Mighty Branch.”

[The Covenant-Breakers]

In short, [that day at lunch], when I came into the room, I immediately bowed [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], and He saw me and said, “Bismi’lláh, Áqá Khalíl. Come, sit and partake of lunch.” I saw that Subhí²⁵ was also sitting on the right side of the Master and a chair was empty on His left. [‘Abdu’l-Baha] said, “Sit.” So, I sat on the chair to His left.

Suddenly and immediately, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] remarked, “Khalíl, you know that for fifteen years I tolerated ‘Abdu’l-Karím and he thought that I was unaware of his deeds.” Then He turned His blessed Visage to Subhí and said, “If the entire world were to array [itself before Me], they would be helpless to take a hair from my head.” Three times, He repeated, “My succor and support is the Blessed Beauty!” He uttered these words so resonantly and powerfully that the entire Blessed House was vibrating by its effect!

‘Abdu’l-Karím that was mentioned [by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was known as Ustád ‘Abdu’l-Karím Kharrát [turner] and was from Isfahan. This person secretly and stealthily associated with the Covenant-breakers, and in truth was their spy. When the marble sarcophagus destined to contain the sacred remains of His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] – may my soul be a sacrifice unto His pure blood – arrived from India to Haifa, and was in process of being moved to the Shrine of the Exalted One, and interred in its permanent and lasting spot, one of the individuals who outwardly was serving this purpose was the same ‘Abdu’l-Karím.

²⁵ Faydu’lláh Muhtadí, known as Subhí, a son of Áqá Muhammad-Husayn, was related to Bahá’u’lláh’s third wife, Gawhar Khánum. He was a secretary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for some ten years and later sided with ‘Abdu’l-Husayn Áyatí, known as Ávárih, and opposed Shoghi Effendi. For many years, he vacillated in his convictions; each time would repent, only to resume his opposition later. In a letter dated 26 December 1928, Shoghi Effendi explains, “Regarding Subhí’s situation, his acceptance and return is conditioned and requires that he should write, in utmost clarity, in his own hand and his own words, a confessional and admission letter similar to his recent letter to the National Spiritual Assembly [of Iran]. This letter should then be distributed among the friends, so all would learn of his change of condition and for it to serve as means of repentance to the enemies of the Cause.”

At that time, [Mírzá] Majdí'd-Dín was one of the pillars sustaining the violators of the Covenant, and according to 'Abdu'l-Bahá's description he was the teacher of Mírzá Muhammad-'Alí (the arch-Covenant-breaker). This person [Majdí'd-Dín] had hidden behind the olive trees, so that at an opportune time 'Abdu'l-Karím would guide and allow him enter and survey the condition and situation of the Shrine of the Exalted One.

Therefore, at noon, when the servants working there had dispersed for their lunch break, 'Abdu'l-Karím thought it timely, and with hand-signal motioned [Mírzá] Majdí'd-Dín, beckoning him to enter the Shrine of the Exalted One. He had immediately entered [the Shrine] and seen all that he wanted to survey and became closely aware of the details.

It so happened that at that moment the custodian of the Shrine of the Exalted One, Áqá Rahmatu'lláh, who was from Najaf-Abad in Isfahan, had noticed this scene and quickly informed ['Abdu'l-Bahá]. On hearing of this incident, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had instantly expelled²⁶ him ['Abdu'l-Karím], and from then he had openly joined the Covenant-breakers.

After his death, 'Abdu'l-Bahá remarked, "For three days and nights, his soul was suspended between earth and heaven and did not know where to go."

This was only a sample of his deeds and behaviors. The rest can be ascertained by the same pattern.

In short, in consideration that, like him, Subhí also secretly associated with the ill-wishing Covenant-breakers and carried out oppositions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was deeply disappointed with him. He had even imitated His blessed signature [of 'Abdu'l-Bahá].²⁷ At the time [lunch hour] when 'Abdu'l-Bahá was severely rebuking him, he seemed dead, as if his soul had left his body.

²⁶ The original *tard* also implied excommunication.

²⁷ The implication might be that Subhí had forged documents, perhaps Tablets, in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's hand.

At all events, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spent that night in the House [of ‘Abbúd], but His blessed condition had become disturbed over this incident and part of the night He was ill.²⁸

Some time later, he [Subhí] was dismissed and sent to Iran [by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. In Tehran he joined the enemies of the Cause, and his end was naught but manifest loss.

[A Note by the Narrator]

It should be clear to the esteemed readers that these recollections are composed without any preliminaries or conclusions, or citing specific dates. This is because the passage of time and days has robbed this servant of that ability. However, the events recorded, or those that will be recounted, are mentioned without any addition or loss. Due to the passage of time, I may have forgotten some small details of certain incidents, and therefore have not recorded those events [in this narrative], nor will they appear in the subsequent pages.

[Remains of the Báb]

<p.35> When the sacred remains of His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] – may my soul be a sacrifice unto His meekness – arrived from Iran to Haifa, and that region and the Holy Land became light upon light, this mighty glad-tidings had not been shared with the beloved friends of God. In ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “If I were to tell you what happy tidings I bear, old men would dance in joy alone in their rooms! But I cannot disclose it.”

From one direction, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blessed will had decreed to cheer the friends’ hearts that had been saddened and made sorrowful from wave after wave of the Covenant-breakers’ [misconduct], but from another direction, wisdom did not permit its disclosure at that time. However, this blessed statement [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] brought great joy and happiness to each one of the friends of God.

²⁸ Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years Near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu’ayyad*, (Trans. Ahang Rabbani), extensively discusses how the conduct of the Covenant-breakers would impact and impair ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s health.

[Iran]

One night there was a gathering in the blessed House of ‘Akká, and the friends of God were in the presence of Him round Whom all the names revolve [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. He remarked, “A day will come when the people of Iran will go to bed as Muslims and wake in the morning all Bahá’ís!” His blessed purpose [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was that Iran [unreadable] would enter beneath [the banner] of the Cause of God.

[Diffusion of the Faith]

During the days of the Guardian of the Cause of God, an [annual] gathering was organized in the shadow of the Shrine of the Exalted One to commemorate the ascension of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and many friends from different regions would be in attendance and beholding the blessed countenance [of the Guardian]. The blessed utterances [of Shoghi Effendi] were:

When a century that has passed from the Manifestation of the Primal Point [the Báb], the world will become spiritual, and people will embrace and associate with the divine religion. However, a century after the Appearance of Bahá’u’lláh, the world will become the divine paradise, and the promise in the sacred Qur’an, “Will enter the Cause of God by troops,”²⁹ will stand fulfilled.³⁰

[Iran’s Future]

One day a group of the friends of God was in the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One. He spoke words to this effect: “Iran, particularly Tehran,

²⁹ Qur’an 110:2 reads, “And thou seest mankind entering the religion of God in troops.

³⁰ Most likely a reference to the conclusion of the Ten-Year Crusade, 1953-63, which witnessed the spread of the Bahá’í Faith to all regions of the globe.

will also greatly advance from the point of view of economics, commerce, agriculture and industry.”

[Visit to the Shrines]

In consideration that the Jews who had come from abroad to the Holy Land, and who would come with the utmost courtesy, reverence, cleanliness and refinement on a visit to the Shrines of Bahá’u’lláh and the Exalted One, the Guardian of the Cause of God would remark on such occasions: “They are very luminous, even though we have not spoken with them [about the Faith]. If we were to discuss the Cause, there would be upheaval between the two factions of the Jews and the Arabs. However, the time for it will come. They are presently engaged in organizing their affairs. Later they will arise in service to the Cause. Now is the beginning of exaltation of the Jews and the beginning of the abasement of Islam. “Truly thy Lord will decide between them on the day of resurrection concerning that in which they differed.”³¹”

His blessed purpose in quoting this sacred verse that has been revealed in the Qur’an was to explain that the abasement of the Jews was decreed to last until the Day of Resurrection, namely, until the Day of the Manifestation of the promised Qá’im. Therefore, that abasement had now ended. He would add, “The Muslims will be humiliated far more than the Jews. But their punishment is quick and then their abasement will turn into glory.” His blessed point was that, unlike the Jews, their disgrace would not last long as they will quickly enter the Cause of God so they would be freed from humiliation.

[A Humorous Story]

There was a Christian priest in ‘Akká who regularly attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. One day other Christians asked him, “What benefit have you gained from visiting ‘Abbás Effendi so frequently?” He replied, “Soon I will baptize ‘Abbás Effendi!” When this news reached His [‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s] blessed ears, He replied, “Very well. We will see whether he baptizes us or we circumcise him.”

³¹ For comparison, see Qur’an 2:113, 10:93, 22:17 and 45:17.

It was not long thereafter <p.40> that the priest fell ill. No matter what the doctors tried, it had no effect, and indeed he grew worse. Eventually it was decided that a team of doctors would consult on his condition. Those doctors decided to examine him and consulted on his situation and when they completed their examination, they prescribed that no remedy except circumcision would cure him. After they decided conclusively on this, they carried out the surgery.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá – may my life be a sacrifice unto His will – would smile³² and say, “I made that comment in humor.”

Subsequently, whenever that priest would come before Him, he was most embarrassed and would keep his head low. It became clear from this incident that the Manifestations of Truth³³ do not jest with anyone, since their humor is also serious.³⁴

[Shaykh Mahmúd, the Muftí]

There was a certain person in ‘Akká by the name of Shaykh Mahmúd ‘Arrabí. According to the sayings of the earlier and elder believers, he was a most courageous and brave man, such that all inhabitants of ‘Akká and the surrounding regions feared him.

One day he saw ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Jámi‘ Jazzár [Mosque of al-Jazzár] performing His ablutions. He [came forth and] stated, “You are the Son of God.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “That is what you say.” Once more, he stated the same thing, only to be given the same answer. This time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá added, “O Shaykh Mahmúd, have you not read the Qur’an,

³² Often the narrator uses the term *smile* in place of *laughter*.

³³ *Haqq*, an Arabic word meaning truth, is often used in Islamic and Bahá’í writings to refer to God. It also means righteous and the quality of Ultimate Reality in mysticism. *Haqq* is one of the 99 Names of God found in the Qur’an. In the Tablet of the Branch, Bahá’u’lláh writes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Verily, He is the remembrance of God amongst you and His trust within you, and His manifestation unto you and His appearance among the servants who are nigh.”

³⁴ This story is also told in: Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu’ayyad*, (Trans. Ahang Rabbani), chap. 6.

‘Honor thy guests though they be infidels?’³⁵ As soon as the Shaykh heard this verse, his anger subsided, and since outwardly ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had not met him [previously], nor heard of his name, this incident greatly added to his wonder.

Later on, he fervently came into the blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] and eventually embraced the Cause, attaining deep faith and certitude. Moreover, his whole family came under the canopy of the Cause.

I have heard that during the month of Ramadan, he [Shaykh Mahmúd] had spread a feast in ‘Akká’s bazaar and was offering food to every passer-by. When this news reached the blessed ears [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], He quickly summoned him and strongly forbade him this conduct. He had asked, “Is it not true that the laws have changed?” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] responded, “Yes, but wisdom is required. Now is not the time.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would remark, “I can convert the entire population of ‘Akká in three days, but the harm [of doing this] exceeds the benefit.”

At all events, one day this person [Shaykh Mahmúd] had submitted to His blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], “I wish to give surety to the government for the dairy animals³⁶ and receive them from the farmers at the harvest time.” However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá did not deem this agreeable and had prohibited him from so doing.

Nevertheless, he had thought that such dealings were worldly and financial matters and not of spiritual affairs, and therefore he had considered his own knowledge superior, particularly since he anticipated that considerable profit could be gained through this undertaking. In short, he acquired the right to the dairy animals for a fixed and specified surety, on the condition that upon collection and gathering, he would pay that sum to the government. However, after commencing this undertaking, he realized that a grievous and irreparable loss had occurred

³⁵ Probably from the hadith (“sayings”) of Muhammad. However, there is a related verse of the Qur’an: 4:86, “When ye are greeted with a greeting, greet ye with a better than it or return it. Lo! Allah taketh count of all things.”

³⁶ The original is not clear on this word, and it can be read in two different ways: either as dairy animals or one-tenth (which presumably would be the farming tax). When the original manuscript is made available to researchers, this word should be checked more closely.

and discovered that he was unable to reimburse his large debt to the government. When he found himself perplexed and remorseful in this situation, it became evident to him that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s knowledge was not bounded, nor specified [to certain matters], nay, it encompassed the whole of universe and creation and nothing remained concealed from Him, nor will it ever remain so.

He then attained ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence <p.45> and threw his corpulent body on His blessed feet and fervently cried and lamented [in repentance]. With the utmost compassion and mercy, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that manifestation of kindness and grace, gently lifted him up, so that later, [the Shaykh] had reported, “Despite my large body, I was like a tender bird in His blessed hands!” To the extent possible, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that embodiment of benevolence and sympathy, had assisted him financially until he was able to recover.

At one time, locust attack had enveloped the region to the point that not a shred of greenery could be found. Shaykh Mahmúd ‘Arrábí owned a large olive grove outside the city of ‘Akká. He came to the blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] and stated, “I want to go and see the condition of the orchard.” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] replied, “Your olive trees are safe from the locusts. There is no need to go.”

However, after two or three days, as he was anxious [about the trees], he mounted his horse intending to inspect his grove. However, as he rode, he observed that a thick cloud of locust, like a resolute army, followed him. When he came close to the grove, he saw that the trees were verdant and green, but about to be attacked by the locusts and to be destroyed. He instantly grew repentant and remorseful of having acted contrary to His blessed advice and will, and quickly turned his steed around. As he turned back, the locusts also followed, and as such, his trees remained intact. This incident greatly increased his faith and certitude.

[Khalíl ‘Arrábí]

After he passed away, his children and descendants stood ready to serve, and, due to their presence, the enemies of the Cause were powerless to rebel to some degree. During the World War [I], one of his sons known

as Khalíl ‘Arrábí, who had a family, had gone to one of the villages of ‘Akká, named Kuwaykat, in search of food, but had been unsuccessful. On his return from the village, his path came by [the Mansion of] Bahjí. That day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – may my spirit be a sacrifice for His sacred tomb – was in the pilgrim house situated next to the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. He instructed the aforementioned Áqá Siyyid Abú’l-Qásim Khurásání to go wait on the road so that upon arrival he would invite [‘Arrábí] to His presence. Khalíl ‘Arrábí was deeply astonished that without being outwardly aware of his journey or plans, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had summoned him to His presence in this manner.

In short, he attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and since it was noon, he was invited to table for lunch. However, worried over the condition of his children, he was deeply perturbed and unable to eat. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, however, consoled and assured him. After lunch, He bestowed a finger-length stack of gold lira coins to him, saying, “Whenever these are spent, come and I will give you more,” and then he was given his leave.

It must be obvious what state came over him. In truth, he was ready to offer his life [for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. Upon his return to ‘Akká, he first bought a basket full of bread, which was the necessary sustenance, and then with great joy went home. Afterward, he invited a number of relatives and said to them, “This plentiful feast is because of the generosity and bounties of His Holiness ‘Abbás Effendi.” <p.50> He then told them of the events.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Chant]

One day, this servant and two or three other of the friends were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Bahjí. After attaining to our true purpose and beholding the peerless countenance of our Beloved, we were given our leave. However since we had not visited the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh – though we had achieved and attained the essence of visitation – this servant inquired, “Do You grant us permission to visit the Shrine [before leaving]?” He instantly rose, took a few steps, and replied, “Visiting [the Shrine] does not require permission.”

After we had illumined our faces by the effulgence of the Sacred Threshold, His blessed Person chanted the Tablet of Visitation with a melody that will never again be heard for the rest of eternity. Upon coming out of the Shrine, we were given our leave.

My paternal uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, related that after the ascension of the Ancient Beauty – exalted be His mighty mention – one day the chant and melody of the Blessed Beauty was heard. Everyone was most bewildered as to the source of this invocation when suddenly they discovered that the tone of that Promised Manifestation was heard from their laudable Master [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. However, He had immediately changed the manner of His chant, as the intonation of the Truth belongs solely to the Truth.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá]

My father, Ustád Abú’l-Qásim Shahídzádih, related: “One day when the Blessed Beauty was strolling, I was in His presence. He remarked, ‘Áqá Abú’l-Qásim, say [what you wish].’ In my heart, I said, ‘After the Blessed Beauty, I see none other than the Most Mighty Branch of God worthy of this station.’ He replied, ‘Marhabá!’”

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Return in December 1913]

On the day that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had returned from His journeys to western countries, and had arrived and resumed residence in the blessed House in Haifa, the friends in ‘Akká collectively hastened by the rail-train to visit that Beloved of the horizons. We were so profoundly ecstatic that uncontrollably we were laughing and crying, and while singing songs and anthems, though it was contrary to wisdom, entered the blessed House [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. We learned, however, that the arch-Covenant-breaker [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] and his collaborators were in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but it was evident that their purpose was not godly. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was informed that the friends of ‘Akká had arrived. He replied, “They should wait.”

Meanwhile, that pivot of rebellion³⁷ had said [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], “You return was delayed.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had replied, “Such was decreed.” Every reader or hearer of this description can fathom with what loathsome manner he had spoken these words in the presence of the Center of the divine Covenant and Testament.

When they had observed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s frailty and weariness [because of the long journey], they had thought their goal was within grasp and had given this glad tidings to one another. However, afterwards, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “It is not as it seems,” and these blessed words had greatly cheered the hearts of the people of Bahá, causing them to spread feasts of thanksgiving and joy.

When [‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s] passing took place, the pivot of rebellion and Covenant-breakers wanted to enter the blessed House [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], but by the instructions of the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – may my life be a sacrifice unto her meekness – the friends had prevented their entrance and offered some excuse. Remorseful and downcast, they left.

In short, we have strayed far from our main story. After the rapsallion Covenant-breakers had left the blessed presence, the friends were summoned, and at that time, each of us reverently, humbly and respectfully, prostrated ourselves on the ground and kissed ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s feet, alighted our eyes and gladdened and thrilled our hearts. That hour was an hour that can never be described by words or otherwise. “Exalted and lofty is that sanctified presence and that hallowed station.”

When He had asked after our health and showered us with His bountiful expressions of favor and grace, He stated, “We went, sowed seeds and now wait for the harvest.”

Thereupon, He bade us farewell by saying, “Fí amáni’lláh,” and we left His presence. Praise be unto God that with our earthly eyes we witnessed what hyacinths of <p.55> learning and divine recognition have bloomed and blossomed across the world from those very seeds.

[The Mansion]

³⁷ A reference to Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí, who in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Will and Testament is referred to as the center of sedition.

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the spiteful Covenant-breakers even schemed for complete ownership of the Mansion of Bahjí. As such, they approached certain individuals in the government offices who had long years of experience, and tempted them into rendering influence in this regard.

Included among them was a certain Turkish physician by the name of Zakí Bayk, who exerted great efforts in this path. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came face to face with him in one of the streets of ‘Akká and in Turkish said to him, “Even if you swallow the Mansion like a mouthful, I will put my hand down your throat and pull it out from your stomach!” From this strongly worded censure, he recognized that all his efforts and exertions would be futile, and therefore had sought through an intermediary to appeal for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s forgiveness. [From this incident,] others grew repentant as well.

There was a certain Shaykh Ibráhím ‘Akkí in ‘Akká, who was an abúkatu, that is, he was ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s attorney, and appointed to undertake tasks associated with the Mansion [of Bahjí]. One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to see him in his residence in order to ensure that he would not be tempted and influenced by the enemies [of the Cause]. However, he pretended to be ill. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked for Dr. Nikúlákí, who was a Christian and a righteous man, to come. The physician came at once and offered a prescription. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá instructed for the [prescribed] medicine to be readied. When it was brought, He placed gold coins stacking a finger-length next to the medicine and said [to Shaykh Ibráhím], “Take whichever of these two is the remedy of your ill, but the affairs of the Mansion must be concluded satisfactorily.” With that, He left, and afterwards [Shaykh Ibráhím] said, “Not Moses, not Christ and not Muhammad!” He meant that none of these Manifestations wielded the scepter of authority as His blessed Person did!

[Attempts on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Life]

Dr. Nikúlákí Bayk was the physician of the Holy Family. Previously in his youth he had served as a physician in the Ottoman military. The Covenant-breakers had asked him to poison ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during the

course of his examination, but he quickly informed and exhorted [the Holy Family], ensuring that not a moment was neglected in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s protection. Afterwards, for a while even ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s food was prepared separately, in a special, secure³⁸ room.

The Covenant-breakers had even asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Christian coachman, a certain Rúhanná, to derail His carriage in a ravine on the way to Bahjí. They had given him some money beforehand and promised to give a substantial sum after the execution and completion of their plan. However, once the carriage had deviated a little from the main path, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá vehemently shouted, and spoke with great intensity, inquiring of his intention. Being frightened and having lost his will-power, [the coachman] confessed to the plan and later was discharged.

Thereupon, Isfandiyár who had been trained by him [the Christian] was appointed the faithful coachman. He passed away in the blessed house [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] in Haifa during the ministry of the Guardian of the Cause of God.

[Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí]

During the days of rebellion of the violators of the Covenant, the arch-Covenant-breaker [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] had said, “‘Alí had the right, but it was ‘Umar who exerted and succeeded.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto Him – sent word to him, “Neither do you have the courage of ‘Umar, nor am I like ‘Alí who remained silent and still.” He added, “What I write in Persian, he copies in Arabic and what I write in Arabic, he reproduces in Persian.” From this blessed remark [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] it was evident that he [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] was bereft of qualities and indeed was no more than a cover [for others]³⁹.

Presently also an ignorant one⁴⁰ is found that similar to the arch-Covenant-breaker and the pivot of sedition, commits such treacherous deeds, stringing certain phrases from the divine verses and heavenly

³⁸ Original *dar-bastih*, implies that the room was locked from within.

³⁹ The word *qishr*, translated as *cover*, also refers to a person concerned with the outward form of religious law, who disregards or is unaware of their true intent.

⁴⁰ *bí-daráyat* has been translated as *ignorant*. However, technically it refers to the science of distinguishing true from false prophetic hadith.

Tablets and calls them revealed verses and tablets; or imitates certain prophecies and divinations about future events that occur in the Writings and attributes them to himself.⁴¹ <p.60> He even has introduced bewildering and strange interpretations of the laws and evident verses which have been sent down from the heaven of Bahá by the King; whereas evident laws are beyond interpretation and elucidation. He has thought that in this way he would win victories and triumph. But alas, alas, to vain imaginings.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would state, “What I state in accordance with the needs and the requirements of the time, Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí (the Covenant-breaker) repeats the exact same in unsuitable and inappropriate places, and therefore his words have no effect.”

There was a certain lawyer in ‘Akká by the name of Shaykh ‘Abdu’r-Rahman ‘Azízí, who in a gathering had spoken words that previously ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said to him. Even though he was a non-Bahá’í, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] censured him for this. Indeed no treachery can be imagined greater than this: that a person, because of his own false and corrupt imaginings, attributes to himself words spoken by others, particularly when those words and remarks have streamed from the will and tongue of the All-Merciful.

In short, this unenlightened and spiteful imitator [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí], who was the pivot of rebellion, eventually became blind and sightless, and in the utmost misery and rejection left this world for the lowest abyss. “Be warned and repentant ye the men of pride, false imagination and imitation!”

One of the pillars of the Covenant-breakers brought a quantity of divine verses and Tablets to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, thinking that he had marshaled proofs [against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], but without even looking at them, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “Throw away these scraps of papers, as what I say is final!” His blessed intent was that they must come beneath the divine Covenant and Testament.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí (the arch-Covenant-breaker) has one happy thought, and that is that after Me it

⁴¹ The original text mixes singular and plural and, therefore, it is unclear whether a specific person or a group of opponents of the Faith is being discussed.

will be him.⁴² However, with my own hands I will shroud and bury him.” After His blessed ascension, one of the Covenant-breakers by the name of [Mírzá] Mustafa Abú-Hurayrih⁴³ had said to Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Mansúr, who passed away in Tehran, “What happened to that statement that He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] said He would shroud and bury Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí with His own hands?” He responded, “O wretched one! What shrouding and burying is greater than replacing him with a youth!”⁴⁴

One time, [Mírzá] Majdi’d-Dín, who was the main pillar of the Covenant-breakers, attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá for a certain purpose. After considerable admonishments and counsels, the blessed tears of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá poured out, because He was disheartened over the deeds and doings of the violators of the Testament. Majdi’d-Dín, however, quietly started to laugh, presumable thinking how powerful and skillful he was to have brought tears to His blessed Person. Suddenly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “I weep over your condition and you laugh! Get up and leave!” With anger and fury, he was thrown out.

One time Mírzá Badí’u’lláh, the brother of the arch-Covenant-breaker, returned, and according to his own reckoning repented, the details of which are available in history books of the Faith. When he saw that he would not be able to achieve his true purpose or realize his vain imaginings, once again he raised rebellion and joined the Covenant-breakers. His deeds and evil behavior reached such a point that he hid seditious papers under the mattress and bed in the blessed bedroom [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], so that whenever the Investigation Committee sent on behalf of the government – which came at the provocation of the Covenant-breakers themselves – conducted a search, then ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would fall into trouble. However, since ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had instructed the Household to carefully search and watch the room, therefore those papers were found.

⁴² Bahá’u’lláh’s *Kitáb ‘Abd* had ordained for Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí to assume leadership after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. However, because he violated the Covenant, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá excommunicated him in His *Will and Testament*.

⁴³ He had been an attendant of Bahá’u’lláh and named Abú-Hurayrih after a fickle follower of Muhammad.

⁴⁴ A short sentence appears to have been erased at this point.

Later ‘Abdu’l-Bahá excommunicated him [Mírzá Badí‘u’lláh]. He had asked that a written statement <p.65> be given [by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. But He responded, “I said leave, then leave!” Everyone heard that.

One time, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] took an oath, “By God, besides Whom there is no other god! I will appear with the perspicuous serpent.⁴⁵” When He spoke that oath, my father, Ustád Abú’l-Qásim, was in His blessed presence and was so thrilled and overjoyed on hearing this that he kissed both blessed shoulders [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. His meaning by “perspicuous serpent” was the blessed person of the Guardian of the Cause of God, who, like a dragon, destroyed and obliterated all the Covenant-breakers.

One of the inhabitants of ‘Akká was exhibiting great opposition. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “He needs a slap.” Next day that person died. It was said to His blessed presence, “He received his slap,” but He did not respond.

[Dietary Considerations]

There was a gathering in the blessed House of Haifa and the friends of God were assembled around the One “round Whom all names revolve,”⁴⁶ and for some reason a discussion of watermelon took place. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “Watermelon is cool.” He then added, “His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] would not eat humectants. Whenever overcome by heat, He would pour a little lemon juice in water and drink that beverage. This was the humectants of His Holiness the Exalted One.”

He also stated, “His Holiness the Exalted One has said that if a person spends two-thirds of his money on sweets, he has not spent excessively.” From this statement it can be understood that man needs sweets more than humectants or other food items.”

⁴⁵ In ancient religions, serpents were often represented as potent guardians of temples and other sacred spaces.

⁴⁶ A title of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, often used in the original manuscript (though in most instances it has been replaced with *‘Abdu’l-Bahá*).

[The Fast]

One time ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “A person does not become corpulent because of excessive eating.”

The Guardian of the Cause of God used to fast without breakfast.

At the beginning, when wisdom in certain matters was most necessary and essential, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would fast during Ramadan. It was suggested to His blessed presence not to observe the [Muslim] fast. However, He said, “Since people believe that I am fasting, if I do not maintain it, then it would be a deceit.”

Even in Haifa, at times He would invite Muslim clergymen to the guesthouse at the top of the Mount Carmel for the evening break of the fast or to have breakfast [at the start of the fast]. However, all the food was prepared in the blessed House [in Haifa]. At dawn, all the delicious food that was prepared would be conveyed by carriage to the aforementioned place by Khusraw, the servant of the blessed House, or Isfandiyár, and be readied. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would not rest until the dawn. After breakfast, in the company of the guests, He would descend Mount Carmel. He would sustain all this toil and difficulty solely for the protection of God’s Cause.

During the days of the Ancient Beauty – may His mention be exalted – two or three of the friends acted unwisely during the month of Ramadan. When this was mentioned before His sacred Presence, He stated, “If both fasts are ordained, then what will occur?” That is, both the Bayání and the Qur’anic fasts. The believers said to them [i.e. the two or three Bahá’ís who had not observed the Islamic fast], “Do not act in such a way that until the end of time people would curse you!” That is, if the Blessed Beauty were to ordain both fasts, then you would have caused it.

In short, later these observances were gradually reduced. Nevertheless, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would not neglect wisdom. He would say, “If by sunset the friends [i.e. Bahá’ís] have not reached their homes, then they should quicken their pace.” His blessed purpose was so that no one would think that they are not fasting.

Even some years during the Festivity of Sacrifice,⁴⁷ He would sacrifice sheep.

However, during the blessed days of the Guardian of God's Cause, such observances⁴⁸ were completely eliminated. During one of the Muslim festivals, several people in Haifa came by the entrance to the blessed House to offer festival greetings. <p.70> However, he [Shoghi Effendi] stated, "Tell them that this is not our festival." They were advised of the dates of Bahá'í festivals. In consideration of the requirements of the period, the Guardian of the Cause of God had willed that his precious time, which was strained due to the voluminous work of the Cause, should not be spent on such unfruitful and unprofitable persons.

[Feeding Haifa-'Akká Area]

During World War [I] famine occurred, to the point that the poor and hapless were dying of hunger. Not even salt could be found, and people were forced to use sea-salt in its place.

That year, 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed the 'Adasiyyih farmers, who were mostly Bahá'ís of Zoroastrian descent, to expand their wheat farming. With great zeal and determination, they began to plant. At the height of summer and despite the intense heat of 'Adasiyyih, 'Abdu'l-Bahá proceeded to that region at the harvest time to ensure that the necessary provisions for Bahá'ís and others were gathered.

The wheat was loaded on camels and sent to Haifa and 'Akká. However, the delivery of the grain was not easy, since people were hungry [and would attack the caravan]. Only the power and influence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá was able to force the government to ensure protection of the transfer [from 'Adasiyyih]. In addition to all the Bahá'ís, so many

⁴⁷ 'Id-i Qurbán or 'Id-i Adha, is a festival celebrated by the Muslims in commemoration of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son for God. This festivity is four days long and begins on the 10th of Dhi'l-Hajjih, and on that day, pilgrims to the Holy Shrines in Mecca and Medina offer a sacrifice, as do other Muslims in other lands.

⁴⁸ The word used for *observance* is *bikmat*, which is usually rendered as *wisdom*. The implication is that such an observance of wisdom, which in this case resembles dissimulation, no longer occurred.

others and the poor received their sustenance from the bounties and favors of that benefactor [‘Abdu’l-Bahá].

However, the intense heat impaired ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s health. He instructed that a canopy be made of thistles and water be sprinkled [on the grounds] so He would rest a little under it.

The wheat harvest that year was most plentiful, to the point that they could not collect it all from the farm, and next year grew again.

In those days, [one day] ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was walking in a street. He saw that a Christian from one of the villages was passing by along with his young son. The lad was saying, “Father, I am hungry.” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] said to them, “Come with Me.” Together, they went to the blessed House, and by His instructions, food was prepared and readied for them. After they had eaten amply from the spread feast, He stated in effect, “Lease a donkey and load a bag of flour, and conduct it to their home.” That person [the Christian] was most puzzled, as he did not know ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the past. However, after he had investigated he had learned of His precious and blessed Person.

In short, this situation passed until the blessed ascension [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] occurred. When that person learned of this dark news, he began to lament and wail with great intensity. When asked what had provoked this intense emotion, he responded, “It was because of the generosity and openhandedness of this sacred and sanctified Person that we are alive today. Otherwise, my family and I would have died of starvation and hunger.” He then recounted what had occurred.

One day the aforementioned Siyyid ‘Alí Afnán was at the blessed dinning table [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. After the meal, he uttered, “Praise unto God!” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked, “Why do you praise?” He responded, “In consideration that we attained unto this bounty.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “Praise should be offered when one satisfies the hunger of a hungry person.”

[The Sea of the Cause]

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to one of the pilgrims in Haifa, “Let us walk a little.” They strolled to the port. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “Yesterday it rained. The sea needed water. She accepted the clouds unto herself and

today the sea is surging forth. However, the sea of the Cause <p.75> has not surged forth yet.” The point of His blessed Person was that when the sea of the Cause has surged, then like this sea [of Haifa], it would refuse to accept any filth. Accordingly, now that the Universal House of Justice has been established, the sea of the Cause has flowed forth in a way that is evident and manifest unto all.

There was a certain ‘Abbás-Qulí of Qum, who for some time served as the custodian of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb]. During the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God, he passed away by the Shrine of the Exalted One. He used to relate that one time one of the Covenant-breakers had said to him, “Has the Blessed Beauty not taught, ‘Consort with the followers of all religions?’⁴⁹ Therefore, why do you not associate with us?” He responded, “First tell me what religion you follow, then we will associate with you!”

One day, this servant walked besides the blessed steed of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the Shrine of the Exalted One to the blessed House [of Haifa]. Along the way, He spoke on certain matters. I mentioned the above incident. He became very happy and smiled broadly. “Yes, indeed it is so. It is revealed, ‘Consort with the followers of all religions except the Covenant-breakers and hypocrites.’⁵⁰”

⁴⁹ The complete verse is, “Consort with the followers of all religions in a spirit of friendliness and fellowship;” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 21)

⁵⁰ The present translator is not familiar with such a statement found in Bahá’u’lláh’s Writings and it appears that it represented ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s interpretation. The word *munafiqín*, meaning hypocrites, has Islamic roots and refers to those who were outwardly with Muhammad, but disputed with His wishes. The following passage from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (*Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 158) further on the theme provided by the narrator: “O ye beloved of the Lord! The Kingdom of God is founded upon equity and justice, and also upon mercy, compassion, and kindness to every living soul. Strive ye then with all your heart to treat compassionately all humankind – except for those who have some selfish, private motive, or some disease of the soul. Kindness cannot be shown the tyrant, the deceiver, or the thief, because, far from awakening them to the error of their ways, it maketh them to continue in their perversity as before. No matter how much kindness ye may expend upon the liar, he will but lie the more, for he believeth you to be deceived, while ye understand him but too well, and only remain silent out of your extreme compassion.”

[The Guardian]

One day an illness had overcome the blessed person of the Guardian of the Cause of God while in the blessed House of Haifa. When the Greatest Holy Leaf – the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – heard of this, she rose from her seat and said, “I must go and see to the condition of the blessed beauty.”⁵¹

The use of this appellation should not surprise the readers and listeners, since the beauty of the Guardian of the Cause of God was the same as the Blessed Beauty. He was the light of God and the nucleus of refulgence of the Sun of Bahá’u’lláh. The point and purpose of the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá was merely to make evident the station and exaltation of the Guardian of the Cause of God through this statement.

[Remedy]

With her own blessed hands, the Greatest Holy Leaf used to prepare a simple drop for eye ailments. To every ailing eye that this drop was applied, it would be cured. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Khánúm must apply the drop with her own hands.” His blessed point was that the reason for the cure was in her applying it [and not the drop].

If, for instance, a pregnant woman would attain the presence of the Greatest Holy Leaf – the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – out of kindness and compassion, she would place her blessed hand on the woman’s womb and smilingly would say whether the unborn child was a boy or girl. Then she would suggest what name should be given. What she predicted always occurred.

At times, out of benevolence and mercy, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would give certain instructions to some that were sick, and [afterwards] perfect health would be gained. However, the true cause of remedy and cure was His blessed will.

My father had acquired a severe eye ailment. No medication helped. One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came to our residence to inquire of his health. My father was bedridden. After He observed the situation, twice He said to him, “Close your eyes.” Then He moistened His fingers with

⁵¹ *Jamál Mubarák*, rendered as the Blessed Beauty, is a title used for Bahá’u’lláh.

His blessed mouth and rubbed it over my father's eyes and said, "It is nothing." Not only his eyes gained perfect health, but also never again in his entire life did he suffer from an eye ailment.

There was a certain inhabitant of 'Akká whose name was 'Abdu'l-Mutallib, a son of a certain Mustafa-Dallál. He was devoted to 'Abdu'l-Bahá. He acquired intense hiccups and no remedy was working. 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to visit him in his home and to inquire of his health. He noticed that hiccups would not let the man speak a word. He asked, "Are there any apples here?" He was told, "It is not the season for apples." He said, "Someone should go to the House and search for one." An apple was found [in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's House] and brought to His blessed presence. A corner of this apple had gone bad. 'Abdu'l-Bahá instructed, "Eat the apple." He ate a piece of the apple and his hiccup subsided some. He continued eating the apple and his hiccup was completely cured. He even started eating the apple core <p.80>, but 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to him, "There is no need to eat these." However, he ate it anyway, perhaps thinking that his cure was due to the apple. In short, he was rescued from this intense ailment.

Such incidents would occur very often, each evidence of the might and influence of His blessed Person. The Guardian of the Cause of God used to say, "Whatever we have willed has occurred." It is certain that whatever the divine manifestations will, will occur since their will is God's will.

[Azal]

One night in 'Akká we were all in the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and He was speaking of the unseemly deeds of Yahya Azal. In the course of His description, He had to point to His index finger to demonstrate the length and extent, and the story was as follows. He said, "One of Azal's sons had said that my father reveals verses and each word is this big." Smilingly He showed His index finger, meaning, the words are this long.

He related that Yahya Azal had said to the Blessed Beauty, "What would we do if the true Qá'im appeared?" The Blessed Beauty had smiled. 'Abdu'l-Bahá also smiled.

Even though the Satanic Tree has never taken root, nor will ever do so, nevertheless this remark of his [Azal’s] was evidence of the falsity of his claim and lack of convictions in the truth of the Blessed Beauty.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would relate in essence, “Azal was most hairy. His back was hairy like a bear.” In short, those that rose to extinguish the perspicuous light, even their body was not without fault and defect.

After the honored Mishkín-Qalam, whose name is mentioned in the history of the Cause, arrived in the Holy Land from the town in Cyprus where Yahya Azal was residing, he related the following:

One year there was no rain in Cyprus. People in that region were most disturbed. No matter how much they prayed, supplicated, visited various shrines, or engaged in entreaty in mosques and other places of worship, in hope that God would accept their appeal and open the gates of His Mercy unto them, it bore no fruit.

At that time, Azal lived in a secluded room that had a high shelf. On this shelf, he had a bundle in which he kept a great quantity of papers, and had deep affinity towards these papers.⁵² I said to people who were praying [for rain], “If you want rain to come, at that location there is a bag full of papers containing many talismans. Bring down and burn those papers, and immediately rain will descend.”

Immediately they hastened to that location [Azal’s apartment] and carried out my suggestion. No matter how much Azal cried and screamed, no one had paid any attention to him.

At that moment, I turned my thoughts to the Blessed Beauty, and whispered, “O God, do not allow me to be discredited. Manifest Thy power!”

Suddenly, a cloud with thunder and lightening appeared and filled the sky. So much rain poured that it nearly flooded.

⁵² From the tone of the original, it appears that the bag contained Azal’s own writings.

People were most thankful to me. They would say,
 “We wish you had enlightened us sooner!”

[Mishkín-Qalam]

The honored Mishkín-Qalam was most humorous and clever. At one time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent him to Bombay⁵³, but told him, “You will return [to the Holy Land].”

While there, after some time, he became ill to the point that the believers had lost hope for him to live through it. They even had prepared the burial shroud and other necessities for his interment. When he was at the door of death, the friends closed their shops and came <p.85> to prepare for his burial.

At that time, the physician, out of desire for testing, suggested that he be placed in a pool of hot water and massaged. As they were massaging him, even though he was weak, with a very soft voice he whispered, “Do not take your hand any lower; it will bite!” All that were gathered burst into laughter and said, “He is not dying. Let us not waste our time.” In short, he regained his health, and in perfect condition returned to the Holy Land. The point is since ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said to him, “You will return,” then it was fulfilled.

After a long time, he passed away in ‘Akká in Khán Avamíd. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came for the preparation of his burial. His burial place is in the Bahá’í cemetery of ‘Akká.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “If Mishkín-Qalam did not have this wife, then he would have lived a natural length of life.” From this blessed utterance, it became evident that his wife was devoid of goodly characters. That is, although she had passed away shortly before his [Mishkín-Qalam’s] passing, nevertheless she had left undesirable effects on him.

[On Life]

⁵³ The name of the region is not perfectly readable and *Bombay* is the present translator’s best guess.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Natural life is one-hundred twenty years. It can be longer, but not shorter.”

The late Áqá Mírzá Áqá Khán Qá’im-Maqámi⁵⁴ – upon him rest God’s mercy and His paradise – used to say that when he was in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He had remarked, “A person may live for one-hundred and fifty-five years, but not for one hour longer.”

[Bahiyih Khánum’s Resting Place]

The Liege Lady of the people of Bahá went one day to visit the Bahá’í Cemetery of Haifa. Later, in the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God, she stated, “I did not like it.” The point of her holiness was that, after her passing, she did not wish her physical temple to be interred there.

The Guardian of the Cause of God suggested the same location in the vicinity of the Shrine of the Exalted One and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, which is the eternal site of visitation of people of Bahá, and this suggestion greatly pleased her sanctified person.

⁵⁴ He was a grandson of the renowned Abú’l-Qásim Qá’im-Maqám Faráhání, who was mentioned by Bahá’u’lláh in the *Kalimát-i Firdawsih*. He was the first of Abú’l-Qásim’s descendants to become a Bahá’í. For his biography see: Fádil Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 8, pp. 267-278. There are references to him also in Taherzadeh, *Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh*, vol. 4, pp. 222-26, and in Mehrdad Amanat, *Negotiating Identities: Iranian Jews, Muslims, and Baha’is in the Memoirs of Rayhan Rayhani (1859-1939)*; PhD Dissertation; UCLA, 2006, p. 115: “Another critical account of Baha’i efforts to convert Jews in Arak is significant in that it stresses the emotional aspect, the Jews’ ‘ignorance’ and ‘simplemindedness,’ and divisions among Jewish rabbis as contributing factors to the Baha’is’ success in attracting young Jewish migrants. The description of Mirza Aqa Khan Qae’m-Maqam, an influential local Baha’i landowner who offered an open invitation to his home and who personally welcomed young Jewish migrants, echoes similar accounts of other Jews in Kashan and Hamadan.” (Omid Ghaemmaghami, email communication, 23 November 2007.)



*An early picture of the gravesite of
Babíyyih Khánúm on Mount Carmel*

[Sugar Shortage]

During World War [I], sugar-cubes could not be found, and most people would drink their tea with raisin, or dry fig, or kharrub⁵⁵ or its syrup, if any of these could be found.

One day, a sugar loaf was presented to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He stated, “I will not use it by myself.”

Next day, the believers in ‘Akká were summoned into His presence in His house and He instructed that tea be served. The sugar loaf was split, and each person received about the size of a sugar-cube. Because of this kindness and generosity of His blessed Person, we were all honored and thrilled. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Place it to the left.” That is, the left-hand side of the mouth. His blessed point was that on the left side, unlike the right side, the sugar would not melt quickly. In truth, it was as He indicated.

At all events, the conduct and deeds of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá were an example to each person, so that we too would attain and be adorned with such goodly and pure character and disposition.

⁵⁵ Better known as Kharnoub Tree in the Middle East, it is known as the Carob Tree or Certatonia Siliqua in the West.

[Tea]

Regarding the preparation of tea, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, in essence, “Tea must be brewed from one water.” That is, more water should not be added.

He would also say, “Tea is not harmed by one boiling.”

In addition, “When tea is poured from the pot in a teacup for testing, do not pour it back into the pot.” This blessed utterance was only to preserve the fragrance and taste of the tea.

He would say, “Tea should not be poured into a saucer.⁵⁶ If it is hot, then one should wait a little for it to cool.” His point was that such a practice is outside the bounds of cleanliness and delicacy.

[A Former Opponent]

There was a certain Hájí ‘Abbás in ‘Akká, originally from Baghdad. After the Ascension of the Blessed Perfection, he joined the Covenant-breakers and would conduct himself in accordance with the instructions of the pivot of rebellion [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] and his followers. He was ready and willing to slay ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, but the sovereignty of Truth prevented him from carrying out his ill-intentions.

<p.90> During the final days of his life he had become old, decrepit and ill.

When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá returned from His journeys to foreign countries [in December 1913], he attained His blessed presence in one of the streets of ‘Akká. In utmost humility and despondency, he submitted, “I beg of You in the name of the Blessed Beauty to forgive me.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “Come with Me.” He caressed his face and added, “The past is past.”

Because he was handicapped, the Covenant-breakers had previously agreed that each day they would bring his food to his house. However, they were neglectful and when they brought some, it was not much.

⁵⁶ In the east, it is not uncommon for tea to be poured from the teacup into a saucer for it to cool, and then drunk from the saucer.

That day, when they [the violators of the Covenant] learned of his return [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s fold], they brought him a large basin of most delicious food items. However, he completely refused, saying, “I have nothing to do with you.” No matter how they pleaded and begged, it bore no fruit. Helpless, they returned with the same food they had brought – unsuccessful and failed.

Since he was ill, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá took him to Haifa, roomed in the British hospital near the blessed House, and He would frequently visit him. [On such visits,] He would offer gifts and money to others in the hospital also. The believers would visit him [in the hospital] as well. This servant visited him once also. From his face and appearance, it was evident that from hell he had entered into paradise.

After a while, he passed away in the same hospital and left this world with a good end.

The Covenant-breakers who sincerely would return [to the Faith], and attain the sanctified presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, prostrate themselves at His feet, kissing them, and cry and beg for forgiveness and pardon, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say to them, “The past is past,” and envelop them in His kindness and mercy.

In truth, there is no pain or illness worse than violation of the divine Covenant and Testament, since it brings darkness and is suffocating. ... “take refuge with God.”⁵⁷

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Influence]

One of the friends of God was living in a village near ‘Akká, and over the years had saved some capital through work and labor. He would lend that money for interest to farmers in that region. However, they schemed not to reimburse his principle. Of necessity, he mentioned the situation to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

At that time, the deputy-governor was staying in that village to attend to some governmental work. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that essence of power and might, wrote him a few words in this regard. Immediately upon the

⁵⁷ In the copy of the manuscript used for the present translation, only a small portion of the line at the bottom of page 92 was copied. Therefore, this sentence represents the translator’s attempt at recovering a portion of that line.

receipt of this blessed communication, he arrested and imprisoned the debtors and conditioned their release upon the full payment of their debts. Because of this, they were compelled to repay immediately.

The inhabitants of that village said, “We did not know that ‘Abbás Effendi has such influence and authority even outside of ‘Akká.”

One of the residents of ‘Akká was so distressed over the conduct and deeds of his wife that he mentioned the situation in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, seeking a remedy. Consequently, his wife was summoned and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke to her words to this effect, “If you do not change your behavior and conduct towards your husband, I will arrange another wife for him.” It became evident that the purpose of the wife had been to rob her husband of the confidence and ability to acquire another wife.⁵⁸ <p.95> However, the blessed remark [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] had made her plans transparent and made her change in such a way that her husband expressed his satisfaction.

[Children’s Education]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was completely skilled and accomplished in swimming, riding horses and shooting. He would say words to this effect, “Teach children so that if it becomes necessary they will have the skills. They should be accustomed to every food and bedding, so that if they encounter difficulty and constraints, they would be able to endure the situation.”

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Knowledge]

A young man in ‘Akká related to this servant, “Passing on a road, I attained the presence of His Holiness ‘Abbás Effendi. He inquired, ‘Whose son are you?’ I mentioned my father’s name. His Holiness then named my grandfather, my great grandfather and generation after generation before them with such details and exposition that I was most astonished and astounded.”

⁵⁸ It appears that a line at the bottom of page 94 was not photocopied in the manuscript used for the present translation.

Indeed, to understand and comprehend the depth of that essence of sanctity's knowledge and perspicacity over all things in creation depends on one's faith and certitude, which is a matter that is clear and evident before the people of Bahá; otherwise [one would remain] halted and befuddled in the valley of wonderment and bewilderment.

[Impact of Deeds]

One day, 'Abdu'l-Bahá was at the pilgrim house adjacent to the blessed Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh. Several Bahá'í youth arrived and attained His blessed presence. He spoke various exhortations and counsels, including the essence of the following:

Your fathers' spirits in the next world are observant of your deeds. They become joyful and pleased with your goodly actions and behaviors, and sad and unhappy when it is otherwise.⁵⁹

[Germany and Sangsar]

One night we were in His blessed presence in the blessed House of Haifa. He spoke regarding the Bahá'ís of Germany. He stated, "Germany means, Ál-mán.⁶⁰ In constancy and firmness, they are like the Bahá'ís of Iran."

Regarding the believers of Sangsar, He remarked, "The Bahá'ís of Sangsar are firm, constant, courageous and brave. They are Sang-Sar."⁶¹

[The Guardianship]

⁵⁹ Two lines are crossed and are completely unreadable at the top of page 97. It is not clear if this was done by the author or by a later hand.

⁶⁰ Ál-mán means our kin; this is a play on the word *German* in Persian. For a similar recollection by Mu'ayyad, see, *Eight Years Near 'Abdu'l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu'ayyad*, (Trans. Ahang Rabbani).

⁶¹ A humorous play on words is intended. *Sang* is stone, and *sar* is head, and together it means headstrong.

At times, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would speak in allusions about the Guardianship of the Guardian of the Cause of God. Nevertheless, in those days [His meaning] was beyond the power of comprehension and understanding of the listeners, since such was necessary. However, after His blessed passing, the meaning became evident and clear unto all.

One night we were all present in the blessed House of ‘Akká in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The Guardian of the Cause of God was present as well. [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated,

After Me, the master of the Cause⁶², will firmly grasp the affairs [of the Faith]. Presently he is here as well.

No matter how deeply we thought about it, we could not understand and discover His meaning since we could not see anyone worthy of such a station. Therefore, we abandoned those thoughts in consideration of the fact that we never imagined that the blessed purpose of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, who was in the gathering with us.

From what I have heard, several individuals, like Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, had instinctively inhaled this musk-laden fragrance [i.e. Shoghi Effendi’s future appointment], but were concealing it.

One day, the father of the Guardian of the Cause of God, the honored Mírzá Hádí Afnán, was addressing him as Shoghi. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “Alas, I address him as Shoghi Effendi, and you call him Shoghi!”

One day this servant was in the company of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá from the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh to ‘Akká. His steed was an excellent donkey. When we arrived at ‘Akká, a carriage-driver had just arrived from Haifa, bearing a missive from <p.100> the Guardian of the Cause of God, which he had to present of His blessed Person [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. From afar, as soon as his eyes fell upon His blessed Temple, he came running, and when he reached His steed said, “This is a letter from Shoghi.”⁶³ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “Shoghi Effendi, Shoghi Effendi.” The man repeated, “Shoghi Effendi.”

⁶² Lit. *sáhib amr*.

⁶³ This sentence is in Arabic.

One day this servant, along with the late Áqá ‘Abdu’s-Samad, who was an older brother of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Mansúr on his mother’s side, attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the blessed House of Haifa. He stated, “A letter has arrived for Me that is thoroughly confidential. Read and return it forthwith.” He then dismissed us.

With utmost care, we read the letter in a secluded spot. We noted that it was signed by the Guardian of the Cause of God, who in those days was in a foreign land [England]. The entire content of that supplication was about the exaltation of the Cause of God, the diffusion of divine fragrances, formation of Assemblies, and the unity and spirituality of friends of God in that region. There was nothing in the letter that could be considered confidential. We then returned the missive to His blessed presence.

However, after His ascension, it became clear and evident that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s purpose by the phrase “thoroughly confidential” was the sanctified person of the Guardian of the Cause of God.

In short, each person, through certain hints and allusions, was admonished and prepared [for Shoghi Effendi’s appointment].

[Jamáliyyih Khánum]

This servant had a paternal aunt by the name of Núríján, who was a daughter of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Shahíd [martyred]. This aunt had a daughter named, Jamáliyyih, who was a granddaughter of Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Shahíd. The Blessed Perfection had willed that Jamáliyyih Khánum be in His service and she stood in attendance on that Promised Beauty.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ In interest of scholarly precision, it should be noted that the phrase here (p. 102, line 4) is, *bi khidmat ikhtiyár farmúdand*. However, the words, *bi khidmat* appears to be a later addition, and without it, the original may be understood to say, “had acquired her as a wife.” When the original manuscript is made available to scholars, it should be checked to see if *bi khidmat* was the author’s editing or by another hand. It should be noted that the present translator knows of no evidence suggesting that Bahá’u’lláh had married anyone other than Ásiyih Khánum, Mahd ‘Ulyá, and Gawhar Khánum. This point is emphasized since certain opponents of the Faith (e.g. ‘Abdu’l-Husayn Áyatí, known as Ávarih, and William Miller) have alleged that Bahá’u’lláh had married this lady or have advanced other unfounded allegations.

The aforementioned Áqá ‘Abdu’s-Samad was a paternal cousin of this servant and a brother of Jamáliyyih Khánum. Their father was a certain Áqá ‘Alí and a native of Kashan.

A Tablet in honor of Jamáliyyih Khánum that positively describes the situation was issued and revealed by the Supreme Pen. That Tablet is thus:

He is the All-Knowing, the Wise.

O Jamáliyyih, upon thee rest My Glory of God, My bounties, and My favors.

I bear witness that thou didst attain My presence, and wast privileged to serve Me in the daytime and in the night season, in such wise that never wast thou overtaken by torpor in My service, nor prevented by any obstacle from serving Me, nor from standing before My Countenance.

Rejoice thou at the testimony of My Most Exalted Pen, and say: “Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I ask Thee by Thy Most Great Name. Glorified art Thou, O Lord my God! I ask Thee by Thy Name whereby Thou hast subdued the kingdoms of earth and heaven, and made manifest the secrets of the realm of glory, to assist me to remain steadfast in Thy love, in Thy commemoration, and in Thy Cause. Thou, verily, art the All-Bountiful, the Most Merciful.”

The Glory of Our presence rest upon thee, O My maidservant and My leaf,⁶⁵ thou who circlest around Me at eventide and at dawn; and upon every maidservant who attaineth unto this Wondrous Cause, and who reverenceth thy station for the sake of God, the Almighty, the All-Praised.

The present translator knows no historical evidence in support of any of these claims.

⁶⁵ The term *leaf* is often reserved for Bahá’u’lláh’s female relatives (such as, His wives or female descendants).

After the Blessed Beauty's Ascension, Jamáliyyih Khánum had said, "O God, grant me an ailment that I would have no sleep at night or during the day." The same thing occurred, and in that condition, she passed away.⁶⁶

After her passing, 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated, "Jamáliyyih showed fidelity to the Blessed Beauty." Her resting place is in the Bahá'í cemetery in 'Akká.

['Abdu'l-Bahá's Residence]

Before 'Abdu'l-Bahá journeyed to foreign countries, His principle residence was in 'Akká. However, in view of <p.105> the fact that the blessed House [of 'Abbúd] could not accommodate such a multitude, nor provide for the comings and goings that were constantly taking place before His blessed presence – such as visiting pilgrims, resident believers, friends, strangers, authorities of the Ottoman government, the 'ulamá, religious leaders, many who associated with or were related to Him, servants and others – a large residence that was known as the House of 'Abdu'lláh Pashá became His residence, and offered comfort and ease to all.

This house had an expansive courtyard, and every Friday all the poor and destitute of 'Akká, who constituted a large population, would gather, and with His own hand and with utmost kindness and compassion 'Abdu'l-Bahá would bestow upon each one a sum of money. This was the method and consistent way of His blessed person.

Through the efforts and intense spirituality of Ismá'íl Áqá, the faithful gardener of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, a garden and orchard was grown in the courtyard of the house [of 'Abdu'lláh Pashá]. It was most enchanting, and would fill visitors with great delight.

On the side of the outer yard of the house was a spacious shelter where the carriage of His blessed Person, with its horses and other supplies, was kept. In those days, cars could not be found. The best

⁶⁶ Most of this sentence is lightly crossed in the manuscript available to the present translator and other words are written over it, which for the most part are unreadable, but seem to indicate that Jamáliyyih Khánum suffered a period of illness and depression before passing.

means for travel to the surrounding areas, or attending to various chores, was by carriage, and even that was rare. Because of this, whenever the nobles, religious leaders, officials of the Ottoman government, or friends, wanted to go somewhere in that vicinity, they would ask ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to allow them to use the carriage and the carriage-driver, Isfandiyár, for the duration of their need.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would sustain every form of hardship for the protection and exaltation of the Cause of God, and to extinguish the fire of sedition, enmity, jealousy and vengeance of the enemies at that time, which was the height of violation of the Covenant, and to administer the affairs of the people, whether friends or strangers.

[Husayn Áqá Tabrízí]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá even appointed a special coffee-brewer among the friends whose name was Husayn Áqá Tabrízí. Whenever the ‘ulamá, clerics or officials would attain His presence, in accordance with His blessed instructions, he [Husayn Áqá] would prepare coffee, tea and a water-pipe for the guests. He was very hard working even though he was an old man. However, due to the intensity of his faith and certitude, he stood in devoted service with his entire heart and soul. At the end, he passed away in Haifa, and was submerged in God’s exalted mercy.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Speech]

When Turkish government officials from Istanbul would arrive and attain the blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], from the ease and sweetness that He spoke Turkish they would be astonished, wonderstruck and enchanted of that divine visage [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá].

When men of letters, the learned and scholars, either Arab or otherwise, would arrive in His sanctified presence and that omnipotent Master would commence speaking, they would be attracted beyond any description or depiction to His mesmerizing utterances, and His eloquence and fluency. Upon entering His blessed presence, they would consider themselves deeply learned, and when leaving [would have come to recognize themselves as] profoundly ignorant. The greatest scholars

would bow before Him and kiss His blessed hands, and in such instances that essence of sanctity would always say, “Astaghfuru’lláh, Astaghfuru’lláh!”⁶⁷

[Nightly Gatherings]

In those days, every night a gathering would assemble, and in accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s instruction, a Qur’an reciter by the name of Shaykh Yúnis, who was blind, would chant verses of Qur’an with hijází intonation, and he would become the recipient of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s kindness. When a sufficient amount was recited, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Well done,” implying by this phrase that everyone’s spirit was sufficiently elated. Afterwards, by His command, prayers would be chanted. A non-Bahá’í who heard those prayers and Tablets once exclaimed, “By God! These are Words of God!”

[Pilgrims]

In those days, rank upon rank of pilgrims <p.110> would arrive from Iran and other places. The pilgrims who came from Iran were mostly attired in the same manner and clothing that was current at the time of the Qajar dynasty.

How often those pilgrims, out of sheer attraction, and overwhelmed by faith, certitude, and love for the countenance of that intended Beauty [‘Abdu’l-Bahá], would walk the entire long journey. Upon attaining the threshold of that unquestioning Limit, out of fervor and excitement that had filled their being, they would uncontrollably throw themselves at His blessed feet and cry profusely, ennobling and perfuming their faces by the dust of His magnificent feet.

Even though, out of the mercy and bounty of that compassionate Master, the days of their attainments would be extended, nevertheless at the time of departure the voice of their wailing and crying would be raised heavenwards. That beloved of the world would try to calm those souls until their sadness and grief was reduced, and at times they would

⁶⁷ Literally “I ask God’s forgiveness,” or “God forbid!”

be honored with a Tablet revealed by the pen of the Center of the Covenant and Testament.

‘Akká’s pilgrim house was in Khán Avamíd. Most days, pilgrims’ lunch and dinner was *ábgúsht*.⁶⁸ One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came by the pilgrim house and inquired of my uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, who was the custodian of the pilgrim house, “Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, what do you have for lunch?” He responded, “Ábgúsht.” He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “Ábgúsht is a healthy meal. Therefore, I will be your guest today.” It must be evident what joy and elation overcame the pilgrims from learning that that day they would have lunch in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. “This did not [take place] save by His Bounties, the Generous.”

In those days, a cloth was spread on ground for serving meals. Either salad or yogurt accompanied lunch and dinner. In addition, sugary halvah made with ground sesame seeds was at hand as well.

At all events, an unbounded and indescribable spirituality enveloped everything. Night and day, all were engaged in speaking the Truth. For sleeping, no special or designated spot was available, pilgrims would assign each other’s place of rest, and with utmost spirit, fraternity, joy and enchantment would all sleep in the same area. Some would sleep in bags, and close them from inside, so they would be immune from the bites of mosquitoes and fleas. Everyone rose early in the morning.

There was a parrot in the pilgrim house that every morning when the pilgrims would come out of the room would greet them by “Alláh-u-Abhá!”

There was also a parrot in the blessed House, that is, the House of ‘Abdu’lláh Pashá. One morning, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was pacing in the courtyard and the parrot said, “Áqá!” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] responded, “Yes?” The parrot said, “Say, ‘Yá Bahá!’⁶⁹” Later, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to the Greatest Holy Leaf, “Khánum, we were about to give away this parrot, but he bought himself.”

In those days, Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí was in the pilgrim house, and when anyone had a question about the Cause, would ask him.

⁶⁸ *Ábgúsht* is an Iranian dish consisting of clear broth with meat and other ingredients such as potatoes, beans and dried lemon.

⁶⁹ Lit, By Bahá!

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Dream]

Before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s journey to foreign lands, one day Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí was in the blessed presence. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to him, “Last night, I had a dream,” and proceeded to describe the dream, in which there were birds and fish. He then asked, “What is its meaning?” He [Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí] stated, “Its interpretation resides with Your blessed Self.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “Whoever dreams of bird or fish will not die until he reaches sovereignty. Therefore, We will not die until We reach sovereignty.” This was an allusion to the exaltation and diffusion of the Cause of God.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Residence in ‘Akká]

In short, in the days nearing His blessed return <p.115> from foreign countries, gradually, the house of ‘Abdu’lláh Pashá was emptied and all movable furnishing was transferred to the blessed house in Haifa.

After His return, His residence then became the blessed house in Haifa. Even though this house was available previously, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s primary residence was ‘Akká.

[Haifa’s Pilgrim House]

Previously a pilgrim house had been constructed near the Shrine of the Báb. Áqá Mírzá Ja‘far [Hadioff] Shírází Rahmání⁷⁰, who in those days lived in ‘Ishqabad, had built this pilgrim house, but gradually, since he did not have sufficient funds. When his money was depleted, he would return to ‘Ishqabad and resume his trading business; when some savings had been accumulated, he would return to Haifa [and continue construction]. It went thus until the pilgrim house was completed.

⁷⁰ *Rahmání* is written above the line and appears to be a later addition. Mírzá Ja‘far Hadioff was originally from Shiraz, had migrated to ‘Ishqabad to take advantage of freedom of movement and commerce for Bahá’ís, and there was engaged in trading tea. The surname *Rahmání* was bestowed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

In accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blessed instruction, an inscription was installed above the pilgrim house that read, “This is a spiritual pilgrim house and has been raised by Áqá Mírzá Ja‘far Shírání Rahmání.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say words to this effect, “If Áqá Mírzá Ja‘far had not built this pilgrim house, his capital would have been wasted in ‘Tshqabad. Now no matter how much this pilgrim house is expanded, it will remain in his name.”



‘Abdu’l-Bahá by the Shrine of the Báb

[Payment of Huqúqu’lláh]

There was a certain Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan in Egypt that became owner of a parcel of land. Oil was found in that land, and for this reason, he became exceedingly wealthy and affluent. He asked ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “Excuse me from payment of Huqúqu’lláh, because if I was to pay the Huqúq, I

would need to appoint a special clerk.” It was not long before his entire wealth disappeared, and then he died.

In his entire life, he had only contributed a candelabrum to the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb], and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had stated, “This is what has been left for him.”

[Visit to ‘Akká]

At all events, after that [post-1914], whenever ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited ‘Akká, the days of His stay would be either at the blessed house [of ‘Abbúd] or in the pilgrim house next to the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. After the intervention⁷¹ of the British government, that previous situation, as described earlier, did not continue.

At the time of the arrival of that government’s army and military to Haifa and ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “The ship of the Cause has reached the shore of safety.” His purpose was that the plundering hand of the enemies of the Cause and the hate-filled Covenant-breakers was now arrested from committing any damage or harm, and no protection, assistance or supporter remained for them.

In ‘Akká a Christian attained His blessed presence and said, “I met you in America.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “All people have questions for us, except inhabitants of ‘Akká. We have left ‘Akká to its inhabitants.”⁷² This comment was made to this person in consideration of the fact that he had seen both the excitement and exhilaration of the people of that region [America, by meeting ‘Abdul-Bahá], and the coldness and indifference of the people of ‘Akká [towards the Faith].

[Visiting the Mosque]

Like before [His trip to the west], ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would visit the mosque on Fridays, and after offering His obligatory prayers, would give alms to the poor.

⁷¹ The original word, *ibtilál*, meaning *reduction*, has been marked in the margin to be replaced with *mudákhibilíb*, meaning *intervention*. The later editing appeared more accurate and was adopted for the present translation.

⁷² The narrator provides this statement in both Arabic and its translation in Persian.

There was only one mosque in Haifa, named Jámí‘ al-Súq – that is, the bazaar mosque. However, later another mosque was built near the train station. Some residents used to say, “His Holiness ‘Abbás Effendi had said that one <p.120> mosque is insufficient for Haifa, and He contributed substantially towards construction of this other mosque.”

[The Future of Haifa and ‘Akká]

At all events, every movement and deed of His blessed person was solely for the sake of the protection and safety of the Cause of God, and the security and sheltering of [Bahá’í] sacred places from the harm of the enemies and ill-wishers.



Haifa in 1910s

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say to this effect, “There is a water wellspring in the land surrounding the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb], but it is untimely to disclose it, and it must remain hidden until its time.” From this blessed utterance, it was evident that once that

wellspring came to the surface, what immense beauty and splendor would encircle the Shrine of the Exalted One.⁷³

He used to state, “Mount Carmel will be all enveloped in light.” He would add to this effect:

At dawn, with wondrous and melodious voices, they will be engaged in the mention of God.

Ships carrying the flag of “Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá!” will anchor at the port [of Haifa] and kings will disembark. On foot and bareheaded, and with humility and modesty, and in a state of supplication and entreaty, chanting divine verses and prayers, they will attain to a visit of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb]. On the path to the Shrine of the Exalted One, there will be pools of water, gardens and places for rest and respite.

Afterwards, with bouquets of flowers over their shoulders, and while reciting divine verses and prayers, they will visit the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh.

At that time, after the bay is drained, a straight avenue will be constructed connecting the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb] to the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh.

However, we will see all of this from the Malakút [the Kingdom of God].

One day at the Shrine of the Exalted One, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke on this theme, and also said, “I see these things now, but you do not see. My presence is a hindrance. Later, the Cause will grow.” From this

⁷³ According to Fariborz Sahba (private communications, 5 March 2008), one of the challenges faced by the project team building the Terraces around the Shrine of the Báb was the irrigation of gardens, especially under the tight water regulations in Haifa. It so happened that the above statement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was brought to Sahba’s attention and with the help of local water consultants and geologists, the source of water was located in 2000. This underground water reservoir appears to have been created because of an earthquake fault that crosses the terrain of Mount Carmel. The project team then managed to negotiate and convince the authorities to make an exception and allow that water to be used solely for the gardens around the Shrine, thus fulfilling ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s prediction.

blessed utterance, it was evident that people are more inclined to the unseen than the seen. It is because they consider the Temple of the Cause as one like themselves.

[Tiberius]

At times, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would journey to Tiberius. [One time,] the Qádí [judge] of Haifa sent a missive to His blessed presence inquiring of the condition of Tiberius. In the course of responding to this supplication, He stated, “If you ask about Tiberius, know that its stones are black, its inhabitants are Jewish and their appearance is basic.”⁷⁴ It is likely that he [the Qádí] had wanted ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to invite him there, so he had been honored with this response.

One day in Tiberius, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was pacing by the shores of the Dead Sea.⁷⁵ Khusraw was also in His blessed presence. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “It was here that Peter fished.” While He was speaking these words, suddenly a large fish threw himself from the sea and landed before His blessed feet. He said, “Come Khusraw, take it, as our daily sustenance has arrived.”

[Confirmations]

In the days of the Blessed Perfection, exalted and magnified be His mention, a native of ‘Akká had invited a group to lunch beneath the spruce-fir trees situated across from the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, which was a most pleasant spot. However, at lunchtime, additional people arrived who had not been invited. The host was deeply perturbed how to feed anyone with the [limited] food that he had prepared. Of necessity, he had gone into the Mansion [of Bahjí] and attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty, inquiring about a remedy for his problem. That Author of bounties and blessings had said, “The Master should go and with His

⁷⁴ The narrator gives this statement in both original Arabic and translation in Persian. Translation of the final phrase is not precise.

⁷⁵ Most likely, *Bahr Miyat* [Dead Sea] was a slip of pen and the Sea of Galilee was meant.

own hand serve the food.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá ...⁷⁶ had served the food, <p.125> and not only was it sufficient unto everyone, but an excess amount was left.

The late Áqá Jamál was a cook in the blessed house, and was known as Abú-Sabrí. For a while, he helped my paternal uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan Khádím, in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the exalted One and was of service in that place. He related:

One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the pilgrim house [of Haifa]. Food was prepared for several of pilgrims and guests. However, at lunchtime, an [unexpected] group of pilgrims arrived. Since the prepared food was insufficient, a lesser quantity was placed in each dish and plate. Suddenly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came into the kitchen and said, “Jamál, what are you doing? Fill the plates.”

I did as bidden, filled the plates, and served them to everyone. I observed that the food was most sufficient for all.

Later, He summoned me and said to the effect, “It had passed noon and everyone was hungry. When food is served in small portions, even if a second helping is offered, it will not satisfy. But when it is given in sufficient quantity, then the eye is satisfied.” His blessed intent was that first the eye must be satisfied for the stomach to feel the same way.

[On Caution]

One night there was a gathering at the blessed house of ‘Akká and in midst of it, the gardener of the Bágh [Garden] Firdaws arrived. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inquired, “Who is at the Bágh?” He said, “No one is there.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarked, “Incidents happen suddenly. Caution should never be abandoned.”

[Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl]

⁷⁶ Half a line at the bottom of page 124 was not copied in the present manuscript.

One day, along with my paternal uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, we attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá outside the outer gate of the blessed House in Haifa. In the course of his utterances, He stated, “If five persons like Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl could be found, I would prostrate Myself on the ground.”

When the *Kitáb Fará’id* was printed and brought before His blessed presence, He kissed the book.

After he had been submerged in God’s mercy [i.e. passed away], ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “He was an amazing man. He was aware of all things.”

During the height of revolt of the Covenant-breakers, Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl would go the Mansion of Bahjí and meet with the pivot of rebellion, perchance he could make him repent [his opposition]. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá inquired, “Why do you go visit Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí (the arch-Covenant-breaker)?” He responded, “Your Excellency, was His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] the true One or was He not?” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “He was the true One.” Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl then said, “If You say that He was not, I will accept.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then remained silent. Through this exchange, Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl established the depth of his faith, certitude, constancy and firmness in the divine Covenant and Testament.

One time, during the days and pilgrimage of Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl⁷⁷, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to him to the effect, “If I were in your place, I would go to Egypt and engage in teaching and educating students in the Qur’an.” From this comment, Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl grew reflective. [Seeing his silence and condition, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “It is not too late. You can do so now.” It was because of this that in accordance with the blessed instruction, he transferred his residence to Egypt and succeeded in immensely mighty services.

In truth, he was a proof unto the Cause. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Even the very water that Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl drank was to give him the strength to write [in support of the Faith]”.

One night an assemblage was meeting in the blessed house of Haifa and the Guardian of the Cause of God said to the effect, “If Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl were here, he would adduce from the [Sacred] books.” From

⁷⁷ This phrase appears to be a later addition to the manuscript.

this blessed utterance it was understood that in much the same way as the previous events [of the Cause] had been in accordance with firm texts and prophecies of heavenly books [of the past], the present occurrences related to the Guardianship were likewise mentioned and ascribed in the celestial books, requiring interpretation by those endowed with knowledge and the learned in Bahá, since nothing in the divine unfoldment is by accident.

[Good Citizenship]

My father used to relate that the Blessed Beauty had said, “When you assume residence in a house, do not worsen nor improve it.” From this utterance of the Truth it was evident that destruction and change were beneath the station of man, nor were they acceptable unto God or mankind.

Indeed, Bahá’u’lláh had also advised, “When you leave a dwelling, it must be cleaned before returning it to its owner. However, it must be no worse and no better than the original. Otherwise, the owner will become greedy and this will cause difficulties.”

It so happened that <p.130> this servant rented a dwelling that consisted of one room. However, to improve its condition, after receiving permission [from the owner] I installed some shelves. Even though the owner was a Bahá’í, he increased the rent. At the end, I was forced to return it to him in the original state. Even though it brought him no benefit, this caused me difficulty and loss.

[Siyyid Mihdí Dahají]

There was a certain Siyyid Mihdí from Dahaj. At the beginning of the Cause, he was among the renowned teachers of the Faith. However, due to his unjustified expectations, in his latter days he joined hands with the Covenant-breakers and used to write letters to various people in hope that, like the foolish ones of this day,⁷⁸ he would derail souls from the straight path of God. The friends of God would send responses to his letters first to blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], and then these would

⁷⁸ Most likely a reference to Jamshíd Ma‘ání, mentioned later in this narrative.

reach him. Beneath one of the responses to him, the following poem was penned [by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]:

The bounty of God will tolerate for some time,
But when the limit is surpassed, it will defame.

At last, with great regret and remorse, he sank to the lowest abyss of hell.⁷⁹

This egotistical man had two dimwitted and unintelligent sons: Husayn and Hasan. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to relate to this effect, “When speaking with Me, Siyyid Mihdí would greatly extol and praise Hasan’s astuteness, saying that the lad was most intelligent. There was a herd of goats at Bahjí. [While playing,] each of the Bahá’í kids was holding the udder of one of the goats, imbibing their milk. However, he [Hasan] was holding a male goat, imbibing it, and saying, “This is salty.”” When telling this story He would laugh heartily.⁸⁰

Siyyid Mihdí had amassed a substantial sum. A Jewish man enticed him and for this reason, he had given him his entire capital, which he embezzled, and decided that escaping was the preferred route.

Sanctified is God! Whoever rose to oppose or harm the Center of God’s Covenant and Testament was seized in the grasp of all manners of divine chastisement.

⁷⁹ Siyyid Mihdí was a learned man and a capable promoter of the Faith. Bahá’u’lláh had conferred the title of *Ismu’lláhu’l-Mihdí* (the Name of God Mihdí) on him and had revealed a number of Tablets in his honor. He was a native of Dahaj in the province of Yazd, visited Bahá’u’lláh in Baghdad, Edirne, and ‘Akká, and had received much attention. Siyyid Mihdí traveled widely throughout Iran and was greatly loved by the Bahá’ís. From a description left by Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí, it appears that Siyyid Mihdí considered himself above other believers, an image that he tried to promote through various means.

⁸⁰ According to Fádil Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru’l-Haqq*, vol. 8, part 2, pp. 900-901, the reason that Siyyid Mihdí Dahají was extolling his sons to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was that he wanted Husayn to marry Munavvar Khánúm, one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s daughters. It was when ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refused this and married them to people whom Siyyid Mihdí considered his inferiors that Siyyid Mihdí went over to Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí’s side in about 1909 and was declared a Covenant-Breaker. From this account, one can see that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had good reason to refuse the marriage. (Based on Moojan Momen’s posting on Tarikh discussion group, 4 March 2008).

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would also tell that he [Siyyid Mihdí] had written *píáz* with a *dhál*.⁸¹ He would tell this story with a resonant accent and smile.

His sons [Husayn and Hasan] died in misery and deprivation.

At one time, some of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s verses and blessed Tablets in Arabic had reached one of the Covenant-breakers. Since he wanted to imply that he had knowledge and learning, he had said, “Its vowelizations are correct.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would tell this story and smile.

In truth, when a person turns away from God, even his mental faculties and senses are impaired.⁸²

[The Narrator’s Family]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “A good wife is like paradise unto a man and a bad one is like hell.”

It was two years after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ascension that this servant married. From this union, we had eleven children: seven boys and four girls. Their names, in order, were: Jamílih, Jamíl, Nadím, Labíb, Nabíhíh, Na‘ím, Ruhíyyih, Amín, Bashír, Samír, and Fá’izih. The names of these children have been given in their chronological order. Out of her grace and bounty, the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá, granted the names of these children through the fifth child, that is, Nabíhíh, <p.135> thereby bestowing this honor upon them.

However, Jamílih and Jamíl were names bestowed by the Blessed Beauty on a sister and a brother of this servant. Since both had passed away, the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá willed that these two names, which had streamed from the lips of the Merciful [Bahá’u’lláh], be once again returned to this family. Therefore, from two directions these names are a source of honor unto them. That is, in addition to the sovereign will of the Greatest Holy Leaf – may my life be a sacrifice unto her kindness and her bounties – the tongue of the Beauty and of the

⁸¹ *Píáz* means *onion* and is written with *ze*.

⁸² Most of page 133 was left blank or was erased in the copy of the manuscript available to the translator.

Grandeur [Bahá’u’lláh] also uttered these two names. God willing, may they be *jamílih* and *jamíl* in every way.⁸³

Similarly, may their brothers and sisters also be known by the beauteous attributes given to them as names, and may they remain successful and confirmed under the shadow of God’s Universal House of Justice, which is the authority and refuge of the people of Bahá. Today, this is indeed the path of righteousness, and eternal glory, and all else is evident loss.

My wife’s name is Zaynab. She is the daughter of Sa’íd Ghaffír; and her mother’s name was also Zaynab. They were of the believers of Damascus, Syria. In those days, she was studying at the College of Beirut. Since her parents had passed away, her maternal uncle, Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Razzaq Rúmání, had raised her.

At that time, this servant journeyed from ‘Akká to Beirut [and met Zaynab] and since it was the divine decree [for us to eventually marry], the consent of the two of us and parents were conditioned upon the approval and good-pleasure of the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá, who at that time was residing in Haifa. After inquiring, an affirmative response and complete consent was bestowed [by Bahiyyih Khánum].

Therefore, from Beirut we proceeded directly to Haifa and arrived at the blessed House [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. Upon arrival, we learned that [Bahiyyih] Khánum had gone to ‘Akká. As such, this servant, without halting in Haifa, proceeded forthwith to ‘Akká.

That very day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s daughter and my bride-to-be arrived in the blessed House of [‘Abbúd in] ‘Akká, which, as mentioned previously, had been our abode and place of residence in accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blessed instructions. It must be evident that in the presence of the Greatest Holy Leaf what exceeding gladness enveloped us!

In short, three days after our arrival, in accordance with traditions, law and wisdom, first Qur’anic [i.e. Islamic] marriage vows were taken and after that, in accordance with the command of the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá to my paternal uncle, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, the Bayánic marriage took place.

⁸³ *Jamílih* and *jamíl* are feminine and masculine versions of the same attribute, meaning beautiful, handsome, reputable, or good.

The morning of that day, [Bahiyih] Khánum and the daughters of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá decided to return to Haifa. At the time of leaving the House, she remarked to this servant, “Groom, may God watch over you!” This evanescent one had no words save bowing, humility and submission. In truth, it was a most undeserved bequest upon this servant.

At all events, these children, that is, Jamílih, Jamíl, Nadím and Labíb, were born in the blessed House [of ‘Abbúd] – a bounty that hereafter will not visit upon anyone else, especially since it occurred in the blessed days of the Greatest Holy Leaf. That is, never again until the end of time will the eye of creation witness such a remnant and vestige [of the Holy Tree, like Bahiyih Khánum].

[Revising Traditions]

At the request of their parents, the newly born children of the friends of God were named by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Center of the Divine Covenant and Testament. After the ascension of His blessed Person, the friends would ask the Greatest Holy Leaf [to name their newborn]. However, after the ascension of the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá, the Guardian of the Cause of God stated, “Henceforth, parents should name their own children.” His purpose was that the friends of God should not bring this request to his blessed presence, since, firstly, it was a waste of his precious time and, secondly, the will of his blessed person had decreed in this regard not to follow the example [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá].⁸⁴

For instance, whenever He wanted to express <p.140> His special bounty and benevolence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would always say, “Marhabá!” The Guardian of the Cause of God completely withheld himself from uttering that phrase.

When the friends, either privately or in a gathering, attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, He would say at the end, “Fí amánu’lláh!”⁸⁵

⁸⁴ The present translator recalls with fondness that this tradition was followed during the tenure of ‘Ali Nakhjavani on the Universal House of Justice, when he would often suggest names for newborns, including a name for the translator’s younger son, Tebyan.

⁸⁵ Lit, Be under God’s protection.

However, the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God would stand up and leave the room.

He [Shoghi Effendi] was most attentive in his observance of such [separate] stations. Therefore, he did not approve of such practices [as naming newborns] that had been practiced in the past, so that his servitude unto the Threshold⁸⁶ would be made manifest in every way.

The beloved friends of God who in the days of the Blessed perfection – exalted be His mighty mention – had attained to the Visage of God [Bahá’u’lláh], and also had attained to the presence of the Center of Divine Covenant and Testament, would say that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, from the perspective of might, grandeur, splendor, conduct and exposition, was identical to the Blessed Beauty; except in the presence of that Promised Beauty, He was the very manifestation of servitude.

In consideration of the fact that this servant witnessed and attained the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Guardian of the Cause of God, I also beheld the same might, grandeur and dignity of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the sacred being of the Guardian.

It is evident that since they all are representative of the Truth, then they are one reality, and no difference is seen in their essence except whatever difference that might exist due to their station and rank.

[Simple Expositions]

One night a gathering was held in the blessed House of Haifa. For an occasion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “The Persian language is not so easy.”

Whenever plain souls like this lowly one were present, that essence of kindness and compassion would speak with simple and common words, so that all would understand His remarks. On the other hand, if a translator was involved, He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] would be considerate of him so that he would be able to carry out his charge.

[Proving the Truth of Islam]

⁸⁶ The author evokes Shoghi Effendi’s well-known signature on his correspondence with the East, which read, *Bandih ástánash, Shoghi* [the servant of His Threshold, Shoghi].

One day during the time of the Ottoman government, several Muslim ‘ulamá were in a gathering in Jámi‘ Jazzár [the mosque of al-Jazzár] with the mutisarrif, who was the governor of the region. At that assemblage, a Christian priest also arrived. Soon discussions with that priest turned to religion and the proof of the truth of the Messenger of God [Muhammad]. However, the ‘ulamá discovered themselves unable and powerless at presenting sufficient proofs and establishing the truth [of Prophet Muhammad] in response to arguments and questions posed by the priest.

When the mutisarrif witnessed the situation to be as such, he became deeply perturbed. He summoned his attendant and whispered to him, “Go to the presence of His Holiness ‘Abbás Effendi and say that the mutisarrif is requesting Him to come forthwith.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá consented and arrived at the gathering, and saw the situation. In order that no one would suspect that he had instigated ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s attendance, after the customary greetings and expressions of humility, the mutisarrif stated, “What an auspicious hour have we attained the presence of Your Holiness, since a religious discussion is taking place here.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “Very well. We will listen too.”

However, the actual discussion was in Arabic and what is written here [in Persian] is a summary of the events.

Gradually, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá assumed the thread of conversation from them [the ‘ulamá] and began to directly speak with the priest. Soon, His blessed utterances were surging forth, to the point that he [the priest] confessed and acknowledged the truth of the Messenger of God [Muhammad].

However, he stated, “We [the Christians] are like inhabitants of a village, who are used to dwelling in the village and unaccustomed and unwilling to live in the city.” He likened the Religion of Christ to a village and the Dispensation of Muhammad to a city.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded, “If in the days of Christ a Jew had said such a thing in His presence, would He have accepted?”

The priest said, “No.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, <p.145> “I do not accept it from you either.”⁸⁷

After this penetrating response and the silence of the priest, all present in that assembly were exceedingly happy.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Guidance]

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, whenever a person had a problem or a difficulty and presented it to Him in hope of guidance, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would state whatever was most effective and conducive for [resolving] his situation. Moreover, when that person acted according [to the given guidance], then he would arrive at a complete resolution.

At times, certain thoughts would occur to the person seeking guidance, and he would imagine that those avenues might support better results; when he presented those [alternative] ideas, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Very well.” Afterwards though, [from the implementation of the person’s own idea], opposite results [from those which were desired] would be gained. And when this reached the ears of His blessed Person, He would say, “His welfare was in the first suggestion.” That is, if the individual had acted according to the guidance that He had first offered, then he would have been successful.

How happy is a person who, faced with divine advice, is in a state of utter resignation, and has no thoughts or will of his own!

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Humor]

Some men with a mustache like to twist their mustache. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “Whoever twists his mustache is sullen.”⁸⁸

For the enjoyment of those in His presence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá at times would employ a little humor, which delighted His listeners.

There was a certain Khajih Nasíf in ‘Akká, who was Christian and the owner of the pilgrim house next to the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh.

⁸⁷ The narrator gives the last exchange in both original Arabic and its translation in Persian.

⁸⁸ It is likely that this statement was a reference to Western missionaries, who were often dry in their demeanor.

Previously, he would come and go in the blessed House [of ‘Abbúd], and had learned a few Persian words. He had married a Christian woman, thoroughly devoid of beauty. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “I asked him, ‘What do you do with her?’ And he responded, ‘I turn off the light.’” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would then smile.

There was a certain Shaykh ‘Alí in ‘Akká, who had become a believer in his native town of Kashan. He was half-cleric, but a very simple man. He worked as a barber. He also had two donkeys, which he used to rent out for extra income.

On this pretext [of renting the animals], someone took away the donkeys, with no intention of returning them. He mentioned the situation to His blessed Person and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá responded [in humor], “O Shaykh, donkeys are gone, donkeys are gone, donkeys are gone!”

He [Shaykh ‘Alí] had a wife, who was from Kashan.

In those days, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s residence was in the House of ‘Abdu’lláh Pashá. When the [nightly] gathering was held, the Shaykh said, “Last night I dreamt that I was riding my [lost] donkey.” And he described some details.

There was a certain Áqá Faraj from Isfahan, who was most witty. He was at the gathering also. Even though he was in excess of ninety years of age, if someone said to him that he was old or decrepit, he would become very agitated.

One day, for the sake of humor, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asked him, “Áqá Faraj, are you older or I?” He said, “Master, the whole world testifies to your greatness – both inwardly and outwardly!”

When the Shaykh [‘Alí] was waiting to hear an interpretation of his dream, Áqá Faraj said to him, “Even in the mosquito net you were riding your donkey?” When he spoke this banter, particularly in the presence of His blessed Person, such laughter overcame those in attendance that in order to give everyone space for enjoyment, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá immediately left the room.

In short, this was the only interpretation of his dream that he heard.

[Bahá’u’lláh’s Influence]

One night there was a gathering in the blessed House of ‘Akká, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá shared the essence of the following:

There was a Kurdish person who was deeply devoted to the Blessed Beauty, and used to attain His sacred presence.

One day, [Bahá’u’lláh] inquired of his health and wellbeing. He said, “I have a problem, but I am ashamed to mention it.” He responded, “Do not be embarrassed; say it.”

It became evident that he was in love with the daughter of a certain Pashá, but [given his humble circumstances] marriage with her was impossible. Nevertheless, the Blessed Beauty arranged a solution [and the marriage took place].

After a while, <p.150> a missive arrived from him, saying, “My wife has given birth to a child and I request a name for him.”⁸⁹

In sharing this story, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was smiling. His purpose was to illustrate the sovereignty and influence of the Blessed Beauty under all circumstances.⁹⁰

[Old Traditions]

One day, several prominent men of Islam were in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence in ‘Akká.⁹¹ One of them asked for water, but drank only a mouthful from the water in the cup. Another of them said to him, “Do you not know that there is a hadith⁹² that states water must be drunk in three mouthfuls?”

⁸⁹ The words of the Kurdish man are given in what appears to be a Kurdish dialect.

⁹⁰ A similar story is attributed to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in: “Told by Abdu’l Bahá: From Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab”, July 3, 1914, *Star of the West*, Vol. 9, p. 212-214. However, in this story it is Jesus who grants a similar wish to a poor man.

⁹¹ The phrase *in ‘Akká* seems to be a later addition.

⁹² Often translated as *traditions*, it is a vast collection of sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the Imams, often being of highly questionable provenance.

His blessed Person shared this story in our assembly and smilingly added, “And he responded, “This is the first mouthful.””

Many of the traditions and practices which were not worthy of direct discussion, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would elucidate them through humor or stories, and thereby edify and educate.

[On Marriage]

Regarding marriage and its prerequisites, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to speak the following exact words, “Man must be godly and be able to earn a livelihood for his family and himself.”

This brief utterance, issued and spoken by the lips of His sovereign will, is most precious before those endowed with knowledge and is filled with wisdom, since it is a principle point and everything else is secondary. Therefore, the happiness sought in marriage by the daughters of the faithful is under the shadow of this principle and nothing else.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said, “The least of the friends is better than the fairest of the nonbelievers.”

Moreover, He used to say, “The worst of the friends is better than the best of the nonbelievers.”

These blessed utterances were solely for guidance, happiness and ease of the people of Bahá. Blessed is the one who followed [Him] and adhered [to the Faith].

[A Dream]

There was a person in the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who lived in ‘Akká and used to attain His blessed presence. One day, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was speaking of the influence of dreams and visions. This man said, “I do not believe in dreams.” He responded, “Very well. Let’s wait till you come to believe.”

After a while, this man had to journey to Haifa. While there, he dreamt that a messenger had come from ‘Akká bearing a letter in his name. When he opened the enveloped, he noticed that it was written, “Your daughter has died, but she has not had her funeral procession.

Come quickly.” [In this dream,] he returned forthwith to ‘Akká and when he arrived, he saw a coffin in the house’s courtyard containing his daughter. A large multitude had gathered for the funeral, waiting for his arrival. Afterwards, the funeral took place.

He woke up from this dream. That very morning, the same details that he had dreamt – no more and no less – occurred. Afterwards, he came into the blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], and had said, “I have come to believe in dreams; however, I did not expect that it would be in such a way.” [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] responded, “Such was the divine decree.”

[Payment of Debt]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would speak considerably regarding payment of debts. For instance, He would state in effect, “There was a person in debt who owed money, but his income was insignificant. Nevertheless, he had set aside a portion of his income for the payment of this debt and gradually was reimbursing what he owed. After a while, he observed that his entire debt was paid and his obligations were fulfilled.” This utterance of His blessed Person was both praise and a lesson.

[Messengerhood]

One day this servant was in the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Haifa. Suddenly and without a previous reference, He said, “Messengerhood means to convey a message.”

It appeared that the meaning of this word <p.155> was unclear to some and His blessed will had decreed that it be made clear and evident.

[Ladies Attire]

One day a Turkish woman from Istanbul arrived at the blessed House of Haifa. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá greatly praised her attire and the manner of her clothing. This was because at that time, the Muslim women who dwelled in the cities would go outside the house wearing a chador and a face covering. However, that woman from Istanbul had only covered her hair under a scarf, and her dress covered her up to the neck, and had long

sleeves and was ankle-length. Therefore, with great joy, [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] said, “This is the meaning of ‘modesty.’”⁹³

[On Marriage]

One time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá observed that a husband and wife among the pilgrims had utmost affection for one another during their entire stay, and consulted with each other on every subject. In seeing this, He stated, “This is an example of being a husband and wife.”

There was a certain Hájí ‘Alí from Yazd who was among the early believers in the Cause. He was ninety years old. He would relate that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said about marriage, “This connection was decreed prior to creation.” From this utterance, it was understood that marriage and union is dependent on God’s will and divine dictate.⁹⁴

[Children’s Spiritual Education]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to rise early morning before sunrise and wake up the household. Sometimes He would go to the rooftop and engage in prayer and meditation. Afterwards, He would proceed to the room of His illustrious sister, the Greatest Holy Leaf, which was the gathering place [of the family] and the morning tea. Then the family of God and His household would all come together, and the children, at ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s bidding, would recite prayers. Tea would be served. He used to say, “Do not give tea to children, and if you do, make it light.”

He asked one of His grandchildren, “Where is your heart?”⁹⁵ The latter placed his hand on his stomach and said, “Here.” He stated, “That

⁹³ The word *hijáb* is typically rendered as *veil*, but in this context, it is understood by the translator to mean *modesty*.

⁹⁴ On a number of occasions, Abú’l-Qásim Afnán related to the present translator that the Hand of the Cause of God Tarázu’lláh Samandarí had shared with him that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had said to him directly that three things are out of man’s control and were decreed before time by God, as they have to do with the world above: marriage, pilgrimage and death.

⁹⁵ While the original *dil* is always translated as *heart*, in Persian parlance it means *stomach*.

is your abdomen.” His purpose was merely to correct this common mistake made by some souls.

In a gathering that was held in a small room with many in attendance, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “The youngsters should give their seats to adults.”

In short, all His blessed utterances, whether personal or communal, were based on wisdom, intended to guide, edify and educate, bringing about righteousness in each soul.

[Spiritual Assemblies]

One day a group of the friends of God were gathered in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One for the purpose of visiting [the Shrine of the Báb], and they were in the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God. He was speaking about obedience to the instructions of the Spiritual Assemblies, and his point was that the community members should obey the Assembly members. He stated, “The Spiritual Assembly will make mistake and their retribution is with God. However, the House of Justice will not err.” It is evident that the intent of his blessed person was the Universal House of Justice, which is immune from making any error.

[Christians]

It was submitted to the blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, “What reason has caused there to be more Christians than Muslims, even though His Holiness the Messenger of God [Muhammad] declared Himself after His Holiness Jesus?” He responded, “The reason is that their hand was not stained by the blood of Prophets.”

[Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan Afnán]

An eminent personage of the Afnán of the Divine Lote-Tree [the family of the Báb], whose name was Mírzá Abú’l-Hasan, was a resident of Haifa. He was deeply pious, humble and unassuming, and the object of attention and bounties of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He had a wife who was also an

Afnán. One day when she was attending to her duties in the kitchen, suddenly the flames <p.160> engulfed her and caused her death. The honored Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan was profoundly heartbroken and depressed over this horrendous incident. Therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá had whispered to him, "I, too, will leave soon."

After hearing this utterance, he was bereft of patience. Next morning, after attending to necessary tasks and the purchase of daily provisions for his household – which had been one of his duties – he set out at an early hour for the seashore. After discarding his clothing and placing his green turban, which was his ancestral emblem, over them, he threw himself into the surging sea.

When this news reached His blessed Person ['Abdu'l-Bahá], He instructed that certain sea-experienced souls immediately retrieve his remains from the grasp of the strong waves. [When he was later examined, it was discovered that] the fish had only eaten away one of his eyes.

Thereupon, the funeral of his earthly remains was conducted with utmost tribute and dignity in the blessed presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

After this incident, three days later, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's blessed ascension occurred.⁹⁶

At the time of the funeral procession for the sanctified Temple of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, that Beloved of all creation and that essence of unquestioned holiness, some of the friends were shouting, "Happy art thou, O Afnán!"

The aforementioned Áqá Jamál, who was the cook in the blessed House, used to tell a story that one day the honored [Mírzá Abú'l-Hasan] Afnán came to the House carrying a quantity of sugar-cube⁹⁷, remarking, "Today, the Master said, 'I asked Áqá Habíb about his business affairs, and even though I know he has money, he said he did not have anything, and that saddened me. I asked Áqá Jamál the same, and even though I know he does not have anything, he expressed his gratitude and satisfaction. That made Me happy and pleased.' Now in consideration that you caused His blessed heart to be filled with joy, I wanted to

⁹⁶ See Appendix 4 for further discussion of this incident.

⁹⁷ The reference appears to be what was known as Russian Sugar-cube, which was a cone-shaped bulk of sugar.

sweeten your mouth.” With that, he gave me the sugar-cube as a gift. May God’s mercy and paradise rest upon him!

[Hájí Muhammad Shúshtarí]

There was a certain Hájí Muhammad, who was a native of Shushtar. He was known as Hájí Muhammad Shúshtarí. Previously he had lived in Baghdad and many times had walked from that town to the Holy Land to attain the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and visit the Holy Places. He had also spent some time in Egypt and Beirut. At the end, in accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s instruction, he became a resident of the Holy Land, and for a while was engaged in Haifa as a cobbler – by this means he used to earn his livelihood.

One day a priest took his shoes to Hájí Muhammad for repair. He started a conversation with the priest and gradually reached the desired topic [of teaching him the Bahá’í Faith]. Eventually, he said to him, “You must worship the donkey, not the cross. This is because Jesus suffered bitterly on the cross, but His donkey brought Him much ease and comfort.”

On hearing this, the priest became deeply perturbed and distressed, and quickly sought the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, complaining about what had been said to him.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to tell this incident and laugh. He stated, “I said to the Hájí not to say these things again.”

One time ‘Abdu’l-Bahá related that Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí (the arch-Covenant-breaker) was passing down a road and Hájí Muhammad had come face to face with him, but turned his head and changed his direction. His point was [to illustrate] his constancy and firmness in the divine Covenant and Testament.

From near or far, whenever his gaze fell upon the blessed Temple [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], he would begin to whisper the prayer, “Praise be unto Thee and thanks be rendered unto Thee.” [He conducted himself] in the same manner when he attained the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God.

He had a most humble dwelling near the blessed House of Haifa. One day at noon, a number of the friends were partaking of lunch at the

blessed House, and from the window, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá saw <p.165> him going home. He said, “Hájí Muhammad is an old man. Be considerate of him.” That is, he should receive a portion from this food and sustenance.

Outwardly, Hájí Muhammad was frail, fallen and poor. However, he possessed an extraordinarily pure heart, filled with spirit and joy.

One day in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb] – on the day devoted to visitation of the Shrine, with the beloved friends of God in the presence of the Guardian of the Cause of God – one of the friends had put one leg over the other. Hájí Muhammad considered such an act outside of the bounds of appropriateness. He rose from his seat and undid his crossed legs. After so doing, he was rebuked and threatened by the honored Mírzá Hádí Afnán.⁹⁸ However, his thoughts were solely centered on the Guardian of the Cause of God, and none other. May his spirit be gladdened.

He was very close to this servant. One day I said to him, “It would be good if we made a pact and covenant with each other, and that would be: If I leave this world before you, then I will come to your dream and tell you of the condition of that world. And if you leave earlier, then you do likewise in accordance with this pact and covenant.” He said, “Very well. I accept.”

He passed away in the blessed House in Haifa during the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God. The Guardian of the Cause of God was in attendance at the time of the funeral. The late Áqá ‘Alí-Asghar,⁹⁹ that faithful and sacrificial servant of the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God, related, “Hájí Muhammad would say, ‘I want to go and see where the Master went.’”

With his own blessed hand, he [Shoghi Effendi] placed a ringstone with the death verse inscribed upon it under his tongue,¹⁰⁰ and

⁹⁸ Shoghi Effendi’s father.

⁹⁹ He is remembered as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s courier. He lived at the home of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in Haifa, in the apartment on the right hand-side as one enters the main entrance and passes by the side gardens. On hearing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s passing, he was so overcome with emotion that he attempted suicide by cutting his own throat.

¹⁰⁰ Regarding the deceased, Bahá’u’lláh in the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, p. 228, states, “and on his finger should be placed a ring bearing the inscription ‘I came forth from God,

stated, “Lift Hájí Muhammad with the utmost respect. Hájí Muhammad is most deserving of our esteem.”

After a few days, he appeared in my dream. I knew in that vision that he had passed away and, therefore, said to him, “Hájí Muhammad, it is time to fulfill your pledge.” He replied, “That is true, but I am not permitted.” That is, he was not allowed to divulge the condition of that world.

[Hájí Farhán]

There was a believer in Haifa by the name of Hájí Farhán, known as Hájí Za‘allán and the Hindí. He spoke fluent Hindi with Indians. For a while, he was united with the Covenant-breakers. According to what he related:

One day the Covenant-breakers inquired, “Who would volunteer to go to India at his own expense in order to promote [our cause] there?” That is, promotion of the path of darkness and misguidance.

They kept repeating this inquiry and I realized that they intended for me [to go to India], as there was no one else available to undertake this matter. Therefore, I volunteered and left ‘Akká, meaning the Mansion of Bahjí, which was the seat of the Covenant-breakers, for Haifa, so I could board a ship leaving for India in three days.

Suddenly, I became gravely ill and pale in Haifa to the point that my plans and destination changed into being admitted to a hospital.

Day after day, my condition grew worse, and all my organs were most afflicted. The physician had also abandoned hope for my recovery.

After forty days of being bedridden and at the door of death, I became repentant and remorseful [over my opposition to the Covenant]. I began to cry. I felt sleep in that condition. I dreamt that the Master had come,

and return unto Him, detached from all save Him, holding fast to His Name, the Merciful, the Compassionate’ ...”

consoling me. He said, “We have bestowed health upon you.”

When I woke, I sensed that all parts of my body had returned to their normal state, and that I was in perfect health. I began to sob bitterly.

<p.170> The doctor came in and asked, “What has happened?” I said, “Abbás Effendi has bestowed health on me.” When he examined me, he discovered in the utmost amazement that I was in perfect condition.

The Covenant-breakers came to visit me. I said to them, “From now on, I have nothing to do with you. All my illnesses and misfortunes were as result of your evil activities and my own idol-worshiping.”

After receiving permission from His blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], I left Haifa for ‘Akká and arrived to the sanctified presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. God only knows how that hour [of being with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] passed. The Master caressed and comforted me. At that moment, I felt as if I had entered paradise by way of hell.

He [Hájí Farhán] would also relate:

Along with a group of [Muslim] pilgrims passing through the region, we attained the presence of the Blessed Beauty and were received on the ground floor of the Mansion of Bahjí. Bahá’u’lláh gave each of us a handful of *nuql*.¹⁰¹ However, some of them, due to torpid and false ideas they entertained, threw out the *nuql*. I gathered all the *nuql* though.

In short, after he [Hájí Farhán] had established his home and dwelling in Haifa, gradually over time he began to purchase the land on the east side of the train-station, which at that time was outside the city limits and away from the residences. He built a modest coffee shop on the land he had acquired, as well as a home for his own use.

¹⁰¹ *Nuql* is a sweet, small Iranian candy.



Haifa's City Hall, 1910

At the same time, he had begun to dig a well [in the courtyard]. He was nearly at the end of the excavation, when, one day, he had filled the basket with dirt to be pulled up by the laborer that was standing at the top of the well, when by chance ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Who at times, either on foot or by carriage, would visit him, arrived on one such visit. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came by the spot where he [Hájí Farhán] was working at the bottom of the well, and stood by the well. Thinking that his laborer was standing at the top of the well, the Hájí shouted with a loud voice, “Pull.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá pulled on the rope and brought up the basket filled with earth.

He related [the rest of the story] thus:

From the bottom of the well, I saw the white skirt of an ‘abá, similar to ones His blessed Person would wear. With great anxiety, I came up. When my eyes fell upon His blessed Temple, I was profoundly embarrassed.

It was winter at that time and the days of war, with tea and sugar being scarce. He inquired, “Do you have tea?” I said that I did not have any. He asked, “How about cinnamon?” I replied that I did not have cinnamon either and that I only had some ginger. He stated, “Brew that.”

Quickly, I put some [ginger] in a pot, boiled it, and took it before His blessed Self. He drank it with utmost pleasure.

After he had completed [the construction], he named it ‘Abbás Land, and devoted all his belongings to the Cause. He was a benevolent man and His blessed Person was well pleased with him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “Hájí Farhán is a good person.”

During the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God, at the time that the believers of the Holy Land were sent to other localities and countries, he too was sent to Sur, which is a town in Syria. It was there that he joined the Divine Bounty [i.e. passed away].

[A Story from Baghdad]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to relate, “In Baghdad, the friends had gathered and had a delightful time. A certain Hájí was sitting in a corner, silent and pensive. Áqá Ibráhím said to him [in verse]: ‘God has bestowed unto us a mighty mansion, O thou suspicious Hájí, what thoughts dost thou entertain?’” He would utter this poem with a smile.

In truth, if this suspicion did not exist among the believers in the Cause of God, what bountiful happiness would surround us! We should pray unto God to release everyone one from the grasp of this inclination.

[Muhammad-Javád Qazvíní]

One of the pillars of the Covenant-breakers was named Muhammad-Javád <p.175> Qazvíní. When he strolled, he held his neck exceedingly straight, particularly if he came upon the friends or His blessed Temple [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]. ‘Abdul-Bahá would say, “He is like someone with a back injury, and forced to hold his neck straight to ease the pain.”¹⁰²

[Various Advices]

¹⁰² An approximate translation.

Regarding protection of one’s head, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “The head must be covered. It will once again return to a turban.”¹⁰³ His blessed purpose was that the head should not be left uncovered, so it would be immune from cold and heat. The interpretation of this is with physicians.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “A husband and wife who greatly love each other, will be together in the next world also.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “There is no comfort in the world, except in death.” He then added, “Sanctified is God! Even though comfort is in death, they flee it.” That is, people do not wish to die.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “No matter how bad a government, it is better than not having a government.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “If a brawl is taking place, do not tarry there.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say to the effect, “After a head cold, when you come out from the bath, eat watermelon to your fill.” The purpose of His blessed Person was for emission and removal of heat.

He used also to say to this effect, “Diarrhea is beneficial for three days as it eliminates vapors and heaviness of head. But if it was to last longer, it would cause harm.” He would moreover state, “Diarrhea has no medicine. [The cure is] only to skip a meal.”

He spoke of the benefits and influences of quinine.¹⁰⁴ His blessed purpose was that even though medicine will be replaced with nutrition [for medicinal purposes], quinine would continue to remain.

[Visiting the Needy]

In the mornings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would go visit the poor and the ill who were unable to leave [their home] or move. The destitute who were upholding their public image were aided in secret and stealthy. If a poor

¹⁰³ The original term is *‘amámih*, which typically refers to the type of turbans worn by Iranian clergies.

¹⁰⁴ Quinine is a natural white crystalline alkaloid having antipyretic (fever reducing), anti-smallpox, analgesic (painkilling), and anti-inflammatory properties. Its main use in ‘Akká of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s time was as an anti-malarial; for other reported comments by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding quinine see, Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu’ayyad*, (Trans. Ahang Rabbani).

person had no family, had fallen ill and was bedridden so that no one was there to care for him, then He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] would appoint a nurse for him until he regained his health.

This servant was twelve years old when for a few days I was confined to bed due to an illness. At that time, we lived in the Khán ‘Avamíd, and the blessed residence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] was in the House of ‘Abdu’lláh Pashá. Suddenly, one early morning, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá came for a visit. With that melodious and enchanting voice, He said, “What is wrong with Khalílu’lláh?” Immediately, I rose from bed and stood with my hands folded over my chest. He took my pulse and pronounced, “No, no, there is nothing wrong.” Then He paused and halted a little and said, “Marhabá,” and departed.

These doings and the conduct of His blessed Person were all considerably more effective and superior to mere words. All were intended for the edification and education of the peoples of the world, and an example for all humankind. Happy are the ones who succeed in tracing and following in His footsteps. Otherwise, that Master of both worlds was sanctified and beyond such considerations.

[Persepolis]

One night there was a gathering in the blessed House of ‘Akká. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke about Takht Jamshíd, which is also written as sacred Text. His blessed purpose was that the Bahá’ís should return [Persepolis] to its original condition, and develop and beautify it. He stated, “I cherish this hope.”¹⁰⁵

[Reading]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Books are for reading, not for storage in a container.” <p.180> His purpose was that from reading and studying benefits would be realized; otherwise, it is the same as its absence.

¹⁰⁵ This appears to be a summary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s exposition on Persepolis, which is given in a talk on 18 July 1915. For ease of reference, that talk is provided in Appendix 6 in translation.

[Witchcraft]

[A question about] the nature of magic and witchcraft was asked of the blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He responded, “It has influence, but its impact later returns to the original person.” His intent was that a person would be seized by his own evil machinations.

[The Lukewarm]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say about those lukewarm in the Cause of God, “If I was to administer the least admonishment to any of them, they would take the path of the Mansion.”¹⁰⁶ However, regarding those constant in the Cause of God, He would say, “If I force them to leave through the door, they would come in by the window.” The purpose of His blessed Person was that, if He did not conduct Himself with wisdom and compassion, then the weak in constitution who had encircled His blessed Person would join the Covenant-breakers. Since in those days the pivot of rebellion and his cohorts were residing in the Mansion of Bahjí, He stated, “They would take the path of the Mansion.”

Praise be unto God that today, out of the power and sovereignty of the beloved and appointed Guardian of the Cause of God, the Mansion has become the point of adoration of all who are under the shade of Bahá.

However, regarding those who are firm and constant in the divine Covenant and Testament, no matter how angrily or heatedly He spoke with them, they would bow more to His sanctified Threshold, would grow more in humility and meekness, and burn brighter by the fire of the love of God’s Proof, and more eagerly seek His good-pleasure. It is why He would say, “If I force them to leave through the door, they would come in by the window.” Blessed are those who arrive at this state and sustain this manner.

[Serving Others]

¹⁰⁶ At that time, Mansion of Bahjí was the seat of the family of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá who had rebelled against Him.

In some festivals and commemorations, after the meal ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would pour water for each guest and visitor from a jug among the pitchers which were common in those days – as there was no better facility for washing hands and faces. In such a way, each believer and attendee would wash his hands and face. He would provide this service in the highest point of perfection for every person, whether lowly or noble, without any exception.

This demands our reflection and pondering! When ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, that Master of both worlds, stood to service to such a degree, then surely the duty of us, who are naught but servants of that Threshold, is clear and well evident.

[Some Answered Questions]

In consideration of His many responsibilities, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá revealed the sacred *Kitáb Mufávidát* [Some Answered Questions] only at lunchtime. It was in this manner: after all others commenced lunch, His blessed Person would pace on one side of the table, back and forth, rather deliberately, and answer questions raised by Miss Barney.



Laura and Hippolyte Dreyfus-Barney in 1906

One day, on the upper apartment of the House of ‘Abdu’lláh Pashá, a number of pilgrims and resident believers were the guests of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. After ensuring that food was served to each guest and that everyone was partaking of the meal, He commenced to reveal answers to questions [of Miss Barney], which were put to Him one after another. The power of utterance and deduction, which exclusively belongs to the Manifestations of the Truth, was most evident and apparent.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Eating Habits]

After He sat at table, although different forms of dishes were at hand, he took three or four mouthfuls of bread and cheese, and then He left.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá ate little. He used to say to this effect, “When I eat, I become heavy and cannot work. However, if I do not eat, then My vigor is diminished. There is no choice; something must be consumed.”

[Correspondence]

At the time of responding to the missives sent from diverse corners of the world to the blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, they were opened in order, an answer was composed immediately and the secretary would take the dictation. <p.185> When it was completed, He would tear up the missive into pieces and would open another envelope. It would go in thus manner until the end – even though there was no end.

The Pen of the Center of the Covenant wrote some of the responses.

One day in Haifa, at the time of such compositions, I was in attendance. It was a particular condition. After I had greatly enjoyed the experience, He said, “Fí amánu’lláh!”

At the time of the revelation of divine verses, Tablets and prayers, the majesty of His blessed Person became a hundredfold.

One day in Haifa, a group of the ‘urafá [mystics] were in the blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. As His blessed Temple spoke with them, He was engaged in writing. The situation unfolded in such a way that He read that text [He had just written] to them, which was extensive

and detailed, and composed in utmost eloquence and fluency in Arabic. They were most bewildered as to how it was possible for Him to be engaged in conversation, giving answers to their questions and inquiries, and at the same time compose such remarkable text and prose. Indeed God was with Him, but they were bereft of recognizing that His power was beyond any human abilities.¹⁰⁷

[Bahá'u'lláh Revealing Tablets]

The paternal uncle of this servant, Áqá Muhammad-Hasan, who was the custodian of the pilgrim house, used to relate:

One day, the Ancient Beauty – His exalted Name is supreme – was pacing and revealing divine verses. Even though Mírzá Áqá Ján, who was His amanuensis and skilled in writing rapidly, was leaving many words without their required dots, nevertheless he [could not keep up], stopped and started crying. Meanwhile, divine verses were pouring forth like capacious rain.

Suddenly, that Promised Beauty became aware of his condition and inquired, “How far were you able to write?” When he stated [how far], Bahá'u'lláh responded, “From the beginning, it was the most great renewal,¹⁰⁸ since this unbounded and unrestrained power was solely appointed to this mighty Manifestation.”

Moreover, he [Áqá Muhammad-Hasan] also used to relate, “One day it was inquired of the presence of the Blessed Beauty, ‘From which direction should the pilgrims return home?’ He responded, ‘The station of the Godhead is the revelation of divine verses.’”¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ A more detailed version of this occurrence is told by Afnán, *Memories of the Báb, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani).

¹⁰⁸ The original *qiyámat kubrá* can also be rendered as the most great *resurrection* or *revolution*.

¹⁰⁹ The implication being that certain questions were not worthy of the time and attention of Bahá'u'lláh. Related to this, the Báb had specifically admonished His

[The Next Manifestation]

At all events, the proof of Manifestationhood up to this mighty and perfect Dispensation, which in no wise can be compared to the previous Appearances, has been the revelation of divine verses.¹¹⁰ Moreover, this proof was concluded with this supreme Manifestation of God, since the Ancient Beauty states, “Ere this Manifestation, Verses alone had been the proof unto all.” Then He states, “For in this Manifestation, God – glorified be His mention – hath willed that most of the believers and the sincere ones should give utterance to Verses; whence in the next Dispensation We shall ordain a different matter as proof, lest all who speak in this fashion should show pride towards God, the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty;”¹¹¹ until the end of His sweet statement.

By clear and explicit divine verses, it is evident and plain that when the Proof of the next Manifestation appears, it will not be by divine verses.¹¹² Moreover, that Appearance will be after the completion of a full thousand years.

According to the statement of the Interpreter of God’s verses – that is, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Center of divine Covenant and Testament – the guidance for the present thousand-year manifestation is provided by

followers not to ask questions from Him Whom God shall make manifest – Whom for the Bahá’ís is fulfilled in Bahá’u’lláh – so that He would be free to address more exalted themes, such as, His own station.

¹¹⁰ Bahá’u’lláh states (*Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 104), “Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. This is, verily, an evidence of His tender mercy unto men. He hath endowed every soul with the capacity to recognize the signs of God.”

¹¹¹ For ease of reference, this Tablet is provided in Appendix 2 in provisional translation. Appendix 3 provides Nabíl Zarandí’s recollections of Bahá’u’lláh’s utterances.

¹¹² This statement may need to be reconciled with other texts from Bahá’u’lláh, where it is implied that revelation of divine verses will always be one of the proofs; see for instance, *La’alí Hikmat*, vol. 2, pp. 39; <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/LH2/lh2-39.html>

the Blessed Beauty. For an exposition and explanation of these statements, refer to *Kitáb Rabíq Makhtúm*, volume one.¹¹³

[Warning Against Claims]

The point is that whenever individuals like the shameless Yahyá [Azal] or the pivot of rebellion the greater firewood [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí], or others advance such claims, or assert Prophethood, then according to the firm text and the decree of the heaven of the divine will, it is absolute falsehood, complete fabrication and thorough polytheism, and stems from misguidance and shamelessness. Likewise, [this is true of] anyone who makes a claim to the Guardianship, like the perished and base Remey.¹¹⁴ This is because in accordance with the firm and irrefutable divine text <p.190> revealed in [‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s] *Will and Testament*, the next Guardian must be a descendant of the Guardian of the Cause of God. That is, he must be an offspring of the blessed temple [of Shoghi Effendi]. Otherwise, he is not someone whom we would consider as the Guardian of the Cause, nor is he specific, explicit, appointed or known as such, and “be as sweet as he is.”

The Guardian of the Cause of God must appoint and designate the next Guardian, officially and personally. For example, in the *Will and Testament*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in an explicit text appointed Shoghi Effendi Rabbani, the chosen branch, as the Guardian of the Cause of God and the authority over the people of Bahá.

Now, if a person advances such a claim that, for instance, he is an offspring of the Guardian of the Cause of God, and in truth even entitled to the Guardianship, since the Guardian of the Cause of God has not appointed him in an explicit text without hints or allusions, then he would not be acceptable to the people of Bahá. How much truer this is in case of the crazed Remey and men like him, who are miles and

¹¹³ Ishráq-Khávarí, *Rabíq Makhtúm*, v. 1, Iran, 130 BE, in 762 pages. This book is a commentary on Shoghi Effendi’s Centennial Letter (known as *Lawh Qarn*) to the Bahá’ís of the East.

¹¹⁴ This narrative was composed shortly after the expulsion of Charles Mason Remey from the Bahá’í community because of his unfounded claim to be Shoghi Effendi’s successor and the next Guardian.

scores [of miles] away from the principal Tree. Delusion can be attributed to such individuals.

In the sacred *Kitáb-i Aqdas*, which is the authority over all the people of Bahá, the establishment and formation of the Universal House of Justice is neither conditioned nor related to the presence of the Guardian of the Cause, so that this can be made into a source of complaint or protest. Rather, this [i.e. membership of the Guardian on the Universal House of Justice] is an exposition enshrined in the *Will and Testament*. However, the absence of its fulfillment is not a reason for denying or disallowing the establishment and formation of the Universal House of Justice, or – and I take refuge with God – a reason for its invalidity.

The most that can be said is that mighty mysteries are enshrined and concealed in this, in which at present one of those wisdoms can be observed. That is: certain ambitious, foolish and lukewarm [individuals] in the Cause of God, and outside of the straight divine path, are thereby subjected to test and trial, and unaware and lost, they traverse the field of darkness.

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “It is not necessary to wait for the Universal House of Justice to be formed at a time when all have embraced the Faith. It must take place when a portion of the people have come under the shadow of the Cause of God.” He did not specify any other condition.

He would say, “The plan of God is mysterious.” He would also add, “Odd or even, we will win.”¹¹⁵

[Tests]

One day in the *birúni* [outer section] of the blessed House of Haifa, He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “I have forgotten my handkerchief.” One of the friends who was known as Ustád Muhammad-‘Alí Banná, remarked to this effect, “How is it possible for the manifestation of Truth to forget

¹¹⁵ *Odd or even* is an expression used in rolling the dice in the game of backgammon. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement implies that regardless of crisis and misfortunes visiting the humanity, God’s plan will ultimately triumph.

anything?” Immediately, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá slapped him and stated, “Over forgetting a handkerchief that man puts a hundred souls to test.”

Recently, this same person was excommunicated during the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God and, dejected and remorseful, left this world.

The point is that such people are bereft of God and unaware of His plans. “And for them is naught save hell and its fire.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was speaking in the blessed House of Haifa about the evil deeds of a person and stated, “I will not mention his name.” This blessed utterance demonstrated that such individuals are not worthy of mention or introduction, since the decree of evanescence and nothingness governs over them.

[The Hands of the Cause]

The Hands of the Cause of God – upon them rest the Glory of God, the Most Glorious – have each been appointed and designated through the sovereign will and the encompassing decree of the beloved and the chosen Guardian of the Cause of God, <p.195> whose will is the same as God’s will and decree. Therefore, they are representative of his blessed person and stand to fulfill his wishes. They are considered and ascribed as the foremost learned in Bahá. Therefore, there is no doubt or reservation left to anyone with discernment that their love-motivated decision to establish and form the Universal House of Justice, and achieve such a bountiful success, the likes of which has never occurred before and will ever happen again, is by the inspiration and confirmation of Almighty God, and in accordance with the firm text. Their very success is manifest and clear evidence, since God has eternally been protector, supporter and sustainer of His Cause and will ever remain so. Therefore, no one can deny the services and mighty undertakings of these sanctified souls, who night and day stood devoted to the Cause, diffused the divine fragrances, and guided the inhabitants of earth and all who dwell in various corners and continents.

Remey is also a Hand of the Cause, or was a Hand, and committed that which is the essence of inequity and most unconscionable. His deeds demonstrated that a dead branch is worthy of fire, much the same

as the Greater Branch [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] became the greater firewood¹¹⁶ and was sent to the eternal infernal fire. In addition, many like him have found their way to the lowest abyss. Therefore, we should know with absolute certainty that such individuals who raise claims are outside the Cause of God and the straight path of the Lord, and suffer from mental disturbance. Consequently, in utmost misery and wretchedness, like the ill-wishing Covenant-breakers, they spend their time, and at the end will join them. “And this is the reward of their deeds,” unless they remove their hands from their evil doings and, penitent and remorseful, return [to the fold].

[An Incident at the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh]

One year during the blessed days of Guardian of the Cause of God, a large number of pilgrims and resident believers were at hand for the commemoration of the Ascension of the Blessed Perfection. Everyone was gathered and present in the garden of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, and with great sorrow and hearts set on fire, was engaged in reciting divine verses and prayers in accordance with his blessed instruction.

At that time, a number of women Covenant-breakers who were in the Mansion entered the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, but their visitation was prolonged. It appeared that intentionally they did not wish to exit, so that there would not be an opportunity for the friends of God to enter the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. Since the time and hour of visitation was passing and all were waiting for their departure, the Guardian of the Cause of God stated [to the Shrine’s custodian], “Tell them to come out.” However, they did not pay any attention and manifested enmity.

Thereupon, by his own sacred self, the Guardian of the Cause of God rose and entered the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, instructing them to leave. The greatness and grandeur of his person forcefully precipitated the exit of that seditious band. At the time of departure, one of the woman Covenant-breakers had said, “May my life be a sacrifice for the Most Mighty Branch [‘Abdu’l-Bahá].” Her intent by uttering this remark

¹¹⁶ Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí was styled by Bahá’u’lláh as the Greater Branch. After his break with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, some referred to him as the greater firewood, a play on words.

was to express her meekness, meaning, “Wrong was perpetrated against us.”

The Guardian of the Cause of God said to the friends who had been standing outside waiting for the opportunity to enter [the Shrine], “Walk around a little until these persons leave.”

Next year, when like the year before, they wanted to enter the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh, the Guardian instructed, “Do not allow them in.” At that time, one of the friends of God who was among the resident believers of that region, whose name was Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rahmán Ardikání, and who presently resides in Amman [Jordan], stood outside the Shrine as a guard.¹¹⁷ With a resonant voice, the Guardian of the Cause of God announced, “‘Abdu’r-Rahmán, do not allow them to enter.” He informed them [the Covenant-breakers], “Instructions have been receive to prevent <p.200> your entrance. It is not possible.”

In such manner, they received the punishment for their conduct of the previous year.

During the course of these events, ‘Alí-Ridá, who was one of the pillars of the Covenant-breakers, from afar, that is, outside of the assembly of the friends, had murmured about the possession and seizing [of the Shrine] and had immediately disappeared from the scene. Later, this incident was printed in the newspaper, stating in essence, “They deprived us from visiting our Father.” However, no one heeded their writings or empty words.

Later, they were completely prevented from entering the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh. And this was naught but through the power and might of the “perspicuous serpent.”¹¹⁸ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had taken an oath that He would appear with the perspicuous serpent. Therefore, this divine serpent so thoroughly uprooted the Covenant-breakers, and eliminated and destroyed them, that forever they will be unable to rise or be reestablished.

¹¹⁷ ‘Abdu’r-Rahmán and his two younger brothers, Subhí and Khalíl, lived for some time in Haifa, where Khalíl was in service to the Faith. The two former brothers lived for some years in Jaffa, before Shoghi Effendi sent them to Jordan. Khalíl’s daughter, Rúhíyyih, lives presently in Haifa in the same house as her father’s. (Hossein Achtchi, private communications, 10 March 2008.)

¹¹⁸ See discussion of the “perspicuous serpent” earlier in this narrative.

[Sádhijh]

Mírzá Badí‘u’lláh had given his daughter, Sádhij, in marriage to the owner of the Karmel Newspaper, who was an old man, a Christian, and whose name was Nassar.¹¹⁹ Even though they presented themselves as Muslims, this deed [i.e. marriage to a Christian] was against Islamic jurisprudence.



Najib Nassar

‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to the effect, “They asked Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí (the arch-Covenant-breaker) of the station and rank of Bahá’u’lláh. He said, ‘My Father was a Dervish.’”

¹¹⁹ Born to a Greek Orthodox family in Tiberius, Najib al-Khuri Nassar (1865-1948) converted to Protestantism while working for 15 years in a hospital run by missionaries. He then worked briefly as a land sales agent for the Jewish Colonization Association before founding the daily newspaper al-Karmil in 1908 in Haifa. Nassar used his knowledge of land sales to Jews to write articles against the Jewish settlers and the first history of the Zionist movement in Arabic, *Zionism: Its History, Object and Importance*. Before World War I, he founded several activist organizations to limit Jewish immigration and land sales. Al-Karmil was closed permanently by court order in 1944. Nassar died in Nazareth. See, Mandel, Neville J. *The Arabs and Zionism before World War I*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976.

At any rate, their purpose from so doing [marriage of Sádhiġ with Nassar] was that whenever they wanted, they could publish their falsehoods, lies and fabrications against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the Center of divine Covenant and Testament, and that Karmel Newspaper would be at their disposal. “O regret for such deeds!”

At the end, they were seized by the greatest misery and were thoroughly obliterated.¹²⁰

[Mírzá Asadu’lláh Isfahání]

There was a certain Mírzá Asadu’lláh, a native of Isfahan. He was related to the members of the blessed household.¹²¹ From a distance, some new

¹²⁰ Under Palestinian Women’s Activist, the following is recorded for Sádhiġ Nassar (1900-70) in: *Encyclopedia of the Modern Middle East and North Africa*; The Gale Group, Inc; 2004, <http://www.answers.com/topic/sadhij-nassar>:

Sádhiġ Nassar, of Iranian origin, grew up in Haifa, where she lived until 1948. She married Najib Nassar, editor of the newspaper al-Karmil. It was one of the few interfaith marriages during this period, and not without controversy. Najib Nassar, who was an Orthodox Christian, was also considerably older than his wife, who was the granddaughter of the founder of the Baha’i faith. Beginning in the 1920s, Sádhiġ Nassar contributed articles to the newspaper, translated articles from the foreign press, and was editor from 1941 to 1944, when the Mandate authorities refused to grant her a permit under the Emergency Defense Regulations. In 1930, she was a founding member and secretary of the Arab Women’s Union in Haifa, which was one of the more militant branches of the women’s movement during the Mandate period. In 1939, the British detained her for political reasons and held her without charges under the Emergency Defense Regulations in the women’s prison in Bethlehem. She was released after an eleven-month imprisonment. She continued her activities in the women’s movement until 1948. After 1948, when she became a refugee, she wrote for various publications in London and in Damascus, where she tried to open a branch of the Arab Women’s Union. She is believed to have died in Damascus sometime during the 1970s.

Bibliography: Fleischmann, Ellen L. *The Nation and Its “New” Women: The Palestinian Women’s Movement, 1920 - 1948*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003.

arrivals would mistake his appearance for the blessed temple of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. This was because in clothing, attire, style of beard and turban – and I take refuge unto God! – he appeared to look like ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. For this reason, some would mistake this imitator [for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] from a distance and would bow down, which would please him. However, when the visitors learned of their error, they would be sad and disturbed. Sanctified is God! What wickedness is this and what false imaginings!

At last he was dismissed and left for America. It was there that his life ended.

[Refinement]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to tie a white cloth around His inner cap and His blessed head. Even though He did so with utmost speed, it was extremely refined and methodical, such that others, no matter how much time they spent, were never able to replicate His manner.

One time the Guardian of the Cause of God was instructing how the sheets designed to spread over the *mandars* [“benches”] in the blessed House of Haifa were to be cut. The Greatest Holy Leaf, the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá, stated, “How have you learned such things?” He replied, “By deductive reasoning.”

It is certain that it is so, since the manifestations of God are themselves the essence of logic.

[Simplicity]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “If not for the grandeur of the Cause, I would not even wear this attire;” even though His blessed appearance was most simple. That is, it consisted of a long garment and a thin overcoat. In winters, He would add a cotton ‘abá. Even then, when He came upon a destitute person in His path, He would bestow the ‘abá on him.

¹²¹ Mírzá Asadu’lláh had married the sister of Munírih Khánúm, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s wife. He rendered notable services to the Faith, including the transfer of the Báb’s remains from Iran to the Holy Land. However, later he followed his son, Dr. Fareed, in rebellion against ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and was excommunicated.

Therefore, from His blessed utterance it can be discerned that clothing is only for the purpose of covering the body, and one must not be attracted to lavishness.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “If one’s clothing has a patch, there is no harm. But it must be clean.”

One of the servants of the blessed House was Bashír. He passed away in Haifa <p.205> in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s residence.¹²² He was exceedingly devoted and interested in the cleanliness of his headgear and its presentation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to him, “Do not be so excessively concerned with spotlessness of your hat.” That is, every undertaking, no matter how desirable, has limits.

At one time in Iran, the government forbade the wearing of the ‘abá. The Guardian of the Cause of God stated, “The ‘abá is a good thing.”

[Sweetmeat]

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, one day a number of Iranian pilgrims were invited for lunch to the blessed House in Haifa. At lunchtime, this servant also attained unto this bounty. Among the food items and various dishes on the table, there were plates filled with *bámiyih*.¹²³ This particular sweetmeat was not common at that time in Iran, and indeed did not exist. Therefore, the pilgrims were hesitant in partaking of them. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “This is *bámiyih*. It is a natural laxative and reduces the bile.¹²⁴” After this remark, they were favored with great appetite and much enjoyment, with coincided with considerable cheers and delight.

¹²² On the manner of unfortunate incident leading to Bashír’s death see, Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu’ayyad*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani).

¹²³ A confection resembling the shape of okra.

¹²⁴ The original term *safrá* is yellow bile (sometimes called ichor), which together with black bile were two of the four vital fluids or humors of ancient and medieval Islamic and European medicine (the other two were phlegm and blood). The Latin name for yellow bile gave rise to the word *cholera*. Excessive yellow bile was supposed to produce an aggressive temperament, known as *choleric*. The word *bilious* refers especially to a temperament produced by an excess of black bile.

[Bahíyyih Khánum]

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, suddenly the Greatest Holy Leaf, the Liege Lady of the people of Bahá – may my soul be a sacrifice unto her meekness – became ill and bedridden. Smilingly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to His illustrious sister, “Do what you wish, but I have work for you.” That is, “If you wish to depart this world, for now suspend that idea, as there is much work that remains which you must shoulder.”



In truth, the veracity of His blessed utterance became evident after His ascension when it was observed what significant and critical matters were entrusted to her.¹²⁵ In this regard, the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God has written extensively.

¹²⁵ During the first decade of Shoghi Effendi’s ministry, Bahíyyih Khánum often served as the Head of the Faith during the Guardian’s absence from Haifa.

Whether during the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, or during the blessed period of the Guardian of the Cause of God, the Greatest Holy Leaf was their principal representative.¹²⁶ Night and day, she was engaged in service within and outside the Cause, administration of daily affairs of the household, serving as host to friends and strangers by her own sacred self, and many other matters and affairs that remain unnumbered and unaccounted. All of this while she was brokenhearted over the infidelity, deeds and activities of the Covenant-breakers both in [the Holy Land] and outside. These things brought much harm to her tender and delicate person. Nevertheless, she endured it all with the utmost dignity, calm, patience, fortitude, serenity and composure. She was a singular friend and companion to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and the Guardian of the Cause of God. Except each [of these luminous figures] had their own sphere of responsibility, and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s was so extensive that He would say, “I must even think of the hay and fodder for the horses.”

The Greatest Holy Leaf was the treasure house of mysteries.¹²⁷

When Arab ladies were invited to the blessed House of Haifa, and a gathering held in the evening, coinciding with this servant having the bounty of attaining as well, then word would be sent [by Bahiyyih Khánúm] that I should chant Arabic prayers. It was mentioned to her sanctified presence, “That person [i.e. Khalíl Shahídí] chants well.” She had responded, “He chants eloquently.” This was yet another bounty upon this hapless and unworthy servant.

At the time of her ascension, she was looking heavenwards saying, “Very well. Wait, I am coming.” It was evident that from the world above that the spirits of the Concours on High, impatiently and with great fervor, were anticipating the arrival of the pure and sanctified soul of that remnant of God and trust of Bahá, which propelled her to speak such words of assurance to them.

¹²⁶ The original *na‘amu’l-vakíl* implies more than being the principal representative or prime confidant and suggests a standing as the deputy or principal substitute.

¹²⁷ Another reading of *makhẓan asrár* is *vault of secrets*. While it is true that Bahiyyih Khánúm was entrusted with the most confidential matters of the Faith, such as being charged with secretly housing the remains of the Báb in her room for over a decade, it appears that the intent of the narrator by *asrár* refers more to spiritual mysteries.

The Greatest Holy Leaf was extremely sympathetic, <p.210> kind and compassionate. With great care, she would inquire of the minute details of all affairs and would administer every enterprise. She would bring about the healing of every ill and unwell person, would give timely advice and counsel, and guide every wayward one. Whenever someone would speak of God, she would immediately utter words of affirmation.

In truth, she was the solver of every difficulty and the tender friend of the people of Bahá.

[Mount Carmel]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to praise and admire the vivifying effect of the air of Mount Carmel. For instance, He would say to this effect, “Whatever problem that a person may have, if he was to stroll a little in that air and think about his problem, a solution would be presented. Whoever wants to live a long life should live there.”

He would also say to this effect, “From the perspective of its natural beauty and pleasantness, it is preferable to all other locations.”

The Guardian of the Cause of God used also to greatly extol [Mount Carmel], particularly the spot where the Shrine of the Exalted One is located.

[Ottoman Military]

Prior to the intervention of the British government, the Ottoman authorities had decided to draft the Iranian youth residing in that region into their military and began that process. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s influence prevented this.

At that time in ‘Akká, He instructed this servant to go to the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb] so that I would be away from the eyes of the authorities. Therefore until such time as the eminent British government arrived [in the Holy Land], I was staying and serving at the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One.

[Mullá Abú-Tálib Badkubih’í]

There was a certain Mullá Abú-Tálib, who was a native of Badkubih, whose age was in excess of one hundred and ten years.¹²⁸ In accordance with the blessed instruction [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], he resided in one of the rooms on the lower floor of the pilgrim house. He was deeply faithful, had great certitude, and was the recipient of attention and bounties of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. He was happy, thankful and appreciative for the sweet humor of His blessed Person.

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá visited his room. After He had inquired of his health, he [Mullá Abú-Tálib] had said, “Since I do not have any companions, I am lonely.” At that point, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summoned me and stated, “Each day, you must sit and for two hours converse with Mullá Abú-Tálib.”

After a few days, he said to the blessed presence [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], “I am most pleased with him [Khalíl Shahídí].” He responded, “‘Abdu’l-Bahá is also pleased with him.”

One day he had submitted [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], “If You grant permission, I would like to go for a few days to the Ridván Garden.” He responded, “What for? Stay here.” However, since he wished to go, He replied further, “Very well.”

Two or three days later, he passed away in the Ridván Garden.

Thereupon, in accordance with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blessed instruction, a number of the friends from Haifa proceeded to the Ridván Garden for his funeral procession. This servant was in their company as well.

His resting-place was in the Bahá’í cemetery of ‘Akká. However, it was among the graves that were not yet built. Since there were no numbers [on the graves], its location is unknown.

¹²⁸ He accepted the Faith through Nabíl’s efforts and became the first Bahá’í in the Caucasus; Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 176. “Two doors, one facing north towards ‘Akká and the other on the eastern side of the Shrine, are named for Ustád Áqá ‘Alí-Ashraf and Ustád Áqá Bálá, sons of Mullá Abu-Tálib. These two brothers were master masons who went on pilgrimage from their native town of Baku, Russia [now Azerbaijan], and with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s permission remained for some time in the Holy Land. During this period, they devoted their efforts to the construction of the Shrine and offered financial contributions towards the project”; Ugo Giachery, *Shoghi Effendi - Recollections*, p. 214.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “If Mullá Abú-Tálib had not gone [to the Ridván Garden], he would have lived a while longer.” His blessed point was to praise the refreshing air of Mount Carmel.

[Tobacco]

According to what this servant has heard from those that beheld the Countenance of the Lord [i.e. Bahá’u’lláh], one day during the time of the Blessed Perfection – may His mention be supreme – a group of the believers in God gathered in the Ridván Garden.

Suddenly, they learned of the arrival of the Blessed Beauty. At that time, one of them was smoking a waterpipe. Immediately, he concealed it in the tall and thick bushes. Upon arrival, the Temple of the Truth – that all-knower of hidden and visible – had proceeded directly to the spot where the waterpipe was hidden, <p.215> and stated, “This is why God has forbidden its use.”

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, when different visitors would arrive in His sanctified presence, some would present Him with cigarettes. In order to please them, the blessed Temple would accept them. One day, He remarked to the Greatest Holy Leaf, “Khánum, they insist on giving cigarettes to us. My chest has developed aches. I am in pain.”

One night, there was a gathering in the blessed House of ‘Akká and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uttered words to this effect, “It is strange. Even though everyone knows the harm of cigarettes, yet people consume them. Civilization will advance to a point one day that they will say, ‘Why did previous generations use cigarettes which are so harmful?’ This will greatly puzzle them.”

When *Lawh Dukhán* was revealed by the pen of the Center of the divine Covenant and Testament,¹²⁹ even though Mírzá Abú’l-Fadl was an old man and deeply addicted to the use of tobacco, to the point that he would light his cigarette with the previous one, nevertheless he

¹²⁹ *Lawh Dukhán* was composed in honor of Muhammad-Husayn Vakíl. It is known in the West as the Tablet of Purity and is published in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 145-50. Smoking is not forbidden in the Bahá’í Faith, but ‘Abdu’l-Bahá has discouraged it for the sake of health and cleanliness.

immediately threw his cigarette case and accessories through the window and announced, “From now on, separation between me and you [tobacco]!”

Similarly, many other elders of the Faith, both men and women, [suspended the use of tobacco], even though the intent was for the younger members to come to their senses, since the Blessed Perfection has exempted the older ones from this injunction. In truth, this ordinance was aimed at the youth so they would purify and cleanse themselves.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, it was the elders who pioneered in their obedience.

Hájí Mírzá Haydar-‘Alí also abandoned the use of tobacco. However, since he was frail and unwell, he became severely ill. No matter how much the physician insisted, he refused to resume his smoking. It went thus until that compassionate and kind Master gave him permission [to smoke] and exempted him from this [prohibition]. After that permission, he would halve his cigarettes and of that half, would smoke only a half – and even that was out of obedience to the wishes of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

...¹³¹

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Health]

¹³⁰ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states the following in *Lawh Dukhán (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha*, p. 147):

The Báb, at the outset of His mission, explicitly prohibited tobacco, and the friends one and all abandoned its use. But since those were times when dissimulation was permitted, and every individual who abstained from smoking was exposed to harassment, abuse and even death – the friends, in order not to advertise their beliefs, would smoke. Later on, the Book of Aqdas was revealed, and since smoking tobacco was not specifically forbidden there, the believers did not give it up. The Blessed Beauty, however, always expressed repugnance for it, and although, in the early days, there were reasons why He would smoke a little tobacco, in time He completely renounced it, and those sanctified souls who followed Him in all things also abandoned its use.

¹³¹ A small paragraph pertaining to the private life of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is left untranslated.

If we were to overlook certain illnesses and infirmities that would sometimes visit His blessed Temple – most of which were caused and brought about by the Covenant-breakers – His blessed Person was in excellent health.

The arch-Covenant-breaker [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] was remorseful over this matter. One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, out of wisdom and by design, said to him, “After Me, it will be you.” He responded, “It is not certain.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said no more to him. In truth, he lived after the blessed ascension [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], but his life was like death.¹³²

If ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s will and decree had not ordained His ascension, He would have stayed longer in this world, since His sanctified being was bereft of any illness or decease. However, God’s inscrutable wisdom decreed as it occurred.

[Card Playing]

The blessed presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was asked about playing cards with no intention of gambling. He replied, “It is a waste of time.”

This blessed utterance demonstrated that from such proclivities, not only would a person squander his time, but he may gradually be drawn to gambling as well, <p.220> and be distanced from sincerity and spirituality.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá Watering the Gardens]

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, at the time of the World War [I], the garden at the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh was watered by a hand pump installed in the garden. Whenever it was possible, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would go and pump water with His blessed hands while whispering prayers.¹³³

For a long time before installation of this pump, indeed for many years, the garden of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh was watered using large jars known as *jarrah*, or with large tin cans, from an aqueduct that passed by

¹³² Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí passed away in 1937, some 16 years after ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

¹³³ For more details see, Mu’ayyad, *Eight Years near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: The Diary of Dr. Habib Mu’ayyad*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani).

the spruce-fir trees across from the Shrine – this waterway was known as *Áb-i Kábarí*. It was through this method that the garden was irrigated.

On the days devoted to general visitation [of the Shrine], using *jarrabs* built by my father, Ustád Abú'l-Qásim, which some of the friends of God had donated to the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh, the believers would collectively participate in carrying water from the aqueduct to irrigate the garden in accordance with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's instructions.

My father was responsible for filling each of the *jarrabs* with water from the aqueduct. After filling 'Abdu'l-Bahá's *jarrab*, my father would dry the jar with a towel and then softly place it over 'Abdu'l-Bahá's shoulder, in accordance with His wish.

This process would continue a number of times, and they would go back and forth, until the garden was fully irrigated.¹³⁴

At all events, 'Abdu'l-Bahá – the Master of the people of Bahá – would manifest and demonstrate such a degree of submissiveness and servitude to the Threshold of the Blessed Perfection, so that His deeds would be an example for all who profess belief in Bahá.

[Financial]

'Abdu'l-Bahá would say, "Having no money is arduous. But too much of it also causes difficulties." The truth of this utterance is clear and evident unto every man of discernment. His purpose was moderation in earning a livelihood.

[An Attempt to Defraud 'Abdu'l-Bahá]

During the blessed days of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, several authorities of the Ottoman government who worked in an office in 'Akká decided, through deceit and trickery, to force 'Abdu'l-Bahá into paying a large and significant sum that they had in mind. However, that essence of generosity and favor ['Abdu'l-Bahá] would never give a single coin to anyone as a bribe or in fear.

¹³⁴ Four lines at the top of page 222 are crossed out beyond readability. They appear to recount an insulting comment by one of the Covenant-breakers.

They selected one of their own to go before His blessed Person to implement their evil and wrong-headed plan. When he arrived [before ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], he spoke facts that were manufactured and resided outside the truth, all intended to [cause] harm and loss to the Cause. This representative spoke to this effect, “The government has decided to do this or that [action against the Faith], but it is possible through a payment of such an amount to prevent the government from taking this action.” His entire presentation to the end was such unsound and untrue statements.

Thereupon, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sought water to perform His ablution. With the utmost deliberation, He completed His ablution and then commenced to perform the long obligatory prayer of the Muslims. During His prayer, the man kept interrupting, “This matter must <p.225> be concluded quickly, as there is little time!” Meaning that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá should end His obligatory prayer and attend to this urgent matter.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá finished His prayer, with the utmost dignity and authority He came close to him and slapped him several times, saying, “I sent it for you.”

With great stress and anxiety, never having imagined such an outcome, he held his face and head, and shouting, screaming and roaring, he returned to the government office and informed his comrades of what had transpired.

That very night telegraphs in Turkish were received from the Sublime Port [Istanbul] for each one of them, signed by one of the eminent and distinguished personages in the [Central] government. These telegraphs dismissed each one of them from office and further instructed them to kiss the hand of ‘Abbás Effendi.

This incident heightened the wonder and astonishment of every high and low citizen, marveling how and when ‘Abbás Effendi had informed Istanbul so that at such an hour of the night dismissal orders were dispatched. Of course, in view of their lack of faith, they were right to wonder in this regard.

Those around these men became deeply frightened and perturbed, and for this reason hastened to the presence of His blessed Person and through this act expressed their humility, beseeching His good-pleasure.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “I am sitting in this room, but I spin the world around My little finger.” His purpose by this comment was that the sovereign will and abiding decree of His sanctified being was the same as the will and decree of God.

[‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Generosity]

One day ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was at Jámi‘ Jazzár [al-Jazzár mosque] and a group of eminent citizens were in His presence. One of the inhabitants of ‘Akká arrived and whispered [to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], “My wife has just given birth and I have no money.” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave him a five lira gold coin. With that, he prepared all the necessary provisions. When the people that were aware of his meager situation inquired, he responded, “This alleviated situation is out of the favors and bounties of His Holiness ‘Abbás Effendi.”

The generosity, munificence, mercy and benevolence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá surrounded every deserving person.

[The Seed of the Next Manifestation]

One time ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “The next Manifestation will also appear through Me.” From this utterance, it was understood that the next Manifestation would be of the blessed descendants of the Center of the divine Covenant and Testament, and none other.

Praise be unto God that in this mighty Dispensation nothing has been left undisclosed. We must pray unto God to give sight to every sightless one.

[Bahá’í Marriage Recognition in Iran]

For a while during the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God, the exalted government of Iran was most hostile towards the Bayánic¹³⁵ marriages and considered them unofficial. This opposition

¹³⁵ Since the Bahá’í law of marriage in the *Aqdas* is derived from the *Bayán*, often the early literature of the Faith referred to it as the Bayánic marriage.

was such that after the marriage ceremony, the [Bahá’í] couple would be imprisoned and punished.

During these upheavals, the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God stated to this effect, “In Iran, marriage will become civil based. The friends must persevere and establish firm foundations so they do not participate in this instance.”

[Snake]

In Tiberius, one night near the morning, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá noticed that a snake had crawled under His cushion. He instructed to this effect, “Put him in a bag, take him to the field and release him. But do not slay him.”

This kindness of His blessed Self was <p.230> consistent with the explicit text of His in which it is stated, “Unless ye must, bruise not the serpent in the dust, how much less wound a man.”¹³⁶

[Visiting the Shrine]

During the blessed period of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, on the days when the friends of God attained and achieved visitation of the Shrines of Bahá’u’lláh or the Exalted One [the Báb], for the sake of wafting pleasant fragrances, His blessed Person would sprinkle each person with the essence of red rose or pure perfume. And if for some reason He was not there and the visitors [to the Shrine] were deprived of beholding the Countenance of that beloved Beauty, then the custodian of that Threshold would carry out this task and perfume everyone.

This practice and tradition was continued and maintained in the same exact form during the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God.¹³⁷

At the time of the arrival of the British government in Palestine and the Holy Land, many of their soldiers were Indian, and a large contingent of them set camp in the vicinity of the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh.

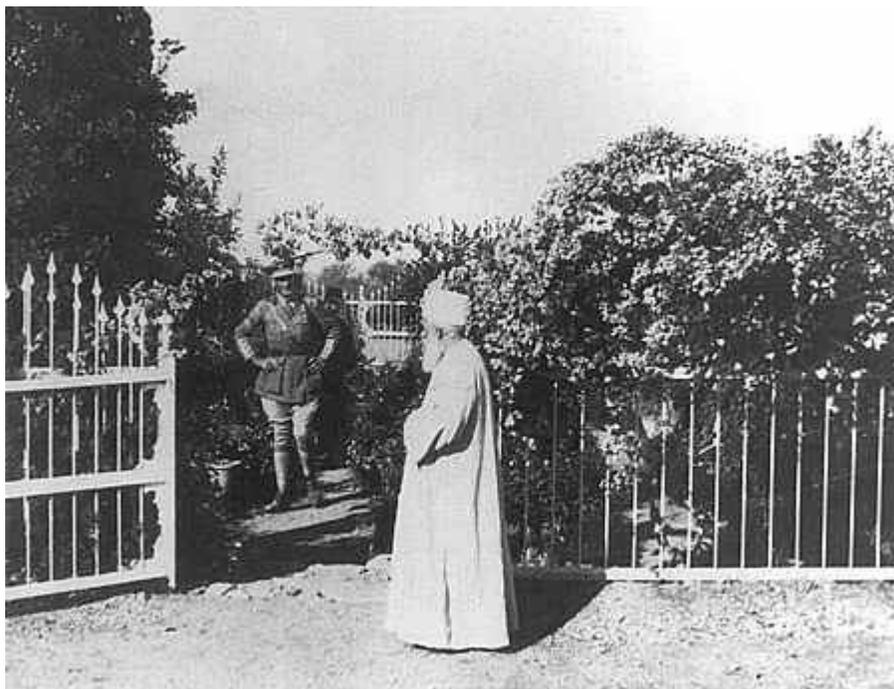
¹³⁶ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, p. 256; the official translation is not precise.

¹³⁷ The present translator recalls the same practice continuing into mid 1970s by the custodians of the Shrines.

Since they considered the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh a sacrosanct spot and a site of visitation, they would go and enter the Shrine at the time of the obligatory prayer, and to the extent they had time engaged in offering their supplications and prayers.

Whenever 'Abdu'l-Bahá went to visit [the Shrine], they would attain His blessed presence and partake of that bounty.

Since the aforementioned Áqá Siyyid Abú'l-Qásim Khurásání was somewhat familiar with the Hindi language, he would serve as a translator for the blessed utterances [of 'Abdu'l-Bahá]. However, he would excessively use Kertahi and Murtazi dialects. Therefore, 'Abdu'l-Bahá said to him, "This is all Kertahi and Murtazi!" His own Person recounted this story with much laughter and delight.



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At all events, one day He remarked to those soldiers, "Whatever is your wish, ask it of this Sanctified Edifice and it will be granted." After hearing this utterance, immediately they performed their ablutions, entered the Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh and commenced their entreaties and obligatory prayers.

After this event, only within two or three days, a telegraph with the instruction for their discharge and return home was received. At that time they would say with the utmost happiness and excitement, “Our appeal to this Sanctified Edifice was this [returning home]. Praise be unto God that He accepted our plea.”

[Dreams]

Once the aforementioned Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl had a dream in which he had seen himself in Iran. He had inquired [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá] about that vision. He replied, “Do not forget this dream.”

At the time that the Guardian of the Cause of God sent him and his kinfolks to Tehran, that exact vision came to pass.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “Whoever has a vision of the Prophets and the chosen ones in a dream, that dream is true.”

[Benefits of Grapes]

One afternoon Áqá ‘Abdu’r-Rasúl Mansúr took some excellent grapes from ‘Akká to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s blessed presence in Bahjí. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá replied, “Today My meal was heavy and I wanted some grapes.” Therefore, He immediately partook of some.

His blessed purpose was that grapes enhance digestion.

Regarding radishes, which in Arabic are called *fujl*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “A *fujl* enhances digestion. However, a radish itself is hard to digest.”

[Divine Laws]

One day the Guardian of the Cause of God was in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One. That day was a day for general visitation, and as such, a group of <p.235> the friends of God, both pilgrims and resident believers, were in his presence. Among his blessed utterances to that assemblage, words to this effect were included, “I have received a letter from one of the friends in the West in which he has suggested that I remove the law of fasting from the Book.” With a baffled look and

smiling, he added, “I wrote him that these are divine laws and ordinances.”

His blessed purpose was that teachings and exhortations that have been sent down from the heaven of the divine decree will remain and are established until the end of eternity, and under no circumstances may a word or a jot of it be changed or altered.

[A Contemporary Violator of the Covenant]

It may be that the questioner had asked about this matter [fasting] out of simplicity, or perhaps he was a new Bahá’í, but in these days in which God’s Universal House of Justice has been formed and established, and the sovereignty and grandeur of the Cause of God has penetrated all corners of the globe, and rank upon rank are entering with humility and meekness beneath the Word of God, a foolish and unthinking person, with evil and base intentions, has shamelessly attempted such a thing.¹³⁸ That is, through his vain imaginings, false ideas, and evil, petrified and empty thoughts, which all stem from passion and desires, he has abrogated many of the laws and teachings of the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* – revelations which are the spirit of this age, sufficient for the happiness of humankind, and the savior of all that dwell on earth from every harm and difficulty. In addition, his cohorts, whose pride and egotism are combined with mindlessness and stem from irreligiosity and absence of faith, have arisen to assist and aid that senseless polytheist.

This wayward and misguided person has opposed the explicit divine texts, and under all conditions has raised complaints, criticism and opposition based on his own desires and passions, much like the pivot of rebellion [Mírzá Muhammad-‘Alí] and the abased Covenant-breakers. More or less, he is engaged in interpretation and elucidation, and day and

¹³⁸ This section appears to be a reference to Jamshíd Ma’ání, an Iranian Bahá’í, who in the 1960s claimed to be a new Manifestation of God (despite Bahá’u’lláh’s specific prohibition in the *Kitáb-i Aqdas* against such a claim before less than 1000 years passed). He gained some following, mainly in Iran, and later was expelled by the Universal House of Justice. He formed an organization called, “The House of Mankind” (which is also known as the “Faith of God”) and the “Universal Palace of Order,” which now appear to be defunct, as announced by the Encyclopedia of Religions: http://www.adherents.com/adh_branches.html

night, with great insistence and much audacity, employs every means to divert simpletons from the straight path, and to bring them to imbibe the poison of faithlessness.

It is evident that association with the ignorant and unwise, and those unaware of the truth of the Cause and God’s inscrutable teachings, with such evil and satanic individuals, will result in being sealed with the mark of the violation of the Covenant, and becoming dispersed, confused, dejected, humbled, ashamed before the community and also by their family and loved ones, and in being cast afar and distanced. Moreover, they will achieve the loss of both worlds and God’s chastisement.

Moreover, with the utmost impudence, deceit and trickery, these polytheists have written letters to various places so that others would be diverted from the straight path of God, and join them in their shameful and superfluous beliefs.

Even though they stand condemned at God’s door, and immersed in misery and deprivation, they have not repented or atoned. They consider the Cause of God to be a plaything of the foolish, and have preferred fire to eternal life.

At the end, such people will become an example for all people to avoid. Praise and glorification be unto God, for having completed, in every manner, His proof unto the people of Bahá, and for having established the exalted institution of the Hands of the Cause of God, and through explicit, clear, evident text having enjoined upon all to turn to the sublime threshold of God’s Universal House of Justice, may its pillars be strengthened. <p.240>

[Pages 240-241 are missing in the copy of the manuscript available to the present translator. It appears that in this section, the marriage of Shoghi Effendi and Rúhiyyih Khánum is recounted. Translator.]

[The Marriage of Shoghi Effendi and Rúhiyyih Khánum]

... upon both be the Glory of God, the Most Glorious, proceeded in an automobile from the blessed House of Haifa to the Shrine of

Bahá'u'lláh. After their visitation and return, their marriage vows were taken that very night in the chamber of the Greatest Holy Leaf – the remnant of God and the trust of Bahá – who longed to witness such an hour. The marriage readings were recited softly by his own blessed temple [Shoghi Effendi] in the presence of those maidens of celestial heaven and the parents of both sides.

After the conclusion [of the ceremony], he turned to that essence of sanctity [Bahiyiyh Khánum] and said words to this effect, “Khánum, the marriage ceremony took place in your chamber.”

In short, with utmost reverence and dignity it was concluded.

In the morning, when the friends of God learned and became aware of this most mighty tidings and this joyous news, out of their delight and exhilaration, they decided to hold a [marriage] celebration in the blessed House. However, when this was mentioned to his blessed presence, he stated, “The friends may do what they wish, but in their own homes.”

In truth, a joy and elation enveloped everyone on that day that is beyond any description, mention or exposition.

In beauty, splendor, perfection and dignity, Ruhyyih Khánum was like the Virgin Mary, and in truth, was a product of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s influence. This is because her illustrious parents – upon both rest the mercy and paradise of God – made an appeal. His blessed will and decree bestowed upon them this mighty bounty and precious trust [i.e. Rúhiyyih Khánum]. How sweet it is that out of the kindness and compassion of His Holiness, every aspect of this marriage took place.

[Gift from America]

After Rúhiyyih Khánum’s marriage, as a gift and a good omen, the Bahá’ís of America presented and submitted a chest of luxurious and expensive clothes, which typically were worn by the westerners. <p.245> However, this was not acceptable unto her and she stated in effect, “Such attire is not the clothing for this place” and in accordance with her instructions, they were returned.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ From the original, it is not clear if it was Rúhiyyih Khánum or Shoghi Effendi who did not accept the gift of clothing and instructed that it be returned.

[A Gift for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá]

In the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a container full of the finest prized tableware was presented to Him. However, upon seeing it and before they were removed from the container, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated, “These will not be of benefit to us.” Therefore, in the same manner and condition as they had been in the container, He bestowed them upon someone else.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá enjoyed a simple and uncomplicated life, even in food and clothing.

My mother used to relate that the Blessed Beauty would say, “Prepare only one dish, but make it in perfection.”

[Mírzá Mahmúd Zarqání]

The honored Mírzá Mahmúd Zarqání was a teacher of the Faith during the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and readily stood to the service and promotion of the Cause of God, and the diffusion of divine fragrance. After the ascension [of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá], through the bounties and benevolence of the Guardian of the Cause of God and in accordance with the command [of Shoghi Effendi], he was engaged day and night in writing and speaking [for the Faith] and, as before, continued to remain in the utmost constancy and firmness.

One night, there was a gathering in the blessed House of Haifa. Because of his many obligations, he [Zarqání] arrived a little late. The Guardian of the Cause of God – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto his kindness – said to him, “I give you too much work. I am embarrassed.”

In truth, this very remark, which was solely out of his benevolence and munificence, would suffice Mírzá Mahmúd in both worlds.

After ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s ascension, he composed a poem, which included this repeated refrain:

O ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, glance over us,
Glance from that world above.

This poem greatly attracted the blessed attention of the Guardian of the Cause of God and he would instruct, “Recite it.” Therefore, collectively and in a heartrending tone, this poem would be recited [by the friends].

After some time, when the Guardian of the Cause of God was away [from Haifa], he journeyed from the Holy Land to Iran. However, during his return, suddenly he became ill, passed away in Rasht, and joined the Exalted Paradise.¹⁴⁰

After the passing of that devoted servant of God, the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God would speak about him, including the remark, “The preciousness of Mírzá Mahmúd Zarqání’s services will become evident in the future.”

[Mírzá Mahmúd Furúghí]

The honored Mírzá Mahmúd Furúghí was one of the teachers and eminent believers of the Cause. He had [previously] been a cleric. He was a native of Dughabad of Khurasan.¹⁴¹

One day in ‘Akká while offering his obligatory prayer, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá suddenly entered the room. He immediately turned his face towards the brilliant visage of the Master. However, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá said to him, “Mind your business!” That is, in the course of obligatory prayer, one’s attention must remain solely, and without any deviation, on the Shrine of Bahá’u’lláh which is point of adoration of the people of Bahá.

One day in the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One, while he was listening to the recitation of God’s verses, after hearing some passages, from the attraction and enkindlement of the fire of God’s love that burnt brightly in his soul, suddenly he removed his turban and fiercely threw it to the ground.

¹⁴⁰ Zarqání’s passing took place on 11 October 1927 and he is buried in Mudíriyyih Cemetery.

¹⁴¹ For intriguing stories about him see, Afnán, *In the Land of Refuge: The Genesis of the Bahá’í Faith in Shiraz* (trans. Ahang Rabbani), and for a more complete biography see, Bushrú’í, *The Voice of the Heroes: The Genesis of the Bahá’í Faith in Khurasan*, (trans. Ahang Rabbani).

This intense condition, which stemmed from his indescribable love and enthrallment, would occur from time to time, and would draw and fascinate the attention of the listeners. However, later, in view of the fact the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God had said to him, “Remain in a calm state,” he changed his behavior and would maintain his peace and composure.

[Condition of Confirmation]

<p.250> The Guardian of the Cause of God – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto him – had dismissed one of the friends [who was resident in the Holy Land] in favor of Egypt with the promise of success. After a while, one of the believers of that region attained his blessed presence, and that night a gathering was held in the blessed House of Haifa. In that assembly, he reported in effect the following on the condition of that person [sent to Egypt], “He stated, ‘The Guardian of the Cause of God promised me confirmations, but I am not successful yet.’ I said to him, ‘Success is conditioned upon and results from efforts and exertions on the requirements.’”

The Guardian praised and approved this comment, and remarked, “It is as you state.”

His purpose was that success comes from action in undertakings, and comes from endeavoring and instigating.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá would say, “Confirmations and success are suspended betwixt earth and heaven. That is, only action is required for it to be realized.”

[Provocation of the Opponents]

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in ‘Akká, the spiteful Covenant-breakers, solely for the purpose of turmoil, division and harm upon the temple of the Cause of God and achieving their own purpose, had given some of the divine verses and Tablets of the Blessed Perfection to the mutisarrif of that era. After studying [these documents], the mutisarrif summoned ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to the government-house so he could ascertain His objective.

In the blessed House of ‘Akká, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá described this incident and stated in effect, “The mutisarrif brought out those divine verses and Tablets, and inquired of the truth of the matter. I realized that it was no longer time for wisdom, so I sat him down and commenced teaching him the Faith. The mutisarrif accepted and attained unto certitude.”

Towards the end of his life, Siyyid Mihdí Dahají had also given some of the verses of the Blessed Beauty to ‘Akká’s muftí.

In short, all the harms of their evil machinations returned to themselves. They were all obliterated and expunged, and their existence became nonexistent.

[Neutralizing the Enemies]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá – may the spirit of all sincere friends be a sacrifice unto His footsteps – used to say to this effect, “When someone harms my Person, I forgive him. However, when their harm impacts the Cause of God, then I will not pardon.”

During the blessed days of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, a person in Egypt was the leader of a band of men, and would provoke these men against the Bahá’ís of Egypt, and for this reason had brought about difficulties. One day that same person arrived in Haifa from Egypt. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá summoned him. After the man entered into ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence, He said to him, “You are causing injury to my community.” Then he was the recipient of warnings, admonishments and several slaps.

After he left [the room], immediately he was summoned once more. He thought to himself that perchance the page had turned [and this time ‘Abdu’l-Bahá would be friendly to him], but it was not so since upon his entrance, one more time, the same thing occurred and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá picked up where He had left off.

When this man returned to Egypt, he gave unequivocal, emphatic and decisive command to that band and emphasized, “You should not show any malice towards this community [i.e. Bahá’ís], as no one can defeat their Chief [‘Abdu’l-Bahá]; He is most powerful and able.”

It was then that the Bahá’ís of Egypt were freed from his mischief.

One time, He [‘Abdu’l-Bahá] stated, “With some people, a thousand counsels and admonishments would not have the same effect as a slap.”

At all events, in different forms and taking <p.255> different shapes, many such occurrences would take place – so many that they remain unnumbered and uncountable. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, while extremely meek, was the zenith of power and grandeur.

[Chanting]

‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “If voice-recording had been available during the days of the Blessed Beauty, I would have recorded His voice.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not pleased with the chanting of some Iranians who, while reciting prayers, excessively extended [the final syllable]. This was especially true of the chant of the divine verses and prayers since it diminished the condition of spirituality and the effect of the prayer. He would also say to this effect, “Some are consumed in their own singing and this causes the effect [of God’s words] to be reduced.”

His point was that divine verses must be recited with the finest voice.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá praised the chanting of the Qur’an in the Egyptian dialect. Moreover, He would say, “If someone reads Arabic well, then I allow him to recite verses of the Blessed Beauty in the gatherings of non-Bahá’ís.” Sometimes this would occur and the listeners would be thoroughly enchanted and enkindled.

[Colophon]

Presently, I conclude my memoirs at this point. With Bahá’í greetings, this servant’s recollections and reminiscences were written in Tehran, and concluded on the first day of ‘Ilm of the year one-hundred and twenty-two Badí [corresponding to 16 October 1965].

Author's Supplement

[The following supplemental materials appear after a page of comments by the Iranian Bahá'í Publishing Committee (cited in the Translator's Foreword). It appears that after the Publishing Committee had expressed interest in publishing Shahídí's narrative and prepared the text for this purpose by editing it, it had decided to ask the narrator to offer supplemental recollections and placed these additional materials at the end.¹⁴² Translator.]

[Divine Confirmations]

During the time that 'Abdu'l-Bahá resided and was established in 'Akká, one year it did not rain in that region. The inhabitants of that area became deeply perturbed and distressed. For this reason, they commenced prayers and supplications in mosques and other places of worship. However, these entreaties remained unanswered [by God].

One day, a contingent of prominent non-Bahá'ís came into the presence of 'Abdu'l-Bahá and expressed their considerable anxieties. Among them was a man whose only daughter had recently died, and he was passing his days with a heart filled with sorrow and grief. 'Abdu'l-Bahá stated to that group words to this effect, "If this person was to arise and offer obligatory prayers, in view of the fact that he is brokenhearted, then God would accept his plea."

After hearing this, he immediately rose, performed his ablutions and in the presence of the entire congregation carried out the obligatory prayer and supplications. At that moment, the weather changed, with clouds filling the sky, and immediately rain began to pour.

This incident – like so many other similar occurrences that remain unnumbered and untold – increased the wonder and astonishment of

¹⁴² Further evidence that this section was a later addition include: (1) the page numbers are different from the main document and only each sheet has been given a sequential page number; and (2) there is no evidence that the Publishing Committee edited this supplemental section.

those in attendance. It is because of this that it is revealed in the hadith [Islamic traditions], “What we do comes from the will of God.”¹⁴³

After the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá – may my spirit be a sacrifice unto His remains – the child of one of the ladies, who was a follower of His Holiness the Spirit [Jesus] and lived in Haifa, became severely ill to the point that everyone had lost hope of his recovery and life.

One day, wailing, sobbing and crying, she came by the Shrine of the Exalted One and with her fists began to repeatedly and loudly pound on the door, shouting, begging and pleading, “O ‘Abbás Effendi, I implore my son from Thee!” At the same time, she continued to cry intensely, kissing and caressing that Edifice.

At last, in the same condition, she returned home. Upon arrival, she saw her child was sitting in the bed and through God’s bounties and benevolence had regained his health. In that instant, she raised her hands heavenwards and thanked God that, sanctified be the Lord, her prayers and supplications had found such ready and immediate acceptance at His door of holiness.

[Avoidance of Tobacco]

One night ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was in the blessed House of ‘Akká and the friends were in His blessed presence. In that gathering, a small quantity of snuff reached His blessed nostrils, but with the utmost delicacy.¹⁴⁴

¹⁴³ The quoted hadith seems to be a corrupted form of a tradition cited by Bahá’u’lláh (*Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 112), “As to the Bayán, it consisteth in thy recognition of God – glorified be He – as the One Who hath no equal, and in thy adoration of Him, and in thy refusal to join partners with Him. As to the Ma’ání, We are its meaning, and its side, and its hand, and its tongue, and its cause, and its command, and its knowledge, and its right. If We wish for something, it is God Who wisheth it, and He desireth that which We desire.” Moreover, another hadith of the same type is quoted in Muhammad-Báqi Majlisí, *Biharul-Anwar*, vol. 26, p. 14: *وأما المعاني فنحن معانيه ومظاهره فيكم ، اخترعنا من نور ذاته وفوض إلينا أمور عبادته ، فنحن نفعل* (Omid Ghaemmaghami, Private Communication, 1 January 2008.)

¹⁴⁴ Snuff is a type of smokeless tobacco. There are several types used in different ways. Traditionally Dry (or European) nasal snuff is inhaled, or snuffed, through the nose and is a form of insufflation.

That is, like someone inhaling the fragrance of a flower – even more delicate. He stated, “A small amount is beneficial. But too much will cause dryness of the nose.”

However, this servant did not witness another occasion of such use [by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá].

The point was that the snuff removes the vapor and heaviness of the head, but it is conditioned on the use of a small amount. That is, it should not be used in such a way as would cause addiction in a person.

Nevertheless, the principle intent of His blessed Person in so doing was to emphasize the ill and loss due to this usage, so that the friends of God would remain sanctified and pure from every direction.

[Morality versus Expediency]

During the blessed days of the Guardian of the Cause of God, one of the Bahá’ís of Iran, whose job was in a governmental office and who was thoroughly an expert in discharging his duties, wrote a missive [to Shoghi Effendi] and therein described his situation and that of those wishing ill upon the Cause of God.

The entire letter explained that the authorities in his department were insisting that he should forego his religion and convictions, or at least conceal and hide them, since they needed his person [for the department to function]. However, they were seeing no results from their insistence except disappointment. For this reason, they had read the poem of Sa’dí to him:

“A well-intended lie is admitted to be preferable to a seditious truth.”¹⁴⁵

¹⁴⁵ Sa’dí (1213-1292) is *nom de plume* of Musharrifu’d-Dín ibn Muslihu’d-Dín. Born in Shiraz, he is one of the greatest figures in classical Persian literature. The cited poem comes from one of his best-known works, *Gulistán* (1258; *The Rose Garden*), which is mainly in beautifully crafted prose and contains stories and personal anecdotes. The text is interspersed with a variety of short, eloquent poems, containing aphorisms, advice, and humorous reflections. The morals preached in the *Gulistán* border on expediency.

That is, they implied, “Ascribe to whatever religion you wish, but speak this lie out of expediency.”

In short, after the arrival of this missive, one day the beloved Guardian of the Cause of God was at the pilgrim house of the Shrine of the Exalted One [the Báb]. That day was a day of general visitation. That supplication was in his blessed pocket. It was read in accordance with his instructions and the friends of God heard its contents. After a short pause, the Guardian stated, “They are resorting and clinging to the corroded sayings of Sa‘dí.” He immediately rose and proceeded to the Shrine of the Exalted One for visitation.¹⁴⁶

From His statement it could be discerned that the very standard and balance for humanity will be the heavenly utterances and divine teachings, and nothing else, and will remain so forever, particularly as it relates to matters pertaining to God and morality.

[Souls]

One night a gathering of the friends of God was assembled in the blessed House of ‘Akká in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s presence. This bounty was also bestowed on this servant. He was speaking regarding the soul of the deceased, including words to this effect, “In consideration of the attraction and connection that the soul has had with the body, for forty days the soul visits that location and spot [of burial].”¹⁴⁷

[Penmanship]

<p.260> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used to say, “Handwriting must be legible.”

His blessed purpose was that the prime importance is legibility of writings. However, it is certain that if something is written with exquisite penmanship, then it is the very perfection.

¹⁴⁶ In 1985, ‘Alí Nakhjavání shared a description of the same incident with the present translator. However, he recalled, “Shoghi Effendi stated, ‘With one verse, Sa‘dí destroyed the moral foundation of the Iranian people.’”

¹⁴⁷ A similar sentiment is expressed in the Persian *Bayán*, 5:12.

[Daily Livelihood]

One time, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá spoke about daily livelihood. Included in His utterances was the essence of the following: “If a person conducts himself in accordance with God’s teachings, then he should never worry about his daily bread, as somehow it will be made available to him.”

His purpose was that a person’s success in all matters – including his daily bread, which is made available to every living thing – is conditioned and dependent upon his obedience to the divine laws and ordinances, and nothing else.

[Commemoration Periods]

It was inquired of the presence of the Guardian of the Cause, “By the difference of how many days should the observances, commemorations and festivals that occur before or after the memorial and solemn Days¹⁴⁸ of the Cause be held?” He replied, “By a difference of ten days before and after.”

His blessed purpose was that out of respect, at least ten days [of separation] is required. In truth, it is a bounty for the people of Bahá that he did not decree and fix more days than this.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ It appears that the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh and the martyrdom of the Báb are intended here; and it may include the commemoration of the passing of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

¹⁴⁹ Shoghi Effendi’s comments regarding the date of Bahá’í Holy Days are further explored in Appendix 5.

Appendix 1

Bahá’u’lláh’s Lawh Istiqámat

[The narrator cited Bahá’u’lláh’s Lawh Istiqámat [Tablet of Constancy] in the text and Mark Costine has graciously prepared a provisional translation. The original text is found in La’álí Hikmat, vol. 1, pp. 113-14, <http://reference.bahai.org/fa/t/b/LH1/lb1-112.html>]

He is the Holy, the Most Glorious.

O ye servants of the Merciful One! We admonish you to observe trustworthiness, truthfulness and faithfulness, and to manifest the fear of God, the Mighty, the Wise. Verily, he who holdeth fast to the fear of God is accounted among those who occupy this sublime station. Your eyes have been solaced, O people of Bahá, by gazing upon My Realm of glory, and blessed are your ears for they have been honored by hearkening unto the Verses of God, the Lord of the worlds. Appreciate ye the value of this exalted station. By My life! The treasures of the heavens and of the earth can never hope to match it.

Verily the glances of God’s loving-kindness are cast upon you. He heareth what ye speak in your love for Him and seeth what ye encounter in the path of the all-compelling Cause of the All-Wise. He truly remembereth you from His habitation in the Most Great Prison, inasmuch as your names are written and preserved in the Guarded Tablet. Say: By God! Each and every thing is a messenger of joy unto you at all times, did ye but know.

Ye must be constant, exceedingly constant, so that your feet shall not slip in the Straight Path. Say: This is My mightiest commandment and My greatest charge upon you and amidst you. Heed ye it, then set it before your eyes, and God is a witness unto what I say. In My Tablet, My Scroll, My Scriptures, My Treatises and My Books, I verily have admonished My loved ones, who soar in My atmosphere and who drink the wine of Mine utterance, to observe the most perfect constancy. To

this testify My pen, Mine ink, My finger, My hand, Mine arm, Mine ear, Mine eye, My hairs, My limbs and My truth-telling tongue.

Time and again We have mentioned this weightiest of themes, so much so that My most exalted Pen hath addressed Me while moving between My fingers, saying “O Thou Who art wronged and imprisoned and the Guardian of the hidden and the known! I see that the ocean of Thyne intent is turning towards this word which Thou hast made the foundation of Thy most exalted words in the station of remembrance in the realm of creation. The glory of Thy might beareth me witness! I am perplexed by this, O King of eternity, and truly Thou art the All-Knowing, the All-Informed. I beseech Thee to remove the veil from the face of mine understanding and to enable me to recognize Thy purpose, O Thou the Desire of the World. {Can it be possible that after the dawning of the day-star of Thy Testament above the horizon of Thy Most Great Tablet, the feet of any-one shall slip in Thy Straight Path?”

Unto this We answered: “O My most exalted Pen! It behooveth Thee to occupy Thyself with that whereunto Thou hast been bidden by God, the Exalted, the Great. Ask not of that which will consume Thy heart and the hearts of the denizens of Paradise, who have circled round My wondrous Cause. It behooveth Thee not to be acquainted with that which We have veiled from Thee. Thy Lord is, verily, the Concealer, the All-Knowing!}¹⁵⁰ Turn thou thy most radiant face toward the Most Sublime Vision and say, ‘O my God, the Most Merciful! Adorn the heaven of utterance with the stars of constancy, trustworthiness, truthfulness and faithfulness. Verily, potent art Thou to do what Thou willest. There is no God but Thee, the Ruler, the Beneficent.’”

¹⁵⁰ Section in brackets { } translated by Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, pp. 250-251.

Appendix 2

Bahá’u’lláh on the Next Manifestation

[Portion of a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh in which He refers to the next Manifestation was cited by the narrator. This Tablet can be found in ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Isbráq-Khávarí, *Má’idih Ásimání*, vol. 4, pp. 92-94. The full Text is provided below for ease of reference as a provisional translation. Translator.]

This very moment was I summoned before the Throne.¹⁵¹ He [Bahá’u’lláh] inquired, “With what wast thou occupied?” I submitted, “I was writing answers to the objections raised by the infernal temple.”¹⁵² Thus spoke the Tongue of God:

Write:

“Hast thou not heard that My proof is My essence, My evidence, My person, and My argument is My Manifestation? While that which hath proceeded from My pen is a pathway leading unto My recognition, whereunto none shall attain save those who have detached themselves from all things, and have passed beyond the world and all that hath been created therein even as the passing of a cloud. My proof hath ever been the manifestations of My power, which have encompassed all who are in heaven and on earth; while the Divine Verses have I appointed as a

¹⁵¹ Mírzá Áqá Ján was Bahá’u’lláh’s amanuensis. It is in his voice that the present passage is revealed.

¹⁵² *Haykal jahím*, rendered as *infernal temple*, is most likely a reference to Mírzá Yahyá Azal. It appears that Mírzá Áqá Ján was engaged in responding to objections raised by Mírzá Yahyá in a letter sent to the Holy Land by one of the believers. From the Tablet it may be inferred that the chief objection raised was that Mírzá Yahyá had advanced his claim to leadership by revealing verses. It is with this specific claim that Bahá’u’lláh is concerned here and sets out to refute.

pathway leading unto My recognition, as a bounty from Our presence unto both worlds. Since, however, My previous Appearance [the Báb] decreed Divine Verses as the proof of this Most Holy, Most Exalted, and Most Glorious Manifestation, We have sent down Verses from the heaven of Will, and allotted them as the proof unto all who are in heaven and on earth.

Ere this Manifestation, Verses alone had been the proof unto all, since in all the previous Scriptures We had sent down this decree. Although in the present Dispensation all mighty evidences, perspicuous proofs, wondrous Verses, prodigious revelations, and divine stations have been made manifest – all these as a bounty from Our presence unto the entire creation – yet hereafter the matter rests in the hand of God: It is for Him to determine what to assign as proof in the succeeding Manifestations. Erelong shall He send down His decree in Tablets, and We, truly, ordain the destinies of all things. All causes are seized within the grasp of Our might. We do as We will, and ordain as We please.

For in this Manifestation, God – glorified be His mention – hath willed that most of the believers and the sincere ones should give utterance to Verses; whence in the next Dispensation We shall ordain a different matter as proof, lest all who speak in this fashion should show pride towards God, the All-Powerful, the All-Compelling, the Almighty, even as the one whom We compelled by Our leave to give utterance unto the things of which the servants around Me speak proudly before God, Who created him, nurtured him, shielded him from the harm of his peers, and protected him under the wing of His wondrous and surpassing grace.¹⁵³

So have We decreed on this night, and We decree as We wish through a command on Our part. Powerful I am to

¹⁵³ This sentence appears to be a reference to Mírzá Yahyá Azal, who was raised by Bahá'u'lláh and then treated Him treacherously.

do what pleaseth Me, while all else besides Me are My creation.

O My creatures! Show not pride towards Him before Whose Countenance the countenances of the company of the Supreme Concourse are arrayed, nor be of them that wax disdainful.’

Here end the words of God, the Peerless, the Wondrous, the Unique.

Appendix 3

Bahá'u'lláh's Utterance

[Under the section “The Next Manifestation,” Khalíl Shahídí cited a passage from a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, which read in part: “For in this Manifestation, God – glorified be His mention – hath willed that most of the believers and the sincere ones should give utterance to Verses.” Perhaps as an exposition on this theme, the following extract from Fádíl Mázandarání, *Tárikh Zubúru'l-Haqq*, vol. 5, pp. 25-26, is provided. Translator.]

Nabíl Zarandí has narrated some of the oral utterances of the Blessed Beauty [Bahá'u'lláh], spoken in those days [in Edirne].

“While I was in the presence [of Bahá'u'lláh] with a number of others in the house of ‘Izzat Áqá, I heard the Blessed Tongue speak these words:

Since We were well-known among all the ministers of Iran, they would all exhibit friendship towards Us. However, they were afraid lest the government would issue a grave order against Us. Since the governor of Tehran had heard of the incident of Badasht that a group [of the Bábís] had been with Us, he took an oath, “Many times I have heard various accounts about Him [Bahá'u'lláh], but I have overlooked them. However, next time, of a certainty I will slay Him.” He ordered the khans [local chieftains] in Mazandaran to arrest and punish Us. However, his majesty the king intervened.

Later on, the Amír-Nizám said in the assemblage of the nobles, “He [Bahá'u'lláh] has brought much harm upon the government. But, nevertheless, He resides in Tehran in the utmost splendor.”

It was a perilous time. Many of the nobles were urging Me to journey [away from Tehran] in a different direction.

However, I considered all of these talks to be drivel, since God desired to manifest His Cause and it was not possible for any harm to come to Me until the Cause had been made manifest, or for the Almighty not to protect Me in midst of calamities.

However, from another direction, in consideration of divine wisdom, We empowered the tongue of a few others to speak Wondrous Words so that people’s attention would be diverted elsewhere and before its appointed time, none would become aware of the Source. One of those people was the honored [Mírzá] Munír [Káshání], whose words were preferred over the words of Yahyá [Azal]. However, in publicizing the name *Yahyá*, and speaking about him in his absence, Our intention was for the people of the Bayán to focus their attention on the house wherein God’s Purpose was concealed. And the intention of His Holiness the Exalted One [the Báb] by proclaiming the naming of Azal was the same, but He styled him as one of the *mirrors* and He exalted the Letters of the Living – of whom Mullá Hasan Bajistání was one – over the mirrors.

Moreover, He [the Báb] instructed the most renowned of the believers [Bahá’u’lláh] to educate Yahyá. For years, We busied Yahyá with writing the Words of God and the Verses of the Lord. He wrote them in Our presence and We encouraged him, and corrected whatever he wrote. He commenced writing from the age of twenty, but never were his writings without errors, both in the material and spiritual meanings.

However, the honored Munír wrote Wondrous Words without having had the benefit of tuition from Us and without needing any corrections. If Yahyá had a jot of equity, he would consider the presence of Munír as a complete proof [of Our influence], since he saw that in both Baghdad and Edirne, Munír’s words were the essence of power, and composed without any pauses.

In view of the Will of His Holiness the Exalted One, it was binding upon Yahyá that should someone like him [Munir] appear in his days, then he should hand the Cause to him.

Appendix 4

The Suicide of Abú’l-Hasan Afnán

[In the section “Mírzá Abu’l-Hasan Afnán”, the narrator recounted the story of the Afnán who committed suicide on hearing ‘Abdu’l-Bahá foretell of His own passing in a few days. The following materials expand on this poignant story. Transliteration of names has been adjusted in conformity with the rest of this monograph. Translator.]

Document 1: *Star of the West*, vol. 12, Mulk 1, 77 (February 7, 1922) No. 18, p. 281, titled “You must not injure yourselves or commit suicide”, a letter from Ahmad Tabrízí to Dr. Zia Baghdadi.

Haifa, Palestine, November 29, 1921

My dear brother:

I am grieved to announce to you in brief that the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, has ascended to the Kingdom by his own will. In some of his writings and Tablets, which are not yet made public, he clearly stated in regard to his departure.

Also in his talks to the friends, in the meetings and even to the strangers and visitors he made similar remarks. Soon I will write you and send you the details.

His latest advices and admonitions to the friends are to the effect that they must be in perfect unity and harmony.

He said: “There shall not be any separation among the believers because Bahá’u’lláh has appointed the House of Justice to be the authority. In the future, many false traditions and untrue statements will appear, but the men of the House of Justice will with great power stop the mouths of the liars. All difficult problems must be referred to the House of Justice.”

Mírzá Abu’l-Hasan Afnán (a noble gentleman from the family of the Báb, for many years living near ‘Abdu’l-Bahá) realizing the approach of the most great calamity the

Master's ascension could not wait to see it, and therefore he drowned himself here, in the sea.

The Master, in advising us and all the friends, said: "You must not injure yourselves or commit suicide.

"It is not permissible to do to yourselves what Mírzá Hasan Afnán did to himself. Should anyone at any time encounter hard and perplexing times, he must say to himself, 'This will soon pass.' Then he will be calm and quiet.

"In all my calamity and difficulties I used to say to myself, 'This will pass away.' Then I became patient. If anyone cannot be patient and cannot endure, and if he wishes to become a martyr, then let him arise in service to the Cause of God. It will be better for him if he attains to martyrdom in this path.

"Arise ye in service to the Cause of God as the Apostles arose after the departure of Christ."

The Master has left a will, which is His Covenant, written with his own blessed hand. As soon as it is read, I shall write to you what it contains. It is the hour of firmness and the moment of steadfastness. Blessed are those who are faithful to the Cause and loyal to the Covenant.

Your brother, Ahmad.¹⁵⁴

Document 2: There are other reports by Louise Bosch and Monever Khanum in that issue about the fact 'Abdu'l-Bahá had His "destroying the room" dream two weeks prior to His passing.

Document 3. A letter from 'Abbás Adíb to Dr. Zia M. Baghdadi, *Star of the West*, 12(19), March 2, 1922, 301-303.

Letter from 'Abbás Adíb to Dr. Zia M. Baghdadi

¹⁵⁴ On the same page, there is a picture of the funeral of Mírzá Abu'l-Hasan Afnán, with 'Abdu'l-Bahá being one of the pallbearers.

Damascus, Syria,

My dear uncle:

Oh! what a calamity has befallen us by the departure of our beloved Master.

Several times in meetings during the year, up to the time I left Haifa, he said: “I have completed my work and duties in this world and what is left will be done by the friends. I want to rest. The actions of the *náqizín* [the Covenant-breakers] and others so injure me that if my heart be pierced with a spear it will be much easier to bear than these actions. Suppressed sorrows will kill a man. If one should relate his sorrows to a friend the sorrow will be removed from his heart and he will be at ease; but if one shall keep it and does not speak it to others it will work in him, make him sick and kill him. You do not know what is happening. I do not say anything.”

Such words were uttered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá many times.

A certain person was such a great stumbling block in the path of the Beloved that he said to Bahádur: “My soul has reached my lips because of his deeds” He continued: “I want to rest for six months. The doctor does not allow me to work, read and write.”

To begin with, he dismissed Mírzá Azízu’lláh Bahádur and Ibn-Asdaq, the latter to stay in Shiraz under the care of Mírzá Bâqir Khán; next he dismissed Shaykh Muhammad-‘Alí, his son and Siyyid Mustafa of Rangoon. A little later, he dismissed Jinab Fadil [Mázandarání] and Subhí, the latter was told that when his services would be needed he would be called meantime to go and teach in Persia. Not a pilgrim was left in Haifa.

On Friday night, November 18th, the Beloved had a cold. That morning Mírzá Abu’l-Hasan Afnán dismissed his servant and said he was going away. He wrote a supplication to the Beloved. Then the Afnán went to the seashore, about two hours walk, and threw himself into the sea. Some fisherman nearby took him out and notified the authorities.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá sent his automobile. I went with the Afnáns and Dr. Lutfu’lláh [Hakím] and helped to bring his body home. The next day when we carried the body from his house, the Beloved approached and assisted in carrying the casket to the carriage. I am sure the Master told him about His departure from this world and that because of it he threw himself into the sea. Another incident: Ten days before this a Bahá’í Turk named Dr. Suleiman Rifaat Bey, whose home is in Beirut, came to visit ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. The day after his arrival a telegram came stating his brother had died. The shock overcame him. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá opened the windows, washed the face and head, rubbed the chest of the doctor, gave him some water mixed with spices, patted him on the back, embraced him, and consoled him. During this talk the Beloved said: “Don’t be sorry. My departure from this world is very near.” (Dr. Bey did not mention this until after the departure of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, not quite a fortnight later. The next morning the Master sent him to Beirut with Ahmed Bey Yazdí and Monever Khanum.

On the morning of November 26th, I left for Damascus. I arrived that night and communicated the news of the good health of the Master to the friends and my father. On Sunday, at a meeting, we spoke of it. Monday noon a telegram came saying the Beloved had departed from this world.

I heard that on Sunday, the 27th, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sat in the garden under the apricot tree. He called Ismá’íl Áqá and asked for some fruit tangerines, sweet lemons and oranges. He ate some and distributed the others among the friends who were present. He rubbed his hands together and said: “Finished, finished, finished.” He arose and went to his room. That night he did not go to the meeting. At midnight he awoke, called the Greatest Holy Leaf, said good bye to all and at 1:30 a. m. ascended to the Kingdom of Abhá. Immediately, everybody was notified and the weeping and wailing commenced.

A few days after the ascension, a Muslim said to one of the Afnáns: “Sometime ago, His Excellency, saw me and inquired about my work. He paid me a few pounds and said, ‘This will be the last time we meet.’ It did not occur to me that he meant he would ascend so. As to the náqizín, they surely gloated over the ascension of our Beloved.

Muhammad-‘Alí came to the house of mourning. Khusraw saw him and told him to wait for permission. The Greatest Holy Leaf sent this word to them Ruhí Effendi: “Our Beloved does not allow this and does not like you to come in, and if come in you will add to our sorrows.” He went away and wrote an article in the newspapers calling the Bahá’ís to turn to him quoting extracts from the Covenant of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh. The Bahá’í Assembly of Cairo answered him, and exposed his claim to leadership... Kindly give my love and greetings to Zenenat Khanum, Parvene, and Hobour Khanum. Shaykh ‘Abdu’l-Rahman El-Hindi is present and greets you.

Your sincere nephew, ‘Abbás Adíb.

Appendix 5

Bahá'í Holy Days

In the section “Commemoration Periods”, the Guardian’s comments about the observance of Bahá'í Holy Days were recorded by the narrator. While the details of the Bahá'í calendar system will be legislated by the Universal House of Justice in due time, the following research note is offered as an exploration of this subject.

The Bahá'í Holy Days consist of 9 days (given below in no particular order):

1. Birth of Bahá'u'lláh
2. Birth of the Báb
3. First day of Ridván
4. Ninth day of Ridván
5. Twelfth day of Ridván
6. Declaration of the Báb
7. Ascension of Bahá'u'lláh
8. Martyrdom of the Báb
9. Naw-Rúz

In determining the date of observance of these Holy Days, we are aided by the following Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to Áqá Shaykh Muhsin in Hamadan:¹⁵⁵

Regarding observances [of Holy Days] in this mighty Dispensation, some are by the solar and others by the lunar calendar.

The Ridván festivity, the Naw-Rúz celebration and the night of Ascension [of Bahá'u'lláh] are observed according to the solar calendar.

¹⁵⁵ Ishráq-Khávarí, *Ganjínih Hudúd va Abkám*, p. 426.

However, in accordance with an explicit text, the twin blessed Birthdays [of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb] are observed consecutively, and this cannot be except by their observance in accordance to lunar reckoning.¹⁵⁶

During the blessed days [of Bahá’u’lláh], the declaration of His Holiness the Exalted One – may My spirit be a sacrifice unto Him – and the martyrdom of His Holiness the Primal Point were observed in accordance with lunar calculations. However, this has not been explicitly stated in the *Kitáb-i Aqdas*.

Therefore, according to this explicit exposition by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, the date of 7 (out of 9) Holy Days are fixed. That is, it can be concluded that Ridván (3 Holy Days), Naw-Rúz and the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh are by solar calendar, while the twin Births are to be observed based on lunar calculations.

Of the remaining two Holy Days, namely, the Declaration and the Martyrdom of the Báb, the observance of one of them has been clarified by the following statement of Bahá’u’lláh:

36. QUESTION: If the anniversary either of the Twin Birthdays or of the Declaration of the Báb occurreth during the Fast, what is to be done?

ANSWER: Should the feasts celebrating the Twin Birthdays or the Declaration of the Báb fall within the month of fasting, the command to fast shall not apply on that day.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁶ The explicit text referred to by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá appears to be the following statement in Questions and Answers (Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i Aqdas*, p. 105):

2. QUESTION: Concerning the Festival of the Twin Birthdays.

ANSWER: The Birth of the Abhá Beauty was at the hour of dawn on the second day of the month of Muharram, the first day of which marketh the Birth of His Herald. These two days are accounted as one in the sight of God.

¹⁵⁷ Bahá’u’lláh, *The Kitáb-i Aqdas*, p. 118.

From the above statement, it is clear that the only reason why the Declaration of the Báb would coincide with the fast season would be for it to be observed on a lunar basis.

That leaves only the Martyrdom of the Báb. There are reasons to believe that this Holy Day is to be observed according to solar reckoning. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in a Tablet to Mírzá Qábil Ábádih’í states the following:¹⁵⁸

You had written about the Day of Declaration of His Holiness the Exalted One – may My soul be a sacrifice unto Him, which is mentioned in *Questions and Answers*. This occurred on the day of kamál of the month of ‘Azamat,¹⁵⁹ and the day of Martyrdom took place on the day of sultan of the month of Rahmat.¹⁶⁰ This is an explicit text and nothing may conflict with explicit texts. Later it will be followed as such.

However, during the blessed days [of Bahá’u’lláh], these two sacred days were observed on the fifth of Jamádu’l-Avval and the twenty-eighth of Sha’bán, and the friends used to gather in the Hallowed Presence [of Bahá’u’lláh]. On the Day of Declaration, He would express His joy, and on the Day of Martyrdom would express sadness, to the point that a profound effect was evident on His sanctified Countenance. Therefore, we also observe those two occasions on the same dates.

However, what has been written explicitly will take place in the future ...¹⁶¹

Regarding the twin Birthdates, the explicit text states that they occur on the first and the second of Muharram.

¹⁵⁸ Ishráq-Khávárí, *Ganjínih Hudúd va Abkám*, pp. 426-427.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Azamat [Grandeur] is the fourth Bahá’í month and starts on 17 May. Kamál is the eighth day of the month. Therefore, the reference here is to 24 May.

¹⁶⁰ Rahmat [Mercy] is the sixth Bahá’í month and starts on 24 June. Sultán is the seventeenth day of the month. Therefore, the reference here is to 10 July.

¹⁶¹ A portion not cited in Ishráq-Khávárí, *Ganjínih Hudúd va Abkám*, p. 427.

If the above analysis is correct, then the following summary could be concluded:

Birth of Bahá’u’lláh	Lunar
Birth of the Báb	Lunar
First day of Ridván	Solar
Ninth day of Ridván	Solar
Twelfth day of Ridván	Solar
Declaration of the Báb	Solar ¹⁶²
Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh	Solar
Martyrdom of the Báb	Solar
Naw-Rúz	Solar

Inasmuch as this analysis concludes that both the Martyrdom of the Báb and the Ascension of Bahá’u’lláh will be observed by the solar reckoning (and these are the only two solemn Holy Days), and three joyous occasions, namely the Births of the Twin Manifestations and the Declaration of the Báb, are observed on lunar basis and move throughout the year, then it appears that the question put to Shoghi Effendi (as reported in the section “Commemoration Periods”) requires further legislations by the House of Justice. That is, it appears that Shoghi Effendi did not wish for the solemn Holy Days to come within 10 days of joyous Days, but how this is to be reconciled and reflected in actual Bahá’í calendar remains a matter for the House of Justice’s consideration.

¹⁶² ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement that the Declaration of the Báb will be observed in the future on solar basis appears to contradict Bahá’u’lláh’s injunction in *Questions and Answers*. However, the system of Bahá’í interpretative law requires that all differences between Bahá’u’lláh’s and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements be settled in favor of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, as the authorized interpreter of Bahá’u’lláh’s teachings.

Appendix 6

‘Abdu’l-Bahá on Persepolis

[A summary of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s remarks about Persepolis (in Persian commonly referred to as *Takht Jamshíd*), was given by the narrator in the text. This appears to be a summation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s talk given on Sunday, 18 July 1915. Two versions of this talk are known to the present translator: (1) *Mírzá Badí‘ Bushrú’í, Nuẓdah Sál Shádmání, manuscript in private hands, pp. 92-94,*¹⁶³ and (2) ‘Abdu’l-Hamíd Isbráq-Khávarí, *Rabíq Makhtúm, vol. 2, pp. 499-502. Without citing its source, Rabíq Makhtúm appears to be quoting the eyewitness account of Bushrú’í, which is used as the source text for the present rendering.*



Persepolis was an ancient ceremonial capital of the Persian Empire. It was built during the reign of Cyrus the Great around 560 BC. This vast and majestic complex is situated some 70 km northeast of Shiraz. To ancient Iranians, the city was known as Parsa, meaning The City of Persians, Persepolis being the Greek interpretation of the name Pars.

Bushrú’í explains that in the morning, one of the German residents of Haifa, Dr. Finkelstein, attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Afterwards, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá went to the pilgrim house and someone remarked, “Most of the homes in the upper section have their doors shut.” The text below is ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s response. Translator.]

¹⁶³ The present translator is grateful to Adel Shafipour for pointing out this reference.

If someone goes to Takht Jamshíd [Persepolis], he will see how homes are shut. There is no building that has not been destroyed. As expansive as it was, Takht Jamshíd was destroyed and made into ruins. In comparison, these present buildings are nothing.

When they say that Jamshíd raised this edifice [Persepolis], it is frivolous talk. Takht Jamshíd was built by Gushtásb,¹⁶⁴ Isfandiyár,¹⁶⁵ and Dará. This edifice was raised by them. However, its details are very involved; few structures are found with such grandeur.



This edifice was located on the skirts of a mountain and had several levels. A barrier was built in front of it ten meters high.



¹⁶⁴ King Vishtaspa was the first Zoroastrian monarch of Iran.

¹⁶⁵ Spendodata succeeded his father, King Vishtaspa.

Two sets of stairs flung out on each side: one on the right, and one on the left. Each of these stairways were sixty feet [long]. However, they were most amazing. Each step was a *chárak* wide and a *girib* high.¹⁶⁶ When one reached the top of the stairs, one turned to the right, which is sixty feet long, and then left, which is another fifty feet, for a total of one hundred and ten feet. Similarly with the stairs on the left: sixty feet to the left and fifty feet to the right. These stairs were built in such a way that a person's feet would not bend. With utmost ease, horses could go up and down these steps.



When one reached the top [of these stairs], a platform appeared that was 470 meters long and 290 meters wide. It is an expansive platform. At the end of this platform, Gushtasb built an entrance that had four pillars. On these pillars were [the statues of] four beasts: their body was the body of a bull, and their head like the head of a man. They had wings. Behind these statues, the platform sloped high for nine meters. This corridor led to the royal hall that had forty pillars. This building was initiated by Gushtasb and completed by Isfandiyar. In a similar manner, the steps are short in height.

When you reached the top, there was the forty-pillar building. The pillars were wide and tall. However, they were not made of a single stone; rather, they were in three parts. Nevertheless, they were so well fused that they appeared seamless.

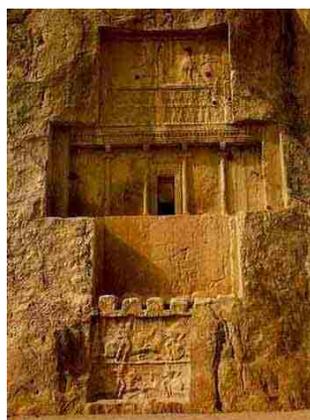
¹⁶⁶ A *chárak* is equivalent to one-fourth of a *dar'*, which in turn is about one meter. A *girib* is one-fourth of a *chárak*, or about one-sixteenth of a meter.



After this forty-pillar building, one reached the building raised by Dará. It had many halls. For instance, its entrance gate was made of three stones and two main pillars. The walls were made of such stones that even today they shine like a mirror. They were so refined that one could see oneself in them.

But, alas, it was destroyed. Most of the pillars have fallen. Of the forty pillars, only thirteen remain standing. Besides this forty-pillar hall, there was another building with one hundred pillars – most expansive.

When a person passed this [building] and ascended the short mountain, at the top there was a *dakhmih*,¹⁶⁷ which in its outer structure was made with pillars. After this portico, there was a *dakhmih* where the dead were placed. On the walls of this building, they have carved faces. They have made statues [from the stones] of the mountain itself.



¹⁶⁷ *Dakhmih* was a circular building where the Zoroastrians laid the bodies of their dead.

In the Gushtasb building, many pictures have been engraved on either side of the stairs. The stones in the Gushtasb structure were each two meters wide and of the same length. Many faces have been carved on the walls: the faces of kings and soldiers, with some holding shields and others spears. Also faces of farmers, artisans and shopkeepers.



On the walls, they have written in cuneiform, which was read by a German. He traveled in Iran for many years and worked hard until eventually he was able to decipher them. At first, he was unable to read them, but found a piece of paper in Greece, which gave a translation of cuneiform into the Pahlavi language beneath each word. By comparing the letters, he was able to read the cuneiform inscriptions, since cuneiform, the Pahlavi and Zand [languages] stem from the same Aryan root. That is, they are from the same branch [of languages] and were close to one another. Therefore, aided by this [decoding] paper, the German was able to decipher the cuneiform in Takht Jamshíd.

In short, in cuneiform they have written who constructed this building. People say that it was Jamshíd who built this structure, but this is not true. Jamshíd lived five thousand years ago.

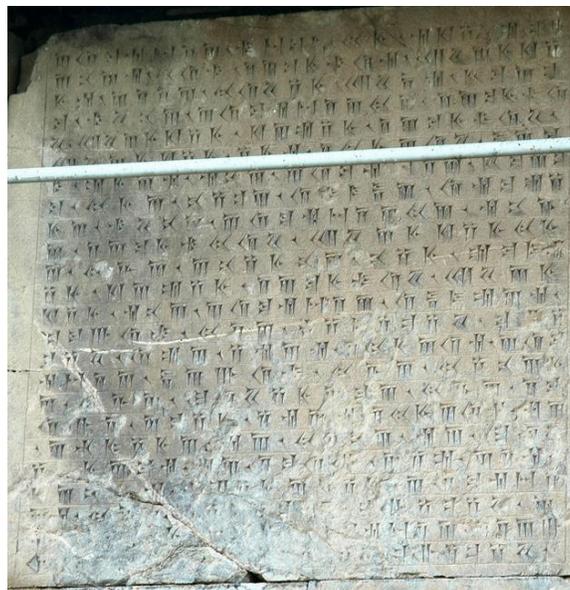
One of these pillars was brought to Paris and displayed in a museum. At the top of the pillar were two bull heads, upon which the building was built.

In truth, what amazing monuments Iran had! What a civilization it possessed!

The Persian nations have written on these stones, “I am Darius, the king of kings. By the favor of Ahura Mazda,¹⁶⁸ I have raised this

¹⁶⁸ *Abura Mazda* is the Avestan language name for a divinity exalted by Zoroaster as the one uncreated Creator, hence God.

building. I have conquered the nations of Iran, Egypt, Greece, and India” – and other nations that he named.¹⁶⁹



Now Iranians in this age have brought down their nation from the height of such grandeur to this misery and ruin, and are still conspiring in the destruction of their nation. In truth, what ignorance can do!

I cherish the hope that Iran will become even mightier than her past and that they would build a magnificent Mashriqu’l-Adhkar in Takht Jamshíd. May Takht Jamshíd be developed even better than before and be built in its original design and a Mashriqu’l-Adhkar be raised there too. However, this must be done on the same foundation, and built in

¹⁶⁹ Part of the inscription shown on this page reads:

I am Darius the great king, the king of kings, the king of many countries, the son of Hystaspes, an Achaemenid.

By the favor of Ahuramazda these are the countries which I got into my possession along with this Persian people, which felt fear of me and bore me tribute : Elam, Media, Babylonia, Arabia, Assyria, Egypt, Armenia, Cappadocia, Lydia, the Greeks who are of the mainland and those who are by the sea, and countries which are across the sea, Sagartia, Parthia, Drangiana, Aria, Bactria, Sogdia, Chorasmia, Sattagydia, Arachosia, Hinduš, Gandara, Sacae, Maka.

the exact form it had in the ancient days. This must be completed. In addition, a Mashriqu'l-Adhkar must be instituted. ...¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ The remainder of this talk is unrelated to Persepolis and as such has been left untranslated in the present monograph.

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