

## **The Bahai Movement: A paper read by Shoghi Effendi at Oxford**

by Shoghi Effendi<sup>1</sup>

It is with no sense of trepidation that I approach this vast subject—but rather with an overwhelming “embarras de richesses” that I feel confronted, in attempting to condense even the salient features of my theme in so small a compass.

For a movement which appeared at one of the most economically restless, politically agitated, yet scientifically remarkable periods in European History; born in the midst of what historians have maintained to be one to the most corrupt regions within the pale of civilization; launched by the son of a woolmonger in Shiraz, who as a herald after chastisement, humiliation, and confinement was in the prime of his youth made the target of two volleys of fire, and to whose eloquence, piety, fervour, simple and courteous manners, such as Le Comte de Gobineau and even some of his sworn adversaries testified; whose founder, though a wealthy Persian

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<sup>1</sup> Shoghi Effendi's address to the Oxford University Asiatic Society, February 1921. *The Dawn*, A monthly Bahai Journal of Burma, Vol. 1, No. 1 (September 1923), pp. 2-4; No. 2 (October 1923), pp. 2-4; Nos 3 & 4 (November & December 1923), pp. 1-2; No. 5 (January 1924), pp. 7-9; No. 6 (February 1924), pp. 5-7; No. 7 (March 1924), pp. 9-11; and No. 8 (April 1924), pp. 1-2. Reprinted in the Appendix of Riaz Khadem, *Prelude to the Guardianship*, pp. 227-240.

Nobleman, discarded all his riches, was thrown for months in the Imperial, subterranean dungeons with the mark of adamantine chains indelibly graven upon his neck: was four times exiled, fifty years in captivity and though deserted, yea denounced by his closest kinsmen, promoted his cause while in chains and fetters, apostrophising and rebuking the very monarchs in whose prison he lay; foretold with his power of clairvoyance the fall of Napoleon III on the one hand and the 'lamentations of Berlin' and the tragic end of the 'king' on the other—such a movement appears to be well worth consideration and serious study. Furthermore, a movement that displays a history stained with the blood of a noble army of martyrs, the record of whose agonies finds hardly any parallel in the annals of the persecution of the world, which in a country whose men however degraded were still decidedly superior to its women, produced a heroine whose career the Marquess Curzon of Kedleston has characterized as "one of the most affecting episodes in Modern History"; "whose appearance in any country and any age," the well known orientalist Edward Granville Browne regards as "a rare phenomenon, in a country like Persia, a prodigy almost a miracle": and whom the graphic pen of Le Comte de Gobineau portrays as "the most extraordinary manifestation of this most extraordinary movement"; a movement which unlike others through its present vigorous spirit has dispelled every apprehension that time might damp its zeal, which advocates the solution of the economic problems of the age and has exerted a profound influence on Persian literature, not to mention Persian intellect and character, a movement which is in process of linking the East with the west removing all barriers of race, creed and colour and that exemplified by the conduct of its devotees during the racial riots that convulsed the American States after the war as well as by the privations undergone by the poorer followers of the faith in Persia in their contributions towards a "Temple of worship" to be erected across the Atlantic by their co-workers whom they have never seen or known; a movement that has despite the relentless opposition of a firmly entrenched hierarchy of fanatic clergy that has hurled at it its charges of Nihilism, Anarchism, and Pantheism, and, in the absence of proper means of publicity, of systematic raising of funds and propaganda organization has invaded almost the whole of Persia and has within less than a century, notwithstanding the growing materialism of the west, and

the coalition of two of the most autocratic potentates of the East to suppress it, burst the confines of Persia, crossed the limits of Asia, affected Europe, penetrated Africa down to its southernmost limit, enrolled within its ranks thousands in the American continent, reaching northwards to the Esquimaux of Alaska,<sup>1</sup> and southward to the foot of the Andes, spread over the mid-Pacific Islands, and thence reaching the Antipodes, has encircled Japan, Burma, and Afghanistan, and is today stretching out to Indo-China—that such a cause should be treated as negligible, I for one, refuse to believe.

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<sup>1</sup> Inuits.



It was in the year 1844 towards the middle of the 19th century, 'a century of revolution—revolution in Government, revolution in the material conditions and circumstances of life, and revolution in knowledge and in mental outlook' that still another revolution in religious ideas and conceptions was introduced in the city of Shiraz by a young scion of the house of the Prophet of Islam, 'Ali Muhammad by name, who appeared heralding the advent of "Him who shall usher in a new and golden age" and, with religion as his lever effect peacefully and

steadily the regeneration of mankind. The century which witnessed the birth of such a movement was indeed a most remarkable one.

But brilliant as the whole century was, yet the decade in which the movement was born was one of the darkest yet the most potent and significant of all. The years 1840 and 1850 were years of great political upheaval that convulsed the whole of Central Europe signaling the risking spirit of liberalism and of nationality that had been so long kept in check by the reactionery [*sic*] dictators of Europe, the sovereigns of the Holy Alliance. And not only was the decade politically an agitated one but it was also socially a result of the failure of the Chartist movement a period of restlessness and disillusionment. At such a time this young Persian Seer appeared in the very heart of the Orient, the home of world religions and in the native land of Zoroaster, whose religion the Orientalist James Darmesteter, [*recte* Darmesteter] describes as the last reflex of the ideas which prevailed in Toran during five centuries which preceded and the seven which followed the Birth of Christ, a period which gave to the world the Gospels, the Talmud and the Quran exerting much influence on each of the Movements which produced or proceeded from those three books, lending much to the Rabbis, and much to Muhammad.

Nor was the East, and particularly Persia in a state of peace and harmony, though its unrest was of a different character. Wrapped in the gloom of denominational, sectarian, racial, and social fanaticism, the whole land afforded a scene of a most deplorable nature. It is no exaggeration to state that if by some unfortunate mishap a Jew's garment brushed that of a Muhammadan the latter would immediately discard, nay destroy it, deeming it polluted. Similarly the Muslim, far from drinking from a cup that had touched the lips of a Nazarene, would, regarding it defiled, smash it to pieces.

In the midst of such circumstances, abroad and at home, this young Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad who was born on 20th of October 1819 declared his mission. His father, a wool-merchant in Shiraz, died during his infancy and the child was brought up under the care of his maternal uncle. Destined as he was originally for commercial pursuits, his early youth was spent in partnership with his uncle at Shiraz after which he independently conducted business in the town of Bushire, on the Persian Gulf. But trade and commerce were not in keeping with his thoughts and nature which were given from the very beginning to religious meditation, and pious devotion. He spent therefore, the main part of his life prior to the declaration of his mission, in religious pursuits, in prayer, and in contemplation. His extreme piety and virtue, his liberal ideas, the charm of his manner, the beauty of his person, the sweetness of his disposition, and the eloquence of his words kindled a spirit of devotion in the hearts of his entourage; and when on May 23rd 1844 he laid claim to be the Bab meaning 'gate', the 'forerunner' of him who should purify the perverted religions and sects of his time from fanaticism, and establish the promised era of peace, and of freedom, it was felt by those whose conduct was the very negation of such ideals that the death-knell of their supremacy was being sounded. The young

prophet, appearing among people predominantly Islamic in faith, started with the Quran

in his hand, to denounce the life, the conduct, the precepts, and even the dogmas of the corrupt clergy which he asserted and proved to be in flagrant contradiction to the Book. He preached a cause that was subversive to the interests of the notorious leaders of Islam but not to the pristine teachings of Islam itself. Soon after his declaration, when he under-took the pilgrimage to Mecca, the few yet zealous followers he had left behind started to arouse the masses from their lethargy. Thirsty souls who for years had chafed under the baleful influence of an orthodox clergy began to read his writing, and that in the uttermost secrecy, for the alarmed body of the Ulamas, Mullas, Siyyids, and Mujtahids were beginning to incite the Government to come to their aid in their campaign of suppression. On his return from pilgrimage, his cause which had already advanced rapidly, was given a fresh impetus and this made the problem of quenching its fire imperative and extremely difficult. He was arrested, summoned before councils, interrogated, cross-examined, threatened, humiliated, bastinadoed, and after a period of confinement in the citadels of Maku, and Chihria<sup>1</sup> he was suspended in public square of Tabriz and made the target of two volleys of bullets. To the clergy and the Government, it seemed the extinction of this threatening fire; but the martyring of a Siyyid, of the lineage of the prophet while inspiring the few votaries of the faith with a new ardour and courage, attracted the attention of the whole country and gave the faith a much greater publicity. Meanwhile a grave incident took place which afforded a fresh opportunity to the clergy, to press their demand to suppliment [*sic*] the martyrdom of the leader with the extermination of his followers, precipitating that period of persecution which the history of the Movement so remarkably exhibits.

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<sup>1</sup> Chihriq.





Two years after the martyrdom of the Bab, two unbalanced impassioned Babis in desperate grief at the loss of their master, fired at the Shah with a fowling-piece. They were instantly seized and put to death, that being the signal for and an episode of the long period of persecution that followed. The clerical element pressed now their contention that the movement aimed at the overthrow of all forms of Government, that it had political motives and that the only remedy would be a wholesale massacre of its adherents. Government and clergy, hand in hand, after this attack on the person of the Sovereign, started on a campaign of unspeakable atrocities. Every conceivable means of torture which the cruel tyrant of the East and his torture-mongers could devise was mercilessly used to force the adherents of the faith to apostatize. But all was in vain.

Among countless cruelties a woman, to whom I have already alluded, of highly esteemed clerical parentage, endowed with great beauty, intellect, tenacity and eloquence without meeting the Bab responded to his call. In spite of the dissuasion of her kindred she deserted rank, family, renown and to the great scandal of her devout yet bigoted kinsmen discarded the veil, and preached far and wide the gospel of love, of justice and of purity to men and women alike and was at last strangled by a colored slave, thrown into a pit and stoned.

No wonder that Lord Curzon referring to these abominable acts comments as follows:

“Tales of magnificent heroism illumine the blood stained pages of Babi history. Ignorant and unlettered as many of its votaries are and have been, they are prepared to die for their religion, and fires of Smithfield did not kindle nobler courage than has met and defied the more refined torture-mongers of Tihiran. Of no small account then must be the tenets and creed that can awaken in its followers so rare and beautiful a spirit of self-sacrifice.”

Among the many victims of such tortures, thrown into the Imperial dungeons of the Shah was a young Persian nobleman, Husayn 'Ali by name and later entitled Baha'u'llah (the splendour of God) the first-born son of one of the foremost ministers of the Crown, born on November 12, 1817, and belonging to an ancient family of Nur in the province of Mazindaran which in later times returned the most prominent councillors and ministers of the Shah. Immediately the call from Shiraz had reached the capital, Tihran, he responded and disregarding honour and public esteem, and giving up high rank and riches, (the latter being soon after pillaged and plundered), he enlisted himself as a resolute advocate of the cause braving all peril, extending his help, morally and materially to the early propagators of the faith and gaining thereby notoriety in the sight of the clergy and the Government. His open and undaunted behaviour in diffusing the liberal ideas of the martyred chief made him, to be suspected of complicity in the attempt on the life of the Shah and, thus arrested, was thrice imprisoned, his last confinement lasting four months in the subterranean dungeons of the Shah. There was no doubt that he had, through his talents, personality, eloquence, courage, and indomitable will, earned the admiration of his co-workers and was gradually coming up to be regarded as the unquestioned leader of a cause that was left leaderless. The farewell scenes, marked with confidence and imbued with gaiety and transport that ensured around him, whenever the executioner would penetrate the darkness of the gaol and summon one or two of the languishing Babi prisoners to the gallows; the moving word of patience, of courage and hope which he uttered to the departing companions; the leading role he took in the songs of exultation and the hymns of praise and in the other manifestations of joy that cheered the damp and foul atmosphere of the prison; his persuasive tone in preaching the faith to the other inmates of the dungeon, the spirit of dignity and contentment which he evinced whenever a relaxation was effected or a gift bestowed by the *Shah*—all these made him, if spared, a promising figure in the future course of the Movement.

Soon, however, his complicity being disproved, he was released and as his personal prestige had immensely increased he was shortly after, as a result of an agreement with the Ottoman and Persian Governments, exiled with his family and some of his companions on October 14, 1852 to Baghdad, in Mesopotamia. The handful of exiles, thus severed apart from the remnants of the faith in Persia, stayed there about eleven years; two of which Baha'u'llah spent in solitude and meditation in the mountain of Sulaymanniah in the province of Kurdistan. Friends, even his family knew not his whereabouts. When he returned, he declared, at first to his entourage and later to the world his mission as "him whom the Bab had expressly foretold".

The Declaration of Baha'u'llah again filled the Government as well as the clergy with alarm and through the persistent efforts of the Persian ambassador at Constantinople, authorization from Sultan 'Abdu'l'Aziz was obtained for the transference of the growing community to the Turkish Capital—a spot distant

from Persia and remote from the resort of pilgrims. This transference was effected on May 1st 1863. His second exile, followed after four months by a third to Adrianople, and its consequent remoteness from the land of its birth, where the few adherents that remained were threatened with extinction by the persecutions that still raged intermittently all over the land, did not arrest the onward march of the Cause. On the contrary, during his sojourn in Adrianople and during the early years of his incarceration in the prison of Acre, Baha'u'llah, in His Writings through a series of detailed epistles addressed himself to Queen Victoria, Napoleon III, the Pope Pius IX, the Czar of Russia, the Emperor of Germany, the Sultan of Turkey, the Shah of Persia, and the Presidents of the American Republics, revealing to them his mission, expounding his principles, admonishing them to rule with justice, praying for their guidance and enlightenment, reminding them of the Past, warning them of the Future, and summoning them to disarm and to usher in the era of Universal Peace. By some these messages were received with admiration and respect [ , by] others with indifference, [*sic*] and still others by derision and contempt. Queen Victoria, is reported to have remarked that if this Cause is of God it would stand, and if not no harm would result. She was assured a long and prosperous reign, while her influence in the abolition of slave traffic, her start towards democratic representative institutions, and her form of Government as constitutional monarchy were highly extolled.

These epistles as well as the vast amount of writings revealed at that time by the Pen of Baha'u'llah filled again the Governments concerned with alarm, but increased the ardour of the adherents of the faith who were now in increasing numbers scattered throughout Persia, Mesopotamia and India. The Ottoman and Persian Governments, again in concert decided on the exile of the community for a fourth time to the distant penal colony of Acre in Syria, wherein political suspects, convicts, criminals of the worst types, brigands and highway robbers were strictly confined and hardly survived. Its

climate was so unhealthy that it was referred to as a spot which if a bird flew over, it would instantly drop dead. When Baha'u'llah and his seventy companions were transferred to that remote colony reaching it on August 30, 1868, the Persian ambassador in Constantinople assured his Government in Tihran that the doom of the sect was sealed. Yet it was during the twenty-five remaining years of his life which he spent in the prison of Acre in a most insalubrious climate, the early part of which years was spent in utter privation, and strict confinement that his movement spread far and wide, that Europe, the Far East and later, America caught its spark, that his Book of Laws the 'Kitabu'-Aqdas' was revealed and his epistle to the Shah of Persia forwarded, that his predictions were fulfilled and that the number of his followers swelled from a mere handful of apprehensive exiles to almost a million and that in Persia alone.

About that time in the year 1890, Edward Granville Browne of the University of Cambridge, on the occasion of his visit to Acre and his meeting the Prisoner in His Mansion and Garden at Bahji wrote the following:

"Of the culminating event of this my journey some few words at least must be said. ... Though I dimly suspected whither I was going, and whom I was to behold (for no distinct intimation had been given to me), a second or two elapsed ere, with a throb of wonder and awe, I became definitely conscious that the room was not untenanted. In the corner where the divan met the wall sat a wonderful [*sic*] and venerable figure, crowned with a felt head-dress of the kind called *taj* worn by '*dervishes*' (but of unusual height and make), round the base of which was wound a small white turban. The face of him on whom I gazed I can never forget, though I cannot describe it. Those piercing eyes seemed to read one's very soul; power and authority sat on that ample brow; while the deep lines on forehead and face implied an age which the jet-black hair and beard flowing down in indistinguishable luxuriance almost to the waist seemed to belie. No need to ask in whose presence I stood, as I bowed myself before One who is the object of a devotion and love which kings envy and emperors sigh for in vain.

A mild dignified voice bade me be seated, and then continued "Praise be to God that thou has attained. ... Thou hast come to see a prisoner and an exile .... We desire but the good of the world and the happiness of the nations; yet they deem us a stirrer up of strife and sedition worthy of bondage and banishment .... That all nations should become one in faith and all men as brothers; that the bonds of affection and unity between the sons of men should be strengthened, that diversity of religion should cease, and differences of race be annulled—what harm is there in this .... Yet so it shall be; these fruitless strifes these ruinous wars shall pass away and the "Most Great Peace" shall come. Do not you in Europe need this also? Is not this that which Christ foretold? Yet do we see your kings and rulers lavishing their treasures more freely on means for the destruction of the human race than on that which would conduce to the

happiness of mankind .... These strifes and this bloodshed and discord must cease, and all men be as one kindred and one family .... Let not a man glory in that he loves his country; let him rather glory in this, that he loves his kind ....”

“Such, so far as I can recall them, were the words which, besides many others, I heard from Baha’. Let those who read them consider well with themselves whether such doctrines merit death and bonds and whether the world is more likely to gain or lose by their diffusion”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Granville Browne, Introduction, *A Traveller's Narrative Written to Illustrate the Episode of the Bab*, vol. 2., pp. xxxix-xl.



With the declaration of the Counter-revolution of 1909 and the deposition of Abdul Hamid, the long period of forty years' incarceration came to an end, and in the year 1911 'Abdu'l-Baha his appointed son set out for a four years' extensive travel to Europe and America proclaiming the cause of his father to Jews, Christians and Muhammadans alike, propounding its fundamental, social and religious principles to Atheists, Agnostics, Theosophists, Mormons, Quakers, Socialists, and followers of various other schools of thought, asserting in synagogues on purely historical grounds the validity of Christ's mission and his fulfilment and propagation of the Mosaic dispensation; proclaiming in mosques the fundamental unity underlying the religions of the past



and establishing in Temples and Churches the truth of the Prophet's mission deriving scientific incontestable evidences from the Quran itself. Before starting on his Western journey he raised a stately Mausoleum for the Bab on Mount Carmel, the 'Vineyard of God' in Palestine, whither the mutilated body of the harbinger of the Movement was borne from Tabriz, the scene of his martyrdom. He also enhanced the beauty and the stateliness of the Sacred Sepulchre of his father, which lies on the verdant plains of Acre, in the heart of a land unsurpassed in its religious traditions, hallowed to the Jew, the Christians and the Muslim alike.

Between these two hallowed shrines and in such a region dwells, free and in peace, at present, the aged leader of the faith, gathering around his table every night the American, the European, the African and the Asiatic and sending out unceasingly through his epistles and the many pilgrims who flock to his doors dynamic messages of love and of hope to a bleeding and weary world.

With regard to the teachings of the Movement: its cardinal principle is the existence of One Supreme Being manifesting Himself like the revealing rays of the Sun in the burnished mirrors of Messengers and Prophets who at various times, have appeared, expounded the same truth, preached the same gospel, but garbed in every time in an attire that would conform with the understanding of their age. Hence the explanation of the various religious ordinances, and the diverse conceptions [of] the state of after life; should the peoples of the world, of whatever race, creed or colour seek truth diligently and with an unbiased mind, they will inevitably converge around the same centre for truth is one and indivisible. Thus the principle of the Oneness of mankind is established. Baha'u'llah addressing mankind says "Of one tree are all ye the fruits, and of one Bough the leaves." Diversity of colour and form should not lead to conflict but should as is the case with a bed of flowers of various scents, forms, and hues enhance the excellence and power of mankind. The exaltation of humanitarianism over patriotism expressed in the saying "Let not man glory in that he loves his country, let him rather glory in this that he loves his kind"; the conception of the world as one home and mankind as one family; the establishment of the Parliament of man in the form of a comprehensive representative international assembly that

shall equitably and peacefully adjust international dispute; drastic measures of disarmament consistent with national safety; the Ideal of Universal Peace to be realised not through human efforts exclusively but confirmed and guided by the Divine Spirit [—] these have been repeatedly expressed and emphasized by the Pen of Baha'u'llah in his epistles to the individuals, assemblies and sovereigns of the world. The equality in rights of men and women is proclaimed.

Mankind has two wings, one is woman, the other man. So long as the two wings are unequally developed the bird cannot fly. Hence the need for compulsory Universal education, with particular stress on the training of women as the mothers of the future on whom primarily will depend the direction and education of the coming generation, Religion is regarded as "the supreme and mighty bulwark. If the edifice of religion shakes and totters commotion and chance will ensue... for in the world of mankind there are two safeguards that protect man from wrong doing. One is the law which punishes the criminal, but the law prevents only the manifest crime and not the concealed sin; whereas the ideal safeguard, namely the Religion of God prevents both the manifest and the concealed crime." Religion (and the term is used throughout to denote the true monotheistic form of religion) too would conform to reason and science, for both are but manifestations of Truth which is one and indivisible. Adoption of one universal tongue and script with the national tongue and script has been enjoined facilitating thereby international understanding and saving time and energy.

Another express provision in the teachings of the Movement is the institution of the House of Justice called the Baytu'l-Adl. Although the details touching its structure and operation have not yet been fully laid down yet the broad principles guiding its future activities has [sic] been established. Its duties are religious, educational, economic and political. Its different spheres of activity will be departmental, national and international. It is broadly speaking the nucleus of the Bahai State. Church and State thus far from being divorced from one another are harmonized, their interests are reconciled, are brought to co-operate for the same end, yet for each is reserved its special and definite sphere of activity. Indeed if one glances at the outstanding precepts of the Movement comprehensive and practical as they are, as the suppression of all dogmas, superstitions, religious organisations, rituals and verbal traditions, the abolition of priesthood, the discouragement of celibacy the emphasis laid on deeds rather than words, the conception of labour as an act of worship, the belief that the criterion of every true living religion must be its conformity with reason and science and its aiming at the betterment of mankind, the body of its social and

economic teachings which while denouncing force and violence and retaining the institution of private property seeks on one hand to infuse by its spirit a sense of justice and goodwill in both employer and workman alike and on the other provides the means whereby the status of the wage-earning class will be raised,—the details governing the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar—all these teachings go to show that religion far from being excluded from man's social life should on the contrary quite stabilize and protect it. The belief in the existence and the immortality of the soul; of its future reward and punishment; the condemnation of the life of the hermit and of all forms of austerities; the confession of sin to none but God; the repudiation of mendacity and idleness; the prohibition of all intoxicants; the necessity of cleanliness and the stress laid on piety, love, justice, service, pardon, steadfastness, co-operation, humility: these are among the features of its basic principles.

A concrete embodiment of the conception that faith and worship though essential are not sufficient in themselves but should be supplemented by social service is to be found in the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar, "the Dawning-place of Praise," a Temple of worship, to be provided if possible in every city and town, and open to all men and women irrespective of creed, color, race, and language. Its adorning is to be simple and unostentatious, its prayer direct, simple in their wording and simply recited, the best hours for devotion being at dawn, then the state of nature and of human mind admirably lend themselves to prayer and meditation. But prayer does not constitute the only purpose of this Temple, for, various accessories such as hostels, asylums, hospitals, orphanages, elementary as well as advanced educational institutions, are to exemplify and embody the other essential element in worship, namely social services.

The first of such temples has been built in what was before the Revolution an integral part of the Russian

Czarist Empire, in the city of Ishqabad, Turkistan for the erection of which the East and West have amply contributed. The example has been followed by the Bahais in the United States, where soon the corner-stone of such a temple will be laid in the shores of Lake Michigan in the vicinity of Chicago. Contributions from their Persian, Hindu, Japanese, Burmese, English, French, German, Turkish, Armenian, Kurdish, Syrian, and Jewish Co-workers are pouring in and it is no exaggeration to state that when the work will reach its final consummation, it will be one of the most concrete and sublime embodiments of inter-religious, inter-racial, and inter-national brotherhood.

We see to-day the East after the convulsion of the Great War is alienated from the West in its customs, its traditions, its religion, its political standards, its conceptions of freedom and of civilization, its economic interests and its standard of living. Hardly any thing short of a fresh superhuman power, can bridge the chasm that is sundering today the two halves of humanity. And it is not much to say that wherever the spirit inculcated by this movement has penetrated, a bond of fellowship has originated that links as no human interest has so far proved to link, the East with the west.

In the capital of Persia, Tihran, where its torture-mongers have inflicted such atrocities and where the black shadow of religious sectarianism, and social fanaticism was so predominant, we see to-day in one home, around one table, Jews, Christians, Muslims, Zoroastrians, Persians, Arabs, Turks and Kurds associating in a spirit of real brother-

hood, giving wherever an occasion has arisen their property, their comforts, yea their lives one for the other. Such a transformation in Persia was certainly a century ago inconceivable.

For the erection of the "Temple of Worship" in the United States of America, the poor and needy adherents of the Faith in Persia have contributed to their utmost and with a spirit that deserves mention:

Eye witnesses have reported that in the outlying province of Khorasan in a village consisting of thirty families—all fired with the spirit of the Movement and afflicted with poverty—a single rug is owned by a group of families and whenever an itinerant Bahá'í teacher would arrive the rug would be passed around from one house to another that it might provide partial comfort to the wayworn traveller. Living on barest bread, the father of each family would gather every day one or two handfuls of wheat and store them for the use of the expected teacher. Despite such misery they would manage to gather a penny or half a penny every day to be sent as contribution to the Temple in the United States. If they own two pence one of it is surely to go to the Temple. If they obtained a monthly pay of twenty Shillings, they purchase with it some wool to weave it into cloth and sell it for thirty Shillings reserving half of it as future capital while the other half is divided between the price of their daily bread and their contribution to the Mashriqu'l-Adhkar.

In conclusion it may be observed that many of these teachings have been advocated by past philosophers, poets, and prophets from the dawn of History till now, that they are in no wise new and original. But in return may I ask whether any of these ideals have been realised and these teachings enforced. Has Christianity as it stands to-day or Islam, Judaism, and other religious schools of thought achieved their aims? And if the movement has wherever it has shed its light, so far succeeded in that direction may we not hope that it may one day usher in that golden Millennium, the awaited Time embodied for the Jew in his promised Messiah, for the Christian in the second coming of Christ, for the Muslim in the return of the Mahdi (Christ), for the Gabr<sup>1</sup> in the purification of the world and the annihilation of the Ahriman by the hand of the new Saviour Saoshyant for the Hindu in the anticipation of hearing again the voice of the divine Krishna and to the Buddhist for the advent of the great fifth Buddha who will regenerate the world.

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<sup>1</sup> Non-Muslims.